

*** The Theatre of the
Absurd**

Second Stage

By:

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* Introduction

- * As a new form of drama, the Theater of the Absurd originated from France after The Second World War. Its name was coined by Martin Iselin in his book *The Theatre of the Absurd*, which was published in 1961. The playwrights of the Theater of the Absurd engaged in creating extremely grotesque plays both in form and contents, which revealed the conditions of human beings' existence in modern society. With the efforts of these playwrights, the Theater of the Absurd reached its peak from 1960s to 1970s and became popular not only in France but also in other countries. This paper analyzes the artistic features and themes of the Theater of the Absurd.

The Characteristics of the Theatre of the Absurd:

Anti-character

In the Theater of the Absurd, the characters are created with curious and grotesque personalities on the stages from the beginning to the end. It seems that the author specializes in shaping the characters with the sense of absurdity and tries to dig out their hopelessness to life and society. We know that in a traditional drama, characters are shaped with their own personalities in common sense. Their languages and behaviors should be reasonable and easy to understand. However, in the Theatre of the Absurd, people who abandon the normal sense and behaviors are completely shaped and described by the playwrights on the stages. Character, especially protagonist in the Theatre of the Absurd, has special personalities and nature. They sometimes talk to themselves continually or repeatedly. And most of the time their words and sentences are interrupted or disordered. There are not any regular rules to follow in their words.

Anti-language

Language is an important constituent of literary work. The use of language is regarded as criterion to evaluate a writer's style and ability. Different writers form their own writing styles in their literary career. In traditional dramas, language is usually used in a logical order. When someone asks some questions, other people will give their answers. No matter whether the answers are true or false, they must obey certain logical order. But in the

* *Anti-drama*

* Drama usually has its own characteristics from its origins. Traditional dramas are easy to understand from its contents and themes, but the Theater of the Absurd is difficult to understand from many aspects. The Theatre of the Absurd appeared in 1950s, while traditional drama appeared several hundreds of years earlier. The Theater of the Absurd has some characteristics of the traditional dramas. Meanwhile, it has some unique characteristics, and all these characteristics hide beneath the surface of the absurd dramas. In traditional dramas, plot is clear and the contents are easy to grasp for common people. The main characters often are endowed with particular and typical behavior and personalities. So when you read or appreciate the drama, you will soon pick him or her up among the crowd. Another point is that the language in traditional drama is usually simple and suitable for common sense.

* *Anti-plot*

* Plot is an indispensable constituent part of drama. Without it, a drama can not be called a drama in traditional dramas. Traditional dramas and the Theater of the Absurd have different plots. The difference is that the plot of the Theater of the Absurd is fractured and scattered. Generally speaking, traditional dramas are arranged in time, place or logical order. Theater of the Absurd has no realistic essence because of its special plot. If we considered like that, there would no authors to continue to engage in this field to create new work for the eager readers. In fact, "emptiness in the characters' hearts is the essence

* THE THEMES OF THE THEATER OF THE ABSURD

* *The Crisis and Cruelty of Human Beings*

* In the Theater of the Absurd, playwrights try to explore the crisis and cruelty of human beings. The Theater of the Absurd appeared in 1950s. At that time, economy developed very fast in western world. All kinds of new technologies were used in every field. People who wanted to survive must catch up with the step and variation of the society as soon as possible. If they could not keep pace with the speed of the society, they would be abandoned and lose themselves in it. Some of them were destined to be left and they could not find their status and identification. So it doomed that their minds were full of crisis and cruelty and usually their thoughts were strange and curious. Some pioneers wrote their minds and thoughts in the Theater of the Absurd to reveal their inner feelings.

* *The Dissimilation of the Society*

* Dissimilation means that people regard the metamorphic things as normal things. Dissimilation of the society means that many abnormal things have appeared, what's more, these phenomena have been regarded as normal things. Disease, death and hunger are often regarded as the themes to discuss. Evil, crime and violence are often thought to be natural things in the society. When people come across these occasions, they would feel sad

* *The Meaninglessness of the Existence of Human Beings*

* To the two characters in *Waiting for Godot*, the meaning of their lives is just endless waiting. They could not find what they are waiting for. Their life is meaningless. They even could not find the essence of human existence. Though they live in the real world, their lives are ridiculous. In the Theater of the Absurd, playwrights express their true feelings to this world by means of the protagonist whom they have depicted in their plays. A play, in fact, is a mirror which reflects the real phenomena in the society. In the Theater of the Absurd the playwrights strive to express the senselessness of the human race and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought.

* *The Isolation among People*

* In the society described by the Theater of the Absurd, the relationship among people is measured through material and money. When they face some dangers and problems, few people come to help them. People who live in this society for a long time will feel lonely and indifferent. Human beings communicate with each other in a cold and detached attitude. Because of this, people gradually have less communication and would rather locked themselves in cages. And once more the chain reactions lead to a serious isolation among people.

* ***THANK YOU***