

Baorong Gong*

The Reception of the Theatre of the Absurd in China

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12775/LC.2023.035>

Abstract: Although the Theatre of the Absurd was known in China relatively early, about ten years after its emergence in France, the real reception of this new form of Western theatre happened only after 1978. This paper tries to trace the history of its reception in China from the very beginning till the first decade of the 21st century. It emphasizes the translation, publication, research, and mise-en-scene of S. Beckett, E. Ionesco, and J. Genet, as well as that of Pinter and Albee, etc., which are related to the political situation and the cultural policies adopted by the Chinese Communist Party and government.

The paper is divided into two parties: the first focuses on the text dissemination and research of the abovementioned absurdist playwrights from the early 1960s to the first decade of the 21st Century. The Theatre of the Absurd was first introduced when China was dominated by anti-Western ideologies; only two plays were translated and published internally and served as objects of criticism. But fifteen years later, thanks to the new authorities' Open up and Reform policy during the New Era, a wave of translation and introduction of this so-called "new school of French theatre" arose. The second part of the paper is about the stage performances of the Theatre of the Absurd. Compared to the text translation, they appeared much later, in the middle of the 1980s, when the first Chinese performance of Beckett's most famous play was staged at Shanghai Theatre Academy.

Through this brief survey of the introduction and the development of the Theatre of the Absurd in China, one can find that the fate of this theatre depends on the political and ideological situation in China, especially at the very beginning. Both the research and the stage performance of the absurdist plays reached a climax near the end of the 20th century when China became more and more open and established the "socialist market economy."

Keywords: text dissemination, stage performance, theatre of the absurd, Chinese theatre

* Professor of theatre studies at Shanghai Theatre Academy, China. His main research interests are contemporary French theatre and intercultural theatre studies.
E-mail: gongxy87@163.com

Recepcja teatru absurdu w Chinach

Streszczenie: Choć teatr absurdu był znany w Chinach stosunkowo wcześniej, około dziesięciu lat po jego pojawieniu się we Francji, to prawdziwy odbiór tej nowej formy teatru zachodniego nastąpił dopiero po 1978 roku. Niniejszy artykuł jest próbą prześledzenia historii jego recepcji w Chinach od samego początku do pierwszej dekady XXI wieku. Kładzie nacisk na tłumaczenia, publikacje, badania i inscenizacje sztuk Becketta, E. Ionesco i J. Geneta, a także H. Pintera i E. Albee, które są związane z sytuacją polityczną i polityką kulturalną przyjętą przez Komunistyczną Partię Chin i rząd. Artykuł podzielony jest na dwie części: pierwsza skupia się na rozpowszechnianiu tekstu i badaniach nad wspomnianymi dramaturgami absurdu od początku lat 60. do pierwszej dekady XXI wieku. Teatr absurdu został po raz pierwszy wprowadzony, gdy Chiny były zdominowane przez antyzachodnie ideologie. Tylko dwa dramaty zostały przetłumaczone i opublikowane, by posłużyć jako obiekty krytyki. Piętnaście lat później, dzięki polityce otwartych i reformatorskich nowych władz w okresie Nowej Ery, powstała fala tłumaczeń i wprowadzeń do tak zwanej „nowej szkoły teatru francuskiego”. Druga część artykułu poświęcona jest inscenizacjom teatru absurdu. W porównaniu z tłumaczeniami tekstów pojawiły się one znacznie później, w połowie lat 80., kiedy w Akademii Teatralnej w Szanghaju wystawiono pierwsze chińskie przedstawienie najsłynniejszej sztuki Becketta. Z tego krótkiego przedstawienia rozwoju teatru absurdu w Chinach wynika, że los tego teatru zależał od sytuacji politycznej i ideologicznej w Chinach, zwłaszcza na samym początku. Zarówno badania, jak i inscenizacje osiągnęły punkt kulminacyjny pod koniec XX wieku, kiedy Chiny stawały się coraz bardziej otwarte i ustanowiły „socjalistyczną gospodarkę rynkową”.

Słowa kluczowe: rozpowszechnianie tekstu, spektakl sceniczny, teatr absurdu, teatr chiński

The Theatre of the Absurd was born in France around the 1950s. At that time, the Chinese Communist Party had just taken power in China, and its ideology was incompatible with it. Therefore, paying attention to this new theatrical phenomenon was impossible, an alternative option even in Europe. Until the early 1960s, due to the need to criticize the “decadent” contemporary Western literature and arts, some influential novels, plays, and other works began to be translated and published internally, but very few plays were amongst them. Later, because of the special political context, until the beginning of the New Era¹ in the late 1970s, the Theatre of the Absurd represented by Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, Harold Pinter, and other playwrights was unknown in China. However, after entering the New Era, with the beginning in the end of the 1970s, China set off an upsurge in translating, introducing, and studying the achievements of modern Western philosophy, social sciences, literature, and arts, with the Theatre of the Absurd naturally among them. If the beginning of the 1980s focused mainly on translation and initial research, then it entered the stage of representation and research, and its influence began to expand to the fields of creation in the 1990s. After entering the 21st century, the Theatre of the Absurd, like other Western aesthetic approaches that once surprised Chinese people and were admired and imitated

¹ The New Era was a name to designate the period from the end of the 1970's till the end of the 20th century; during these years, the main policy of the Party and the country as well was the opening up and reform.

by playwrights, has returned to calm and no longer raised any waves. Since this paper only aims at the presentation of its introduction and impact in China, we will not take into consideration the overseas scholars' achievements in this field, which are numerous and outstanding, but not necessary suitable to our studies.

Part I: The Text Dissemination of the Theatre of the Absurd in China

The 60-year history of the reception of the Theatre of the Absurd in China shows that this process has always been closely related to the development of Chinese society, and it was a way of development from complete negation to objective evaluation.

During the 1960s, a very “revolutionary” decade with the Cultural Revolution at its peak, most people completely ignored Beckett, Ionesco, or any other absurdist playwrights. At that moment, particularly before the launch of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, everything—including literature and arts—from Western capitalist countries was considered negative in the eyes of the critics. It was from this perspective that, in 1962, China decided to translate and introduce some Western “reactionary literary and artistic schools” and works as “decadent” and negative examples to be criticized. The following year, *the China Drama Publishing House* published *Les Chaises* and *En attendant Godot* internally.

Beckett and Ionesco were the first to be introduced as playwrights of the “anti-theatre” and “avant-garde”. On 21th October 1962, Cheng Yisi published an article titled “Analysis of the French Avant-Garde Theatre” in the *People's Daily* (the organ of the CCP), criticizing this new theatre and its representatives, who were “increasingly decadent” and “ridiculously absurd”. He believed that the core of their aesthetic ideas was “metaphysical”, and that they had “gone astray in philosophy” and were destined to “a dead end”. In August 1963, Dong Hengxun published the article *The Degeneration of Dramatic Art – On the French “Anti-Theatre School”* in Beijing's review *The Front Line*, where, without any scientific arguments, called Beckett's drama “a decadent philosophy that promotes death”, believing that Ionesco “hates the progressive tradition of Western theatre”, and that Genet is promoting capitalist society through *Le Balcon* (Dong 1963: 11). This brief introduction is a total denegation of the Theatre of the Absurd. However, no matter how unfair the starting point may be, these unbiased criticisms and the publication of two plays still opened the door to understanding the new theatre for the Chinese academic community.

In the late 1970s, with the opening up policy of the New Era, modern Western and contemporary literary works flooded into China. As one of the important schools of Western theatre, the Absurdist plays began to be translated and introduced in large numbers, which can be described as the first climax. In addition to the works of Beckett, Ionesco, and others published in foreign literary magazines, thematic drama collections have gradually appeared. The most influential one was the *Anthology of the Theatre of the Absurd* published by Shanghai Translation Publishing House (STPH) in 1980, which included

one play of Beckett, Ionesco, Pinter, and Albee. In 1983, the Foreign Literature Publishing House's *Selected Plays of the Theatre of the Absurd* included six works, two by Beckett, three by Ionesco, and one by Genet. In 1984, *Selected Works of Foreign Modernists*, Volume 3 (Shanghai Literature and Art Publishing House) once again included these representative plays. At this point, the large-scale translation and publication of works of this theatrical genre during the New Era ended since the movement against "Western spirit pollution" was launched. In fact, since 1990, both the process of translations and the release of this theatre slowed down. It was not until 1996 that Huang Jinkai's *Selected Works of the Theatre of the Absurd* (China Renmin University Press) was published. It included comments, research materials, and eight works by Beckett, Ionesco, Adamov, Pinter, etc. Almost ten years later, in 2005, Wang Yiqun's *Selected Works of Foreign Modern Drama*, Volume 5, entitled *Theatre of the Absurd School and Others*, was the last anthology of this theatrical genre.

Since entering the new century, the works of the Absurdist playwrights could not draw the attention of the editors in China, with exceptions only when encountering major events. In 2005, after Harold Pinter had won the Nobel Prize for Literature, Jiangsu Yilin Publishing House published two volumes of his plays. The following year, in connection with the commemoration of Beckett's centenary birthday, Hunan Literature and Art Publishing House released a 5-volume *Selected Works of Samule Beckett*, including all of Nobel Prize winner's works written in French. Significantly, it is only in 2023 that *The Complete Works of Eugène Ionesco* is published by STPH, but the project was planned at least 15 years ago.

In terms of research, Martin Esslin's *Introduction to The Theatre of the Absurd*, published in the first issue of the famous review *Foreign Theatres* in 1980, and his book from 1992 have had a profound impact on Chinese scholars' research of this form of theatre. However, due to the lack of translation of plays, the fifth chapter of the original book on Pinter, Albee, and others has been omitted. Although other foreign critic articles have been translated after the book of M. Esslin, they are mostly based on Esslin's view that many Chinese scholars have begun their research. "From the perspective of research methods, the academic community mainly adopted the popular research model of a dichotomy between thematic ideas and artistic techniques at that time" (Zhang 2010: 39). That means, on the one hand, scholars adhered to M. Esslin's analysis of the aesthetic values of the Theatre of the Absurd. Still, on the other hand, they were very critical of the values and impact of this aesthetic approach, especially in China. The most influential Chinese experts on Western literature such as Zhu Hong, Yuan Kejia, Xiao Man had representative views on the Theatre of the Absurd at that time. To some extent, Zhu Hong's essay *A Review of the Theatre of the Absurd* had the same impact on the Chinese academic community as Martin Esslin's.

Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco and Jean Genet

As mentioned above, Beckett and Ionesco were first introduced into China as "Western bourgeois playwrights" to be criticized in the early 1960s. At the beginning of the New Era, scholars, on the whole, were still very critical. When discussing Beckett in her

above-mentioned essay (1980), Zhu Hong believed that he emphasized “the insignificance of human beings in the absurd world”, and *En attendant Godot* reflected “the general ideological characteristics of the theatre of the absurd: the unknowability of the world, the unpredictability of fate, the lowly state of human beings, the meaninglessness of human actions, and the paranoia about death, etc.” (Zhu 1978: 214). Through these lines, she has explained clearly the meaning of absurdity, which is followed by many scholars. Yuan Kejia and others explored the narrative structure and artistic techniques of *En attendant Godot* from the perspective of “anti-theatre”, which are different from traditional theatre (Yuan 1979; Luo 1986). However, many scholars, being under the influence of the ideology of that time, emphasized the need to remain vigilant about the nihilism, pessimism, and “capitalist characteristics” of this theatre.

In general, “the criticism and denunciation of the New Era have already had more academic connotations and non-political factors” (Zhang 2010: 40). During the 1990s, the number of Chinese academic circles expanded on a large scale, and the number of papers increased significantly. However, Beckett no longer has a “sensational effect” as before. With more than a decade of reform and the opening up, the diversification of literary and artistic styles also made the Theatre of the Absurd less attractive. It is gratifying that many authors have begun to conduct thematic research on Beckett, such as from the perspectives of religion, linguistics, narrative, spatio-temporariness, even music, fine arts, etc. Since the 21st century, the number of doctoral theses with Beckett’s output as the topic has also increased. In October 2011, Shanghai Theatre Academy held the “Symposium on Contemporary French Drama”, in which many scholars submitted papers on French Theatre of the Absurd. The collection of these articles published after the conference was specifically named *After Beckett: Studies of Contemporary French Theatre*, which shows the importance of this Nobel Prize winner in the eyes of Chinese scholars.

The acceptance of Eugène Ionesco quickly reached its peak along with Beckett. Since the late 1970s, there occurred an intensive translation of Ionesco’s plays followed by a series of articles on his theatrical works, the most influential of which were those of the translator and scholar Xiao Man. As early as 1979, she published the article *The Theatre of the Absurd and Its Representative Writer, Ionesco*, in *Foreign Theatre Materials*. The following year, the first issue of this journal, renamed *Foreign Theatre*, published her translation of *Rhinocéros* along with the author’s essay. She pointed out that the play attacked those “following the tide or others”, but did not mention its political implications. In 1982, the fourth issue of the same journal published an interview with Ionesco. In addition to the essays by Zhu Hong and Xiao Man, in his *The Intriguing La Cantatrice Chauve*, Luo Dagang, a veteran French literature expert, believed that Ionesco “most vividly” expresses a passion with a strong personality, making the play possess the necessary conditions for an epoch-making literary and artistic work: expressing “the consciousness of the times” with “new artistic forms” (Song [&] Xu 2004: 148). This praise should have been bold in that time’s very particular political environment. In his *Commentary on the Theatre of the Absurd in France*, Jiang Huosheng explored the artistic characteristics of Eugène Ionesco’s “desire to find his essence”, but he concluded that the Theatre of the Absurd is “a *deformed child* generated in the era of the decline of the capitalist system” (Jiang 1984: 29).

Throughout the 1980s, there were no monographs on Eugene Ionesco, only some introductory critical articles on the Theatre of the Absurd or Western literature. The

abovementioned Chinese scholars' comments on Ionesco's plays were mainly conducted within the field of the Theatre of the Absurd. However, the long-term acceptance was limited to a few earlier plays with the common characteristics of "the Theatre of the Absurd". It was not until Wu Yafei's doctoral thesis came out in 2015 that it changed. In this book, Wu thoroughly researched the playwright's whole theatre career for the first time.

The 1990s were poor in terms of research on Ionesco, and the situation changed only after entering the new century. Huang Jinkai published *The Biography of Ionesco: The King of the Absurd Stage* in 2008, which outlines the playwright's life and artistic concepts along with some illustrations and texts and explores the ideological connotation of his plays.

Since 2000, the number of academic articles has increased significantly, and the perspective of its research has also become richer². For example, Yang Rong's *The Psychological Motivation of People Changing into Rhinocéros: On Ionesco's Rhinocéros* analyses this play in the context of the alienation of Western capitalist society and the herd mentality and behaviour of modern people. Despite this, there was no breakthrough in the scope and research methods in the previous period, and the interpretation of his plays remains mostly within the framework carried out by Martin Esslin, Zhu Hong, or Yuan Kejia. Significantly, his works' unique political implications and historical background are often ignored because of Ionesco's open anti-communist attitude.

Jean Genet was also the object of criticism when first introduced to China. In 1963, Dong Hengxun, in his abovementioned article believed that Genet "often confused games with seriousness" and that *Le Balcon* was promoting "Revolution equals futility". He concluded that "this is the reactionary essence of their thoughts" (Dong 1963: 10–11). Due to the limited international influence of Genet at that time, as well as his special life experience and sexual orientation, even in the New Era, the translation and publication of his works came much later. They often appeared in the collections of plays entitled *The Theatre of the Absurd*. In 1983, Jean Genet's *Les Bonnes* was the first play to be published in China, but it did not change the fact that the academic and theatrical circles generally ignored him. During this period, Professor Liao Kedui introduced Genet in a course on the history of Western European theatre at the Central Academy of Drama. He believed that Jean Genet "destroyed the constraints of traditional drama, first learning from Artaud and pursuing a theatre about religion, rituals, and fear". And his plays "were painted with a strong colour of the Eastern ritual tradition" (Liao 2002: 573).

The research on Genet's works is generally richer and more significant. Initially, the academic community focused on the aspects of "ritual", "sense of game", "theatre in theatre structure", and "mirror effect" of his theatre. In 1993, in his book *The Structure of Theatre: Epic Structure and Theatrical Structure* (Taiwan Shulin Publishing House), William Sun discussed Genet's "theatre in theatre" structure, arguing that *Les Paravents* further developed the theatrical style of Chinese Jingju, "all for this word 'false'", "this is far away from the aesthetic principles of Chinese theatre. The empty stage and conventions (decorative back scenes) of Chinese Jingju are first the result of primitive technical conditions in history, gradually becoming part of a concise and stylized scene that facilitates the improvisation of actors' singing and dancing. However, according to his own 'inflated thoughts in his mind',

² The statistics of database *ProQuest* show that the 1980s and the early decade of the new century reached two peaks of the research on the Theatre of the Absurd.

Genet greatly complicated some of the skills learned from Jingju and turned them into a maze of screens” (Sun 1993: 182). It seems to us that both Sun and Genet should have done some misreading of each other’s theatrical skills since we are not sure at all that Genet utilized technical methods from China.

In 1993, Shen Lin published his translation of *Le Balcon* and postscript. He seemed to have been inspired by Lacan’s theory of mirrors, arguing that “when the mirrors smashed, it is ‘I’ that is destroyed. Once the way ‘I exist’ does not exist, ‘I’ will no longer exist” (Shen 1993: 79). In his article, Shen Lin also expressed concern about the ritual in Jean Genet’s plays. In *Theatre Arts* (02) from 1997, Xiao Man gave a brief introduction to Jean Genet’s life and dramatic works, arguing that he was “a person with a dual personality”, “but at the same time, he had a high level of understanding of theatre, completely shaking off the vulgar side” (Xiao 1997: 65). In 1999, she published another article to introduce this French playwright further. Her perception of Genet was significantly different from that of two years before. From a more negative “dual personality theory” to more sympathy, affirmation, and praise for Genet, she gave a new explanation for the uproar caused by Jean Genet’s theatre performances in France. This change in Xiao Man’s approach also reflects the change of the Chinese academic community towards Genet and his theatre.

It was not until the approaching 21st century, when the Chinese were more tolerant towards gender problems, that people began to view seriously and objectively the profound connection between Genet’s seemingly “degenerate” life experience and his creative abilities and expanded the research beyond his plays as well. It was only then that his plays began to appear on the Chinese stage. Since the new century, the Chinese academic and translation circles have paid more attention to Genet and have expanded their work to other literary genres other than theatre, such as novels, literary theory, and so on. For Jean Genet’s Chinese followers, 2007 was an important year. Not only were Jean Genet’s first two novels, *Notre-Dame des fleurs* and *Miracle de la Rose*, translated into Chinese and published, but also Beijing People’s Art Theatre, commonly considered the most important theatre in China, put *Les Bonnes* on the stage. Prior to this, there was not much attention paid to homosexuality, which subject is more or less taboo in China. However, after the publication of these novels, scholars no longer avoided such topics.

It is worth pointing out that in the newly published two books titled *History of French Literature*, edited by two eminent experts, Zheng Keru and Liu Mingjiu respectively, in the 21st century, Genet was introduced as an important postwar French writer alongside Sartre and Camus.

Harold Pinter and Edward Albee

Compared to Beckett and Ionesco, the criticism of playwrights considered right or wrong in China – Absurdists such as Pinter, Albee, and others – came later. Zhu Hong also introduced them in her famous essay. On the one hand, it is related to the deepening of Chinese people’s understanding of the Theatre of the Absurd, and on the other, it is because of the increasing influence of these playwrights in the world. However, there has been no significant breakthrough in the research behind the apparent prosperity, which is

still confined to the notion of the so-called “Theatre of the Absurd”. To some extent, these papers are restricted by advanced theories, almost with the same ideas.

Harold Pinter appeared for the first time in Zhu Hong’s introductory article. Based on discussions by foreign experts at that time, “She positioned Pinter as a representative figure of the absurd theatre in England. This perspective had a significant impact on domestic Pinter research. It lasted until the end of the 20th century” (Yuan 2010: 85). The earliest Chinese version of Pinter’s play was *The Birthday Party*, published in the second issue of *World Literature* in 1978. Since then, Pinter’s plays were sporadically included in some drama anthologies, such as *The Dumb Waiter* or *The Caretaker*. In 1992, the fifth chapter of Martin Esslin’s famous book in the Chinese version was omitted, indicating that Pinter’s influence in China was still insignificant at that time. Meanwhile, with the success of the commercial performances of *The Lover* and *Betrayal*, the playwright’s popularity rapidly increased. In the later published anthologies of the Theatre of the Absurd, Pinter’s plays were generally no longer omitted, and some have even increased their selections. After the author won the Nobel Prize for Literature, the translation and research of his works underwent significant changes. When the new version of Martin Esslin’s work was rereleased, it completed the missing Chapter 5 discussing Pinter’s output. In 2010, Phoenix Publishing House published a two-volume *Pinter’s Play Collection* translated by Hua Ming, including 13 of his plays.

In the 1980s, the research results on Pinter’s plays were almost lacking. Due to the limited resources and received ideas, most scholars focused their research on the “threat” characteristics, language style, ethics of his drama, and the so-called realism of Pinter’s plays. In this case, the earliest introduction to the functions of “silence” in Pinter’s dramas entitled *Pinter’s Exploration of “Silence”* published by Liu Kou in *Shanghai Theatre* (1982/02), was unique.

In 1990, Wang Wu discussed the artistic characteristics of Pinter’s early plays in his thesis entitled *Returning to Home*. The following year, in *Odysseus After Returning Home*, he studied the characteristics of the “threat comedy”. These two papers indicate to some extent that the study of Pinter in China entered a mature period. The research objectives during this phase mainly focused on his early drama, including its definition, expressive techniques, style, and other aspects. In 1998, in an interview, Wang Yiqun stated that Pinter’s works referred to the Theatre of the Absurd and had a “very realistic” naturalistic flavour. “However, the works expressed existentialist propositions such as the fragility of life, the unintentionality of life, and the inability to communicate between people”, as well as “a large number of pauses and silences”. Therefore, among playwrights of the Theatre of the Absurd, “Pinter is unique” (Wang 1998: 110).

Since Pinter was awarded the Nobel Prize in 2005, there has been a wave of re-understanding of Pinter’s works in China. As Y. Wang pointed out, “Pinter’s website (www.haroldpinter.org) was introduced to China, and many introductory articles were subsequently triggered. They not only introduced Pinter’s award-winning circumstances but also reviewed the absurd factors in his plays, denying that Pinter is classified as a realist writer” (Wang 1998: 110). The end of 2005 was a turning point in China. The globalization of economy and culture, the popularization of the Internet, and the increase in the use of English in China all contributed to Pinter’s life and work becoming an immediate focus of attention in Chinese literary and academic circles, which also led to the outstanding

achievements in translation and research, marked by the publication of the two-volume edition of plays.

During this period, Chinese scholars' research papers on Pinter increased significantly, and the topics discussed became more in-depth. "Since 2006, there has been criticism of the art and techniques of Pinter's dramatic creation in China, discussing the structural models, triangular character patterns, and dramaturgy of Pinter's theatre" (Hu 2012: 35). In addition to the commonly discussed themes like absurdity, threat, or review papers, the research results can be broadly classified as thematic studies such as "dramatic aesthetic studies", "politics, women, and power", and interdisciplinary studies. Yuan Xiaohua's *On the Essential Characteristics of Harold Pinter's Drama* (2012) discusses the decisive elements, basic characteristics, functions, and creative methods and purposes of Pinter's dramatic art. In another paper published in the same year, "On the Stylistic Characteristics of Pinter's Dramatic Art", the author systematically redefined the term "Pinter style". What is more recommendable, many scholars have abandoned the early stereotype of thematic research and explored the topic of threat and political characteristics of other plays that were not considered "threatening" or "political", thereby finding a main line in Pinter's long creative career. For example, Chen Hongwei's *"No man's Land": The Evolution of Pinter's "Threat Theme"* (2003) generalizes the threat theme in her later research, pointing out that the characters are not only competing for space in the sense of survival, but also for the inner world and "private territory" hidden by "memories". Liu Jing's *Unreliable Narration in Pinter's Drama* (2012) analysed the ethical positions of the characters in *Ashes to Ashes* based on narrative theory. Interdisciplinary research has greatly broadened the field of theoretical analyses and injected infinite possibilities into future explorations. It is worth pointing out that graduate students, especially those who study English and American languages and literature, have become an important contingent of Chinese academics.

However, "the blind spots and gaps exposed by existing criticism point out the direction for future research" (Yuan [&] Song 2008: 156). For example, the translation and introduction of Pinter's works are still insufficient, especially for the later "straightforward" political plays, which were "not appreciated" by Western critics. Also, due to the difficulties in collecting the first-hand materials, many Chinese scholars could only follow Western researchers. Furthermore, there has only been one comprehensive book on Pinter's plays till now – *The Dramatic Art of Harold Pinter* by Cai Fangdian in 2016 (China Renmin University Press).

The *People's Daily* article on October 7, 1961, *Defacing and Laughing at Human Beings: A Popular "Avant-garde" Play in the United States*, was the first to introduce Albee briefly. In 1964, Ding Yaozan made the author reappear in the eyes of Chinese readers in his article *Avant-garde Literature and Art in the Western World*. In the particularly leftist political climate of the 1960s, it is unsurprising that the playwright was represented as a negative bourgeois playwright. After entering the New Era, there were some new publications on Albee, but the scale is far behind that of Beckett, Ionesco, or Pinter. It can be said that the process of translating Albee's plays had been slow for a long time, and only after nearly a decade in the 21st century did certain improvements occur.

Albee's output in China is mostly limited to a few of his early works. In 1979, *The Zoo Story* was released in *Foreign Literature and Art* as the earliest Chinese-language publication of the playwright's works. In 1981, *The American Dream* was published in *Foreign Literature*,

while *Which Theatre Is the Theatre of the Absurd?* was an earlier Chinese version of Albee's theatre theory. In 1985, *Drama Literature* (05) published *Sandbox*, while his play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* appeared relatively late, in 1996. After entering the 21st century, his late plays began to come out. Appeared in 2001, *Everything in the Garden*; in 2008, *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?* in 2010, *Three Tall Women*, and in 2011, *At Home at the Zoo*. So, we can say that a lasting enthusiasm exists for Albee's theatre in this new century.

From the late 1970s to the late 1980s, there were only some introductory articles and papers on Albee's early works in China. In her abovementioned essay, Zhu Hong, following Esslin, classified Albee as a playwright of the Theatre of the Absurd. The articles on Albee in the beginning of the New Era were relatively simple and brief. This phenomenon did not change until 1986, when Guo Jide's *Albee and the Theatre of the Absurd* analysed and evaluated the playwright in greater depth. It is commendable that, at the end of the article, the tradition of characterizing Albee as an Absurd dramatist in China is contradicted, and a clear conclusion is drawn: "There is no doubt that Edward Albee is a prominent realist playwright in contemporary America, but he is a realistic writer influenced by the absurd drama" (Guo 1986: 38).

Although some experts had long believed that among the 20th-century American playwrights, the only one who could truly rank among the top writers alongside O'Neill, Williams, and Miller was Edward Albee (Wang 1998), until the 2000s, the attention paid to Albee by the Chinese scholars did not significantly increase, and only towards 2010 did it have some upward momentum. According to the papers published during this period, the research on Albee mainly involved several aspects, such as the absurdity and modernity of his plays, the "ecological" theme extended from concepts such as "alienation", and his creative techniques and stage effects.

Even though the playwright himself has written specifically against being classified as a representative of the Absurdist theatre and critics such as Guo Jide have long considered him to be a realist, many scholars have always regarded Albee as a representative of the American Theatre of the Absurd, and most of these papers have been published after Guo et al., such as Tang Jian and Lu Tinhua in their master thesis. Of course, there have also been articles from different perspectives, such as parallel research, interdisciplinary research, the "alienation of human beings", "death", the "devaluation of language", or the concept of human existence in the environment. These studies undoubtedly "broaden the horizons of the study of Albee's drama in China" (Zhang 2012: 154), leading researchers to consider his plays from other perspectives.

By 2018, there were seven doctoral theses regarding Albee as the topic, including two from the Shanghai Theatre Academy. In 2021, Dr. Fan Xiaojun from Shaanxi Normal University published her thesis entitled *Study of Edward Albee's Drama*, which became the first monograph in China. Taking a comprehensive view of the status of Albee research in China since the New Era, we can find the following common characteristics: firstly, the research mostly focused on the three plays – *The Zoo Story*, *The American Dream*, and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. Secondly, the research topics were linked with similar keywords such as "absurdity", "existence", and "alienation". Together with closely related "language" research, the number reached more than half of the total. Only in recent years has this phenomenon slightly improved.

Part II: The Performance of the Absurd Theatre in China

In general, the presence of plays of the Absurdist theatre on the stage in China was quite rare, particularly in the first thirty years of the New Era, mainly due to the restrictions imposed by policies, personnel, funds, venues, audiences, and many other conditions. For those “niche market theatres”, such as “experimental theatre”, “avant-garde theatre”, or “the Theatre of the Absurd”, etc., which are incompatible with a mainstream ideology about the content and difficult to secure box office guarantees, their survival situation is complicated. In most cases, only a few art schools, like the Central Academy of Drama (CAD) and the Shanghai Theatre Academy (STA), organize some teaching practice performances. It occasionally happens that there are some professional troupes or private theatres that are full of innovation and a pioneering spirit to perform some famous Absurdist plays.

In 1980, STA invited an American student to direct *The Zoo Story*, which was not only the first play by Albee but also the first of all the Absurd plays staged in China. Five years later, the first Beckett’s play was staged again at STA. The performance frequency of Beckett’s plays in China is not too low. Still, compared to the attention paid to him by translation and academic circles, the scale of his plays’ presence in Chinese theatres is underestimated. Interestingly, the cross-cultural adaptations and performances based on *En attendant Godot* were relatively active. In 1986, Chen Jialin, a professor at the STA, staged this well-known play on the Chinese stage, first on campus and then at the Changjiang Theatre for 15 performances, winning praise from the audience. Chen Jialin believes that the play “adopts anti-theatre techniques, but instead of excluding all the other elements, rather reorganizes them” (Chen 1987: 69). In terms of style and genre, it “achieves a high degree of integration of realism and humour, farce and tragedy” (Chen 1987: 70). In the process of directing, he did not rigidly adhere to Beckett’s original indications. He even incorporated the basic skills of Chinese Jingju into the performance, such as the use of dwarf footwork in long speeches by Lucky. “When he said, ‘Blow hell into the sky’, he raised his hands and extended his arms into the sky. Then, there was a wild horse galloping around the entire stage, making circles, jumping, and bumping Pozzo and two others around until the ‘wild horse’ was finally tamed. Finally, all the people pressed on Lucky’s back to stop him from talking nonsense” (Chen 1987: 70). In addition, the performance also uses Chinese music, poetry, and dance to bring *En attendant Godot* closer to the local audience. By doing so, Chen made the play understandable to those who had never seen an Absurdist performance. At a time when China’s reform and opening up had just begun, he was invaluable in making innovations based on his realist directing skills, in relation to his familiarity with Chinese traditional performing arts, and his understanding of the spiritual essence of Beckett’s play.

What brought Beckett to Chinese audiences was Meng Jinghui, who is now very famous internationally. In 1991, as a graduate student, he directed *En attendant Godot* at the CAD and then started his avant-garde directing career. During the performance, “the audience watched on the stage, the actors performed off the stage, and the entire

environment was like a hospital. Finally, the actors smashed the glass with umbrellas, reflecting their behaviour's helpless and forced resistance. Its most obvious characteristics are visual attraction, explosive power, stimulating rhythmic methods, grotesque surreal colours, and poetic techniques. In 1993, at the invitation of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Meng Jinghui led this production to Berlin, New Brandenburg, and other places to participate in the "China Avant-garde Art Festival". In 1998, Ren Ming directed the female version of *En attendant Godot* in Beijing, where the tramps turned into young women and the story's location was changed to a coffee shop.

In the same year, Lin Zhaohua combined Chekhov's *Three Sisters* with *En attendant Godot* and adapted it into *Three Sisters. En attendant Godot*, "placing Chekhov's melancholy beauty and Beckett's sad vulgarity on the same stage at the same time [...]. Beckett's text is lively and full of the atmosphere of the streets of Beijing, while Chekhov's text is more likely to emanate from the depths of memory, and is as remote as Fate's recitation" (Yang 2001: 315) causing no small sensation.

Interestingly, the performing styles of these *En attendant Godot* versions are different, and none of them copy the Western model, fully reflecting the high level of "borrowlism"³ and "for my own use" philosophy of Chinese directors in the face of this very obscure Theatre of the Absurd, as well as their efforts to create a form that local audiences are happy to accept. It can be said that up to the end of the 20th century, the performance of *En attendant Godot* was branded with a deep Chinese imprint. Since the 21st century, in addition to continuing to be adapted by directors, Beckett's plays have also begun to appear in original versions, which came from Western countries such as Germany and Ireland.

However, although the performance of Beckett's works has caused a lot of sensation, the scale is still relatively small; the number of performances is not enough, and the repertoire is also very limited, often centred around an *En attendant Godot*, while *Endgame* and other plays are mostly the results of Sino-foreign cooperation. Like the problems faced by the academic, translation, and publishing communities, Beckett's plays still have much to be explored in Chinese theatres.

The performance of Ionesco's plays in China has always been quite rare. The initial attempt was made in 1987 with *Rhinocéros*, directed by Mu Sen. Thanks to the reform policy, the work of this amateur team was unexpectedly accepted by the authorities and praised by professionals, even triggering a wave of experimental fever. In 1990, Lin Yinyu and others directed *Les Chaises* and several other plays of the Theatre of the Absurd at the Central Academy of Drama. The following year, in the same place, Meng Jinghui staged *La Cantatrice Chauve* together with *En attendant Godot*. Unfortunately, these were all experiments conducted in professional schools, and they did not contact ordinary audiences, thus causing too much echo. After that, Ionesco's plays were "neglected" for a long time.

In 2006, *Rhinocéros* finally appeared on the stage of the China National Theatre. This performance also relies somewhat on "external forces" as the director, Ning Chunyan, has a special identity of Chinese naturalized in France. If the original version of MuSen still rough, the CNT version of this play presented a combination of Chinese and Western

³ A term invented by the famous writer Lu Xun (1881–1936) which means to borrow from other cultures what is useful in order to enrich his own.

characteristics, and was extremely exquisite. The stage background was collaged with large pieces of rice paper, and local music was used at the opening, instantly transferring a small town from a French province into the context of China. After the “rough trampling by Rhinoceros”, represented by a sound, Chinese ink stains were left on the pieces of paper. The clothing was also made of pure white paper, which was quite fashionable and modern. After Béranger became a rhinoceros, his white clothes were stained with ink. Ning Chunyan has practiced in France for years, consciously applying Western theatre concepts to Chinese creation. Except for minor modifications, the performance is almost entirely faithful to the original.

In 2006, Shandong Theatre staged an adaptation of *La Cantatrice Chauve* with local elements. The director made extensive deletions of the original text, added a prologue at the beginning, and transformed the Smith couple into a typical Chinese husband and wife. The servant Mary has also been localized as a “little nurse” in Chinese cities. If the Shandong version was still relatively adequate to the original work, the 2010 Shanghai Ke Contemporary Art Center staged *The Most Familiar Stranger* based on *La Cantatrice Chauve*, completely overturning the original play. Apart from a few quotes from the text, there was no single line from the literary source in the play. The characters have also completely changed their appearance, with the Smiths and Martins missing and even replacing the fire captain and maid with several couples, lovers, and playmates. The performance adopted a segmented structure, connecting five unrelated segments, interspersed with a narrator and an actress singing in the background, becoming a veritable *La Cantatrice Chauve* with both bald and cantatrice. The director applied the theme of “absurdity” to present urban life, described current social phenomena and interpersonal relationships, and dug deeper for the realistic significance of the play. The two versions of the Chinese style *La Cantatrice Chauve* had different methods and styles. The common ground had that they both attempted to “dispel absurdity”.

During the Fourth International Experimental Theatre Festival in Shanghai in 2007, the Hong Kong “Theatre Combination Group” performed *Two Old Good-for-Nothing Playing a Game* at the Shanghai Dramatic Art Center, which caused a great response to this unique version of *Les Chaises*. The adaptation deleted many parts of the original text, “replacing the absurdity of language repetition with empty and boring games and body movements” (Yang 2001: 315). The creators hoped that “the performance could be closer to modern people, more specific in outlining today’s issues, and more able to communicate with the audience here and now” (Yang 2011: 315). In Autumn 2012, Shanghai 1933 Micro Theatre staged *Le Nouveau locataire*, a slightly “thin” and “unpopular” play that was discovered by a young team just out of college. All these creations, whether faithful to the original works or bold adaptations, revealed the characteristics of the national consciousness of Chinese artists.

The first appearance of Jean Genet’s plays on the Chinese stage was in 1993. The director of *Le Balcon* (performed at the Beijing Central Experimental Theatre) was Meng Jinghui, but he graduated in more than a year. He designed the stage as a rehearsal venue. He painted the main actors’ faces resembling masks with the images of goddesses in Botticelli’s *Spring*, making the entire performance closer to a game. This performance, which mixed many fantasies and dreams, could be a bit ahead of schedule for most audiences. They reacted indifferently during the first performance, and even after the end, no one

applauded. However, there was a major reversal the next day, and the audience responded enthusiastically. The performance won the “Excellent Director Award” at the 1993 China Experimental Theatre Festival, proving it was a milestone in disseminating Jean Genet in China. The commentary on *Chinese Theatre* stated that the performance “attracted the attention of the theatrical community with its dramatic logic, strong sense of form, and stylization, which are very different from traditional realist theatre” (Yi 1993: 24).

With the increasing popularity of Genet in China, his plays attracted not only critics and researchers but also the interest of students and amateurs. Both the CAD and the STA had students rehearsing *Les Bonnes* on campus. 2000 Professor Lin Yinyu staged it at the Beijing Youth Art Theatre. This was the first time that this national theatre performed an Absurdist play. According to Jean Genet’s suggestion, the female characters were played by men, and their male characteristics were undisguised. In the beginning, the actors were nearly naked and strong, with black briefs wrapped in yellow gauze, and some modern dances were interspersed to emphasize the strength and beauty of men. Lin Yinyu said that she tried to make the play as straightforward and clear as possible and even added a character called “The Uncertain of Identity” to express his intention directly with narration and slogans. This was a successful performance, which not only caused a lot of positive echoes at that time, but also was published at a DVD, which greatly contributed to the dissemination of Genet in China.

Although Genet’s plays are rarely performed in China, his distinctive works have brought new models for modern and contemporary Chinese theatre beyond traditional realism, allowing people to rediscover the relationship between theatre and ritual on the stage. *Le Balcon*, full of dreams and rituals, provides a sample of French postwar theatre and becomes an indispensable part of the avant-garde theatre of this period in China. *Les Bonnes*, with its clearer structure, absurd and interlocking plots, has often become the choice of students and amateurs, as well as being staged by professional theatrical troupes.

Generally speaking, Harold Pinter’s plays staged in China can be divided into experimental and commercial performances. Undoubtedly, experimental directors such as Meng Jinghui, Lin Yinyu, etc., made great contributions to disseminating Absurdist dramatists, including Harold Pinter, in China. In 1990, Meng Jinghui, still a graduate student, first brought *The Dumb Waiter* onto the stage. The audience was mainly “young theatre students eager to learn about foreign avant-garde dramas”, but the large sections of “nonsense”, pauses, and silences in the play “far exceeded the audience’s aesthetic expectations and receptivity at the time” (Wang 2011: 110). This was an atypical performance limited to theatre schools, which even the “small crowd” may not understand, but it had far reaching significance. In 1991, the Central Academy of Drama staged Harold Pinter’s *Lover*, with Lin Yinyu as the director and Meng Jinghui as the art design assistant. The play successfully demonstrated the author’s creative spirit using sound, lighting, and scenography, but at that time, it was still restricted in terms of audiences. In the 2010 Beijing International Youth Theatre Festival, Meng Jinghui’s studio staged Pinter’s four works, *The Dumb Waiter*, *Betrayal*, *Moonlight*, and *Going Home*, and reciting Harold Pinter’s other four plays. That large-scale performance of Pinter’s plays, “although the halls were packed and the performances [...] received unanimous praise from professionals, it still belonged to a kind of experimental theatre for the ‘small crowd’, and was considered to be “largely an imitation of Western modernist theatre” (Wang 2011: 112)

The commercial performances of Pinter's plays on the Chinese stage mainly came from professional theatres, with successful cases like *The Lover* and *Betrayal* launched in Shanghai in the 1990s and early 21st century. In 1992, Zhao Yiou, from the Shanghai Youth Theatre Troupe, adapted and directed *The Lover*. He performed more than 40 times in Shanghai alone and later toured more than 300 nationwide for a long time. He achieved great commercial success, which is still difficult to surpass. Zhao Yiou confessed, "I chose *The Lover* for purely commercial reasons, and the name *The Lover* itself has a sensational effect" (Xu [&] Yu 2009). In 2004, Zhao Yiou staged the play again in Shanghai, while the Beijing People's Art Theatre also launched *The Lover*, directed by Xu Ang, which succeeded. In 1995, Gu Yi'an directed *Betrayal* at the Shanghai Youth Theatre Troupe, with more than 40 consecutive performances and the theatre full. In 2002, he re-staged the play. Compared to Zhao Yiou's drastic revision of *The Lover*, Gu Yian's *Betrayal* was more faithful to the original text because he matured not to be the kind of person who immediately thought about how to mobilize all stage elements to make the stage full of absurdity upon hearing of an 'absurdist play'", but rather sought to make the audience "appreciate the absurdity that the author intends to reveal from ordinary life" (Wang 1998: 111). Yuan Decheng believes that the success of *The Lover* and *Betrayal* in China's commercial performances was due to "each interpreter living within a specific historical and cultural sphere, not the interpreter dominating its historical and cultural traditions, but the historical and cultural traditions dominating the interpreter" (Yuan 2010: 88).

With a total of 32 plays, Pinter is not yet diverse in terms of the variety of plays performed on the Chinese stage. The fact that he gained market popularity with *The Lover* and *Betrayal* indicates that his plays' "popular" performance was often misunderstood, and Pinter was still limited to the "small crowd".

The total number of performances of Edward Albee's plays on the Chinese stage is small, with the largest scale causing greater social responses being *A Garden Outside*. *The Zoo Story*, although also performed many times, is more often performed on the stage of professional schools or on the stages of ordinary universities. In August 1980, an American student whose Chinese name is Baijin⁴ directed *The Zoo Story* at the STA, and that was the first time an Absurdist play appeared in China. There are many insightful people among the internal audience: "The ending of the play was very philosophical: two strangers had changed their situation and minds due to this encounter, and Peter was no longer at ease. He felt that there was a threat in life, thus losing the tranquillity of the past. Jerry broke the barrier between people with his death and finally found that communication between people could still be achieved" (Bu 1980: 63). In addition to this, in the 1980s, Albee was performed twice in China, including *The Sandbox*, performed by the University of Hawaii in Nanjing in October 1986, and *The Zoo Story*, performed by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions' Theatre Troupe in January 1988. However, there was little response. In 1993, the CAD staged the play again, and the director "captured the two most important elements in the play: masks and fences, highlighting the human cost of communication at all costs" (Wu 2005: 103). The localized characteristics of the performance were quite obvious: "[a] sign with mottled markings of 'Central Park in New York' is hung on the fence, and a notice 'This Way to Beijing Zoo' is posted on the other side. At the end of the play,

⁴ Unfortunately, there is no record of her English name during her stay in STA for about one year.

Cui Jian, later to become a famous jazz singer, hoarsely shouted, “The world is becoming increasingly unclear” (Wu 2005: 103). At the beginning of the 21st century, Wang Wei from Beijing Foreign Studies University adapted *The Zoo Story*, changing the two characters’ names into “Patriots” and “Scud” “to highlight the estrangement, misunderstanding, and conflict between different religious communities in the human world” (Wu 2005: 104). Fourteen mass actors were also involved to facilitate dialogue with the characters in the play, functioning like the chorus in ancient Greek tragedy. In recent years, this play has still been constantly staged.

The Chinese version of *A Garden Outside* premiered at the China Youth Art Theatre on December 23, 2000. Albee once said that this play is a “mirror” in front of Americans, using it to reflect on our current rapidly developing and somewhat out-of-control social situation; people will also feel the contradictions and struggles, kindness and sin from themselves. Its practical significance is also evident in today’s China. “The Garden may be a mirror, an alarm bell, and an antidote” (Zhang 2000: 50). Thus, the performance focuses on exploring the social and family issues in the play under the guise of “absurdity”. The director did not deliberately treat the play as a very “avant-garde” form of expression but rather had a strong, realistic style. With luxury halls, spiral stairs, fireplaces, sofas, etc. he did not greatly exaggerate or deform the play. The performance received a warm response.

In November 2011, Han Jie, the director of the National Theatre, renamed *The Garden of Desire*, challenging the audience’s visual nerves and focusing on the reflection of the absurd lives of modern people submerged in desire. There were more localized interpretations in the performance, some difficult speculations to understand were deleted, and some humorous expressions were added. Among Albee’s numerous plays, *A Garden Outside* had the greatest impact in China due to these performances. Wu Wenquan believes that “the reasons are: first, the intricate and absurd plot; second, the strong theatricality; third, the strong realism style; and fourth, catering to fashion” (Wu 2005: 106). But perhaps the most important reason is the story and its practical significance.

Overall, the number of performances of Albee’s plays is not only small, but the repertoire is limited. Those more absurd masterpieces, such as *The American Dream* and *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, are never staged. On the one hand, this is related to the delay in the translation and research; on the other, to the very few comments on Albee’s performances in China’s academic circles. The deeper reason is that the differences between Chinese and Western cultures have led to differences in theatre aesthetics. To change this situation, the joint efforts of translation and art circles are needed.

Conclusion

Regardless of the twenty years before the New Era, the reception of the Theatre of the Absurd in China reached a climax with the translation and publication of plays in the first half of the 1980s and gradually entered a performance period in the next decade. Later, with the help of the rise of the market economy and the commercial achievements of Pinter’s two plays, this Absurdist theatre entered people’s vision again. There was once again a small upsurge in the new century thanks to Pinter’s Nobel Prize, but in general, the Theatre of the

Absurd has lost its lustre. If, in the 1980s, people focused more on their literary meanings and dramatic reform, then around the 1990s, the theatrical world began experimenting on the stage and quickly moved from imitation to creation itself. The Chinese theatre has begun to emerge with a batch of avant-garde plays with broken traditions in theme and content, presenting a sense of “absurdity”.

In the early 1980s, the imitation of this theatre in the Chinese theatrical world was extremely obvious, with Gao Xingjian as a typical example. His *Station* (1983) was the local version of *En attendant Godot*. Soon, the influence of this theatre shifted to the creation of traditional Xiju, novels, and other fields. Wei Minglun, a Sichuan Xiqu playwright, was another exemplification. His play *Pan Jinlian* (1985) caused a nationwide uproar, while among novelists, Liu Sola was the earliest with her novel *No Choice* (1985). The impact of the Theatre of the Absurd was the most enduring in the creation of Guo Shixing, who created a series of plays in the 1990s full of experimental spirit and absurd characteristics. When talking about his drama, the playwright claimed that life is full of absurdities and that “With the development of modern society and being far away from nature, what human society itself cannot escape the essence of absurdity” (Zhang 2000: 53). This passage explains why the Theatre of the Absurd profoundly impacted China, especially after ten years of the “Cultural Revolution”. But after entering the new century, the theatre aesthetics represented by Beckett and Ionesco, already integrated into Chinese theatre, along with other modern or post-modern theatres, have lost their halo. That is why, today, in 2023, the echo is almost imperceptible even with the publication of the Complete Works of Eugene Ionesco. It is undeniable that “everything has its own time,” and the time for the Theatre of the Absurd has gone forever.

Bibliography

- Albee, Edward [Aidehua-A'erbi] 1981. “Na jia ju pai shi huangdan ju pai [= Which Theatre Is the Absurdist Theatre School]”. Transl. Yuan Henian. *Waiguo Wenxue* [= Foreign Literature] 1: 50–53.
- Bu Yi 1980. “«Huangdan ju» zai Shanghai” [= «The Absurdist Plays» in Shanghai]. *Jiangsu Xiju* [= Jiangsu Theatre] 9: 62–63.
- Chen Jialin 1987. “Gengxin xiju guannian, takuan daoyan jiaoxue lingyu – huangdanpai ming ju «Dengdai Geduo» paiyan jiaoxue xiaojie [= Renewing Theatre Concepts and Broadening the Field of Director Teaching: A Summary of the Stage Teaching of the Absurdist Theatre «Waiting for Godot»]”. *Xiju Yishu* [= Theatre Arts] 2: 66–71.
- Dong Hengxun 1963. “Xiju yishu de duoluo – tan Faguo ‘fanxijupai’ [= On the Degeneration of Theatre Art – On the French ‘Anti-Theatre School’]”. *Qianxian* [= Frontline] 8: 10–11.
- Guo Jide 1986. “A'erbi yu huangdanpai xiju [= Edward Albee and the Theater of the Absurd]”. *Waiguo Wenxue Yanjiu* [= Foreign Literature Studies] 3: 34–40.
- Hu Baoping 2012. “Zhongguo de Pinte piping: Fangfa, wenti yu zhanwang [= Pinter Criticism in China: Methods, Problems, and Prospects]”. *Dangdai Waiguo Wenxue* [= Contemporary Foreign Literature] 1: 33–41.
- Jiang Housheng 1984. “Faguo huangdanpai xiju pingxi [= A Review of the Drama of the French Absurd School]”. *Faguo Yanjiu* [= Studies of France] 1: 22–29.

- Liao Kedui 2002. *Xi'ou xiju shi (quan er ce)* [= The History of Western European Theatre (Vol.2)]. Taipei: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe.
- Luo Jingguo 1986. "Beikete he «Dengdai Geduo» [= Beckett and «Waiting for Godot»]". *Guowai Wenxue* [= Foreign Literature] 4: 38–54.
- Shen Lin 1993. "Rinai he ta de «Yangtai» [= Genet and His «Balcony»]". *Juben* [= Plays] 11: 78–80.
- Song Xuezhi [&] Xu Jun 2004. "Faguo huangdanpai xiju zai Zhongguo de fanyi yu yanjiu [= The Translation and Research of French Theater of the Absurd in China]". *Waiguo Wenxue Yanjiu* [= Foreign Literature Studies] 2: 147–152.
- Sun Huizhu 1993. *Xiju de jiegou: Xushi xing jiegou he juchang xing jiegou* [= The Structure of Drama: Epic Structure and Dramatic Structure]. Taipei: Shulin Chuban Gongsi.
- Wang Na 2011. "Pinte xiju zai Zhongguo wutai de chuanbo yu jieshou [= The Spread and Acceptance of Pinter Plays on the Chinese Stage]". *Jiangnan Luntan* [= Jiangnan Forum] 4: 110–114.
- Wang Yiqun 1992. *Dangdai Meiguo xiju* [= Contemporary American Theater]. Shanghai: Shanghai Waiyu Jiaoyu Chubanshe.
- Wang Yiqun (et al.) 1998. "Pinte de «Beipan» ji qi zai Zhongguo de shouyan — «Beipan» wenxue guwen Wang Yiqun fangtan lu [= Pinter's «Betrayal» and its Premiere in China: Interview with Wang Yiqun, Literary consultant]". *Xiju Yishu* [= Theater Arts] 2: 110–111.
- Wu Wenquan 2005. *Kua wenhua duihua yu ronghui: Dangdai Meiguo xiju zai Zhongguo* [= Intercultural Dialogue and Fusion: Contemporary American Drama in China]. Beijing: Zhongguo Shehuikexue Chubanshe.
- Xiao Man 1997. "Faguo jj zuojia xiaoshuo jia Rang-Rinai de yisheng [= The Life of French Dramatist and Novelist Jean Genet]". *Xiju Yishu* [= Theater Arts] 1: 62–68.
- 1999. "Rang-Renei de shengping ji qi zuopin [= The Life and Works of Jean Genet]". *Xiju Yishu* [= Theater Arts] 2: 44–51.
- Xu Peng [&] Yu Ying 2009. "Zhongguo xijujia yanzhong de Pinte [= Harold Pinter in the Eyes of Chinese Dramatists]". *Shidai Zhoubao* [= Times Weekly], 8 January 2009. In: Zhou Zan. "Haluode-Pinte: Linghun zai duihua [= Harold Pinter: Souls in Conversation]". *Nanfang Pinglun* [= The Southern Review], 29 September 2012. On-line: <https://www.zgnfys.com/a/nfpl-16386.shtml> [14.04.2023].
- Yang Huiyi 2001. *Luodi hua kai: Xianggang xiju 1999* [= Blooming to the Ground: Hong Kong Theater in 1999]. Xianggang [= Hong Kong]: Guoji Yanyijia Pinglun Xiehui [= Hong Kong International Association of Performance Critics].
- Yi Zi 1993. "Yansu de youxi yu renzhen de banyan — shiyan xiju «Yangtai» de fenggehua yu xingshigan [= Serious Games and Serious Acting: Stylization and Formal Sense of Experimental Theatre «Balcony»]". *Zhongguo Xiju* [= Chinese Theatre] 11: 24–25.
- Yu Hua 2014. *Huaju «San zimei, Dengdai Geduo» bitan* [= Dialogue by writing on the Play «Waiting for Godot, The Three Sisters»]. Electronic base: Jiujiu Cangshu Wang, <https://www.99csw.com/article/810.htm> [16.04.2023].
- Yuan Decheng 2010. "Pinte zai Zhongguo: Huigu yu fansi [= A Review of the Research Status of Harold Pinter at Home and Abroad]". *Sichuan Shifan Daxue Xuebao* [= Journal of Sichuan Normal University] 3(37): 85–88.
- Yuan Kejia 1979. "Xiangzhengpai shige, yishiliu xiaoshuo-huangdanpai xiju — Oumei xiandaipai wenxue shuping [= Symbolic Poetry, Stream of Consciousness Novels, and the Theatre of the Absurd: A Review of Modern European and American Literature]". *Wenyi Yanjiu* [= Literature and Art Research] 1: 54–65.
- Yuan Xiaohua [&] Song Yun 2008. "Haluode-Pinte guonei wai yanjiu xianzhuang zongshu [= A Review of the Research Status of Harold Pinter at Home and Abroad]". *Yishu Baijia* [= Hundred Artists] 1 (24): 154–156.
- Zhang Helong 2010. "Zhongguo de Beikete xiju piping [= Review of Beckett Studies in the Country]". *Guowai Wenxue* [= Foreign Literature] 3: 37–45.

- Zhang Lianqiao 2012. "Aidehua-A'erbi xiju yanjiu zai Zhongguo [= The Study of Edward Albee's Drama in China]". *Dangdai Waiguo Wenxue* [= Contemporary Foreign Literature] 2(33): 150–156.
- Zhang Xian 2000. "Guo Shixing tan chuang zuo [= Guo Shixing, Talks about Creation]". *Xiju* [= Drama] 1: 48–55.
- 2001. "Yao fenchang haishi yao huayuan – huaju «Wuwai you huayuan» guan hou [= Want a Cemetery or a Garden – After the Performance «A Garden Outside the House»]". *Xiju Wenxue* [= Dramatic Literature] 5: 48–50.
- Zhu Hong 1978. "Huangdanpai xiju shuping [= A Review of the Theatre of the Absurd]". *Shijie Wenxue* [= World Literature] 1: 213–242.