



# The Chairs

*Eugène Ionesco , Martin Crimp (Translator)*

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**The Chairs** Eugène Ionesco , Martin Crimp (Translator)

In a house on an island a very old couple pass their time with private games and half-remembered stories. With brilliant eccentricity, Ionesco's 'tragic farce' combines a comic portrait of human folly with a magical experiment in theatrical possibilities.

## The Chairs Details

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## Mateo R. says

Me hizo acordar un poco a *Fin de partida* de Samuel Beckett: teatro del absurdo, escenario bastante despojado y supuestamente aislado del mundo de la diégesis, veladas alusiones post-apocalípticas, actitudes patéticas. El tema de la obra parece ser la imposibilidad de la comunicación, como en *El rinoceronte*. Al ser una farsa y encima teatro del absurdo, las situaciones son poco realistas y es difícil encontrarle la continuidad y el sentido a los diálogos. Hay que dejarse llevar por la atmósfera de la obra nomás.

Un anciano y una anciana viven aislados en una edificación rodeada de agua. Él, conserje del lugar, lamenta no haber podido transmitir correctamente su mensaje al mundo (¿el significado de la vida? ¿la razón de su existencia particular? ¿un mensaje "científico"?). Lo ha estado preparando durante años y este día será transmitido (pero no por él, sino por un orador) a una multitud de "sabios y propietarios" (compuesta por invitados invisibles, no representados por actores).

Hay una ansiedad ante la vejez y la vida que se le ha ido al viejo, que no ha podido alcanzar la gloria que cree que merece. La anciana se llama Semíramis, como la reina asiria que según la tradición mandó asesinar a su esposo para acceder al trono, pero no veo la relación porque aquí la vieja es abnegada y básicamente vive para su marido.

El final es muy efectivo.

Intertextualidad

Menciones directas:

\* Mención a la leyenda de Tristán e Isolda.

Indirecta:

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## Linda says

The play, written by Eugène Ionesco, consists of an Old Man and an Old Woman, moving around many chairs. It's one of the plays that became the foundation for a theatrical movement called Théâtre de l'Absurde.

There are only two people in the play, except the orator that make an entrance later. The other characters are invisible. Perhaps the Old Man and Old Woman are the only ones left in the world. Perhaps an apocalypse has destroyed the earth, leaving nothing behind. They say that there is no Paris anymore, and talk about an old memory repeatedly. The chairs might symbolise their long lost friends. Another explanation is that the imaginary guests are real people, but with an absent mind. They are there, but at the same time not. However, despite being invisible, they seem more alive than the strange orator, who seems more like a robot than a human being. Are they in the future?

There are many themes in the play. The need to be remembered is easy to identify with. No one wants to be

forgotten forever. When finding the meaning of life, or whatever discovery the Old Man has made, will guarantee it. Perhaps the chairs symbolise the importance to not forget people. Or perhaps the couple might have dementia? Or being prisoners, bored and wanting to entertain themselves? It doesn't really matter. The play is about memories, and the ability to remember a past that was better than the present. It is about regret. The Old Woman often tells her husband what he could have become if he only were more ambitious. Now, when he has the answer to everything, and will reveal the secret to the world, he will finally be someone. He will be remembered.

The reason that the orator doesn't succeed to reveal the Old Man's discovery is perhaps because of the Old Man. He doesn't dare to reveal his discovery himself. Instead he escapes. If not believing in oneself, no one else does. He seems to have escaped many things in his life. He denies having a son and he admits having abandoned his dying mother. Is the empty room a form of escapism? The lack of responsibility is a great theme. By the way, perhaps the orator really tells the audience the meaning of life. They are just unable to understand it, because it's impossible to understand.

What's good about this play is that it makes you think. There are many interpretations possible, and the story surely means different things to different people.

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### Fatemeh sherafati says

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### Karla Hernández Krugmann says

El teatro del absurdo no es adecuada para mi.

Todo el tiempo intenté seguir el mensaje de trasfondo, pero tantas incoherencias me distraían. Sillas. Sillas. Sillas. Me preguntaba que importancia tenían las sillas, pues se repetía la palabra casi en cada linea. Creí que

enloquecería si continuaba leyendo.

Personas invisibles hablando con otras personas invisibles. La Bella. El Emperador. La Dama. La Anciana hablando con personas invisibles y el Anciano hablando con un Emperador invisible. Oh, es más de lo que puedo procesar, Ionesco, las personas inexistentes no son lo mio.

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### Indu Muralidharan says

I was unable to get the point of 'The Birthday Party' and was not sure about picking up yet another play belonging to the theatre of the absurd. But reading 'The Chairs' was an experience by itself, so much that I could see the play unfold scene by scene through the pages, in spite of the cryptic stage settings, the large cast of invisible characters and the disconnected, often meandering dialogue. The play remains open to a number of interpretations - it is never clarified if the main characters of the nonagenarian old man and his wife are the among the last few survivors in an apocalyptic world, or merely two sad souls who regret their uneventful life and long to be accepted, respected and remembered. Thought-provoking, darkly funny and saddening, this is one of those works of literature that Yann Martel said makes the reader 'existentially thicker'.

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### Ahmad Sharabiani says

Les Chaises, Eugène Ionesco

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### Susan says

A crazy crazy play to say the least. Try ot understand it if you dare. There are so many ways to interpret this play but ultimately I think I would LOVE LOVE LOVE to see it staged. I think that with Absurd drama that is the only way to get SOME grasp of what is really going on, or the true feel of the play. Two old people going in and out of many doors bringing hundreds of chairs into a room full of visitors that are not there. You try to understand. Honestly earth shattering stuff..... Love this play. Probably it is one of my new favourites.

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## Pooya Kiani says

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## Huda Yahya says

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## **ivana18 says**

What is the meaning of life?

Can we really know the answer to that eternal question?

Or better yet, can we handle the answer to that question?

Is that the reason the chairs are empty, because no human being can truly know the answer and still be alive, still exist as a rational human being?

Are the chairs empty because the guests are there in flesh but their mind is not really present, because they don't want the truth, or can't handle the truth?

The Old Man, the Old Woman the deaf-mute Orator, and the bunch of empty chairs...can this really be a good play, can it make any sense?

Well, that's the beauty of the Théâtre de l'Absurde, it's totally absurd and absolutely, completely and totally brilliant...but definitely not for everyone.

I'm sure that there are people out there who hated this play and who feel that Ionesco and his peers are pretentious intellectual snobs. But that too is the beauty of the Théâtre de l'Absurde, one way or the other and at one point in our lives we've all done or said something snobbish or had a snobbish thought...and Ionesco and the other authors are just having fun with that, and with many other human faults.

Théâtre de l'Absurde leaves so much open to interpretation, and (as you can see) makes you wonder and ask questions (many, many questions) without giving you the answers, but at the same time helps you find them...maybe that is the meaning of life, searching for the answers and questioning the world around us, refusing to yield to the dogmatic thinking that our society sometimes tries to impose on us.

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## **Rick Homuth says**

Of the three of his I've read so far, this play is probably the closest to what I'd call "traditional" absurdist theatre (which is an oxymoron itself and should make it all the more apparent that I don't really know what I'm talking about). One of the key issues with describing the movement (again, from what I've observed) is that each artists' body of work is so incredibly different; "The Chairs," however, definitely has a Beckettian air about it.

**Ali says**

[illegible]

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http://www.goodreads.com/author\_blog\_..

## Michael says

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**???? says**

[illegible]

## Anelis says

Les Chaises is, so far, my favorite play of Ionesco's.

It took me an *absurdly* (...i love puns) long time to read it, mainly because I only found it in French and had to first brush up what French I used to know 7 years ago, but every single damn unknown word was worth it. Plus, I can read in French again, so double win.

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## Helga says

A tragic play written by Ionesco about the relationship between a very old couple after being married for more than 70 years, their love for one another, their what ifs and would have been-s, their reminiscences and disappointments over lost opportunities.

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## Ahmed Abdelazim says

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## Michelle Lynne says

I loved reading The Chairs. The plot in itself and the concept of trying to find the meaning of life, when the endeavour in itself seems almost pointless, was really interesting to read about. I loved the absurdist and existential themes.

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## Mia says

O piesa absurda despre viata si timpul ireversibil, despre cum acesta isi bate joc de noi si cum incercam din rasputeri sa il manipulam prin memorii. Batranul si Batrana, doua personaje care isi regreta viata si si-o amintesc fiecare cum vor, nu stiu decat sa traiasca unul langa celalalt, se contopesc. Ei asteapta oaspeti - care vin, imaginari, la un discurs, o dorinta din tinerețe, acea schimbare in lume care nu apare niciodata, caci Oratorul, absurd, si singurul la fel de real aici ca cei doi, e surdomut.

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## Conor Morgan says

Not sure if it's pretentious or really really intellectual, either way though, it doesn't really make sense, and is

therefore interesting yet hard to enjoy.

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