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Globalization of the Dramatic Discourse in the Interest of trans-acculturation: A Fresh Reading of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*

Dr. Ahmad Taha*

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□ ABSTRACT □

This article aims at examining the elements, goals and strategy of the absurd theatre, which helped universalize the dramatic discourse. Traditionally, aspects of drama, including setting, plot, technique, characters and themes were designed to address certain rules and regulations set up conventionally by classical dramatists, such as Plato, Aristotle, Horace, Longinus and Sidney, and attend to a certain category of people, like the upper/noble classes, in the case of the Greek and Elizabethan theatres, and the middle and lower classes in the Victorian theatre. The absurd theatre, seemingly, came as a reaction to this type of conventional drama. It is an attempt to wrestle the dramatic discourse free from the restrictions and limitations imposed upon it by the conventional rules of writing; violating the traditional rules of writing that includes language, characters, setting, theme, and technique. Herein lies the importance of this study that throws light on the dramatic discourse, which absurdists, including Beckett, attempt to globalize, following the example of the existentialism of Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre, who argued: "Humanity had to resign itself to recognizing that a fully satisfying rational explanation of the universe was beyond its reach", and, "the world must ultimately be seen as absurd."

Keywords: The Absurd Theatre- Dramatic Discourse- Globalization- Comprehensive- Open- Classical Drama- Rules- Violation- Trans-Acculturation- Universal- Link- Cultures.

* **Associate Professor- Department of English- Tishreen University- Lattakia/ Syria**

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عولمة الخطاب المسرحي في خدمة العبور والتفهم الثقافي: قراء جديدة في مسرحية بيكت "انتظار غودو"

الدكتور أحمد طـه*

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□ الملخّص □

يهدف البحث لدراسة مسرح العبث بمقوماته، وأسسه، وأهدافه، واستراتيجيته التي تقوم على الخروج من إطار الخطاب المسرحي المبرمج، ضمن إطار محدد، للوصول إلى أكبر عدد ممكن من الناس، بمختلف جنسياتهم ومشاربهم. كما تبين الدراسة الآليات التي يلجأ إليها رواد هذا المسرح للخروج عن النص المسرحي التقليدي المعروف بأدواته المسرحية، من حبكة، وأسلوب، وتقنيات، وأفكار، ومكان وزمان الحدث المسرحي، إلى فضاء رحب تكون فيه هذه الأدوات ناظمة لعمل مسرحي يختلف بمواصفاته، ومقوماته، وأهدافه عن الأعمال التقليدية على اختلاف أنواعها، أعني تلك الأنماط المسرحية التي تقع ضمن دائرة الكلاسيكية، أو الكلاسيكية الجديدة أو الرومانسية، أو الانطباعية، أو السريالية ... الخ، ليخرج بمفردات جديدة تجعله يختلف، في قليل أو كثير، عما سبقه، أو عما جاء بعده. وتخلص الدراسة لإظهار الجانب الأبرز في هذا المسرح الذي يتلخص في توجهه نحو عولمة الخطاب المسرحي ذاته، وجعله أكثر شمولية وانفتاحاً، وقابلية لمخاطبة الآخرين، مهما كانت خلفياتهم وهوياتهم، وذلك من خلال التفرد بلغة مسرحية مرنة تخلو من القيود والضوابط، والأطر والشكليات التي تحد من شموليته ومرونته. ومن هنا يأتي هذا البحث ليبرز ميزات مسرح العبث وأهدافه، ذلك المسرح الذي شغل حيزاً مهماً في حركة المسرح العالمية، ولعب دوراً بارزاً كمعبر ثقافي للأمم الأخرى، وصلة الوصل بين مختلف الثقافات.

كلمات مفتاحية: مسرح العبث– الخطاب المسرحي– عولمة – شمولية– انفتاح– المسرح الكلاسيكي– الأطر– الشكليات– معبر ثقافي– عالمي– صلة وصل– ثقافات.

* أستاذ مساعد– قسم اللغة الإنكليزية– جامعة تشرين– اللاذقية – سوريا.

Martin Esslin Writes:

If a good play must have a cleverly constructed story, these have no story or plot to speak of; if a good play is judged by the subtlety of characterization and motivation, these are often without recognizable characters and present the audience with almost mechanical puppets; if a good play has to have a fully explained theme, which is neatly exposed and finally solved, these often have neither a beginning nor an end; if a good play has to hold the mirror up to nature and portray the manners and mannerisms of the age in finely observed sketches, these seem often to be reflections of dreams and nightmares; if a good play relies on witty repartee and pointed dialogue, these often consist of incoherent babblings.[1]

Esslin in the above quotation speaks about the aspects of the theatre of the absurd to which *Waiting for Godot* belongs. Esslin considers the play a success; he finds in it an entire break with traditional drama where conventional aspects of drama, such as setting, plot character and language no longer matter much. In contrast, what matters most for absurd playwrights, such as Adamov, Jean Jenet, Eugene Ionesco and Samuel Beckett, is the highly unusual and innovative form, which is meant to startle the viewer out of their conventional world of complacency and acceptance, into a world of parodies, distorts, broken images, allegories and euphoria, and crutches of unconventional language. The language the absurdists use in their plays has two purposes in view: first, it mirrors their own search for freedom; secondly, it universalizes the language of drama, which doesn't espouse any organized linguistic theory at all. Herein lies the first aspect of the dramatic discourse absurdists attempt to globalize, following the example of the existentialism of Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre, who argued: "*Humanity had to resign itself to recognizing that a fully satisfying rational explanation of the universe was beyond its reach"*, and, *"the world must ultimately be seen as absurd."*[2]

In *Waiting for Godot*, we find apparent echoes of existentialism, especially in the internal structure of the play, where subtle and obvious deviations in language and meaning provide ambiguity, and violate the conventions of setting, plot and character development in realistic literature. This is what Beckett's plays do. Each one follows its own structure and style to create its own world of language. To make this device more effective, Beckett makes the linguistic meaninglessness in the play the mouthpiece of his ideas and notions which he intends to convey to his readers. In *Waiting for Godot* (1952) *and Endgame* (1957), he struggles hard to subdue language to his own purposes, so that the silence of the real world outside might make his presence felt inside the plays. To achieve the required maximum effect, he relies heavily on words, utterances, phrases, and even jumbled sentences, whose representational semantic properties have been subverted: *Waiting for Godot* like *Endgame* expresses this fact clearly, following an insidious circular structure backed up by echoes, actions, gestures and motions which undermine language as a means of communication. The following argument between Vladimir and Estragon testifies to this fact:

[1] Martin Esslin. *The Theatre of the Absurd*. London: Penguin Books, 1969, pp., 21-22.
[2] *Theatre of the Absurd*. *From The 1995 Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*. 95 golier Publishing Company, Inc. 30 January 2006, p., 1.
<http://www.honors.montana.edu/~oelks/TC/Absurd.html>.

Vladimir: What are you insinuating? That we have come to the wrong Place?
Estragon: He should be here.
Vladimir: He didn't say for sure he'd come.
Estragon: And if he doesn't come.
Vladimir: We'll come back tomorrow.
Estragon: And then the day after tomorrow.
Vladimir: Possibly.
Estragon: And so on.
Vladimir: The point is -----.
Estragon: Until he comes.
Vladimir: You're merciless.
Estragon: We came here yesterday.
Vladimir: Ah no, there you're mistaken
Estragon: What did we do yesterday?
Vladimir: What did we do yesterday?
Estragon: yes.
Vladimir: Why … (Angrily) Nothing is certain when you're about.
Estragon: In my opinion we were here.
Vladimir: (Looking round). You recognize the place**.** (Act I. pp., 14-15**)**

In addition to demonstrating the way that the two characters can be seen as interchangeable, this textual repetition of the same words by Vladimir and Estragon is an obvious indicator of the circular, insidious, repetitive language referred to above, a language which points to a deliberate emptying out of identity in the speaker: Estragon: "What did we do yesterday? Vladimir repeats the same question adding nothing to Estragon's inquiry, *"What did we do yesterday?*." We wait impatiently for an interpretation for the question raised by Estragon, but we don't get the interpretation, as Vladimir repeats the same question, and moreover Estragon wonders if they were in the place yesterday. This circular movement continues throughout the play, giving us the impression that Estragon is dependent on Vladimir in a way that they cannot do without each other; this dependence is made clear by Vladimir, who makes it clear that Estragon would be *"nothing more than a heap of bones"* without him (I. p., 9*).* Every time there is a spark of suggested meaning in the dialogue between Estragon and Vladimir on the one hand, and Pozzo and Lucky, the master and the slave on the other, we come up to a sort of deadlock, where meaning is undermined and lost.

The play starts with Estragon pulling hard at his boots, but a moment later giving up the attempt, and declaring, *"Nothing to be done"* (I. p., 1), and ends up with the same implication that nothing has been done, as they remain standing in the same place when the play had started two days ago.

Vladimir: Well? Shall we go?
Estragon: Yes, let's go.
They do not move. (I. p., 94)

The same picture is repeated at the end of **Act I** when Vladimir suggests to Estragon that they part, but Estragon replies that they cannot, because *"It's not worthwhile now"*, and

Vladimir agrees; later, Estragon suggests to Vladimir that they go elsewhere, *"Well, shall we go?"* and Vladimir replies, *"Yes, let's go", but they do not move* (I. 54). Beckett seems to "use self-negating clauses to undermine both the validity of action, and the semantic logic of words", Brian Finney contends, and to create a dialogue that is "highly mannered, showing more interest in creating mutually negating patterns of words", where the employment of "puns, paradox, allusion, repetition, inversion, all in an attempt to disrupt the predictable semantic effects of language."[3] This brings us back to the assumption that Beckett's implied purpose in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* is the globalization of the dramatic discourse, where the subversion of all the norms of what is traditionally known as classical drama, is made the vehicle by which he crosses to literature and drama. He trades in plot, setting, characters and action in its Aristotelian implications, known as "completeness, seriousness, and magnitude", which had been hitherto the landmarks of drama, for a set of fragmentary images.[4] He, thus, subverts the elements of drama, "approximating the remote, and familiarizing the wonderful", to quote Wordsworth's words,[5]and oversimplifies the theme, perhaps, surprisingly, to drive a universal idea to readers, based on the fact that life means waiting, killing time and clinging to the hope that one day at least some part of our wishful thinking may come true.

The repercussions of Beckett's plays found their way in the world of literature in the plays of Eugene Ionesco, Jean Jenet and Harold Pinter, through a number of universal themes, that revolve basically around Man's realization of "the absurd" nature of the universe, and Man's pre-historic wish "to know". Martin Esslin in his *The Theatre of the Absurd* contends:

The experience expressed in Beckett's plays is of a far more profound and fundamental nature than mere autobiography. They reveal his experience of temporality and evanescence; his sense of the tragic difficulty of becoming aware of one's own self in the merciless process of renovation and destruction that occurs with change in time; of the difficulty of communication between beings; of the unending quest for reality in a world in which everything is uncertain and the borderline between dream and waking is ever shifting.[6]

Esslin refers to two main points in the quotation above: first, to the ever-changing world around us, a world which knows no end for the reconfiguration and reformation of ideas, concepts and perceptions in an endless process of construction and reconstruction; secondly, to "the difficulty of communication" between human beings, and the endless quest for reality. Vladimir and Pozzo, Lucky and Estragon remarkably embody the previous concepts, especially if we take their ideas and relationship into consideration. They continually try to reach an agreement concerning small ideas they raise from time to time, but they tragically fail; they continually attempt to break the monotony of the boring time they live in, but unfortunately they fail; and they despairingly make several attempts

[3] Brian Finnery. *Columbia History of the British Novel*. 12 June 1994. Beckett's prose Fictions. 30 Jan. 2006. p., 3.
<http://www.csulb.edu/~bh finnery/becekett.htm>
[4] Quoted in Richard Harland's *Literary Theory from Plato to Barthes*. New York: Palgrave, 1999, pp., 10-14.
[5] Ibid., p., 76
[6] *The Theatre of the Absurd*, opsit., p., 70.

to move around the place, to increase the seriousness and intensity of their argument, and to do something with the little implications of seriousness, but they tragically fail. This brings us back to the suggestion that these characters, in their continuous quest for the ever-elusive reality, in their hankering after the mystery "of Godot", who may never come, and in their inability to communicate, strip themselves to the bare of any social characteristic, to the extent that we are made to believe that they represent Everyman. The static situation referred in Estragon's words, "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful" (I. p., 41), is also reflected in the closing situations at the end of **Act I** and **Act II**.

Estragon: Well, shall we go?
Vladimir: Yes, let's go.
(They do not move)
(Act II. p., 94).

The role of Estragon is reversed at the end of Act II, as Vladimir makes the question himself:

Vladimir: Well? Shall we go?
Estragon: Yes, let's go.
(They do not move)
(Act II. p., 94)

This analysis of Vladimir and Estragon logically leads to the conclusion I started with this article that Beckett's dramatic discourse is universal in its techniques and approaches, because it transcends in its implications, technical devices, character and techniques the limits and boundaries of classical drama.

This is because of the fact that characters in Beckett's plays trade their individual identity for a universal one, that stand for humanity at large: Estragon and Vladimir do not represent isolated, individual, and self-autonomous type of characters, but rather universal figures standing for humanity at large. Similarly, the antithetical nature of Pozzo and Lucky, Pozzo as master and Lucky as slave, suggests, to a large extent, that since time immemorial the relationship between master and slave has not changed. The master, as is the case with Pozzo and Lucky, is still treating the slave disrespectfully, and the slave is still struggling to wrestle himself free from the nets thrown upon him by the master. This conclusion asserts again the assumption that these characters share with their counterparts worldwide the same characteristics, something which makes of them universal figures. Estragon suggests to Pozzo that they do not belong to "these parts" of the world, meaning that they stand for human beings at large, as Pozzo emphasizes for him:

You are human beings none the less. (*He puts on his glasses.*) As far as one can see. (He takes off his glasses.) (*He bursts into an enormous laugh.*) Of the same species as Pozzo! Made in God's image. (I. p., 23)

Pozzo's remarks above that "He and Estragon" belong to "the same species", and that they are "made in God's image", leave no doubt that they represent a universal case, rather than an independent one standing on its own. Consequently, every layer of meaning in the relationship between Vladimir and Estragon on the one hand, and Pozzo and Lucky on the

other unfolds a new source of knowledge about the universal nature of these characters. Their needs become, as Kenneth Knapman argues, "a method of revealing the possible intention of the author"[7], that Vladimir summarizes in the words, *"... at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not. Let us make the most of it, before it is too late! Let us represent worthily for once the foul brood to which a cruel fate consigned us!*" (II: 79). The conventional criteria against which a successful play should be measured may be ignored in the interest of new conventions and rules, that help universally promote the new language of drama to reach the farthest corners of the world. John Calder, in a review of Beckett 2004, arrives at the same conclusion when he argues:

Nietzsche saw Man taking over from God, Shaw saw Man as moving towards one day becoming God himself, but to Beckett, the whole of creation was one great cosmic mistake and the extinction of the species, … would hardly be a tragedy as it would, temporarily at least, bring pain to an end.[8]

Characters, in Beckett's plays use a language "spattered with words that went dead", where each word gets obliterated, before it has time to make sense, by the word that comes next." Additionally, "the dialogue … is often built on the principle that each line obliterates what was said in the previous line."[9] In fact, most characters in Beckett's plays do not know what to do, where to go, what to think of, what to come tomorrow, even in the heat of argument. They represent a case in a world of "incessant change, where there is no certainty, where there is no possibility for definite meanings- and the impossibility of ever attaining certainty is one of the main themes of Beckett's plays."[10] Language, moreover, changes gradually into symbols that have lost their meaning, into an abstract artifact expressing the confusion of the characters. Dialogue becomes a heap of accumulated meaningless words that refer to broken minds; language, in other words, loses its aspects of denotation and connotation characteristic of the human language, in the interest of a haphazard language where morphemes in the words are put together arbitrarily. In brief, language breaks down, and meaning gets lost tragically to express, probably, a universal case of disillusion, dismay, frustration and carelessness among hopeless post-war century characters. Lucky uses this type of ciphered language to address Pozzo:

Lucky: Given the existence as uttered forth in the public works of Puncher and Wattmann of a personal God quaquaquaqua with white beard quaquaquaqua outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown but time will tell and suffers like the divine Miranda with those who for reasons unknown but time will tell are plunged in torment plunged in fire whose whose fire flames if that continues and who can doubt it will fire the firmament … . (I. p., 43)

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[7] Kenneth Knapman. "Has Beckett's Existentialism Any Roots in Hegel's Philosophy?" *Free Server* 27 September. 8 February 2006, p., 3.
http://www.w-mids.freeserve.co.uk/hasbeckett.htm

[8] John Calder. "The Importance of Samuel Beckett". The Godot Company. Performing the Plays of S. Beckett. Sept. 2004. 30 Jan. 2006
http://www.godotcompany.com/beckett1.htm

[9] The Theatre of the Absurd, opsit., p., 85.

[10] Ibid., pp., 85-86. For further details about Esslin's ideas in this concern see chapter **I** and **II** in the previous reference.

One may conclude from the above passage that Beckett's embedded purpose in the play could be a reference to the necessity to obliterate the boundaries between peoples, that language may pose to hinder their communication with each other. Moreover, it seems that he considers language as a universal medium of communication among all peoples, rather than a regional means of communication among local communities, something that asserts the assumption that Beckett's implied purpose is the globalization of the dramatic discourse.

In a sense, characters in Beckett's plays, in general, may be compared to traditional fools in Shakespeare's plays. They remain on the fringes of action in the plays, passing judgments, arguing in a futile way, wasting time purposelessly. They fail, in fact, to push the incidents in the play forward, as traditional characters in classical plays usually do. Act One and Two end up with the same words, as a reference to immobility in the action:

> Estagon: Well, shall we move?
> Vladimir: Yes, let's go.
> (*They do not move*) (1. 54)

Similarly, fools in Shakespeare's plays remain on the fringes of action in the plays. They pass judgments on the deeds of their betters, watch events in the play without interfering or trying to affect their direction; they can be described as passive, rather than active, though their mobility in these plays, is, in a sense, more active than Beckett's characters. On the other hand, Beckett's characters can be relatively compared, in a sense, to Eliot's in "Waiting for Godot", and "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", where they remain behind the scene, almost as a voice passing judgments, proposing a form of a future blurred by obsessions of what to come. These poems share *Waiting for Godot* in their common themes which revolve about Man's condition in our time, loss of faith, and the search for a truth that will never be found. In this sense, *Waiting for Godot* gains an extra weight by transcending the limitations of plot, character, themes and setting, which classical drama usually imposes on the work of the playwright, in order to universalize the familiar and generalize the common.

Thus the theme of the play becomes universal, almost common to us all, as "We always find something,… to give us the impression we exist", as Estragon puts to Vladimir. It's a common purpose for us all to find something in this world to add meaning to our life, to attribute to our existence, and to give us the impression that we exist. Beryl S. Fletcher reaches the same conclusion; he contends that *"Waiting for Godot* is, therefore, quite simply, a picture of the antics of Man as he tries to distract himself until "Godot" comes", though Man's waiting doesn't bring any rewarding conclusions for him, as Man waits for nothing but death: "Thus Godot becomes anything the expectation of which helps man to bear his existence."[11] Gareth Lloyed Evans finds in his *The Language of Modern Drama* that *Waiting for Godot* shares modern drama in its vision and outlook towards man in particular and life in general:

[11] Beryl S. Fletcher. *A Student's Guide to the Plays of Samuel Beckett*. London: Faber and Faber, 1978, p., 35.

… in these plays mankind seems lost and alone in a present which terrifies him and oblivious to a past and a future which may or may not have any reality. The vision is "absurd", because there is so much that is incongruous, incompatible, inexplicable to be seen in man's existence. Simply because of this absurdity the action that is presented in such plays can be both comic and pathetic, savage and inert. There is no moral judgment, or any other kind of judgment, involved- these plays and the characters who inhabit them just "are", and that is all.[12]

Beckett follows in the steps of Pinter and Ionesco in using a stumbled type of syntax that deliberately impoverishes language. They strip language of its referential function and its occasion, to make it "the focus of the vision … to enter into misrepresentation or into bafflement."[13] Beckett makes use of this type language in an attempt to elude definition for his dramatic work. He bases his major concept in almost all his plays on the assumption that the borderline between death and life, illusion and reality, blackness and whiteness, and truth and falsehood, is rather imperceptible, that it could hardly be discerned. This type of understanding for Beckett's work could be best seen in the relationship between Pozzo and Lucky, "the driver and the driven", or "the sadistic master and the submissive slave", and Vladimir and Estragon, "the prevailer and the prevailed".[14] The opening situation in act I, shows two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon, waiting on a country road, by a tree, for unidentified person they believe to be Mr. Godot. The Act ends without meeting Godot. Act II follows the same pattern, ending up with the same conclusion; though the pattern in both acts is almost the same, as well as conclusions, but the relationship between characters does not remain the same. It keeps shifting. The opposition of temperaments between Vladimir and Estragon, for example, is the cause of this ever-shifting relationship between them.

They start the day giving us the impression that they are dependent on each other to the extent that they can never part. Act I ends up with the feeling that they had to part, due to the unbridgeable gap which exists between them, especially when we come to know that Vladimir is more like the mind and Estragon is more like the body. If we take this relationship into consideration, we can logically conclude that the relationship between Vladimir and Estragon is in a state of flux, exactly like the ever-changing relationship between the mind and the body in its subordination and submission mostly to internal and external effects beyond Man's control.

The same understanding can be applied to the relationship between Pozzo and Lucky as well. Though Lucky works like a teacher to Pozzo, who filters "beauty, grace, and truth" (Act I. p., 33) into his slave's mind, but Pozzo seems to be impenetrable for almost all Lucky's attempts to civilize him, or get him over his primitive level. There are ups and downs in their relationship that keeps the borderline dividing them dim, hardly perceptible and ever-changing. When Lucky's powers fail at the end of Act I, Pozzo complains that they cause him untold suffering, and decides to sell him the fair. But when they appear again in Act II, they seem to be still tied together, as the former had gone dumb, and the latter had gone blind; they can't part from each other, seemingly assuming

[12] Gareth Lloyed Evans. *The Language of Modern Drama*. London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977, p., 197.
[13] Ibid., p., 197
[14] *The Theatre of the Absurd*, opsit., pp., 57, 48.

the same role they started the first act with, namely, Pozzo, the master, and the slave: Pozzo still marches behind Lucky, driving him forcibly into an unidentified destination, and Vladimir ends up with prevailing over Estragon, bringing into memory, in a circular movement, the first scene of the play. This conclusion of the relationship between the characters in the play brings us back the major idea of this article that Beckett's basic philosophy is to break up with all classical conventions of drama in the interest of a universal dramatic discourse having the current aspects of globalization. Beckett's works have transcended in their techniques and structures all the boundaries and observations laid down by classical drama. His work is a venturing out of the limitations and confines of traditional drama of Sophocles, Shakespeare, Jonson, Marlowe and even Shaw and Eliot; it wrestles itself free from "the manners and mannerisms", plot, character, motivation, theme, and witty repartees and pointed dialogue techniques of classical drama[15] It moves to a terrain where man, as Eugene Ionesco contends, is "Lost … and cut off from his religious, metaphysical and transcendental roots."[16]

As a result, absurd drama came as an immediate response to the changes which had taken place after the Second-World-War, shaking the individual person out of their existence, conventional, comfortable ways of life. After the war a new atmosphere of meaninglessness and Godlessness has prevailed, paving the way for the collapse of all traditional conventions dominated the lives of people in the West for ages. These changes not only affected the forms and ways of life, but also the traditional forms of art, including novels, poetry and drama. Some critics such as Jan Culik go so far as to say that "the theatre of the absurd seems to have been a reaction to the disappearance of the religious dimension from contemporary life." Moreover, it may be "seen as an attempt to restore the importance of myth and ritual to our age, by making man aware of the ultimate realities of his condition."

The theatre aspires to accomplish this hope through "Shocking man out of an existence that has become trite, mechanical and complacent."[17] Culik's ideas are clearly reflected in Beckett's plays, especially in *Endgame* and *Waiting for Godot*, in the dialogues between Pozzo and Lucky, the Master and the Slave, on the one hand, and Estragon and Vladimir, the two tramps, on the other. The play opens with the two tramps waiting by a leafless tree for the arrival of Mr. Godot. They quarrel, try to sleep, think of committing suicide, check bones for the purpose of eating them, and eat carrots. Later on, Pozzo and Lucky arrive. Lucky has a rope tied around his neck, a stool, a basket, a bag and a coat. They seem to depend on each other throughout the play. This is seen in the second Act when they appear again tied together. The play end up with Pozzo going blind, Lucky becoming dumb, proceeding on a journey without a clear goal, and Vladimir prevailing upon Estragon, continuing to wait for Godot. The play wavers back and forth in a circular movement, leaving us as readers waiting, like characters in the play, for a certain denouement in action that brings home to us some meaning or some hope about what to happen tomorrow. The action in the play seems to be static reflecting Man's condition on earth, where "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful" **(**Act I; p. 41). This situation is blatantly

[15] For further discussion of this point, see Esslin's *Theatre of the Absurd*, especially pp., 20-26.
[16] Quoted in Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd*, opsit., p., 23.
[17] Dr. Jan Culik. "The Theatre of the Absurd: The West and the East", 2000, p., 1. 27 Oct. 2006. http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/Slavonic/Absurd.htm

expressed by Pozzo in his final outburst, when he states out that day is like another, and when we die, we are going to be forgotten about, as if we had never existed before:

It's abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day like any other day, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we will go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you. They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more. (Act II. p., 89)

This passage seems to be a microcosm of not only the meaning which Beckett wants to drive home for us, but also of the meaning of our existence on earth as human beings, as Pozzo puts it: "One day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second"; once we are born, once we are "astride of a grave, the light gleams in an instant, then it's night once more" (Act II: p., 89). Vladimir echoes Pozzo's words a moment later, "astride of a grave and a difficult birth (II. p., 89). Repercussions of these themes are repeated over and over again throughout the play, namely, the uncertainty of the hope of salvation, and the hardships and worthlessness of life between birth and death. When Beckett himself was asked what he thought of the theme of *Waiting of Godot*, he referred to a passage for St. Augustine: "There is a wonderful sentence in Augustine I wish I could remember the Latin. It is even finer in Latin than in English, 'Do not despair: one of the thieves was damned.'"[18] If we examine this quotation carefully, we may come up with the conclusion that Beckett is hinting at the biblical concept of salvation and damnation of Adam and Eve at the time of creation, and how this concept is handed down from generation to generation throughout history of Man. It also contains a certain amount of allusion to Man's destiny on this earth, that Man is rather predestined to either ends, namely, salvation or damnation. Beckett, seemingly, is almost certain that at least some of us are going to be saved, while some others are likely to be damned. But, on the other hand, he doesn't seem to be sure when and how this salvation will take place, something which is best seen in the chaotic and careless behavior of his characters, who are kept roaming heedlessly in a circular movement hardly moving outside the limits of the stage where we first met them. Moreover, they showed little ability to think creatively or to express themselves clearly, something which reflects the state of uncertainty and loss they are suffering from. The case that Beckett wants to present to us in the play concords with his statement above that "One of the thieves was damned", and the other one was probably saved. This conclusion is what makes us think that the theme of the play is universal, and this universality is what makes us believe that Beckett is one of the pioneer playwrights who stand behind the globalization of the dramatic discourse through his adoption of the concept of the absurd theatre.

Beckett conducts a lifelong verbal assault on the conventional elements of drama, including plot, characterization, setting, language and action. He creates a mythical world peopled by lonely creatures living in a terrible vacuum, overwhelmed by a sense of grief and loss, trying to grapple with something beyond their reach, but tragically their efforts go astray. He also expresses his distrust of language as a means of communication, holding it as unreliable, meaningless, insufficient, inauthentic, and deficient to express the verities of

[18] Quoted in Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd*, opsit., p., 53.

daily life. So, absurdists, in general, including Eugene Ionesco, Harold Pinter, Arthur Adamov, Jene Jenet, and Beckett, try to go beyond the conventional patters and stereotyped structures of language, for people to come into direct contact with the conventions and authentic meanings of natural language. To do so, characters in the absurd drama are made to break the traditional barriers of language, that stand between them and the real world outside. The conventional dramatic dialogue using standard methods of communication is replaced by a dialogue constituting of jargons, clichés and fragmentary incomplete sentences. This is best expressed in Lucky's long speech on pages (43-45) with Pozzo, where words lose their meaning, sequence of tense and logic alike is lost, and word order is broken leaving the general meaning of sentences jumbled and completely lost:

Lucky: I resume alas alas on on in short in fine on on abode of stones who can doubt it I resume but not so fast I resume the skull to shrink and waste and cocurrently simultaneously what is more for reasons unknown in spite of the tennis on on the beard the flames the tears the stones so blue so calm alas alas on on the skull the skull the skull the skull in Connemara in spite of the tennis the labours abandoned left unfinished … (Act I. p., 44).

This refers, no doubt, to Beckett's major intention lying behind this type of wrecked language, which embodies the absurdist's strategy in conveying his message to the reader. It is an attempt to generalize the particular, to universalize the local, to de-familiarize the common, and to globalize the trite, the routine-like and the mechanical. This conclusion is best expressed in the words of Vladimir when he addresses Estragon:

Vladimir: Not indeed that we personally are needed. Others would meet the case equally well, if not better. To all mankind they were addressed, those cries for help still ringing in our ears! But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like or not! Let us make the most of it, before it is too late! Let us represent worthily for once the foul brood to which a cruel fate consigned us! (Act I. p., 49)

Vladimir's words are, no doubt, impressive. They express the deepest parts of his mind. He relates himself to humanity at large. He doesn't represent himself only, but rather "the foul brood to which we are consigned". He transcends in his speech the limitations and boundaries of the particular to reach the spacious realms of the general, where humanity at large is there, with all its contradictions and discrepancies. This is the message which Beckett wants to convey to the world at last, that is, the dramatic discourse could be more expressive and communicative if it was addressed to all mankind, in its language, in its form and its themes. Dr. Robert D. Lane argues that Beckett's dramatic discourse rightly "tells us about birth and death, salvation, the act of waiting, the fleeting nature of time, the lack of communication among human beings …",[19] as representatives of all mankind -"the foul brood"- to which we are consigned by a cruel fate". Thus the absurdist dramatic discourse is made to apply to all mankind, transcending the limits of gender, language, sex, race, and ethnicity. It is an attempt "to create", in Dr. Culik's words, "a ritual-like, mythological, archetypal, allegorical vision"[20], that embraces in its multidimensional perspective mankind all over the world.

[19] 19. Dr. Robert D. Lane. Beckett's Godot: "A bundle of broken mirrors", 1996 of Modern Poetry by Wallace Stevens, 5 March 2006, p., 9.
http://www.w-mids.freeserve.co-uk/hasbeckett.htm.

[20] "The Theatre of the Absurd: The West and the East", opsit., p., 1.

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