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Five Themes in "Waiting for Godot"

This article is part of a longer comparative study of Beckett's plays and translations. One of the main features of the analysis as a whole is that it was conducted with the aid of the computer.

A brief summary of the method used would perhaps be helpful at this stage. The author feels that those traditional methods which relied on instinct did not allow for sufficient detail and accuracy. A more scientific approach was therefore adopted with the aid of the computer. In the past, there has been some reluctance on the part of linguists and stylisticians to reduce literature to figures. But this attitude is changing with the improvement of mechanical aids available to the linguist and the success of recent computer aided projects.

In this study, two main tasks are required of the computer. The first is to list all the words in the text and to indicate how frequently each one occurs. This enables us to recognise and evaluate individual items, and more particularly, to compare them with the items in the target language. The frequencies, too, are revealing, especially where they differ in the respective languages. These word-lists can therefore isolate lexical units for close examination. The second function of the computer is to produce a concordance which places each word in its context, ordered alphabetically, providing another service and helping the stylistician to see, at a glance, how given items are used in the text.

The benefits of using the computer in comparative stylistics are indeed numerous. Above all, a concordance enables one to distinguish items more clearly, to see them in context used in various ways. Certain features and usages may be revealed which would otherwise pass un-noticed. The type of listing found in the concordance also promotes a more metho-

dical approach to lexical items and their different interpretations in another language. It may help to determine the themes running through an author's work.

It should be added that in determining the main themes of *Godot*, a certain element of intuition is exercised. When reading the play, one has the impression that certain ideas are prevalent. These ideas are converted into single lexical items where possible, and checked against the frequency list to ensure that they are indeed as prominent as they appear to be. Intuition is therefore supported by numerical fact, and the idea is then established as a "theme". Five of these proved to be particularly abundant in *Godot* after reference to the frequency lists, and these are the ones with which we deal in this study. They are: 1) Waiting 2) Insecurity of the human condition 3) Despair which results from the absurdity of existence 4) Problems of communication 5) Search for identity.

The importance of "waiting" is already evident from the title. Previous critics have studied the density of expressions concerning waiting, and this tends to influence one's own intuition. In his article "Beckett émule de Gide", Paul Fortier proves through figures how waiting in all its aspects is a major theme in Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*. By a similar reference to the concordance, I discovered also, for instance, that the verb *essayer* expressing insecurity, and verbs of indecision (*réfléchir*, *reculer*) are quite common. Likewise, the word *silence* expressing not only waiting, but lack of communication is one of the most common nouns (119 occurrences). The final theme, Search for Identity, is reflected in the frequent use of the verb *chercher* (23 occurrences).

Thus, the double criterion of intuition and numerical fact was adopted in order to extract the five themes which will now be considered separately.

Waiting

The theme of waiting finds its most vivid expression on stage, and this is shown by the worldwide success of Beckett's first public production. More than any other genre, the theatre is able to make us conscious of the passing of time, highlighted by the theme of waiting. On a superficial level, the characters in *Godot* tell us directly on several occasions that they cannot move because they are waiting. Their attitude towards the interminable wait fluctuates between boredom: "C'est que le temps est long" (p. 113)¹ and hope: "Comme le temps

¹ Edition used: *En Attendant Godot*, Editions de Minuit, Paris 1952.

passé vite quand on s'amuse" (p. 109). The medium allows them to express their feelings directly and to remind the audience of the central theme. In support of this theme, Paul Fortier presents some enlightening figures. He notes:²

Douze fois au cours de l'action, l'attente commune aux personnages et aux spectateurs est centrée sur Godot au moyen de la formule «On attend Godot» ou des variations sur cette formule. Cinquante-et-une autres évocations créent une atmosphère d'attente généralisée.

Maintaining the argument, he states later in the article that another element contributes to this atmosphere, and that is the choice of vocabulary. The text, he points out, contains more than four hundred words evoking either doubt or hesitation through which the main theme of waiting is realized. Amidst this uncertainty, one thing is sure, and it is expressed by Vladimir in the words:

Dans cette immense confusion, une seule chose est claire: nous attendons que Godot vienne. (p. 112)

By these explicit references to waiting, the theme is driven home. Yet language is only one of the ingredients of drama and according to the opinion of some, it is not necessarily the most important ingredient. Artaud writes in his "Lettres sur le langage":³

Il n'est pas absolument prouvé que le langage des mots soit le meilleur possible. Et il semble que sur la scène qui est avant tout un espace à remplir et un endroit où il se passe quelque chose, le langage des mots doit céder la place au langage par les signes dont l'aspect objectif est ce qui nous frappe immédiatement le mieux.

Language is no longer defined in strictly linguistic terms, but includes all the elements of expression used by the dramatist.

In *Godot*, there are numerous paraverbal elements which enhance the theme of waiting, and which Beckett exploits to great advantage. The first of these is silence which, being diametrically opposed to it, can be felt more strongly through language. Silence and speech exist only by virtue of one another, and Beckett has been praised by critics for his skilful use of silence as a dramatic technique. In *Language and Silence*, Steiner captures this quality:⁴

² Paul Fortier, «Beckett émule de Gide», *L'Esprit Créateur* Vol. XI, No. 3 (Fall 1971) 59.

³ Antonin Artaud, *Le Théâtre et son double*, Gallimard, 1964, p. 162.

⁴ George Steiner, *Language and Silence*, Faber 1967, p. 25.

Mr. Beckett is moving with unflinching Irish logic towards a form of drama in which a character, his feet trapped in concrete and his mouth gagged, will stare at the audience and say nothing... As rarely before, poetry is tempted by silence.

In *Godot*, we sense the beginning of this technique, though language has still an important part to play. It is in contrast to words that silence gains its impressiveness in Beckett's first major play and makes us feel more poignantly than ever the passing of time.

It is significant, though not surprising, to discover that in *Godot*, there is scarcely a page without a pause. Each silence is there for a purpose, which can often be traced back to the central theme. The frequent silences turn the concept into something palpable. They also emphasize the difficulty which the characters have in maintaining conversation.⁵ They are frequently followed by repetition of what has just been said, or a fruitless afterthought which does not lead to any fresh discourse and kills the conversation. These two points are illustrated in Estragon's words:

E. Ça serait là un grave inconvénient. (Un temps) N'est-ce pas Didi que ce serait là un grave inconvénient? (Un temps) E-tant donné la beauté du chemin (Un temps). Et la bonté des voyageurs (Un temps). N'est-ce pas Didi?

V. Du calme (p. 20)

This epitomizes the attempts of one character, dashed by the other, to fill in the silence with meaningful words.

A silence may represent an interruption in speech or train of thought which causes Pozzo, for instance, to forget what he is saying:

Ne me coupez pas la parole! (Un temps). Si nous parlons tous en même temps, nous n'en sortirons jamais (Un temps). Qu'est-ce-que je disais? (p. 41)

This is one of the moments where normal conversation is effectively simulated. The same accidents occur in our daily encounters. Similarly, silences appear in Pozzo's lyrical description of the twilight (p. 52) where words fail him and he realizes their inadequacy in expressing visual images.

Silences may indicate a period of reflection, a mental effort to communicate, or they may be intended to coax, to 'reach' the other physically:

⁵ Barry C. Smith, *Some Features of the Dramatic Language of Samuel Beckett*, Dissertation for B. Ed., University of Birmingham, May 1970.

V. Veux-tu que je m'en aille? (Un temps) Gogo! (Un temps)
Vladimir le regarde avec attention) On t'a battu? (Un temps) Gogo!
Où as tu passé la nuit? (Silence)

E. Ne me touche pas! Ne me demande rien!

A silence which represents a pause or a period of waiting is therefore carefully inserted for a particular purpose. Larthomas sums up the use of silences in the theatre:⁶

Le silence, comme dans la vie, signifie. Il rend la durée sensible. Ce n'est pas une absence de paroles, mais une attente dans un monde désert où il ne se passera rien.

It is upon this tragic foundation that *Godot* is constructed. The silences draw our attention towards the act of waiting, making us more intensely aware of each single moment.

Another device which makes us conscious of this "timelessness" is the repetition of patterns. The entire play is in fact circular, since we are no further forward when the curtain falls than we were at the beginning of the first act. The arrival of Pozzo and Lucky is a false interlude in the eternal wait for Godot. However hard the tramps try to escape the sense of time by games and conversation, they return to the inevitable line "On attend Godot".

Apart from silence, other paraverbal elements such as *light* contribute to the atmosphere of timelessness. We are told it is evening, that part of the day where time is spent, motionless, expectant. It lacks the definite quality of light and darkness, it is in-between, unqualified, characterless. Similarly, the bare setting, consisting of a single tree, reflects the empty hopelessness of the 'attente' on which the characters rely for their salvation. Although we are not directly concerned with the paraverbal elements in *Godot*, it is interesting that Beckett should explain so carefully in his stage directions how he wishes these elements to be introduced. In this sense, language has the important function of communicating as accurately as possible what is expected by the author. That Beckett feels the stage directions to be of value emerges through the quality and precision of the language he uses. In his stage directions, as well as in the words of the characters, not to mention the "palpable" silences, Beckett expresses his concern with time and the theme of waiting.

⁶ Pierre Larthomas, *Le Langage dramatique*, Armand Colin, Paris, 1972, pp. 162/7.

Insecurity.

The theme of waiting which pervades the play is partly a result of the feeling of insecurity which haunts Beckett's characters. They are certain of nothing, neither of Godot's existence nor the time of day, nor even of each other's friendship. They are constantly seeking reassurance from the other of their loyalty, of their attention. Beckett's protagonists are insecure individuals, and only able to escape from this situation by the illusion of harmony, however unsatisfactory, provided by another being. The only character in *Godot* who escapes, at least partially, from this condition is Lucky as his name ironically suggests. His position is without ambiguity, since he is Pozzo's slave. In this respect, he seems to be free from insecurity. But this is negated by the fact that he may lose his job — he is not secure after all.⁷ Moreover, his state is so deplorable that his detachment loses its value.

The fact remains, however, that Lucky is able to stand back and declaim his monologue on the follies of his fellow-men. In his speech, he is using conventional language, that language which is alienating for the individual, since it is a social activity. But it follows a private system of logic and imagery which is only partially intellegible to the average person. It has been described as a "wonderful piece of schizophrenic oratory".⁸ Indeed, it contains many of the characteristics of schizophrenic thought disorder, reflecting Lucky's basic security. His private logic seems to suggest a basic security, while his inability to adapt to his surroundings seems to indicate, on the other hand, that in the eyes of the general public, he is insecure. Sartre defines the schizophrenic as "un de ces rêveurs éveillés que la médecine nomme schizophrènes et dont le propre est de ne pouvoir s'adapter au réel". This is a good description of Lucky which is supported by his monologue and use of language.

Lucky is rather an extreme case, however. The rest of the characters suffer from a more common feeling of insecurity which requires that others recognize his presence. Pozzo, for instance, delivers his pompous speeches only after he has ensured that everyone is listening to him. Likewise, Gogo and Didi frequently call upon each other's attention by engaging in fresh conversation. They cannot endure silence for long, since this is equivalent to separation from the other. They are in a

⁷ Stephani P. Smith, «Between Pozzo and Godot: Existence as Dilemma», *French Review* XLVII, No. 5, April 1974, p. 895.

⁸ G. C. Barnard, *Samuel Beckett: A New Approach*, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., London, 1970, p. 95.

paradoxical position which is summed up in Vladimir's words: "Ne me dis rien. Reste avec moi!" (p. 81). Their situation is absurd and frustrating — they strive for security, but their efforts fail to bring them satisfaction.

Despair

This feeling of insecurity which is never entirely overcome, leads to despair, all the more poignant because the victims are aware of their condition. Primarily, this is seen through the characters' lucidity, their conscious use of language. They are aware of their own condition and have a critical attitude towards it. This is observed through references to death, to the pointlessness of carrying on. A notable illustration of this is in Vladimir's speech where tenses and personal pronouns are ingeniously woven into a pattern which is both balanced and rhythmic. For the individual, nothing is certain, neither activity, nor its place in time. Vladimir questions himself:

Est-ce que j'ai dormi, pendant que les autres souffraient?
Est-ce que je dors en ce moment? Demain, quand je croirai me réveiller, que dirai-je de cette journée? (p. 128)

The series of questions remains unanswered, because there is no one or nothing to act as a frame of reference. The only certainty is death. After a pause, Vladimir continues:

Du fond du trou, rêveusement, le fossoyeur applique ses fers.
On a le temps de vieillir. L'air est plein de nos cris.

The series of questions remains unanswered, because there is so that after reflection, he sighs: "Je ne peux pas continuer", but in the unfailing manner of the play, he resumes with "Qu'est-ce que j'ai dit?". On several occasions, the characters are on the point of surrender, but somehow they manage to pursue the struggle, pulling themselves, or one another, together as soon as their spirits sink too low.

In their attempt to gain recognition, the characters strive harder than the average human being. The theatre allows Beckett to exaggerate their situation, to carry it to its extreme limits to achieve what Artaud advocates as the role of the theatre: "Le théâtre doit faire rencontrer l'homme et son destin".⁹ More than once, the conversation fades, or death is actively envisaged and the tempo comes to an ominous halt as the characters contemplate their fate. Then, through tireless ingenuity, they devise some new form of amusement or new

⁹ A. Artaud, *o. c.*, p. 165.

topic of conversation which holds us in suspense. The play is composed of thematic and rhythmic variations which reflect the subject matter and the state of mind of the characters concerned. Janvier quotes Beckett on this point:¹⁰

Les metteurs en scène ne semblent pas sensibles à la forme dans le mouvement. La sorte de forme qu'on trouve dans la musique, par exemple, où les thèmes reviennent. Dans un texte lorsque les actions sont répétées, elles devraient être insolites la première fois, de sorte que quand elles reviendront... le spectateur saura les reconnaître.

As Beckett himself suggests in this quotation, there is a certain musical quality in the structure of the play, and this could be extended to include the choice of words. There is a striking example of this when Didi and Gogo try to describe the sound of leaves. The words in themselves are simple, but so arranged, they evoke musical overtones:

<i>French</i>	<i>English</i>
A.	
V. — Ça fait un bruit d'ailes	They make a noise like wings
E. — De feuilles	Like leaves
V. — De sable	Like sand
E. — De feuilles	Like leaves
Silence
B.	
V. — Elles parlent toutes en même temps.	They all speak together
E. — Chacune à part soi	Each one to itself
Silence
C.	
V. — Plutôt elles chuchotent	Rather they whisper
E. — Elles murmurent	They rustle
V. — Elles bruissent	They murmur
E. — Elles murmurent.	
Silence (p. 88/89)	They rustle.

(p. 62/63)

If we divide the conversation into two parts, we discover that A and C are symmetrical, separated by silences and a brief exchange (B). In each of the two sections, Vladimir makes a statement, which is contradicted by Estragon, rectified by Vladimir himself and finally by Estragon with the same word as his previous one, i.e. *feuilles* and *murmurent*. This repetition and variation on a theme, ending in harmony, is musical. The

¹⁰ Ludovic Janvier, *Pour Samuel Beckett*, Minuit, Paris, 1966, p. 400.

presentation is identical in the two versions which indicates that it is important, more so in fact than the choice of terms which varies slightly. In French, *murmurent* is repeated, whereas in English, rustle (*bruissent*) is the word which re-appears. However pleasing acoustically, this verbal exchange is only a brief interlude in the fight against despair.

Communication

Despair, which we have just been discussing, is closely connected with another theme, the difficulty of communication between individuals. This emerges through the language in *Godot*.

The medium of the theatre enables the characters to express their lack of contact. On stage, they interact with each other in such a way that any breakdown in communication is immediately noticeable. Although in Beckett's early plays, the directions are looser than in the later ones, such as *Comédie* where every detail of action is prescribed with infinite precision, the action in *Godot* is already carefully controlled. Lack of communication is indicated on the physical level:

V. — Viens que je t'embrasse!

E. — Ne me touche pas!

(Vladimir suspend son vol, peiné. Silence).

It is also suggested on an emotional level by the silences and pauses. Alternatively, the characters may deliberately discuss their inability to communicate, which therefore intensifies their incompatibility:

Voyons, Gogo, il faut me renvoyer la balle de temps en temps (p. 15)

C'est ça, faisons un peu de conversation (p. 67)

C'est ça, posons-nous des questions (p. 90)

Here the characters reveal their repeated attempts to communicate. Like the nature of all human interaction which comes in fits and starts, without reaching the root of the matter, so the dialogue in *Godot* develops irregularly, frequently and abruptly changing course in search of fruitful results which never materialize.

The dialogue forms the spine of most of the drama, though in *Godot*, it has a more active role than in later plays, since there is virtually nothing else in the way of movement. As a result, concentration is focussed upon it. Giraud's remark

that in the theatre, "c'est le langage lui-même qui est dramatisé"¹¹ is particularly applicable to *Godot*. Guiraud elaborates:

Nous voyons les mots se gonfler, se rétracter, avancer, paraître et disparaître selon leur propre loi.

This is exactly what happens in *Godot*. There are many illustrations, and one which seems particularly apt is the discussion between the tramps about the mysterious Godot. It is a wonderful example of rhythmic effect, each speaker taking up the cue from the other. They are trying to recollect the Saviour's words, building up to a crescendo and then releasing the tension with a descent into common sense, followed by a silence which marks the end of the phrase, just as in a musical score. The following passage is quoted to illustrate this point:

- E. — Qu'est-ce-qu'on lui a demandé au juste?
V. — Tu n'étais pas là?
E. — Je n'ai pas fait attention.
V. — Eh bien... Rien de précis.
E. — Une sorte de prière.
V. — Voilà
E. — Une vague supplique.
V. — Si tu veux.
E. — Et qu'a-t-il répondu?
V. — Qu'il verrait.
E. — Qu'il ne pouvait rien promettre.
V. — Qu'il lui fallait réfléchir.
E. — A tête reposée.
V. — Consulter sa famille.
E. — Ses amis.
V. — Ses agents.
E. — Ses correspondants.
V. — Ses registres.
E. — Son compte en banque.
V. — Avant de se prononcer.
E. — C'est normal.
V. — N'est-ce-pas?
E. — Il me semble.
V. — A moi aussi. (Repos) (p. 24)

The passage is a brief interlude where some degree of contact is achieved. As usual, however, the effort is short-lived. Silence follows and communication ceases. The exchange is also somewhat contrived. The directness of ordinary dialogue is present, but the grammatical accuracy of the passage removes it from the realm of reality. The correctness with which each

¹¹ Pierre Guiraud, *Essais de Stylistique*, Klincksieck, Paris, 1969, p. 41.

phrase is uttered has a studied quality about it which is not possible in spontaneous conversation. In this respect, Beckett yields to what Larthomas describes as "la tentation de l'écriture"¹² which tends to attract dramatists. Indeed, their art lies somewhere between the spoken and the written word, since it is composed in script with a view to being performed orally. The playwright has time to polish the dialogue and direct it towards the desired goal. If Beckett had decided to produce the effect of ordinary conversation, then he would have had to add some of its characteristics such as careless repetition, hesitation, and accidents of various kinds. In parts, it is evident that this is what Beckett tries to do. The conversation between the tramps and Pozzo is a good example of this:

- P. — Qui est Godot?
E. — Godot?
P. — Vous m'avez pris pour Godot?
V. — Oh, Monsieur, pas un seul instant, Monsieur.
P. — Qui est-ce?
V. — Eh bien, c'est un... C'est une connaissance.
E. — Mais non, voyons, on ne le connaît à peine.
V. — Evidemment... on ne le connaît pas très bien... mais tout de même...
E. — Pour ma part, je ne le reconnaîtrais même pas.
P. — Vous m'avez pris pour lui.
E. — C'est-à-dire... l'obscurité... la fatigue... la faiblesse... l'attente... j'avoue... j'ai cru... un instant... (p. 30)

There are hesitations, corrections, interruptions, introductory phrases which all provide a semblance of actual speech. Likewise, the oaths and interjections which are scattered through the play, contribute to the ambiance of reality. It is the more poetic passages, especially the monologues, which become too artificial to resemble everyday speech. Both types of speech combine to create a general atmosphere of tension, of ineffectual attempts at communication. Pozzo, in his arrogance, rarely listens to his friends and avoids their questions. As for the tramps, they often talk at cross-purposes or in contradiction to one another. Moments of harmony are brief and overridden by a lack of understanding. A conversation does not last long without a change of subject. Beckett may, in fact, have felt that this element was overdone, for he eliminates some of the topic changes in the translation. The following extract supports this point:

¹² Larthomas, *o. c.*, p. 350.

- V. — Alors pourquoi ils t'ont battu?
 E. — Je ne sais pas.
 V. — Non, vois-tu, Gogo, il y a des choses qui t'échappent, qui ne m'échappent pas à moi. Tu dois le sentir.
 E. — Je te dis que je ne faisais rien.
 V. — Peut-être bien que non. Mais il y a la manière, si on tient à sa peau. Enfin, ne parlons plus de ça. Te voilà revenu, et je suis bien content.
 E. — Ils étaient dix.
 V. — Toi aussi, tu dois être content, au fond, avoue-le.
 E. — Content de quoi?
 V. — De m'avoir retrouvé.

The English is condensed so that "Te voilà revenu, et je suis bien content" disappears. "Ils étaient dix" is replaced by "I wasn't doing anything" which is a continuation of the previous statement and not of the more remote reference to robbers. The sequence is not as haphazard as the original. There is an effort in the translation to tighten up some of the dialogue and the stage-directions, which can be accounted for by a growing insight into the requirements of the theatre.

Returning to our original point, we stated that the stage directions often indicate awkwardness and consequent lack of communication. There are several attempts at reaching the other which are temporary and relatively unsuccessful. Most of the exchanges are based on conflict, which lies at the root of human relationships in *Godot*.

Identity.

This conflict which affects communication, is part of a search for identity which is the next theme for consideration. Through communication, the characters are essentially hoping to achieve a personal meaning and identity with their surroundings. The only way this can be done is through language which by its nature is alienating since it is shared with others. Silence and solitude seem to be the ideal expression for self-identity, but they are rather dubious as an ideal since they are equivalent to the void. Vladimir, for instance, tries to galvanize Estragon into action, although he knows that the only relevant action, to wait, is boring. But they must not let any opportunities of diversion escape them for, he warns:

Dans un instant, tout se dissipera, nous serons à nouveau seuls, au milieu des solitudes. (p. 113)

It is significant that the last phrase is translated by "in the midst of nothingness" (p. 81). Solitude is synonymous with the void and also with silence. It is the only state in which man is free from conflict. The absurdity of the situation is

the essence of *Godot*. It becomes even more evident in later plays where the written sentence gradually gives way to longer, more eloquent silences. George Steiner notes that:¹³

The revaluation of silence in the poetics of Beckett is the most original, characteristic acts of the modern spirit.

Bernal, however, rightly reminds us that:¹⁴

Pour que cette histoire de silence soit dite, il faut qu'il (Beckett) revienne aux mots.

Silence can be best expressed with language, just as solitude can be seen as the result of an attempt at communication.

The search for identity is both a fruitless and a necessary task in a world where there is no certainty except in silence and solitude. Iris Murdoch emphasizes this point:¹⁵

The simple virtues of human intercourse become forms of insincerity... What it (the aspiring spirit) desires is complete stillness. Its ideal is silence.

Beckett develops this in a number of ways which we have already explored: hesitation, pauses, contradiction. Another device which is used is the vagueness which surrounds dates, numbers, place-names, anything in fact that is likely to form a frame of reference. The tramps have no idea what day of the week it is, and their surroundings are so bare and anonymous that they could be almost anywhere. As for time, we noted already that the time of day is uncertain, contrived. Night falls so suddenly that it becomes conspicuously artificial. Even the moon is no longer a reliable source of information as regards time, its arrival being too abrupt. In one single sentence, "Le soleil se couche, la lune se lève" (p. 131), Beckett deliberately flouts all conventions which would render the scene more realistic. Clearly his intention is to preserve its absurdity, so as to disorient the characters. All is illusion; no one realizes this more intensely than Estragon: "On trouve toujours quelque chose, hein, Didi, pour nous donner l'impression d'exister" (p. 97).

The themes of waiting, insecurity, despair, lack of communication and identity are dealt with in such a comprehensive way that they in fact emerge as themes with universal

¹³ Steiner, *o. c.*, p. 671.

¹⁴ Olga Bernal, *Langage et Fiction dans le Roman de Beckett*, Gallimard, Paris, 1969, p. 189.

¹⁵ Iris Murdoch, *Sartre*, Collins, London, 1967, p. 80.

relevance and appeal. Ionesco, also a playwright in exile who chose French as his idiom, evaluates Beckett in this sentence:¹⁶

Beckett est essentiellement tragique... parceque justement, chez lui, c'est la totalité de la condition humaine qui entre en jeu... c'est le problème des fins dernières de l'homme qui se pose.

To this end, the theatre, with its wide range of techniques, is a wise choice as a medium. It is a medium in which the language is dynamic and is actively examined by the protagonists. Like the silences and the setting, language is but one of the elements which constitute the total experience of drama. The content is articulated into words, while the remaining elements create the form, and the two merge into a theatrical 'language'¹⁷ which is to a large extent universal. The result is that when Beckett translates from French into English, the formal linguistic elements change, while the rest of the elements, the paraverbal ones — the physical and emotional aspects — remain intact. The theatre is so ideally suited to Beckett's linguistic curiosity and existentialist philosophy that Croussy was able to say with conviction: "Jamais un auteur ne mit mieux que Beckett son oeuvre en équation avec sa vie".¹⁸

¹⁶ Duckworth, p CXXVI (From 'Notes et Contrenotes' 114).

¹⁷ Artaud, *o. c.*, p. 6.

¹⁸ Guy Croussy, *Beckett*, Hachette, Paris, 1971, p. 16.