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What is there to say when faced with the end of the world?:

The Representation of Language in the Theatre of the Absurd and 21<sup>st</sup> century French and Québécois

### Apocalypse Literature

This paper explores the connections between two literary movements, the theatre of the absurd and end-of-world literature. The former is recognized as a major part of post-war literature, with authors such as Ionesco and Beckett continuing to be a topic of scholarly discourse. The latter has gained in prominence throughout the years, with a significant amount of works being produced in the beginning of the 21st century. Within the research of the absurd and the apocalypse, the two movements, while both being heavily influenced by the creation of weapons of mass destruction, are very seldom considered in tandem. Interestingly, these movements resemble each other in their representation of language and communication. Dialogue is an essential aspect of theatre, however, for Beckett and Ionesco, it does not serve the purpose that we have come to expect of it. Characters speak to each other without listening, repeat themselves non-stop, contradict what they had said two lines ago and vocally claim to do an action while not moving at all. A similar degradation of language can be found in my corpus of apocalypse literature, where, along with the dwindling number of survivors, language slowly loses its meaning. This paper argues that this decomposition of language indicates a thematic heritage between the theatre of the absurd and apocalypse literature. Words come to mean different things in the wastelands of the apocalypse and the deserts put on stage by Ionesco and Beckett.