

Absurdity and Human Existence in Yusuf Idris's *The Farafir*: A Philosophical Reading in Light of Existentialism

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Received: 04/08/2025

Accepted: 17/11/2025

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Doi:

<https://doi.org/10.36586/jcl.2.2026.0.53.0001>



Abstract

This paper examines *The Farafir*, a seminal play by the Egyptian playwright Yusuf Idris, from an existentialist perspective, with a keen awareness of the concepts of absurdity, freedom, and alienation. The study argues that Idris employs the dynamic relationship between Farfour (the fool) and the Master to dramatise existential concerns, such as those explored by Western philosophers, including Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Drawing on textual analysis and existential principles, the paper illustrates how Idris's portrayal of human war, the absurd, and entrenched social hierarchies reflects a well-known human quest for meaning. The research highlights the approaches in which Idris's characters grapple with questions of self-determination, the anxiety among characters' will, societal constraints, and the inevitability of human isolation. By situating *The Farafir* inside both its Egyptian cultural context and the wider existentialist tradition, this examination of the play reveals its capacity to transcend local social and political critiques, offering a profound philosophical inquiry into the absurdity of human existence. In doing so, it underscores Idris's role in bridging Arabic theatre with global intellectual movements.

Keywords: Yusuf Idris, *The Farafir*, existentialism, absurdity, freedom, alienation, human condition.

Introduction

The modern-day Arabic theatre, much like its Western counterpart, has frequently served as a reflective medium through which playwrights interrogate the human circumstance, societal systems, and philosophical quandaries of life. Within this subculture, the works of Egyptian dramatist Yusuf Idris occupy a great role, especially his celebrated play *The Farafir* (1964), which boldly challenges conventional narrative structures and theatrical expectancies through its minimalist design, meta-theatrical techniques, and deep philosophical undercurrents. While Idris's contributions to Arabic literature had been extensively acknowledged for their sociopolitical critique and psychological depth, *The Farafir* stands proud as a compelling dramatisation of existentialist worries, putting human lifestyles—their absurdity, alienation, and ceaseless search for meaning—at the very centre of its dramatic inquiry.

The play revolves around central figures: the Master, a consultant of authority, subculture, and oppressive systems; and the Farfour, the archetypal “simpleton” or “idiot,” whose reputedly naïve demeanour belies a profound philosophical intensity. Through their perpetual confrontations, shifting identities, and cyclical energy dynamics, Idris constructs a dramatic space that mirrors the existentialist theatre of the absurd. Farfour's oscillation between servitude and insurrection displays humanity's battle towards externally imposed roles, societal expectations, and the inherent meaninglessness of life. In this context, Idris's paintings align closely with the philosophical discourses of European existentialists, inclusive of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, each of whom grappled with the absurd situation of humanity in an international without clear cause or divine order.

Existentialism, as a philosophical movement, emphasises the man or woman's duty to create meaning in an indifferent or even adverse universe. Sartre's concept of lifestyles' previous essence and Camus's formula of the absurd establish frameworks via which people confront their freedom, alienation, and the futility of existence. As Camus famously asserts in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, “There is but one really serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or isn't always really worth living quantities to answering the fundamental question of philosophy” (Camus, 1942, p. 3). While *The Farafir* does not without delay confront the query of suicide, it ranges the wider existential quandary of whether lifestyles, as dictated with the aid of arbitrary structures and expectations, hold any real value. *Farfour's* resistance to and manipulation of the Master's authority turns into a

metaphor for humanity's defiance of meaninglessness via self-assertion, creativity, and play.

Moreover, Idris's usage of absurdity and cyclical repetition in the play's structure aligns with the aesthetics of the Theatre of the Absurd, a movement profoundly fashioned by existentialist thought. Like Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, *The Farafir* dispenses with linear narrative development and conventional plot decisions, favouring an atmosphere of uncertainty, contradiction, and philosophical provocation. The communication between the Master and the Farfour frequently devolves into round arguments, reflecting the futility of communication and the elusiveness of definitive truth. Such strategies underscore the play's alignment with existentialist topics, positioning Idris inside a broader global context of modernist and postmodernist theatrical experimentation.

In addition to its philosophical resonances, *The Farafir* additionally offers a tremendously Arab meditation on the human situation, filtered through the cultural, political, and social realities of Sixties Egypt. The hierarchical courting between the Master and the Farfour may be examined as a microcosm of broader structures of oppression—be they colonial, patriarchal, or autocratic—that continue to shape the lives of people within the Arab world. In this experience, Idris's play transcends mere imitation of Western existentialist fashions, imparting as an alternative a localised articulation of usual issues. The interaction between non-public freedom and systemic constraint, between the search for authenticity and the weight of culture, imbues *The Farafir* with each cultural specificity and philosophical universality.

This paper argues that *The Farafir* operates as an extensive literary text that interrogates the absurdity of human lifestyles via its dramatic form, individual dynamics, and philosophical underpinnings. Drawing upon existentialist concepts—especially the works of Sartre and Camus—this observation will explore how Idris crafts a theatrical representation of alienation, freedom, and rebellion that resonates a ways beyond its immediate cultural milieu. Ultimately, *The Farafir* exhibits itself as a timeless meditation on the human quandary, one that continues to speak to audiences grappling with the fundamental questions of lifestyles in an ever-changing international environment.

Literature Review

The important reception of Yusuf Idris's *The Farafir* inside Arabic literary studies frequently focuses on its modern contribution to fashionable Arabic theatre, its symbolic use of characters, and its social critique of class dynamics. However, noticeably fewer studies method the textual content from the vantage point of existential philosophy and its alignment with the Theatre of the Absurd. This literature evaluation will first situate *The Farafir* inside broader scholarly discussions on absurdist drama, then highlight works on existentialism in literature, before finally synthesising these to justify this paper's particular contribution.

Scholars of Arabic theatre have continually located Yusuf Idris as a playwright who bridges traditional Arab storytelling with modernist and existentialist theatrical techniques. Ibrahim Taha, in his *A Look at The Arabic Theatre and Modernity*, emphasises Idris's engagement with Western dramatic trends, noting that *The Farafir* "borrows from Beckett and Ionesco, but roots its concerns inside the specificities of Egyptian subculture and politics" (Taha, 1997, p. 112). This statement highlights how Idris integrates existentialist factors—especially the absurd and the cyclical—with the localised realities of Egyptian society. Similarly, Ferial Ghazoul identifies Idris's paintings as a "pioneering attempt to redefine the connection among actor, target audience, and authority within Arabic dramaturgy" (Ghazoul, 1998, p. 45). Her evaluation underscores how the play's performative structure destabilises hierarchical strength both on the level and in society, aligning with existentialist issues of freedom and revolt.

An important body of scholarship associates *The Farafir* with the discussion of strength, identity, and the social construction of roles. In the modern Egyptian drama, etc. Badawi claims that Idris drama is Badawi notes that Idris's drama satirises social hierarchies and transforms specific social references into universal human concerns (178). Badawi's reading situates Idris's drama within the framework of Hegelian philosophy, yet it simultaneously opens the door to an existential interpretation, as the Master and Farfour reflect Sartre's concepts of freedom, bad faith, and the struggle inherent in existing under the gaze of the other. However, Badawi refrains from explicitly connecting Idris's work to existentialism or absurdist philosophy, leaving a conceptual gap that this study seeks to address.

Existing studies on life in literature, particularly within European criticism, have examined the figure of absurd drama. Martin Esslin, in his influential work *The*

Theatre of the Absurd, analyses the genre through the works of playwrights such as Eugène Ionesco and Jean Genet. Esslin defines absurd theatre as “the human condition being reduced to its basic minimum, the absurdity of existence exposed in a repetitious, meaningless cycle” (Esslin, 1961, p. 23). Although Esslin does not discuss Yusuf Idris, the criteria he establishes for absurd drama—such as cyclical communication, functional reversals, and the violation of logical discourse—closely align with the techniques and concerns found in Idris’s plays. This connection has been indirectly noted by Arab critics such as Sabry Hafez, who observes the transcultural echoes of the absurd in Idris’s drama (Hafez, 1993, p. 97).

The intersection of existentialist philosophy and literature has been extensively tested via the works of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Sartre’s emphasis on freedom, duty, and the absurdity of existence underpins much of existentialist literary criticism. His idea of “horrific religion,” in which people deny their inherent freedom by way of conforming to imposed roles, resonates strongly with Farfour’s oscillation between servitude and subversion (Sartre, 1956, p. 70). Camus’s notion of the absurd, articulated in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, in addition, parallels the repetitive and seemingly futile exchanges between Idris’s characters, who exist in a global world stripped of coherent meaning or reason (Camus, 1991, p. 28). While these philosophers’ works are normally applied to European literature, their relevance to Idris’s play invites a broader, trans-cultural application of existential notions. What remains underexplored in current literature is the specific way Idris employs absurdist techniques no longer simply as a cultured preference but as a philosophical critique of lifestyles themselves. Some critics, along with Nehad Selaiha, well known for *The Farafir*’s existential dimensions, describe the play as “an Arab response to the disaster of modernity, blending local issues with recurrent existential dilemmas” (Selaiha, 1999, p. 132). Yet, complete research explicitly situating Idris inside the existentialist subculture, along with European counterparts, is uncommon. Most analyses prioritise the socio-political readings of the Master-Farfour dynamic, regularly overlooking the deeper metaphysical questions embedded within the textual content.

Therefore, this takes a look at positioning itself at the intersection of Arabic literary complaint, absurdist theatre studies, and existential philosophy. By drawing connections between *The Farafir* and the existential themes articulated through Sartre and Camus, this paper fills an opening in modern-day scholarship. It argues that Idris's play isn't always best a critique of Egyptian social hierarchies but also a profound philosophical exploration of the absurdity inherent in the human circumstance, freedom, and the search for meaning within oppressive structures.

Characters as Existential Archetypes: The Master and the Farfour

At the heart of Yusuf Idris's *The Farafir* lies a profound existential conflict embodied by the two important characters: the Master and the Farfour. These figures are not merely products of Egyptian society; however, function as existential archetypes, dramatising the essential human war between freedom and subjugation, absurdity, and, which means, oppression and resistance. Their interactions provide a rich exploration of the existential topics of freedom, alienation, and the absurd situation of humanity, situating *The Farafir* firmly within the philosophical traditions articulated by Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, as well as the theatrical culture of the Absurd.

The Master symbolises the forces of authority and culture, the systemic systems via which human beings try and impose order and hierarchy upon a chaotic global. His speeches are grandiose but hollow, structured completely on Farfour's popularity and his authority. As the Master announces, "There should be a Master, and there has to be a Farfour. Without me, you cannot exist, and without you, neither can I" (Idris, 1985, p. 36). This acknowledgement immediately displays the Sartrean concept of the reciprocal gaze, wherein identification is contingent upon the recognition of the other (Sartre, 1956, p. 353). The Master's life as 'Master' is handiest tested through Farfour's subservience, highlighting the artificiality and absurdity of roles which can be socially constructed rather than inherently significant.

The Master's reliance on the Farfour exposes the fragility of constructed identities. In existentialist philosophy, terrible faith entails clinging to social roles as a means of escaping the obligation of freedom (Sartre, 1956, p. 70). The Master embodies this terrible faith, attempting to restore each himself and the Farfour into static categories. His frequent declarations— "This is the order of things. Masters need to command, and Farfours must obey!" (Idris, 1985, p. 39). By displaying his determined attachment to a hierarchy he is aware of, at some stage, to be arbitrary.

His authority exists not because of any intrinsic superiority but because Farfour plays alongside, even supposing sarcastically.

The Farfour, alternatively, embodies existential freedom and revolt. Although socially located as an idiot or servant, he subverts the Master's instructions through humour, irony, and resistance. His phrases regularly undermine the seriousness of the Master's proclamations. In one instance, when the Master demands obedience, the Farfour retorts, "If you're the Master, then why do you appear so terrified of me? Are you afraid your Farfour may run away?" (Idris, 1985, p. 42). This line exposes the absurd dependency at the heart of their relationship and aligns with Camus's belief that the popularity of absurdity opens the direction to revolt (Camus, 1991, p. 54). Farfour's refusal to conform absolutely to the position assigned to him signifies his focus on freedom and the arbitrary nature of all imposed hierarchies.

Farfour's defiance echoes Camus's concept of the absurd hero, who, despite spotting life's lack of inherent meaning, chooses to persist in rebellion. His conduct—ranging from mocking deference to open defiance—suggests a deeper knowledge of freedom as a non-stop statement of defiance towards oppressive systems. In one of his maximum revealing strains, the Farfour states, "If I refuse to obey you, do I quit to be a Farfour? Or do you give up to be a Master? Perhaps we both vanish into nothingness!" (Idris, 1985, p. 45). This assertion captures the existential horror at the heart of the play: without these roles, neither identification may be sustained. Yet in exposing this dependency, the Farfour exhibits the absurdity of the whole structure.

The cyclical nature in their exchanges—wherein defiance ends in punishment, punishment in repetition—displays the existential futility found inside the Theatre of the Absurd. Martin Esslin notes that absurdist drama regularly depicts "the human condition being reduced to its basic minimum, the absurdity of existence exposed in a repetitious, meaningless cycle" (Esslin, 1961, p. 23). In *The Farafir*, this cycle is dramatised through Farfour's repeated resistance and the Master's repeated failure to establish lasting dominance. Farfour's laughter will become a form of existential defiance, echoing Camus's perception that revolt itself gives life meaning in the absence of a wish for resolution (Camus, 1991, p. 123).

In addition, the instability of the language in *The Farafir* of the existence of communication reflects. Words in Farafir are unable to express a stable meaning; They change, contradict, and often fall into uninteresting. When the master insists, "You should follow the rules," answers Farfor, "You tell me, 'You must follow the

rules,' but whenever you wish, you change the rules. How can I accept such folly?" (Idris, 1985, p. 50). This exchange emphasises the impossibility of the arbitrariness of social orders and the particular truth in an absurd world, and repeats itself with the vision of Sartre that "man is nothing else but what he makes of himself" (Sartre, 1956, p. 22).

Finally, the Master and Furfour closure work in a dialectics of freedom and fear, as existing protests. The master represents humanity's efforts to refuse freedom through the control structures, while FARFOR represents the existence hero, who, through rebellion and laughter, also claims his freedom within subordination. Their endless struggle refers to a broader human situation: Between the desire for meaning and conflict with the invaders, between the roles and the identity. In this sense, Farafir stands as a deep focus on existence, and reveals the philosophical truth through its characters that freedom, even when it is denied, persists as the irrational essence of human existence.

2. Dialogue and Structure as Reflections of Absurdity

Yusuf Idris's *The Farafir* achieves its existential effect no longer entirely via its characters, but via its modern use of dialogue and theatrical structure, each of which mirrors the absurdity in the middle of human lifestyles. Like the existential philosophers and dramatists before him—Sartre, Camus, Beckett—Idris utilises the very form of his play to carry the meaninglessness, circularity, and futility that symbolise the human condition. In *The Farafir*, language will become fragmented, conversation breaks down, and the play's structure resists conventional resolution. These stylistic alternatives strengthen the play's existential subject matters and align it with the conventions of the Theatre of the Absurd as theorised by way of Martin Esslin.

One of the most putting functions of *The Farafir* is its repetitive, cyclical speech. The characters frequently return to the identical arguments, the same assertions of authority, and the same refusals. This repetition mirrors the existential concept of existence as a sequence of meaningless, ordinary moves, void of progress or remaining motive. For example, the Master time and again insists on his superior function: "You have to obey, due to the fact it is written so!" to which the Farfour time and again responds with versions of, "But in which is it written? Show me the e-book!" (Idris, 1985, p. 44). This round exchange illustrates the fall apart of logical conversation and the futility of maintaining that means wherein none inherently exists. Sartre argued that human beings are condemned to seek meaning in a universe

that gives none (Sartre, 1956, p. 22), and Idris describes this catch-22 situation via speech that guarantees decision, however, promises none.

The dialogue also highlights the emptiness of authority when divorced from reason or ethical basis. The Master's proclamations are more and more hollow, counting on tautology and contradiction instead of logic. At one point, while the Farfour questions the policies, the Master exclaims, "Because I am the Master! That is the rule of thumb!" to which the Farfour laughs and says, "So the rule is a meaningless story" (Idris, 1985, p. 47). This alternative not handiest exposes the arbitrary nature of electricity but also reflects Camus's notion of the absurd, where human tries to impose rationality in conflict with an irrational international (Camus, 1991, p. 40). Farfour's laughter will become an act of rebellion, affirming his consciousness of the absurdity around him.

In terms of structure, *The Farafir* subverts the traditional arc of dramatic conflict, climax, and resolution. There is no linear progression; alternatively, the play operates in loops of repetition and return, and does not use a real exchange or development. The Master and Farfour interact in a reputedly infinite conflict of wills; however, neither achieves a definitive victory. Instead, the play ends as it begins: with the roles intact, the questions unresolved, and the cycle ready to repeat. This circularity embodies the existential quandary defined by Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus*: "The battle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a person's heart" (Camus, 1991, p. 123). Like Sisyphus pushing his rock ad infinitum, the Farfour and the Master are trapped in roles they can't break out of, reflecting the absurd nature of human lifestyles within societal systems.

Idris additionally incorporates metatheatrical elements that underscore the contractedness of both theatre and social roles. The Farfour, every so often, breaks the fourth wall, addressing the target market directly or drawing attention to the artificiality of the play. For instance, his feedback, "You are watching us, aren't you? Just as you watch your own Farfour at home!" (Idris, 1985, p. 51). This self-recognition aligns with the existential critique of performative roles in society, suggesting that individuals, like actors, are trapped in scripts written by others yet capable of recognising and subverting them. Patricia Waugh defines metafiction as fiction that "self-consciously reflects on its procedure of production" (Waugh, 1984, p. 2), and Idris applies this to theatre, inviting the target audience to reflect on the absurdity of their social performances.

Moreover, the failure of language in *The Farafir* reflects a key topic in existentialist and absurdist literature: the inadequacy of phrases to convey fact in an international language lacking a strong meaning. Communication between the Master and the Farfour regularly descends into contradiction, irony, or silence. When the Master asserts, “Words are sacred. They create truth,” the Farfour counters, “Then talk me into being a Master. Go on, attempt!” (Idris, 1985, p. 49). This moment reveals the impotence of language to alter existential realities; words, like roles, are hole until imbued with authentic meaning via action—a belief consistent with Sartre’s perception of existential freedom and obligation (Sartre, 1956, p. 70).

The setting of the play, too, contributes to its absurdist surroundings. The stage is often naked, undefined, emphasising the universality and timelessness of the war. This loss of specificity locates the focus squarely at the existential condition in place of any unique socio-political context, although the Egyptian backdrop remains implicit. Such staging selections align *The Farafir* with Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, in which the barren panorama displays the vacancy of life and the futility of human undertaking (Beckett, 2011, p. 12). Esslin identifies this minimalist, non-realist setting as a trademark of absurdist theatre, which seeks to strip away the distractions of realism to show the existential void beneath (Esslin, 1961, p. 23).

Ultimately, via its fragmented speech, round structure, metatheatrical attention, and minimal placing, *The Farafir* embodies the existential and absurdist view of human existence as repetitive, futile, and essentially missing in inherent that means. Idris’s innovation lies in how he adapts these time-honoured issues to the specificities of Egyptian society, displaying how local forms of authority and oppression mirror broader existential dilemmas. In doing so, he positions *The Farafir* no longer as a critique of societal systems, but as a philosophical meditation on the absurdity of human roles and the continual, if futile, warfare for freedom and authenticity.

3. Freedom, Alienation, and the Human Condition

At its centre, Yusuf Idris's *The Farafir* is an exploration of some of the most critical questions of human life: freedom, alienation, and the absurdity of the human circumstance. These themes, closely tied to the existentialist tradition, permeate the entire play, using the interactions between the Master and the Farfour, and shaping the very shape of the drama itself. Through their repetitive and futile exchanges, Idris interrogates the boundaries of freedom within societal structures, the pervasive sense of alienation in cutting-edge life, and the absurdity of existence itself—a universe without inherent meaning or justice.

3.1 Freedom as Illusion and Resistance

Throughout the play, freedom is presented as each a human necessity and an impossibility within constructed structures of authority. The Master represents the illusion of freedom through manipulation, clinging desperately to hierarchical roles to avoid confronting the terrifying freedom of an international without fixed meaning. His repeated claims—“There must be a Master and a Farfour. Without one, there is chaos!” (Idris, 1985, p. 44) — reflect Sartre's idea of terrible faith: the human choice to get away with freedom via surrendering to socially prescribed roles (Sartre, 1956, p. 70). The Master's fear isn't always of Farfour himself, but of the disintegration of the entire machine that means that sustains his identification.

Conversely, the Farfour symbolises the opportunity of freedom through cognisance and subversion. Though trapped in the role of the servant, he retains the existential freedom to outline his response to that role. His refusal to accept the Master's authority as herbal or essential turns into a diffused yet persistent act of rebellion. In one of the play's key moments, he demands, “If I pick out no longer to obey, what happens then? Do we each disappear? Or can we start anew, without titles?” (Idris, 1985, p. 45). This rhetorical question embodies existential freedom as theorised by Sartre: the capability to negate, to refuse, and to redefine oneself through conscious desire (Sartre, 1956, p. 22). The Farfour recognises that structures of strength are upheld handiest using the complicity of those underneath them, and his rebellion, although incomplete, asserts his freedom to impeach.

However, Idris also highlights the restrictions of freedom in a world dependent on absurdity and repetition. Despite Farfour's moments of defiance, the play circles returned endlessly to their initial positions. This structural choice reflects Camus's view that freedom exists inside the absurd, not past it. As Camus shows in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, rebellion itself will become an affirmation of human dignity in the face of absurdity, even if final liberation is impossible (Camus, 1991, p. 123). Farfour's laughter, his video games, and his refusal to take the Master critically are expressions of this existential insurrection.

3.2 Alienation and the Breakdown of Connection

Alienation permeates *The Farafir*, no longer best inside the characters' roles but additionally in their failed communication. The Master and the Farfour communicate at, in place of to, every different; their phrases rarely join meaningfully. This breakdown displays cutting-edge existential alienation, where individuals are estranged from each other, from genuine roles, and from the structures that shape their lives. The Master's reliance on empty declarations—"You are what you are. That is all there may be to it!" (Idris, 1985, p. 39)—highlights his alienation from his humanity, reducing existence to arbitrary labels. He no longer engages in talk; however, he simply recites the policies of a meaningless recreation.

Farfour's alienation is more existentially acute. Aware of the futility of communication and the artificiality of roles, he oscillates between sarcasm, silence, and absurd compliance. His isolation is not just from the Master, however, from any solid experience of self or purpose. He remarks bitterly, "Today I'm a Farfour. Tomorrow? Who knows? Perhaps I'll be a Master. Or possibly nothing at all" (Idris, 1985, p. 46). The popularity of the fluidity of roles and the instability of identity encapsulates the alienation at the coronary heart of cutting-edge existence, wherein individuals cannot find grounding in subculture, religion, or strong social positions.

Alienation is further dramatised through the empty, undefined setting of the play, reflecting the existential void. Much like the barren landscapes of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, Idris's degree lacks specificity, improving the sense of placelessness and timelessness. The Farfour and the Master exist in a vacuum, speaking and acting in cycles that make their isolation stronger in place of overcoming it. This displays Esslin's remark that inside the Theatre of the Absurd, characters are "Man is faced with a universe which is meaningless, without clear purpose or certainty, and from which he may be estranged" (Esslin, 1961, p. 23).

3.3 The Human Condition: Absurdity without Resolution in *The Farafir*

In *The Farafir*, Yusuf Idris offers a penetrating critique of the human condition, articulating an imaginative and prescient view of existence as inherently absurd, cyclical, and devoid of remaining decision. The play's shape, speech, and characterisation dramatise the futility of human efforts to discover meaning or assert manipulation within arbitrary social structures. In this regard, *The Farafir* aligns with the philosophical insights of existentialist thinkers like Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, as well as the wider traditions of absurdist theatre exemplified via Beckett and Ionesco. Through its portrayal of the repetitive, unresolved conflict between the Master and Farfour, Idris presents human life as a continuous performance, on the lookout for significance within a meaningless and absurd universe.

The absurdity at the heart of the play is rooted in the repetitive, cyclical nature of its plot and talk. Despite Farfour's moments of rebellion and the Master's attempts to reassert dominance, no actual development is ever accomplished. The equal conversations recur with mild versions, the same energy dynamics repeat, and the roles of Master and Farfour continue to be unchanged. This structural preference displays Camus's conception of the absurd situation, wherein people confront a universe without clear purpose, course, or justice. As Camus famously writes, "The absurd is born of this disagreement between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world" (*Myth of Sisyphus* 28). In *The Farafir*, this disagreement plays out via the Master's determined insistence on policies and hierarchies and the Farfour's attention that those are mere performances covering the void beneath.

The speech itself reinforces this absurdity through its failure to establish meaningful communication or resolution. The Master's proclamations, along with "There should always be someone to command and someone to obey!" (Idris, 1985, p. 44), are met not with submission, however, with Farfour's ironic, destabilising responses. The Farfour questions, mocks, and undermines these statements, highlighting their inherent emptiness: "If that is the rule, why do you change it every time you speak?" (Idris, 1985, p. 47). These exchanges exemplify the crumble of language as a vehicle for fact or stability, a key problem in each existentialist and absurdist literature. According to Sartre, in a global in which life precedes essence, people cannot rely upon outside systems or language to define themselves authentically (Sartre, 1956, p. 22). In *The Farafir*, phrases become equipment of

electricity video games in place of conveyors of fact, reinforcing the characters' entrapment in a meaningless cycle.

The absence of resolution within the play's conclusion is vital to its philosophical message. Rather than imparting catharsis, alternative, or escape, the play ends a lot as it started out—with the roles intact and the absurd cycle prepared to copy indefinitely. This planned non-resolution displays the existentialist view that life lacks inherent teleology or final purpose. As Camus indicates through the parent of Sisyphus, the war itself, as opposed to its outcome, constitutes the centre of human experience (Camus, 1991, p. 123). Farfour's refusal to completely capitulate, his persistence in thinking and mocking, mirrors Sisyphus's everlasting challenge. His resistance does not modify the system but affirms his employer inside it, embodying what Camus phrases the "lucid rebellion" towards absurdity (Camus, 1991, p. 54).

Furthermore, the play's unresolved structure reflects the human situation as a nation of perpetual incompleteness. Both the Master and the Farfour are trapped in roles that deny them fulfilment. The Master is haunted by the fragility of his authority, knowing it exists simply through Farfour's persistent recognition. The Farfour, even though aware of the absurdity, cannot break out of the dynamic he seeks to undermine. This mirrors Sartre's idea of "condemned freedom", where humans are unfastened to choose but cannot escape the outcomes of their choices within a world that gives no ensures (Sartre, 1956, p. 70). Farfour's restrained freedom lies in his recognition of absurdity and his refusal to publish unthinkingly, at the same time as he stays bound within the cycle.

Idris also employs metatheatrical techniques to underline the play's philosophical worries. Farfour's occasional addresses to the target market divulge the constructed nature of both theatrical and social realities. By breaking the fourth wall, he implicates the target market in the absurd performance, inviting them to understand their roles inside similar systems of energy and repetition. This aligns with the existential critique of roles and performances—that individuals are regularly trapped by using the scripts society affords, yet hold the freedom to understand and resist those roles (Waugh, 1984, p. 2). The audience is, as a result, confronted now not simply with Farfour's dilemma but with their participation in systems that perpetuate absurdity.

The empty, timeless putting further reinforces the sense of absurdity without decision. The loss of a particular location or ancient grounding renders the play

common, suggesting that the dynamics it depicts are not restricted to Egypt or any unique society but reflect the wider human catch-22 situation. In this, Idris connects with the wider way of life of absurdist theatre, where minimalist, barren stages mirror the existential void. Esslin notes that such settings strip human life down to its necessities, confronting characters with “the human condition being reduced to its basic minimum, the absurdity of existence exposed in a repetitious, meaningless cycle” (Esslin, 1961, p. 23). *The Farafir* participates absolutely in this subculture, using its stark surroundings to highlight the characters’ existential isolation and the futility of their war.

Ultimately, *the Farafir* affords the human condition as one of absurdity without decision, where individuals are trapped in roles, systems, and performances that provide no breakout. Yet within this bleak imaginative and prescient lies a quiet confirmation of human dignity through resistance. Farfour’s refusal to just accept the Master’s authority as hereditary or eternal, his laughter in the face of absurdity, and his persevering engagement with the structures that confine him all reflect existential freedom. He can’t alter the arena he inhabits; however, he can pick his mindset toward it. In this, Idris aligns with Camus’s declaration that the riot itself is meaningful, even in a meaningless world.

Through its structure, speech, and philosophical depth, *The Farafir* speaks to the long-lasting human struggle for organisation, dignity, and authenticity inside systems that perpetuate absurdity. Idris’s work, while rooted in Egyptian cultural realities, transcends its context to provide a customary meditation on the absurd condition of human existence—one wherein the absence of resolution does not negate the opportunity of meaningful resistance.

Conclusion

Yusuf Idris’s *The Farafir* stands as a pivotal painting within modern-day Arabic theatre now not simplest for its innovative dramatic structure and socio-political statement but more profoundly for its philosophical engagement with the usual condition of human life. Through its apparently simple but symbolically rich characters—the Master and the Farfour—the play stages a complex interrogation of freedom, alienation, absurdity, and the search for meaning in a global without inherent purpose. Idris’s dramatic vision displays and, in some respects, localises the wider existentialist discourse articulated by way of European philosophers and

dramatists, together with Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Samuel Beckett. In doing so, Idris bridges Western existentialist concepts with the particular cultural and ancient realities of Egypt in the 1960s, creating a work that resonates a long way beyond its immediate social context.

Throughout the play, Idris deconstructs conventional strength dynamics, exposing their reliance on performance, recognition, and repetition. The Master's authority is discovered to be hole, contingent upon the Farfour's subjugation, but this subjugation is neither absolute nor strong. The Farfour, via his oscillation between submission and defiance, exposes the artificiality of the roles imposed upon each himself and the Master. This dynamic mirrors Sartre's existentialist view that individuals are not defined with the aid of any essence but ought to constantly forge their identities via acts of will, choice, and resistance in opposition to bad faith. The Master's clinging to his role represents the denial of freedom in favour of societal constructs, while Farfour's playful subversions embody the existential impulse closer to authenticity and self-definition.

The structure of *The Farafir*, in addition, reinforces its existential concerns via its cyclical, non-linear narrative and its embrace of absurdity. Like the characters of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, Idris's figures are trapped in a repetitive, futile change that mirrors the human situation itself—forever and ever striving for that means within an indifferent universe. The breakdown of verbal exchange, the absurdity of debate, and the play's meta-theatrical elements all make contributions to a theatrical revel that denies the target audience the comfort of decision or closure. Instead, Idris's invitation reflects on the character of life as something inherently unstable, performative, and absurd.

Alienation emerges in the play not only via the characters' isolation from one another but also via their estrangement from language, roles, and reality. The Farfours' incapacity—or refusal—to conform to the Master's expectations highlights the alienation inherent in societal structures that searching for to repair identity and suppress individuality. This subject matter resonates with the wider existentialist critique of modernity, in which people locate themselves alienated no longer simply from each other but from the structures of meaning that after provided coherence and cause. In this mild, *The Farafir* turns into a philosophical meditation on the human condition in the current age: condemned to freedom, careworn with choice, and pressured to create meaning in the face of absurdity.

Moreover, Idris's contribution to the Theatre of the Absurd is massive exactly because he situates those everyday concerns within an Egyptian—and, via extension, Arab—context. While indebted to Western existentialist traditions, Idris's play speaks without delay to the realities of post-colonial societies grappling with authority, identification, and the legacies of oppression. The Master and the Farfour, while abstract figures, also symbolise the tensions within Arab societies between tradition and modernity, authority and rebellion, stagnation and transformation. In this regard, *The Farafir* transcends mere imitation of European fashions, supplying instead a localised expression of existential issues that speak to the precise historical and cultural situations of its advent.

Ultimately, this observation has demonstrated that *The Farafir* operates on more than one stage: as a social critique of energy relations, as a creative test aligned with absurdist theatre, and as a profound philosophical inquiry into the character of human lifestyles. Idris's play invites us to confront uncomfortable questions: What is the premise of authority? How do roles define and confine us? Can freedom be completed inside systems designed to suppress it? Is there any that means to be located beyond the cycles of repetition and overall performance? While the play gives no definitive answers—indeed, its shape intentionally resists closure—it affirms the existential imperative to question, to face up to, and to create that means through conscious engagement with the absurd.

In conclusion, *The Farafir* remains a vital textual content for know-how, no longer only the evolution of modern Arabic drama but also the enduring relevance of existentialist ideas in confronting the human situation. Its exploration of absurdity, freedom, and alienation continues to resonate with current audiences dealing with similar struggles with identification, authority, and the search for reason in a fragmented and unsure international environment. Through his mixing of local realities with common philosophical issues, Yusuf Idris contributes meaningfully to the worldwide discourse on lifestyles, leaving us with a work that is as tough as it is enduring.

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العبث والوجود الإنساني في رواية الفرافير ليوسف إدريس: قراءة فلسفية في ضوء الوجودية

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المستخلص

تناول هذه الورقة البحثية مسرحية "الفرافير"، وهي مسرحية رائدة للكاتب المسرحي المصري يوسف إدريس، من منظور الفلسفة الوجودية، مع إدراك دقيق لمعايير العبث والحرية والاعتراب. وتجادل الدراسة بأن إدريس يوظف العلاقة الديناميكية بين فرفور (الأحمق) والسيد لإضفاء طابع درامي على القضايا الوجودية، كذلك التي تناولها فلاسفة غربيون، منهم جان بول سارتر وألبير كامو. وبالاعتماد على تحليل النصوص والمبادئ الوجودية، توضح الورقة كيف يعكس تصوير إدريس للحرب البشرية والعبث والتسلسلات الهرمية الاجتماعية المتجذرة سعياً إنسانياً معروفاً نحو المعنى. وتسلط الدراسة الضوء على المناهج التي تتعامل بها شخصيات إدريس مع مسائل تقرير المصير، والقلق الكامن في إرادة الشخصيات، والقيود المجتمعية، وحتمية العزلة

البشرية. بوضع مسرحية "الفرافير" في سياقها الثقافي المصري وفي إطار التراث الوجودي الأوسع، تُظهر النظرة إلى المسرحيات الشهيرة قدرة المسرحية على تجاوز النقد الاجتماعي والسياسي المحلي، مُقدّمةً تساؤلاً فلسفياً عميقاً في عبثية الحياة البشرية. وبذلك، تُبرز دور إدريس في ربط المسرح العربي بالحركات الفكرية العالمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: يوسف إدريس، الفرافرة، الوجودية، العبث، الحرية، الاغتراب، الحالة الإنسانية.