CHAPTER III

Language of Beckett: Ingenuity of Verbal Expressiveness with Special Reference to

Waiting for Godot.
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with Special Reference to Waiting for Godot.

Beckett's ingenuity of innovation has caused the emergence of a new type of drama — drama of non-communication, characterised by intense compression of words, importance of their sound and intonation and their inward pull in invoking images. Beckett's plays are written from the standpoint of an expressive urge inclining towards abstraction. It tends to compression, and also to the cadence of a counter-rational dramatic language. Herein, we find a unique and revolutionary transfer of subjective irrationality on the stage, to an apt verbal expressiveness. A total re-orientation in language and style is achieved.

Beckett shows a leaning towards a private system of language wherein words germinate in the mind of the speaker. The playwright's creed sees art as "the apotheosis of solitude"¹, and the playwright never deviates from this tenet in his plays.

Movement in Beckett's plays is nearly always a
succession of still-points or a cycle of recurrence of verbal occasions. Beckett’s dialogue is constructed as counter-pointed monologue. As Andrew Kennedy points out, Beckett tries in his dialogue to create the verbal equivalent of a “final desolation of solitude” somewhere beyond the tangible world.

Samuel Beckett does not put forth any cut-and-dried theory about dramatic language. For a close examination of his plays it is necessary to understand as to what extent the playwright depended on words as a primary element in drama, despite his mastery of gesture, movement and stage-setting. Beckett asserts the primacy of language by trying to equalize the language with the content, fusing the two into one, so much so that ultimately language is genuinely merged with the perceptive reality and the objective correlative strikes a balance. This amounts to some-thing which might be called
Beckett's optimum verbalism. Beckett is faced with the problem that words cannot be trusted. They can neither communicate nor can they adequately express, and often they almost fail. Verbal expression is a compulsive urge, but in any case it is self-defeating. The following passage of *Godot* may be cited as an illustration:

"Estragon: In the meantime let us try and converse calmly, since we are incapable of keeping silent.
Vladimir: You're right, we're inexhaustible.
Estragon: It's so we won't think.
Vladimir: We have that excuse.
Estragon: It's so we won't hear.
Vladimir: We have our reasons.
Estragon: All the dead voices.
Vladimir: They make a noise like wings.
Estragon: Like leaves.
Vladimir: Like sand.
Estragon: Like leaves" (II, p. 62).

The passage quoted above shows that often what appears to be sayable becomes unsayable. In Beckett's plays his dramatic language points to the creative paradox the author is faced with. It is significant to note as to how
Beckett achieves a perfect blending of content and expression in his plays. The whole texture of his dramatic language is woven around the playwright's ever-present sense of the formidable failure of language. It may be argued as well that the central work-out, or function, in Beckett's drama is the creation of words against the wreck of words.

In Beckettian drama a game of deception continues in language. Beckett tries to demonstrate that language by itself is the fundamental deception. This may be exemplified from what is said in his novel The Unnamable (L'Innomable, 1951): "I can't speak of anything, and yet I speak". The speaker is thus defining language as a system of sounds, devoid of the subtle content which moves only within itself. In Harold Pinter's The Birthday Party Stanley utters gurgling, unintelligible sounds, instead of tangible words under
excessive psychological strain after he has
been given the "treatment" by the two toughies
Goldberg and McCann. Because the word is not
'the thing' it indicates, one can accept that
one is speaking of something without possessing
or understanding it. In Beckett's work we find
the relation between language and object as pure
non-possessions:

"... that all words that taught me without
making their meaning clear to me, that's
how I learnt to reason, I use them all, all
the words they showed me, there were columns
of them, the strange glow all of a sudden,
they were on list with images opposite, I
must have forgotton them, I must have mixed
them up, these nameless images I have, these
imageless names . . . .

without any object, talking loses the
possibility of its reaching a limit; because it
may come to a halt only when it encounters a
definite and definable thing. Without resistence,
or outside support, the language loses its
boundaries, to become an erratic futile search
without a goal. The words merely hang in an
empty space, and do not connect.
The language game continues without limitation — used either as a constant variation or a lingering contradiction — and produces only indifference. It lacks qualities like the empty time within which it takes place, and which it cannot fill. A collection of prose pieces written by Beckett in 1955 named Text for Nothing (Textes pour rien) touches almost that frontier where language, although it still remains language, threatens to vanish in that empty space by which the "I" of Beckettian novels already knows itself to be surrounded and filled up. Dieter Wellershoff quotes Maurice Blanchot's words in his essay "Failure of an Attempt at De-Mythologization" in connection with Beckett's linguistic treatment in which he has spoken of the works of A modern literature, where "we almost hear, what it would be our lot to hear, if suddenly there were no more art or literature." Here Wellershoff points out that it would not be silence but an absence of silence, an incessant
murmuring inside each of us, which says nothing and yet incessantly seems to be saying something in which emptiness itself speaks intensely and monotonously, without ever adding anything to itself in spite of all the associated noisy babbling and whispering. It would be a secret speech without a secret, in which there is no space left for stillness, because there is no longer a language shaped by meaning, being the only defence against infinity speaking without meaning. It hints at this shapeless terror, into which consciousness would sink. This is what has been conveyed dexterously by Beckett through his intricate verbal pattern powerfully demonstrated in his plays.

In adjusting the language according to the need of his artistic urge, Beckett reaches the point where it seems as though his characters were saying the same thing in other words which may be said to be "nothing". In the unending dialectic of language having lost its subject-
matter, no error is any longer significantly definable. Sometimes the talking "I", as of The Unnamable, realises that it does not know what it has just said or had wanted to say. Put in the potential infinity of limitless speech this becomes irrelevant:

"What was it I just wanted to say? No matter, I'll say something else, it is all one".  

Beckett took a freedom to develop and to embody in his work, a new verbal order capable of supplanting the order imposed normally by the conventional language. Beckett's verbalism enabled his plays to be an expression of his mind, rather than a pale reflection of actuality. Jacob Korg has rightly observed that the writer may have "the illusion that he is using words, not that they are using him, but he is in reality confronted with a Chinese wall of established, though unconscious, ideas that run through the syntax, vocabulary and rhetorical
practices of his medium, and he is fortunate indeed if he is able to penetrate this density with some elements of his own individuality§.

Beckett endeavours to cross over that China-wall with his sparse, bare vocabulary. He found that in order to embrace reality, language must be liberated from its traditional, habitual ghetto, and aim at expressing the "immaculate non-humanity of material things"§.

This freedom can be attained only by non-logical verbal utterance which is free first to penetrate the essence of the matter and then to destroy the barriers separating it from the psyche.

Beckett tried to make language emptied of its conventional meaning, by using language in fragmented and incoherent forms so as to regain the innocence of a world in which things
have no names, and can therefore escape the categories set up by our intellect. Beckettian dialogue consists of nonsense-syllables and fast flowing fragments of speech, organised into quasi-musical sequences. This allows human voice to be heard without the interference of intellectual meaning or inferences. Here, in order to exemplify, we may cite from Godot Estragon's answer to Pozzo, who asked the opinion of both the friends (Vladimir and Estragon) about Pozzo:

Vladimir: (First to understand). Oh very good, very very good.
Pozzo: (to Estragon) And you, Sir?
Estragon: Oh tray bong, tray tray tray bong" (I, 38).

It may be noted in this connection that a few decades earlier than Beckett, Tristan Tzara (b. 1896), famous for his weird play The Gas Heart, observed that conventional
language, despite its usefulness, is not helpful "for our solitude, for our intimate games, and for our literature".  

Beckett in *The Unnamable* declares that "all these strangers, this dust of words" is useful only for creating mildly amusing patterns. He has also said that "there is no great difference here between one expression and the next, when you've grasped one you've grasped all".  

Beckett's device for dismembering language turns out to have some positive values. He shows that even the most fragmentary and formless elements of language inheres an unmistakable capacity for signifying something. The dramatist seeks to get away from logical and aesthetic controls, for grasping an absolute psychological reality in order to project the human spirit as an
integrated whole. He holds that the repression of spontaneity is the only possible mistake committed by the imposition of a logically structured vocabulary. Beckett believes that words are meaningful only as the accidental consequences of spiritual activity. He also believes that the expression of spontaneous thought has more reality in them than anything which results from logic or a structured syntax.

In Beckettian drama language is made to contribute beyond its capability, to record sub-conscious thoughts. The dramatist makes it possible for the language to attain and emit its full power, by detatching words from their dictionary meanings, through the study of the sounds they evoke, through structure and effect, and also through attending to their interactions with each other and one another. Words by themselves opened up unexpected avenues
to imaginative freedom. Beckett made use of the context having detached the word from its ordinary surface meaning, making it the vehicle of a radical re-ordering of the ephemeral reality, in accordance with Paul Eluard's lines:

"The earth is blue like an orange /
Never a mistake words do not lie" 12.

Here is a claim for the verbalization of the irrational mind. It is Beckett's conviction that the intellectual functioning of language prevents the mind from gaining contact with the vital, radically interpenetrative nature of reality. If language is to do justice to mental reality, it would have to overpower such obligation as references, intelligibility, sequence and traditional usage.

Along with some of his predecessors (like Antonin Artaud) as well as some of his contemporaries (like Harold Pinter or Eugene
Ionesco) Beckett too deeply feels the failure of conventional language. He finds that conventional syntax and vocabulary have silently pointed to the assumptions about time, space, matter, causality, the mind, the self and other elementary concepts which were becoming obsolete by degrees. Journalism and popular literature circulated a linguistic medium, limited to the expression of simple, familiar ideas through stock phrases and trite, sensation-alizing rhetorical devices. The current form of language found available around him had few resources for conveying the insight into the nature of reality. It is worth while to consider the views expressed by André Breton (1896-1966):

"... nothing less than the rediscovery of the secret of a language whose elements would then cease to float like jetsam on the surface of a dead sea. To do this it was essential to wrest these elements away from their increasingly narrow utilitarian usage, this brings the only way to emancipate them and restore all their power".

In accordance with this Beckett prepared a
verbal space, free of referential practices
where language also is free to deploy its
inherent energies.

The materials of other arts have
almost no innate meaning. The paint used by
a painter, a pencil or a crayon as well as
the stone in a raw solid block are very close
to being neutral indifferent substances,
which it is possible for the artist to fully
control within physical limits. But when we
turn to language, we find that it has
commitments which take priority over its
aesthetic potentialities. Language must
represent or articulate something and is
required to embody a notion of regularity.
So it is very difficult to play up the meaning-
lessness of the word and recreate the language
with a new vigour.
Beckett performed this brilliantly through his dramatic works and attained thereby a landmark in the Twentieth Century drama. His medium is speech -- the written word, and the inadequacy of the words has always troubled the literary artist. He is indeed concerned with the crux of how to express the inexpressible. Beckett is concerned that:

"... there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express"14.

Beckett's task becomes more difficult when he gets himself occupied with suffering creatures. His characters are tramps, dust-bins, sand-mounds or urns containing human voice. Beckett's character knows nothing, feels nothing but exists, nevertheless. What Beckett does in his plays is that he uses words making them come out of the lips of such a character. There by he
creates his own intricate pattern of verbal expressiveness, intending to underline the inadequacy and inefficiency of language. It is significant to call to mind what A.J. Leventhal observes in this connection:

"... words, words and more words pour themselves out in a cascade of affirmation and denial. It is an effort to stay the fleeting thought, to capture winging silence" 15.

Samuel Beckett challenges the value of his own verbal description again and again by opposing their accuracy, using another verb, another noun and finally dismissing them all because they seem to be as worthless as the thoughts themselves, whose message they carry. In Beckett's language, the simplicity of words is startling and it is incompatible with the tragic import of the situation in which he puts his characters. But soon it becomes clear that the sparse and bare vocabulary is giving profundity to the statement.
Through his intricate pattern of verbal expressiveness Beckett tries to give us the glimpses of a "threshold position"\textsuperscript{16}, i.e., that region of being where existence and essence, self and non-self, time and timelessness -- endlessly co-exist in the strange, ambiguous, inescapable half-world of semi-exile for human souls. This twilight area of perception is Beckett's image of our existential human condition as he has presented in his dramatic and narrative work. In \textit{Waiting for Godot} too the playwright tries to depict life without time. At a point in the play Vladimir and Estragon have asked some question to Pozzo but none of them can remember what it is. All the three persons take off their hats simultaneously, press their hands to their foreheads and strain to concentrate. After a long silence Estragon cries "Ah" (p. \textemdash). He has found the question, that is -- "Why don't he put down his bags?" (p. \textemdash). "He" refers to
Lucky. It is the question asked a few minutes earlier. But in the meantime Lucky has put down the bags and everyone is quite satisfied when Vladimir argues again:

"Since he has put down his bags it is impossible that we should have asked why he did not do so". (p. )

What is dramatically important here is the playwright's understanding of the fact that in this universe where time stands still, the words "before" and "after" have no meaning. All that counts is "present". We may in this connection remember Plato's remarks in Timaeus that:

"The past and future are created species of time that we unconsciously but wrongly transfer to the eternal essence. We say "was" "is" "will be" but the truth is that "is" can alone properly be used"17.

Beckett in Waiting for Godot has attempted to break-through these "created species" that have left such a mark on our everyday language. The
playwright has attempted to restore in us some sense of the central essence which these species normally conceal.

In *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett goes closest to speak the language of eternity on his own account, and thus to step over his personal brink into silence. Beckett tries to transmit the great artistic suffering to the audience through his characters, whose punishment consists of struggling with language. Beckettian characters struggle continually to interact with the language of self and the language of non-self. In the plays of Beckett we notice the co-related paradox -- self consisting of words trying to keep silence in many places as in Winnie's playful antithesis:

"Say no more. (Pause) But I must say more (Pause) Problem here". (*Happy Days*, p. 44)
In Beckett, when he endeavours to paint the "threshold situation" we find a patina of disembodied language. Accepting the only evidence of itself, it seems, as Beckett sees it, to possess "the vocal stream, issuing from the soul through the lips". (Murphy, p. 85) Thus Beckett gives his language the task of making both the subject and the object of consciousness to coincide, of making the self into non-self, time into timelessness, and space into non-space. This is a task which the familiar language cannot fulfil, since the voice issuing from the soul, knows only the language of the outer world, the language of time and space, and the language it grossly shares with other external agencies. To speak the language of the self the soul has to invent a new linguistic idiom of timelessness and spacelessness. But meanwhile, as the soul knows no words but the useless ones of
the common tongue, it can only continue to struggle on. Ross Chambers has aptly pointed out that "the task of life and the task of art (which I have so far been calling language) are seen to be one and the same, and each as absurd as the other: each is a mysterious punishment for some unknown crime (that of being born perhaps), each is the unremitting search for an impossible language of the self . . . "\textsuperscript{18}.

Speaking in terms of the artist's calling Beckett observes:

"to be an artist is to fall"\textsuperscript{19}.

The idea of the failure of language has been taken by Beckett as the myth for creation. The whole texture of his dramatic language is invariably created out of his ever-renewed sense of the failure of language. There may hardly be any doubt that as an
artist, Beckett looks for attaining such an impossible language. We cannot read through Beckett's dramatic work without being aware of the fact that he is engaged in an unceasing struggle against the common well worn-out language -- a struggle in which his interest in the theatre is particularly symptomatic. It is quite obvious that the theatre offers a degree of freedom from the linguistic strictness, and allows thereby the possibility of treating time-themes directly. This is done not by an attempt to describe a temporal experience in words but by recreating that experience for the spectators by actually shaping a fragment of time. In Beckett's *Endgame*, of time slowing down towards we find the playwright creating the physical experience of the endgame, its impossible stop. In *Waiting for Godot* too, Beckett does the same thing, but with the additional complexity of the superimposed time-scales by which he attempts to shatter in our minds the categories of past,
present and future by the estimation of which we normally live.

In *Waiting for Godot*, when the play ends, there is nothing to indicate that the curtain could not rise again on another scene, which is in every respect the same as the opening one of the play. Thus the setting of the whole play moves again in a virtual repetition of itself. This kind of ending is conceived by Beckett with a brilliant ambiguity, mirroring the situation of the people whose lives are over with meaningless, but still going on physically. People who are partially out of time, but cannot merge with timelessness or eternity. These people are out of time to the extent that the time-sequence of past, present and future has almost lost its meaning for them. As time expands and slows down towards its stop, it is losing its dimensionality and a pointed direction. This is a strange, ambiguous
experience that language, which in its very structure reproduces the dimentionality of the past, present and future, is by itself inadequate to convey. In *Godot* Beckett's characters Vladimir and Estragon flounder this inadequacy of language.

Beckett makes his dramatic language sound as if it emanates out of a Limbo or a state of uncertainty, waiting for something to happen. It has been his attempt to capture in words a final desolation of solitude somewhere beyond this perceptible world. For example, in the following dialogue of the *Play*, in which sound of low voices responds with unnatural rapidity to the flickering spot-light, the audience encounters the total lack of interaction between the speakers. This is something which is not stated, but only theatrically expressed through the fast-flowing fragments
of speech that never gets interlocked:

"Spot on M
M: When first this change I actually
    thank God. I thought. It is done,
    it is said, now all is going out --

Spot from M to W1
W1: Mercy, mercy, tongue still hanging
    out for mercy. It will come. You
    haven't seen me. But you will.
    Then it will come.

Spot from M to W2
W2: To say I am not disappointed, no,
    I am. I had anticipated something
    better. More restful" (Play, p. 15).

If we try to penetrate Beckett's verbal
intricacies as is manifest in this passage,
we will find a certain depth of feeling
and a certain universality in this empty
Beckettian machination of the narrative.
It may be noticed that the fragmentation of
the utterances, the staccato phrasings
gradually become more desperate as each of
the characters tries to talk about their
present experience, having changed into
present tense with obscure memories of the
past, and still fainter imagination of the future.

The use of the spot-light, devised by Beckett as a non-human inquisitor and prompter, seems equally radical and successful. It fuses at once two strongly physical images: that of the stage and also of the modern torture chambers. Here what comes to one's mind is the reflection of the notorious interrogation methods said to be adopted by the formidable secret service police under a painfully dazzling light. Incidentally, we are reminded here of Pinter's play One For The Road (1984) where such an interrogation episode is presented with Nicolas the interrogator. Beckett does not intend the spot-light to reach the characters evenly, thereby condemning the three speakers to isolation. All the three of these characters of the Play stick to monologue and
speak with an individual automaton in
relation to their questioner.

In order to comprehend and enjoy
a Beckettian play thoroughly we have to
see or aptly imagine, its performance on
the stage which after all is not at all
easy. Theatre language has undergone a
highly sensitive, subtle transfiguration
so much so that the words at their face
value take us almost nowhere. Careful
dialogic deployment with movements, gestures,
insinuations, symbolic overtones, pauses,
silences, light effects, connotative
undertones of the words spoken by
characters, all these tend to contribute
richly towards what the audience is
essentially communicated by the play. In
this connection G.S. Fraser rightly points
out that the development of drama "is not
strictly a literary development."
is continuously engaged at controlling the theatrical reality in words, action and time, so that the plays can say what their author wants them to say:

Through his undisputed mastery of gesture, movement and setting Beckett tries to show human existence in its stark nakedness. He strips his stage figures completely of all those qualities in which the audience might recognize itself, so that an alienation effect in terms of Brechtian drama gets created in order to make the audience mystified. There is a vacuum between what is shown on the stage and the spectators. The sense become so unbearable that the spectators have no alternative but either to reject and turn away or to be drawn into the enigmatic fold of the plays in which nothing reminds him of any of his purposes in the world around him.
As far as Beckett's novels are concerned, they are mainly monologues, or rather musings of some solitary person. From this we may deduce that the various characters which the playwright puts up on the stage, are not really persons but figures from man's inner psychic world. In a speculative study of dramatic forms Northrop Frye defines, what he calls, the 'archetypal masque' which tends to "detach its setting from time and space" and where we find ourselves frequently in a "sinister limbo". The action of archetypal masque takes place in a world of human types, which, when "most concentrated, becomes the interior of the human mind".22

Accordingly, we may regard Beckett's dramatic language as a sustained attempt, to create the words for such an archetypal action. Beckett himself has deliberately refrained
from theorizing about his dramatic language. We should first try to understand the extent of Beckett's dependence on words as a primary element in drama. As a playwright Beckett equates language with content, and also with reality in order to arrest the very primary of language. He writes in his essay on Proust:

"For Proust, as for the painter, style is more a question of vision than of technique. Proust does not share the superstitions that form is nothing and content everything . . . . For Proust the quality of language is more important than any system of ethics or aesthetics. Indeed he makes no attempt to dissociate form from content. The one is a concretion of the other, the revelation of the world" (Proust, pp. 19-20).

In this essay on Proust at one place Beckett praises Proust for "being less interested in what is said than in the way in which it is said" (Proust, 83).

Obviously this is still the aesthetics behind Beckett's oft-quoted remark affirming his
interest in the shape of the sentence. This is why Beckett praises the beauty of St. Augustine's statement on the two thieves:

"Do not despair: one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume: one of the thieves was damned"23. He further adds --

"that sentence has a wonderful shape. It is shape that matters" (Proust, p. 48).

Dealing with drama Beckett finds the language as the only reality, but the crux is that words show their deceptive nature. They can neither communicate nor express, and consequently they fail. Alain Robbe-Grillet in his essay "Samuel Beckett, or 'Presence' in Theatre", observes that in Waiting for Godot, "from the beginning to the end, the dialogue is dying, agonizing, at the end of its tether. It stands always on those frontiers of dissolution inhabited by all Beckett's "heroes", of whom one sometimes hardly say for certain that they have not already
crossed them. In the midst of the silences the repetitions, the readymade phrases ("one is what one is . . . The essential doesn't change"), one or the other of the two tramps suggest something to pass time -- making conversation, "repenting", hanging themselves, telling stories, insulting one another, playing at "Pozzo and Lucky". But each time the attempt founders: after a few certain exchanges they peter out, give up, admit failure."²⁴

Beckett holds that it is impossible to estimate the number of misunderstandings due to the noble and harmonious discourse with its power to conceal either ideas or their absence. This is why he felt an urge to write such plays in which there can be no misunderstanding. Both thought and eloquence are conspicuous by their absence, both are
presented in the plays only in the form of a parody.

So, speech in *Waiting for Godot* may be said to be that "twilight" -- described by Pozzo -- introduced as a set piece with great clearings of throat and cracking of whip, larded with select expressions and dramatic gestures, but ruined by sudden interruptions, vulgar exclamations and grotesque failure of inspiration:

"Pozzo: (lyrical) An hour ago (he looks at his watch, prosaic) roughly (lyrical) after hairing poured forth ever since (he hesitates, prosaic) say ten O'clock in the morning (lyrical) tirelessly torrents of red and white light it began to lose its effulgence, to grow pale . . . " down to the final twist, snarled out gloomily after silence "That's how it is on this bitch of an earth" (I, pp. 37-38).

In Beckettian plays, we find a tentative and playful element within the crisis of verbal expressiveness. Beckett's creative
"spiralling interior monologue"^26, which could not be attained through the narrative technique of stories. Consequently the language of Beckettian plays moves away from everyday speech towards an internal and abstract purity that has never been seen hitherto. This apparently intricate patterning of verbal expressiveness gives Beckett a unique place amongst the late twentieth century dramatists, underlining the intrinsic value of his work. When we see the play as a whole, we find them moving towards the goal of a minimal language. Beckett takes his dramatic language to such an extreme as to be called, "the zero-point"^27 as Darko Suvin has seen it. From the initial stage Beckett, as a creative playwright, inwardly appropriated the need for constantly recreating form and language for each new work. In the self-defining essays he composed on Joyce and Proust, Beckett took up the key-position on the verbal art, which illuminated not only the
sprouting genesis but also the future growth of his ideas on writing. Gradually but radically these ideas were put into creative practice, in his continuously changing fictional and dramatic work, following a graphic curve of ever-increasing compression. However, by the suggestiveness and implication Beckett's 'less' becomes 'more' to speak for itself. In an article written about Joyce's last work *Finnegan's Wake* (1939) (then incomplete and known as *Work in Progress*) Beckett defended the need to innovate or re-invigorate the language. He felt that the immediacy of words, their sounds and their hieroglyph — like picture images should be released in and through the new writings. English language, as Beckett realized, had become abstracted to annihilation — something like a dead language. By contrast, what Joyce wanted the language to be — his language-in-the-making — was that the words should be
somewhat tilted and to be rather effervescent.

Beckett comes up with a resonant manifesto in defence of this kind of verbal expressiveness:

"Here form is content, content is form. You complain that this stuff is not written in English. It is not only to be read -- or rather it is to be looked at and listened to. His writing is not about something, it is that something itself"28.

This sounds like an indirect manifesto of Beckett's own aim as a writer. In Waiting for Godot Beckett destroys both the form and the logical content. He presents a kind of existence which has lost both form and sequence and in which life no longer moves forward. Life's conventionally accepted idol is destroyed, Shakespeare's "walking shadow" (of Macbeth) does not walk forward. The play becomes a representation of the stagnant, static life. Beckett's meaningless parable
about man stands firm.

It is true that *Waiting for Godot* no longer corresponds to the formal ideals of the classical plays. But as it is a play about a kind of life, and not about any degree, it is utterly difficult to find an appropriate, well-made dramatic idiomatic means which could be comfortably presented within a definite dramatic design. The weakness of the play, and its so-called failure to connect become the focal point. If the play suffers from the lack of cohesion, this is so because lack of cohesion is very much its subject-matter. If the play rejects to relate an action aptly, it does so because the action the play is supposed to relate, emanates from a life without action. If *Waiting for Godot* defies convention by no longer offering a story, it again does so because it seeks to describe Man eliminated from, and deprived of, history.
That the events and fragments of conversation, with which Godot is constituted, arise without motivation, and as such simply repeat themselves. This lack of motivation is 'motivated' by the subject-matter, and this subject-matter is a form of life sans a motivating principle.

For Beckett writing certainly is "that something itself" and not "about something", in the sense of a subject that can be separated out, as an independent statement, an action or a narrative from the way it is expressed in words within a recreated genre. On this point Beckett is in consonance with James Joyce as well as with various symbolist theorists of poetic language like Lascelles Abercrombie (1851-1938), such an idea of language is quite contrary to the vulgarly materialistic language of commerce, journalism and also to the representational language-version of the view that language mirrors the world. This contrary concept holds
that in poetic or fictional writing or any imaginative writing, language functions in a self-mirroring and self-authenticating way. Thus the act of writing seems to be primarily a re-working or a re-creation, of words for images and also of verbal sounds, as the in the act of painting a painter works with shapes and colours, while the composer works with tonal sounds.

The Beckettian plays look fertile and liberating when seen against the limitation of naturalism, the conventions of stage rhetoric and verse drama:

"No more stories, no more words."\(^{29}\).

Beckett himself commented on the growing difficulty of writing, at an earlier stage:

"For me the area of possibilities gets smaller and smaller."\(^{30}\).
Above all, Beckett's work has intensified the split in certain basic uses of language in modern drama, in respect of inwardness externality; and reduction, extension. Beckett's unique achievement in the renewal of language is a marked growth towards a wholeness or totality. Almost in a decade's time Beckett has preempted a number of modes of expression in drama including the art, of re-creation of language through apparent decomposition; as well as the creation of dialogue through seeming monologues. But whatever he has perfected, seems to him to be exhausted at last. The following excerpt expresses his problem of expression:

"The living and the dead language.
Estragon: All the dead voices.
Vladimir: To have lived is not enough for them.
Estragon: They have to talk about it"

(II, p. 62).
In his early advocacy of Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*, Beckett declared English a "language abstracted to death", and developed the point by saying that the relation of modern English to "other European language in a great extent that of medieval Latin to the Italian dialects", and he draws a parallel between the linguistic situation of Dante and Joyce:

"both saw how worn out and thread bare was the conventional language of literary artificers, both rejected a universal language".31

Thus whatever the English writer gets in inheritance is something like a dead language. The context is familiar: we have reached the final stage in Vico’s language-cycle, the stage of rational over-saturation. Beckett praises Joyce for going back to the spring-time of the cycle to a

"quintessential extraction of language"
and painting and gesture, with all the inevitable clarity of the old inarticulation. Here is the savage economy of hieroglyphics. Here, words are not the polite contortions of 20th century printer's ink. They are alive. 32.

Beckett holds that with the capacity for renewal goes the gift that recreates the language cycle. These ideas of Beckett may be seen as a hypothesis on language or a myth for verbal creativity.

Beckett's incessant struggle with words, with question of expression, form and style should not be mistaken for a cool, rational formalist idea of verbal art. On the contrary, from the beginning Beckett's search for words is indivisible from a search for the traces of meaning within our experience of diminished meaning. In Endgame a conventional dramatic idiom achieves a new life, while it is decaying too in consonance with the man-centred universe. The slow-moving
revelation of Endgame is embodied tentatively in the formal ousting of a traditional tragedy. We find the recurrent theatrical echoes written into almost every speech in Endgame. For example:

"Hamm: (He clears his throat, joins the tips of his fingers) Can there be any misery (he yawns) loftier than mine? No doubt. Formerly. But now? (Pause)."

(Endgame, p. 29).

Hamm's speech in its sonority and pomposity can be put side by side with Pozzo's speech in Waiting for Godot, while the pair of Nagg and Nell chat in a highly stylized senile quaver. A sustained rhythmic beat can also be noted in the play, like the constant pattering of clov's feet. We find a skilled combination of vision-sound-word texture in Endgame which calls out for performance in a way that is a high-water mark in modern drama. Kennedy comments about this play of Beckett:

"Writers who are primarily concerned with
universal situations of inner states or a poetic text (ranging from Sartre among the Existentialists and Maeterlinck, Yeats and Eliot among the one-time-masters of inwardness and poetic drama) have not always managed to achieve such a theatrical immediacy.33

In a letter written to Alan Schneider, the plays New York director, dated Dec. 29, 1957, Beckett wrote:

"My work is a matter of fundamental sounds (no joke intended) made as fully as possible."34

_Endgame_ enacted a diminished theatre, along with diminished meaning from language as well as from human and physical universe:

"Clov: Mean something /
      You and I mean something".

It compresses entire world of experience, out of which Beckett called "fundamental sound".

Three later plays of Beckett —

_ Krapp's Last Tape_ (1959) _Happy Days_ (1962) and
Play (1964) may be regarded as ruthlessly exhibiting specimens of a dead language and yet, as the words are replayed by the tape-recorder or the compulsive voices of memory, they regain life within each play. Krapp's Last Tape shows the process in which a man's own words become archaic to him through the pathetic comedy of keeping private sound archives. The parody is doubled when Krapp is presented as an would-be writer whose youthful style, as recorded in the tape, gains literary perfection, and becomes the magnum opus. In Happy Days Winnie seeks relief in reciting over and over again the fragments of an old style which equates in its decay as well as in its comforts -- a line from Milton with the writing on a toothbrush. In Play the words, uttered at the bidding of the spot-light, are not only a dramatic device to relate the dead speakers to the community of ghosts from The Persians.
to the *Ghost Sonata* (of August Strindberg), but also they speak in an exhausted convention, i.e. the old styled dialogue of melodrama and farce. So Beckett embodies in each of these plays a particular drama of words and the decay and renewal of a style as a part of its total meaning. Almost each Beckettian play manifests a concern with language in varying degree. The dialogues in these plays are carried on in broken syntax as the characters struggle with words. In his radio play *All That Fall* (1957) the playwright gives a clear hint of what this deadness of words implies. *All That Fall* reveals frankly the modern thinkers' sense of inadequacy of language:

"Mr. Rooney: Do you know, Maddy, sometimes one would think you were struggling with a dead language.
Mrs. Rooney: ... I often have that feeling, it is unspeakably excruciating.
Mr. Rooney: I confess I have it sometimes myself, when I happen to overhear what I am saying.
Mrs. Rooney: Well, you know, it will be
dead in time, just like our poor dear Gaelic, there is that to be said.35.

In the above quoted passage "it" most probably stands for the present mode of speaking, than only for the English language itself. This particular sentence of Beckett's play echoes George Bernard Shaw's anticipation about language:

"I find it more and more difficult to keep up your language. Another century or two, and it will be impossible."36.

The inadequacy of language consumes more and more place in Beckett's plays, until it is separately taken up in the radio play Word and Music. In Happy Days apart from combing and applying lipstick, Winnie's only activity is talking. However trivial her thoughts may be, she must express them. Moreover, she must be sure she says:

"I am not merely talking to myself, that it is in wilderness, a thing I could never bear to do."37.
This comment stands for the human compulsion for speaking as well as for the very irrational desire to communicate our ideas, however trivial they may be to others. Like Mrs. Rooney, Winnie too seems to be in struggle with language. She quotes the remaining bits of classics. Never-the-less, inspite of her great care, her syntax is broken and also repetitive. She too speaks in the old style like Mrs. Rooney, who uses a "dead language", the inadequacy seems to refer to the dissatisfaction of the modern writer with the traditional use of language. The phrase "old style", used by Winnie, and the prophecy of Mrs. Rooney that the present language will be dead in due course of time, seem to justify the interpretation of Beckett's denunciation of language and speech with reference to its contemporary state.

The aspect of dark and the complete
lack of certainty, concerning both the self and its language, becomes a powerful creative force which is negative and which drives Beckett's work towards the limits of art. An extreme aesthetics of failure is the conceptual counterpart of that vision, which is formulated in a series of paradoxes on art in "Beckett's Dialogue with Duthuit". These challenging paradoxes represent a radical shift in Beckett's later, post-War concept of art. Most of his early statements on literature are concerned with fairly typical modernist question of how to make writing fully alive, when the language as well as the dominant culture faces death. Beckett requires words to be more alive and effective so that they may present word-pictures like hieroglyphs.

In the later years Beckett moved towards a far more radical position gradually
transferring certain creed to the art of writing -- like statements on the very different art of non-figurative painting, with reference to the work of his painter friends Tal Coat, Masson and Van Velde:

"B: I speak of an art turning from it in disgust, weary of its puny exploits, weary of pretending to be able, of being able, of doing a little better the same old thing . . .
D: And preferring what?
3: The expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express."

Here, we find Beckett moving into total scepticism about the value, and even about the possibility of artistic expression. It amounts to a creative paradox. The attraction of the inexpressible, saying the unsayable against a perceptible reality of nothing-to-be-said, is matched by the irrepressible "obligation to express", rather than choosing the total silence.
"Winnie: Say no more. (Pause)
But I must say more. (Pause)
Problem here" (Happy Days p. 44).

In the texture of each Beckettian play a particular literary language is isolated or parodied. He sets his language in such a dramatic frame, wherein the process of decay may be perceived. The words decay through their speakers, through deadly over-use or habit. We find from Ducky, in Waiting for Godot, to Winnie in Happy Days a steadfast decay of words. In the plays named above as well as in the later plays consisting of disembodied voices, words from an old style become part of the action. Yet in the concerned play as a whole, the used language is made new. We find, in these Beckettian plays, that the language cycle is being enacted paradoxically. Out of the decay there emerges endless verbal germination. It has been pertinently pointed out that:
"the run-down of language towards a dead end, in a seemingly mechanical replay of the once-living, now dead verbal formulac, is so controlled that the language gains 'new-life' within the context of the play" [39].

In performance, this paradoxical experience is given as an immediate response, so as to emphasize that the dramatic sense of Lucky's speech does not depend on any subsequent close reading. Even a first reading or hearing should yield at least two perceptions. The decay of rational language expresses the decay of one kind of order constructed by theology, and other such systems which turn man's persistent hunger for a logo into a formula. As the speech runs on and then downs itself when Lucky accelerates and shouts before the final silence, the deteriorating syntax releases isolated word-clusters which sound like the lost 'true voice' in the speech. Thus the whole speech of Lucky is an accurate rendering of the process whereby the aphasic
Lucky stutters and becomes silent:

"Given the existence . . . of a personal God . . . who . . . loves us dearly . . . and suffers . . . with those who are plunged in fire" (I, p. 42).

The increasing repetition of contentless syntax-phrases prevents the completion of any one sentence, such as the word 'that':

"that, in view of the labours of Partov and Belcher . . . " (I, p. 43).

It continues up to the final burst of isolated poetic words:

"Fading, fading, fading . . . on, on, on . . . alas alas on on the skull the skull the skull . . . " (I, p. 44).

Thus the language cycle runs down to exhaustion. The repetition of significant words is gradually cut down. "the skull" is used from four to two, then to one, with only one "alas" to follow.
In this carefully constructed speech of Lucky, the final movement in a language cycle can be perceived clearly. Here, the language relapses into primal babble from the hyper-articulate stage. Though Lucky is ruthlessly silenced, his language works creatively within the play.

Beckett sets against Lucky's speech the old rhetoric of Pozzo, and also sets around it the dialogue of Vladimir and Estragon, seemingly ever-new but one and at the same time running down. The word "On" is Pozzo's first and last word on the stage. He pronounces "on" in Act I while smacking the whips; in Act II while jerking the rope. Lucky's relentless "on, on" externalises his inner, embedded ego. The fine speech-making of Pozzo constructed along the line of theatrical eloquence proves more stolid than the language of Lucky's subtler school of
thoughts. In Act I, we find Pozzo still a
confident user of a dead language. The
'old style' is still a possession as far
as he is concerned:

"(They stop looking at the sky) what is
there so extraordinary about it? Qua
sky. It is pale and luminous like any
sky at this hour of the day. (Pause)
In these latitudes. (Pause) When the
weather is fine. (Lyrical) An hour ago
(hes looks at his watch, prosaic) roughly
(lyrical) after having poured forth
ever since (hesitates, prosaic) say
ten O'clock in the morning (lyrical)
tirelessly torrents of red and white
light it begins to lose its effulgence,
to grow pale (gesture of the two hands
lapsing by stages) pale, ever a little
paler, a little paler until (dramatic
pause, ample gesture of the two hands
flung wide apart) pppfff! finished! it
comes to rest (I, p. 39).

Here Beckett presents a parody
through stage direction. The 'prosaic' and
the 'lyrical' modes of expression in sharp
contrast mock each other in the frame-work
of a bravura (or showy style of performing)
speech which is delivered to the stage audience:

"How did you find me? Good? Fair?

The naturalistic "say ten O'clock in the morning", and the poetic prose of the sentence "it began to lose its effulgence, to grow pale" are the two styles which are shown to be dead ('qua') styles by Beckett. It is this counterpoint which gives a new vitality and force to these styles. Due to the playwright's Symbolist and Irish heritage, the lyrical mode itself is a recurrent 'old style' for Beckett. However, he feels it 'less abstracted to death' than either conversational or discursive language. Beckett returns to lyricism to create a consciously poetic intensity.

In Act II, Pozzo comes back. He is now blind and dispossessed, crying out for help.
In eight-page run-on dialogue, he cries fifteen times in vain for help. Though he has lost his eye. Sight yet he still possesses the faculty of speech-making. Pozzo's exit is marked by the now-famous and oft-quoted lament on time, ending with these lyrical cadences:

"They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then its night once more. (He jerks the rope.) On!" (II, p. 89).

Here parody of lyricism seems to have given way to pathos. The speech is usually taken to be an expression of Beckett's moving poetic vision we are deeply moved in our response to these lines, and these cadences emotively work on us in such a way that it can hardly be replaced by any rational statement. Similarly the pathos is spelt out by Pozzo's relentless 'On!'. By our conception Pozzo's, figurative function
includes tying up thought and language, and the explicit parodying of the lyrical mode, which we have sensed in his earlier speech. Thus, with the pathos there looms the false pathos, and there is a double tone in the dying fall of the old-style lyricism. This double tone is made more complex when Vladimir echoes Pozzo's lyrical phrase a little later:

"Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the forceps. We have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries. (He listens)" (II, pp. 90-91).

This displays an indulgent poeticism. Against its total context, it works more dramatically and moves us. The context is that Vladimir is speaking on the threshold of sleep (or waking), and this borrowed fragment of speech, woven into his day-dream, deepens his own sense of unreality. The end of the speech — "I can't go on! (Pause) what have I said?" questions
the speech, its content and also its style.
By all means Vladimir has gone a long way
from Pozzo's still confident proprietary
use of poetic words.

The apparent improvisation noticed
in Gogo-Didi dialogue, is a method which
exemplifies the playful inter-action of the
formal and the conversational exchanges.
The method indeed refers us to Beckett's
indebtedness to the Italian Commedia dell'
arte⁴⁰. At the same time the dramatic
dialogue is revitalized to mark the downward
trend of the episode. Vladimir and Estragon
bring into their apparently casual-sounding
talk many kinds of literary outfit, such as
quotations, half-quotes and recognizable
intonations. For example, Vladimir half-quotes
the Biblical phrase "Hope deferred maketh the
something sick" and thereby gives the comic
dialogue on his physical affliction, a
relevance to the whole play. Vladimir also adopts the rhetoric of self-exhortation instead of helping fallen Pozzo:

"Let us represent worthily for once the foul broad to which a cruel fate consigned us" (II, p. 79).

Estragon evokes the old tragic tone:

"God have pity on me! ... On me! On me! Pity! On me!"

We may notice an apparent parody in all these dialogic exchanges. At the same time the traditional over-tones are revived to such an extent that the device works dramatically. Again such an ambivalent device may also be found in Beckett's treatment of the traditional Christian images, such as:

"Two thieves, crucified at the same time as our Saviour" (I, p. 12).

This sentence is placed in the dialogue-
sequence (pp. 12-13) which is tentatively meaningful. For, it begins with a question concerning the Bible, then tries to answer the question of Gogo's swelling feet, and eventually ends with a curse:

"People are bloody ignorant apes"
(I, p. 13).

It is significant to note that such words as "Saviour", "saved", "hell", or "damned", have been used as if with a renewed thrust. The pattern of the dialogue is capable of exploiting the aesthetics of the fragments by means of its implicational power. Through this dialogue designing Beckett has enabled himself to recreate the power of religious vocabulary which may be said to have broken the syntax of the habitual conversation.

However, it may be pointed out that this revitalized linguistic excercise has a
dwindling tendency regarding the dramatic action. The type of language-game played between Pozzo and Lucky subsequently and the use of ritual, curses and pardons register exhaustion. Estragon gets tired and pent up. Vladimir says that they are not informed, so they stop. Therefore it is noteworthy that the physical symptoms of degeneration in the second act of the play is indeed connected to this declining trend of the Gogo-Didi dialogue. This is perhaps the point which has been considered by Kennedy as a "down-ward moving cycle" (Six Dramatists .. p. 144) resisting the verbal revitalization.
REFERENCES

Language of Beckett: Ingenuity of Verbal Expressiveness with Special Reference to Waiting for Godot.


11. Ibid., p. 80.

12. Ibid., p. 83.


21. **Alienation Effect**: Bertolt Brecht, (1898-1956) the German playwright and dramatic theorist noted that in dramatic performance where the actors identified themselves with their roles, the spectators were liable to be swept away by the illusion of reality created in the play, having allowed their sympathies for the characters to be manipulated in such a way that led only to vague emotional satisfaction, excitement or confusion rather than a critical judgement of the content of the play.

Brecht argued that the actors should distance, or alienate, themselves from their roles so as to remind the audience that it was watching a play which is only a representation of reality, and not reality itself. In order to achieve this detachment and awareness Brecht had made his plays interspersed with songs and summaries of the action, and even his heroic characters tend to have unsympathetic faults so that it becomes difficult to the audience to identify with the characters.
22. **A Conspectus of Dramatic Genre**,  
The Keyon Review (Autumn, 1951),  
p. 559, also Northrop Frye,  
**Anatomy of Criticism**, 1957, New York,  
1965, pp. 290-91.

pp. 19-20.

or 'Presence' in Theatre" in Samuel  
Beckett: A Collection of Critical  
Essays, op. cit., p. 111.


26. Kennedy, *Six Dramatists in Search of  


32. Ibid., pp. 15-16.


38. 'Three Dialogue' in *Transition*, 1949, No. 3.


40. *Commedia dell'arte* -- This form of drama came up in the 16th century in Italy, mostly adopted by the travelling repertories, wherein actors improvised comic plays around common plots using stock characters. For example it may involve a young lover ("Inamorato") tricking a rich old father ("Pantaloons") into giving up his daughter. Some other stock characters are the clever servant ("Harlequin") and the clown ("Punch"). The plays of *Commedia dell'arte* were characterised by dancing, singing and buffoonery. Shakespeare and Molière
were influenced by this dramatic form.