CONCLUSION

the stage is a tangible, physical place that needs to be filled and it ought to be allowed to speak its own concrete language

Antonin Artaud

Samuel Beckett’s theatre is regarded as a theatre of presence which paradoxically depicts the ‘non-ent’ on the proscenium. Language as an apparatus investigates the fractured personalities and disjuncted psyches of the ‘non-ent’ plays. It debunks the conventions of stagecraft by registering drama through ellipsis, commas and bare words. The action is performed with this newly generated language which restricts the physical activity on stage. Beckett in his plays “maintains the aesthetic centrality of language” (Parker 374). The demonstration of the ‘non-ent’ is a reminder of the theatrum mundi. The phrase connotes that “God” is “the sole spectator of man’s actions on the stage of life” (Fletcher 20), probably because Beckett’s characters are embodied as predicaments. These predicaments howl and stutter their absurdity and metaphysical anguish on the stage.

In each of Beckett’s plays, language is used to convey a different kind of dramaturgic presence on the proscenium. The incommunicable is communicated with language creatively ‘communicating its collapse’. The generated collapse of language situates the meaningless and irrational human condition in an oblique, intense and bleak fashion. This thesis is a close analysis of Beckett’s language dramaturgy. His plays situate on stage truncated forms of human corporeality robbing them of the capacity of physical action. The study is carried in a chronological order tracing the idea of reduction and minimalism in Beckettian theatre. The first play chosen for language analysis is Waiting for Godot.

The play depicts the helpless absurdity of the characters. The picture of two hapless beings “waiting by a tree in the open country for Godot to come – has become one of the most famous images of the modern stage” (Pattie 74). It is a full-length tragicomedy in two-acts and presents a stage with minimal number of characters and the least stage artifice. The two sets of characters representing different human predicaments are parallels as well as binaries of each other. The action in the play
extends and perpetuates through language. Between the twin components of the title Godot and waiting it is the latter which becomes the focus. The delay is illustrated through words. Beckett successfully portrayed this ‘waiting’ as a character in its absent presence. His exceptional craftsmanship is evident in the balance of ‘changelessness’ and ‘waiting’ with ‘changeability’. The changelessness and the incessant wait is crafted through Gogo and Didi and the continuous changeability is created through the wanderings of Pozzo and Lucky. Coherent language units create and maintain the balance of the narrative. The action is placed intentionally within these language blocks. The play is in the form of a persistent quest for dramatising the ‘non-ent’ on stage. This quest is carried forward and performed only through language experimentation in Waiting for Godot.

Lucky’s diatribe is a seemingly endless and vociferous utterance unravelling his thought processes and also revealing the suffering and plight of man. The metaphors and allusions in his rant accompany references, jargons, cliché and repetitions. A close textual analysis of the subtext exposes the speech as a thinking process. The subtext or stage directions highlight a symmetrical pattern of reference to Pozzo and Lucky. Significant and meaningful adjectives define drama and assist in Beckett’s language dramaturgy. Another important aspect is the articulation of coined words or sounds as “quaquaquaqua”. The ‘qua’ series incorporated form a linguistic device promoting absurdity and incomprehensibility. Language creates inane movements on stage. The play portrays Gogo and Didi’s helpless wait for Godot. Their infirm powerlessness is made evident in various repetitive clusters which are confined within blocks preceded and followed by stillness and quiet. Silence is another tool which halts the action and allows the reader to speculate upon the succeeding action in the drama. Language embodies the theme of absurdity, which is communicated through reiteration. The blocks or units of repetitions reinforce the incongruous and bizarre through monotony. Language becomes a flexible tool for the execution of dramatic theatricality.

Endgame is a one-act play which restricts its characters to a room. The blind Hamm is confined to a chair and exercises power over his servant Clov and his legless parents who are incarcerated within human-sized dustbins. Their drama emerges only through language when the lids are opened by Clov. Hence restriction in movement is created on stage. Drama is channelized through verbalised dialogues, Hamm’s stories, and his tour within the ‘miniature kingdom’. The world shown to him by Clov is either
futile or damaged. Clov is only human being who does not suffer from physical impairment although his eyesight is weak, and he cannot sit. The play is performed with bare interiors against grey light. It distils the excruciating experiences of war years and the Cold War. The title announces an unspecific end. The word ‘end’ is repeated nine times in the text shows a ceaseless search for some uncertain and indeterminate end which is possibly beyond reach. An important feature of Endgame is the playwright’s incorporation of ‘yawns’. Yawn which is an involuntary reflex action spells boredom and tedium. It functions as dramatic tether which binds the drama to the language. The play’s pronouncement “finished, it’s finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished” advocates the playwright’s existentialist concepts of ‘despair and anxiety’. The philosophical notions are not the only responsible quotient for creating drama in Endgame. Beckett’s discerning awareness of language leads him to create a unique language dramaturgy. The strategy is executed through verbalised queries in dialogues that are “pitched exactly right, all the pauses carefully respected and the actions kept crisp, simple and exact” (Fletcher 116-117). However, the real drama emerges from the unsaid and unvoiced actions, the silences, pauses and yawns of the principal characters.

Beckett’s experimentation with tape dramaturgy explores an unchartered course in language usage in Krapp’s Last Tape. The playwright regarded this play as ‘a stage monologue’ in which a machine interpolates the protagonist’s past into his present. It is an overwhelming experience where the non-ent is situated through a gadget. The language deals with time, desire and memory and juxtaposes the time-past with time-present. Solitude and irredeemable loneliness is emphasized by language in this play. The language places an elderly sixty-nine year old Krapp who is half-inebriated. He rewinds and plays the spool. A distinctive spoken awareness of silence is unfolded to his readers. The play delineates a significant reduction approach as the dramatist unfolds the drama of only one animate being accompanied by a machine. The drama breathes with a mixture of animate and inanimate inhabitants in a startling dramatic technique.

The study discusses the playwright’s inimitable use of language to generate action with a unique allocation of information in the subtext. As the conventions of stage drama are exploited, a new array of dramatic action emerges through the subtext and the stage directions. The first subtext details the time, place and stage settings by
introducing “a wearish old man: Krapp” to the readers. The subtext outlines the incomprehensibility of the drama by referring to “a late evening in the future” thus startling the readers leaving them to grapple with time reference from past, present and future.

The subtext colours the dull and mundane stage with the portrayal of Krapp in the shades of white and black. The language dramaturgy of Beckett vividly defines Krapp in ‘colours’ and in ‘adjectives’. It abounds with adjectives and verbs and assists the drama to gain shape through it. The adjectives help in restricting elaborate language exercise and control action. It performs a syntactic role by defining noun in a single word thus providing brevity to the burlesque. Beckett usage of verbs displays his passion for creating action with words. The subtext of the first dialogue is laden with action words. The words used for projecting the drama are listed below –

“bends, turns, finds, wants, reads, raises, stares, starts, takes, lays, opens, peers, closes, rubs, shrugs, broods, switches and assumes”

All these words are portrayals of a quick series of actions. Beckett restrains his characters from physical action and these words rapidly create action on proscenium. The dramaturgy of *Krapp’s Last Tape* permeates with numbers. The display of numbers is an intentional attempt for projecting precision drama. The numerical reference is woven into the subtext of the text. The play is in a monologue but it deconstructs itself into diverse voice personae. This deconstruction exhibits an intermingling of numerous short stories of Krapp’s life, thus proving that Beckett does not need a queue of characters for the production of drama. For him a character is a mere tool for exposing a predicament on stage. This play also employs the technique of ‘a play within a play’ by unfolding the drama of multiple selves of Krapp interacting with each other. This illustrates how language is a perfect apparatus for dramatizing the illusions of youth, memory and ambition within a time frame. The play ends in silence and an absolute silence takes over the stage with the dropping of the curtain.

*Rockaby* is a play which stands for its character’s thoughts, inspirations and memories. It is a drama which offers a new dimension to the absurd theatrics. This play is minimalist in its structure and form. It gives a statement on the existential void and imbroglio of a female character who rocks on a chair throughout the course of the
drama. The rocking chair with its incessant movement is used as a motif for portraying the absurd predicament on the proscenium. The movement of the chair is synchronized with the sound played from back-stage and this constitutes the drama of the play. The drama structures the theme of loneliness and alienation through its language and its unique pattern of articulation. The entire play relies on a quest for “another creature like herself” and this quest is portrayed with the aid of the voice which works on the prompts of woman’s “more”. The play offers a brief introduction under the title of ‘Notes’ which highlight the stage business of the participants. ‘Notes’ are a brief word picture providing a podium for readers and spectators to prepare themselves for witnessing a drama which is a parable of alienation and despair. The ‘notes’ function as a prologue which emphasize the essential features of Rockaby by outlining briefly all constituents of its drama. The discussed essentials are ‘light’, ‘an old lady’, her ‘eyes’, her ‘costume’, her ‘attitude’, the rocking ‘chair’ and finally ‘voice’ which generate the drama. The play progresses only with the progression of ‘voice’. All the constituents stand as independent units exercising drama in their own peculiar manner. ‘Notes’ allow readers to feel close to the predicament which the play projects and shape along with the stage settings.

Rockaby enunciates the “time she stopped” as an echo which exists in reiteration and in unison when the woman announces “time she stopped” along with voice’s articulation. The reiteration occurs reiteratively with the rocking of chair and emerges as a metaphor for human routine, weariness and despair. The rhythm of this fragment is congruent in essential musicality. The language of the play offers a new dimension to its employment as it functions through four separate blocks. These four blocks are the four voice speeches, the first block corresponds to the idea of the woman’s search for some other creature and the rest extend the same idea with few more incorporations. The gravity of the play lies in these four blocks. The entire language exercise in the first block resonates with the idea of the ‘another’. Each time the search for ‘another’ is intensified by joining more words to it. This system of adjoining words to the prime idea underscores the language and assists it in producing the drama. The urge for finding the other self is portrayed with the linguistic units which Beckett has formed and shaped for transporting his idea of alienation and despair. This quest for the other is the core of the play which is crafted with utmost
simplicity. The words mentioned below illustrate Beckett’s cyclic nature of language usage.

That Time, is a play which allows the idea of alienation and isolation to travel from Beckett’s mind to readers through an “old white face”. The play is a muddle of thoughts and memories which are related to some distant past. The “old white face” with “long flaring hair” come into view from the absolute obscurity on stage. The play offers three modulations which come back and forth without any subsequent break in their utterances. Beckett fractures the utterances not with the punctuations but with the audible breath and smile of the head. This does not make the language susceptible and vulnerable but it proves that language is in independent dramatic mode free from all theatrical obligations.

The playwright exercises his power over drama through his exceptional language employment. Language distances all the forms which demands or gathers reader’s attention for understanding this drama. The play is isolated from the visual
essentials and it attempts to convey the meaning through aural form. The language allows the text to run from the absent body through three disembodied recorded voices which are coming from both sides and from above. These modulations are referred to as A, B and C in the play. The head’s existence displays gloom and vagueness related to his past. The entire drama in designed in such a manner that it creates obscurity for readers. The language is devoid of punctuation marks. So the sounds appear as a continual and ceaseless rant in three distinct and diverse modulations.

The play is a prose exercise and there is an apparent absence of punctuations in the typical dialect which makes it incomprehensible. For purposes of comprehension in this study these articulations are divided through imaginary lines. The utterance changes its shape and meaning by being thus punctuated. The speech of B in the text can be comprehended, in diverse way by merely reorganising these imagery lines.

B: no sight of the face or any other part never turned to her nor she to you always parallel like an axle-tree never turned to each other just blurs on the fringes of the field no touching or anything of that nature always space between if only an inch no pawing in the manner of flesh and blood no better than shades no worse if it wasn’t for the vows

This series of incessant words are a portrayal of memories. The stream of consciousness penetrates into the fabric of drama. The supposed lines generate mini-structures and outline the meaning.

no sight of the face/ or any other part / never turned to her nor she/ to you always parallel like an axle-tree/ never turned to each other/ just blurs on the fringes of the field/ no touching or anything of that nature/ always space between/ if only an inch/ no pawing in the manner of flesh and blood/ no better than shades no worse/ if it wasn’t for the vows

The blocks formed by formulated segments create meaning and structures the text in the direction it ought to be. It portrays the yearnings of worn out men seeking
solace. The fancies and yearnings are halted with the employment of ‘silences’. There are three silences in the entire play structured with the subtext.

The play on surface level appears deconstructed but a thorough language study shows that it is tightly knitted and framed. The play has three modulations and demonstrates three time-span punctuated by three silences and offer images of three distinct circumstances. The language of That Time unremittingly shifts from the narrative tendency to descriptive by stressing prominence on movements of eyes, breath and a toothless smile at the end. The language unfolds the play as a protagonist’s quest for his past in which he takes refuge. The three disjunct voices provide fodder to the alienated head with flashes of existence.

There is a complete rejection and denial of stage conventions in Beckett’s plays. Not I is one such play which manifests denial and rigidity. The character in Not I subsides into darkness and the ‘red-flaming lips’ appear on stage. The entire body covered “from head to foot in loose black djelleba”. This play is a perfect word salad that flows in a stream which is unremitting. The drama is purely dramatic in its entirety and flows through a blabber. The blabber is voluble and loud and is the only available tool for executing drama. This continual stream of words comes through incorporeal disembodied lips which prove that the voice is thwarted and ridiculed in life.

Not I proffers a body which is reduced to fragmented lips whose entire existence is suspended in darkness. This alienated and displaced mouth performs the drama through its unique linguistic structure. Beckett’s distinct linguistic and visual apparatus defines the play through a “mouth”. The language of the “mouth” exposes the scenes from her past in her frenetic speech. The stage offers a contrast at the visual level by portraying a frantic mouth accompanied by the image of an immobile and silent auditor on stage. Their relationship with each other is indefinite and uncertain. The exclusive formation of words conveys the loss and pain of the woman whose lips are placed. There is an apparent denial in admitting that it is herself who is being talked about. The language offers a frightening image of a woman as a mouth. The language exercise in the analysis proves that it is the stressed words which assist in producing an intense impact on the stage. The stress words when collected together shape and form new language units which combine in a unique away to create drama.
The language offers a new series of queer voice patterns uttered in a nervous and excited manner. The dramatic conflict is woven in the lonely soliloquy as

Mouth: ...the words... the brain... flickering away like mad... unanswered ... prayers unanswered... or unheard... keep on... not knowing what... what she was... what? ... who? ...no!... SHE!...(pause)... what she was trying... what to try... no matter... keep on... (curtain starts down)... (Beckett 382-383)

This shows an instant transfer of one idea to the idea punctuated through ellipsis. The immediate change in thought highlights the burdened soul of the woman who has a lot to express in a stream of words. The stories of pain and anguish are confined and contained in these elliptic blocks portrayed in a black space. This play determines Beckett’s linguistic concern for theatre. The divorce to theatrical conventions display Beckett’s preoccupation with language and this comes with the analytical density of his narratives. Language unfolds malignity, whims, mystery and despair with the banter of mouth in an interiorized and monologized form.

Beckett institutes several onstage ‘absent-presences’ in his plays. These absent presences are irrational and meaningless portrayals depicted with the apparatus of language. Godot as a symbol hovers over the entire play in its absent-presence. The tramps are in consistent wait, and withdraw themselves from other worldly affairs as they pronounce “we can’t” followed by “why not?” and conclude that they “re waiting for Godot”. A similar absent-presence in Endgame exists in an urge to reach to an unspecific “end”. Krapp’s Last Tape projects on stage a decrepit human corporeality involved with a tape-machine to register the unseen past with recorded spools. Rockaby places the quest for “another creature like herself” as absent presence on stage. The suspended old white face in That Time gasping, breathing and slowly smiling at three modulations are his own narrations of his past hinting at an unspecific time “that time you went back that last time”. And Not I is a perfect example of the idea of Beckett’s absent presence as the existence of lips without body situates the fragmented pieces of memory in a disjointed monologue.

This thesis is an attempt to study the language of Samuel Beckett as a tool for executing drama. The plays of Beckett are assessed within the premises of language dramaturgy. Language is used to depict the dramaturgic absurd content on stage. The
existential disillusionment and metaphysical anguish is registered with pauses, ellipsis, parenthesis, clichés, reiterations and silences. The depiction of brutality and filth is only possible with these new invented language games. His language presents the psychological odysseys of human beings who are restrained, incarcerated and whose lives are shorn of meaning. Beckett is a conscientious artist, who prunes, polishes and refines each play with his new language experiment. Language with unique variations becomes a potent vehicle for creating drama at multiple levels and conveying the futility of the excruciating existential impasse. His language dramaturgy ushers the readers to experience drama in “a flawless rhythmic structure pregnant with grotesqueries”. (Kenner 184)
Works Cited


