Chapter 2

The Futility of Hope: Waiting for Godot
THE FUTILITY OF HOPE: *WAITING FOR GODOT*

*En attendant Godot* has given its author a prominent stature. It first appeared in French in the year 1952, almost three years after it was written and performed at the Theatre of Babylone in Paris. The English translation entitled *Waiting for Godot* got published in the year 1954 and became one of the most influential European dramas of the post war period. In a play where nothing happens Beckett presents a stage with minimal number of characters and the least stage artifice. The two sets of characters representing different human predicament are parallels as well as binaries of each other. They are designed mouthpieces who reflect the pain and agony of the Beckettian era. The play examines and portrays the metaphysical anguish, the anxiety of being, the nature of time, the absurdity of human condition, the existence of doubt and despair, and many more issues that plagued the anima of the human being. In the words of Deirdre Bair,

> It is almost as though Beckett moved through a phantom country in which he was the only occupant, paintings were the only objects, and museums and galleries the only buildings. (Bair 11)

The drama opens in a pessimistic world which unfolds the darker perceptions inside the psyche of mentally deranged and impotent people reacting against religion, crumbling institutions of the family, and the ethical fabric of society. The names inhabiting the world of the play are symbolic of four general human dilemmas. They are abbreviated and generic images of mankind that are interchangeable with each other. The ‘beckettian’ oeuvre is not loaded with any series of intense actions or any sort of regular drama which allows him to expand and explore tangible images. The drama works and moves in order to keep the title alive and continues the impression of uncertainty and incompletion to its end. Though ‘ongoingness’ is a key which keeps the play in action yet this becomes monotonous and tedious by deliberately persisting, thus cancelling any false impression or hope of completion. Beckett’s drama accomplishes everything required within the premises of theatre strategy without deflating readers’ interest. They along with the audience continue to wait for Godot even after the play ends. The idea of waiting relates to a singular state of being and anticipation when someone is mentally attuned to a specific milieu and
circumstance. Pendulum like the mind swings between contrary moods and states. Throughout the play Beckett attempts to underscore the tedium involved in this process of suspended animation. Two individuals or character- disjuncts who have been named Didi and Gogo display this relentless wait for the unknown figure. During the course of waiting their conversations, moods, routines, activities and behaviour may differ but one thing which remains unvarying till the end is their endless wait for Godot.

The fact cannot be denied that no writer has written such an elaborate play about ‘waiting’ because waiting is opposite to the genre of drama which demands as its basic fundamental ‘action’. How Beckett’s language fills the void of ‘what to do while waiting’ requires a careful study and these spaces make place for the drama to proceed Angela Hotaling observes “Not only waiting is difficult, but figuring out what to do while waiting is difficult” (Hotaling 3-4).

It is here that language is made to serve as a major tool for the execution of ‘what to do while waiting’. Therefore events are created in these planned and minute gaps so that action can take place. The play mentions a number of events and these are interconnected to give meaning and shape to the play. The gaps are filled with anecdotes, jokes, black humour, songs and arguments so that the reader will remain riveted and interest does not lag.

Beckett’s drama is contrary to the traditional theatre. It does not believe in offering the content to which the reader is accustomed thus, veering them away from drama of multiple characters, attractive stage settings and entertainment. The expectations are reversed as Absurd drama depicts stifling darkness on stage. The orbit of action is replaced by empty units and these bare areas are created through the ‘pauses’ and ‘silences’. This theatre strategy leads to a symmetrical chaos where every action appears meaningless and the consequent dramaturgic vacuum appears meaningful. In order to achieve this, the playwright manoeuvres a series of words in concatenation. The resultant blocks create movement on stage. Vladimir and Estragon insult each other on stage and this is done spectacularly through a rich vocabulary. Drama is created with these articulations as it gives birth to verbal juggling. Action becomes animated as words are tossed at each other all spoken in a similar pitch and tone. All the insults are intended to generate drama. The given language structure
establishes a balance in pairs. The words correspond to each other both phonetically and semantically – ‘Moron— Abortion’, ‘Vermin— Morpion ’, ‘Sewer-rat— Curate’ and finally ‘Cretin— Crritic’.

Vladimir: Moron!
Estragon: Vermin!
Vladimir: Abortion!
Estragon: Morpion!
Vladimir: Sewer-rat!
Estragon: Curate!
Vladimir: Cretin!
Estragon: Crritic. (Beckett 71)

A number of critics find Waiting for Godot, deficient in action but on the contrary each and every minute unit of the play consists of action as has been illustrated in the aforesaid block. Language with unique variations becomes a potent vehicle for creating drama at multiple levels and conveying the futility of the excruciating existential impasse. It successfully bears the burden of creating the tortuous bind that forces the character-disjuncts to helplessly and ineffectually wait for an uncertain Godot. Beckett is very particular about attaining a balance in the text as

the waiting and changelessness of Gogo and Didi are balanced against Pozzo and Lucky’s wanderings and changeability. Just as the former are tied to space, the latter- with their compulsion to be constantly moving. (Malick 22)

The action of waiting is an undertaking which hovers over the entire drama. ‘Waiting’ becomes a living presence. Throughout the play the absent proximity of its expectation is felt by both those who are present on stage as well as the audience. An action does not possess any significance until it achieves the desired result. Intentionally, Beckett presents binaries because mingling of many characters at the any particular point could possibly have led to some sort of action. Beckett avoids this, his aim being not to create ‘action’. Precisely, because emptiness or void or inaction or passivity on stage is made a compulsive interest for the reader. Fundamentally, the drama of Beckett remains a drama of language which creates action through the drama inherent in language as a dialect or vernacular.
The language in the play is inconsistent. It sometimes takes the form of academic writing while at other moments become pseudo intellectual, degenerating into a gibberish, meaningless word salad and oft repeated cliché. While writing this play, Beckett has made use of several language devices as language is the primary reality which exists all the way in the play. Language devices are basic conventional structures used in writing with the intention of providing a greater understanding of the work. Beckett employs these devices and designs with extreme dexterity. Subsequently language becomes inspirational. He uses conventional strategies but his treatment is unconventional and unique as these are cemented to exhibit layered connotations in the play. The dramatist deliberately exploits alliterative sounds using repetition with continued variations to impart a polyphonic quality. The strategy which Beckett make use of in his dramaturgy are echo, counterpoint, cross talk, refrain, polyphony, and polytonality. These are scattered in the text in such a way that it does not affect the thread of emptiness and vacuity which serves as its essence. The word-phrases and monosyllabic discourse are intentionally designed to maintain vacuity. Beckett significantly observed at one juncture that there is

nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express together with the obligation to express. (Malick 34)

This confession from the playwright sums up his quintessential theatre strategy. The first utterance “nothing to be done” is articulated in two aspirated blocks where “nothing” is loud. The loudness seems to serve two purposes; firstly it propounds negation at the onset in order to create an environment which warns the reader to cease their expectations for an action experience through the play. The play is a mental exercise instead of a dramatic or melodramatic encounter. Secondly, it introduces the essence that ‘nothing is going to happen’ during the course of the play, it will be a monotonous activity where individuals will be found in protean struggles-struggle for their self recognition, stuck in an existential quest primarily in search of Godot. The first subtext of the play consists of four sentences; initial sentence throws light on Estragon and his activities. The second sentence is followed again by his activity and leads to helplessness where he gives up. The concluding sentence is formed of two words “As before”, which means that this activity has already been
done before in the past and ended the same way as now. This indicates the circular motion of the play with reference to time.

As the curtain rises two beings personifying mankind trapped in a predicament are shown on the stage. A tree without leaves (representing a semi-living condition) and a mound (possibly stone) are the only props for the play. Adding to Beckett’s technique of reductionism they are not ordinary props but also a significant part of the plight of the two people. Another feature which emerges out in this brief opening is the picture of a struggle of Estragon wrestling with his boots. Seeing this Vladimir approaches him with small steps-

(...advancing with short, stiff strides, legs wide apart). (Beckett 5)

Vladimir’s speech is not a reply, and neither is Estragon’s statement an opening to start any conversation. Vladimir therefore cannot be blamed for his remark. While his utterance is long, containing four sentences Estragon speaks four words. Struggle appears a key activity, where readers are made aware at the outset of a conflict in this “non-ent” (Al-Udayli) drama. Estragon’s first activity is physical, where his battle begins with shoes while Vladimir’s conflict is mental for which he readies himself by being optimistic. Therefore, he says –

All my life I’ve tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven’t yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle. (He broods, musing on the struggle. Turning to Estragon.) So there you are again. (Beckett 5)

‘Nothing to be done’ is a blatant admission of the existential impasse, the struggle with the boots being equated to the inconsequential abortiveness of human life. Vladimir’s observation “haven’t yet tried everything” and Estragon’s “me too” convey implications of another unexplored layer of meaning and consequently related activity. The short penetrating questions and monosyllabic utterances which are duly contradicted later are an important part of Beckett’s language exercise. The last sentence of Vladimir’s dialogue “So there you are again” opens multiple interpretations to be explored during the course of the play. The very opening had suggested that drama is taking birth through language. The language of the first statement sets the tone of absolute negation literally and metaphorically. It is language which imparts this information to the readers without resorting to any action. Drama
emerges through its language which forms blocks. The first block consists of seven
pronouncement out of which three are articulated by Estragon and the rest by
Vladimir. In this block Estragon has only twelve (12) words while Vladimir with sixty
eight (68) words, Estragon’s statements are:

Nothing to be done
Am I
Me too
Not now, not now

Through such an interchange of ineffective non-correspondence Beckett tries
to generate rhythm in the very beginning. Readers are startled and confused by such
an opening as it does not adhere to the accepted perception of a regular launch of a
play or drama. However the created impression conforms to Beckett’s own technique
of playwriting. The play starts as a true depiction of man to man experience of crude
reality producing palpable drama by projecting a baffled sense of helplessness. The
experience creates ripples of unconscious pain and agony among readers and
spectators, as both the audiences are forced to witness their own misery and
nightmares recreated through language bereft of ornamentation and artistic
embellishment. This gives them a true sense of their own being pushing them into the
wily quagmire of Beckett’s Waiting for Godot where emptiness is found on a
dramatic scale. It manages to generate sustainable curiosity among them for a
‘language drama’ only. Waiting resonates as the action for sustaining drama in the
play and characters are found struggling with their babblings. They do not establish
any kind of sensible conversation the reason for this may be because of responsibility
endowed upon language for carrying the drama forward. Dramatic activity takes place
through monologic form creating an extremely novel and exciting theatrical
experience. Here, language does not function as a medium of communication but it
acts as a sine qua non for shaping drama. It has been revealed at the onset that the key
activity of the play is the title of the drama itself and the first dialogue— “Nothing to
be done” by Estragon gives the best anticipation to readers about future action that
readers/audiences will experience nothing but they will be familiar with language’s
ability to generate an inspirational stage show.

Estragon: (undertone). Is that him?
Vladimir: Who?
Estragon: (trying to remember the name). Er... (Beckett 19)

Characters in the play are found lost in their own worlds and busy in some sort of inactive activity, their constant wait for Godot gives them a momentum to carry on with their activities along with the main action of play. The protagonists meet another couple. They mistakenly think he is Godot but later find that Godot is someone else who is yet to come. The dramatization takes its course through the wonderful play of words, sometimes with over statements and at other times with undertones as the above usage of ‘Er...’ by Estragon. It is language dramaturgy which allows him to translate facial expressions into language with the articulation of ‘Er...’ which may show that he is not interested or less concerned thus forgotten the name of the person who is the core reason for their existence, or he may mean to hide his name from Pozzo so has uttered his name as ‘Er’ giving birth to sign language. With use of ellipsis after ‘Er’ the playwright intends to connect to the title of the play and its key dialogue ‘Nothing to be done’. Estragon forgets Godot’s name, so the readers are left with nothing to expect and ready themselves for the ‘non-ent’ experience along with the characters themselves.

Beckett’s extraordinary sensitivity towards language led him to coin words. Though the playwright does not aim to project drama directly into the psyche of the reader, he did reject conventional norms of theatre. The entry of Pozzo can be seen as an illustration of Beckett’s expertise with language and dramaturgy. The pride, pomp and pseudo grandeur with which he announces himself is debunked by the tramps. Vladimir does not respond to him, connecting instead with Estragon. Their very existence depends on the continued wait as it is through this meaningless activity that they can learn to comprehend the absurd irrational. Therefore they are more inclined and interested in identifying Godot rather than in denying Pozzo who ends this entire exercise on the declaration ‘of the same species as Pozzo! Made in God’s image!’

Pozzo: I present myself: Pozzo
Vladimir: (to Estragon). Not at all!
Estragon: He said Godot.
Vladimir: Not at all!
Estragon: (timidly to Pozzo). You’re not Mr.Godot, sir?
Pozzo: (terrifying voice). I am Pozzo! (Silence.) Pozzo! (Silence.) Does that
name mean nothing to you? (Silence.) I say does that name mean nothing to
you?
Vladimir and Estragon look at each other questioningly.
Estragon: (pretending to search). Bozzo...Bozzo...
Vladimir: (ditto) Pozzo...Pozzo...
Pozzo: PPPOZZZO!
Estragon: Ah! Pozzo...let me see... Pozzo...
Vladimir: It is Pozzo or Bozzo
Estragon: Pozzo...no...I’m afraid I... no...I don’t seem to...
Pozzo advances threateningly
Vladimir: (conciliating). I once knew a family called Gozzo. The mother had
the clap. (Beckett 19)

The coinage of Pozzo’s name rests in its denial by the tramps. Pozzo’s name
is refuted variedly and substituted with three different spellings, as ‘Bozzo’,
‘PPPOZZZO’, ‘Gozzo’. Beckett creates drama with this word coinage as with this he
decreases and blunts the splendour and majesty of Pozzo’s sage presence. But the
collapse of Pozzo is evident at the end of the language exercise where he helplessly
remarks “Of the same species as Pozzo! Made in God’s image!”. There are many
such situations where Beckett generates new words. The series are coined and placed
in Lucky’s speech. Inconsequential words and fictitious names are abundantly found
in Lucky’s discourse. There are any number of such made-up specious fabricated
units which assist language in creating drama by distorting the logical order of words
and sentence patterns thus forming incomplete structures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Puncher and Wattmann”</th>
<th>Fictitious names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Quaquaquaqua”</td>
<td>Depicts man’s futility and its repetition is parodic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Testew, Cunard, Farto and Belcher”</td>
<td>Invented names for bodily functions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Acacacacademy and Anthropopopometry”</td>
<td>Inventing new spellings and have excrement associations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Feckham and Fulham”</td>
<td>A new coinage rhyming with Peckham and Clapham</td>
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</table>
Like many contemporaries Beckett’s works also consist of an obsessive use of repetition. James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Georges Bataille and other nouveau romanciers employed the strategy of repetition and it becomes an integral part of their individual works (Connor 2). In *Waiting for Godot*, Act One and Act Two are duplicated with a display of primordial doubling from the onset of play. The repetitive note continues but at times is broken with its variation in language. The language is endlessly parodied and repeated through its reiterated linguistic blocks and cliché. Thus, if a repetition may emphasize meaning at one level then on the other plane it underlines its emptiness by reiterating. It also becomes a source for flattening a meaningful word, and shapes it as a bare verbalization that hardly produces any meaning and provides tautness to the structure of the play. The most distinctive feature of oft repeated words lie in its simple pattern of syntax and vocabulary. As in Shakespeare’s *Othello*-

Is he not honest?

Iago: Honest, My Lord?

Othello: Honest? Ay, honest. (Al-Udayli 20)

*Waiting for Godot* is abundantly rich with repetitive sequences, for instance:

Estragon: (his mouth full vacuously). We’re not tied!

Vladimir: I don’t hear a word you’re saying.

Estragon: (chews, swallows). I’m asking you if we’re tied.

Vladimir: Tied?

Estragon: Ti-ed. (Beckett 17)

Here the repetition of the word ‘tied’ is not a mere reiteration for producing monotony in dialogue. It attaches the thematic cord to the conversation by artistic language thinking – it is a ‘connect’ to the ‘fear’ of Gogo’s and Didi’s idea “of being together”. The play’s form and content do not allow them to get separated as they are tethered to each other by an invisible thread, an unseen motif which can be a soul to soul relationship, or a human tendency to hanker for company or their helplessness at being shackled to each other. At another level it prepares the readers to anticipate another tied alliance in Pozzo and Lucky who enter the stage soon after. Pozzo and Lucky are not metaphorically coupled with one another like Gogo and Didi. In this instance the fastening is accomplished through the ‘rope’. In the aforesaid
conversation, Estragon affirms “We’re not tied” and Vladimir wants him to repeat it for confirmation. But Estragon’s seemingly low energy merely quips “I am asking you if we’re tied”. Vladimir’s response is a startled and disbelieving query ‘ti-ed’. Continuation breaks as the word is divided into two syllables through the use of a hyphen “ti-ed”. This game with language is done not merely to extend Estragon’s dialogue where he may seems stammering, it is also Beckett’s strategy to employ language in its multitudinous forms to promote its own inherent drama.

Both Vladimir and Estragon wonder whether they are really tied to the idea of Godot who may bring salvation, happiness, and an end to the endless waiting which leads to a change in their present circumstances. This shows how a mere repetition of a single word “tied” creates ripples of action on stage and startles reader. The echo shows movement of thought and its variation. Thus without creating added physical action on stage language manages to communicate the trouble and distraught state of mind of the characters.

Beckett offers a bleak vision of existence in which characters are portrayed as a ‘predicament’ of human state. The actions on stage are created for capturing reader’s attention and language- the medium of conversation is the only source for transmitting meaning. The action on Beckett’s proscenium is randomly crafted but succeeds in conveying the dramaturgic effect on readers. Excessive attention is given to language because it is fundamental to the existence of human race. Theatricality is found dependent on language making it essential for the survival as everything else seemingly loses significance and importance. Characters may be found struggling sometime with their boots and hats, or at other moments with their purpose of existence and but never with language as it is the only resource available. It is language which ultimately helps them in defining their identity. Beckett is different from Ionesco, Tzaru and Jarry in terms of language consciousness. For him language is a self sufficient mode which masks all voids created by modern drama. Hence it is created and re-created for the fulfilment of dramatic necessity. Not found dependent on movements, actions, stage settings and gestures the language of drama is essentially the spectacular theatrics and potential inherent in language itself to create drama. Repetitions and sameness of words, thoughts and intentions free it from constraints. Like Hamm and Clov, Gogo and Didi, language and drama become
interdependent. Steven Connor maintains “sameness always inhabits or inhibits what may initially present itself as novelty” (Connor 2).

*Waiting for Godot* depicts an incomprehensible place which is complex, paradoxical and unfathomable. This theatrical work does not follow any conventional parameters or the ideals proposed by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. Instead Beckett creates his own individualistic drama with a distinctive language dramaturgy. The dialogues in the play are not intended to form series of conversation. Responses are not in the form of replies to each other and the reader’s respond to the syntactical blocks of the play. They are perplexed with these blocks, trapped in the circularity of the text and are left to unravel the tangled conversations in order to explore the coherent underlying semantics. The language of the text demands the reader to do a mental exercise for extracting the meaning. For example in Act I there is a block which is locked within three silences. Silence is another important tool for executing theatricality. The mentioned block of the text below reveals the cyclic pattern of repetition and allow action to take its course through language’s rhythmic movement. The first sub-block within first set of silence is -

Silence

Estragon: Then adieu.

Pozzo: Adieu.

Vladimir: Adieu.

Pozzo: Adieu.” (Beckett 44)

Beckett’s art of choosing words show his artistic thinking with respect to essence and existence of action in play. The word ‘silence’ is used as stasis to halt action in the actionless play in order to create monotony and boredom. This is followed by ‘adieu’ the literal meaning of which is “to wish a fond farewell”. ‘Silence’ connotes a halt in dramatic activity, where action on stage stops for a while but continues in the minds of the readers. In the above series of dialogues, ‘Adieu’ is uttered four times, with four diverse modulations. ‘Adieu’ is uttered again in second sub block. The difference being that initially silence was a lone word. It is now followed by ‘no one moves’ which adds to the quiet stillness and immobility.
Silence. No one moves.

Vladimir: Adieu.

Pozzo: Adieu.

Estragon: Adieu. (Beckett 44)

The final sub-block is a kind of respite with characters seemingly drawing themselves back to the stage by uttering words other than ‘adieu’ aiding the playwright to perpetuate further action through words. The re-iterated ‘no-no’, ‘yes yes’, ‘thank you’ and ‘not at all’ either precede or pre-empt action. Though meaningless clichés they become meaningful through usage in this sequence.

Silence.

Pozzo: And thank you.

Vladimir: Thank you.

Pozzo: Not at all

Estragon: Yes yes.

Pozzo: No, no

Vladimir: Yes yes.

Estragon: No, no

Silence. (Beckett 44)

It is a repetitive process where ‘adieu’ mentioned several times to create an environment of monotony and circularity. Derrida explicitly explains the strategy with the observation that “nothing changes with a repetition, but at the same time, an imperceptible difference emerges”. (Connor 4)

Another example of blocks within blocks in the text is the conversation between Estragon and Vladimir in Act II, where an utterance of Estragon paves the way for their argument over ‘dead voices’. The phrase “All the dead voices” proceeds into a series of blocks clubbed within silences. The units are illogical but this incoherence corresponds to the sense of apocalypse during the world wars. These voices can be the wail and lamentation of humanity in general. The conversation is as follows-

Vladimir: They make a noise like wings.
Estragon: Like leaves.
Vladimir: Like sand.
Estragon: Like leaves

Silence.
Vladimir: They all speak together.
Estragon: Each one to itself.

Silence.
Vladimir: Rather they whisper.
Estragon: They rustle.
Vladimir: They murmur.
Estragon: They rustle.

Silence.
Vladimir: What do they say?
Estragon: They talk about their lives
Vladimir: To have lived is not enough for them.
Estragon: They have to talk about it.
Vladimir: To be dead is not enough for them
Estragon: It is not sufficient.

Silence.
Vladimir: They make a noise like feathers.
Estragon: Like leaves.
Vladimir: Likes ashes.
Estragon: Like leaves.
Long Silence.
Vladimir: Say something!
Estragon: I’m trying.
Long Silence.
Vladimir: (in anguish). Say something at all!
Estragon: What do we do now?
Vladimir: Wait for Godot.

Estragon: Ah!

Silence. (Beckett 58)

*Godot’s* language experimentation is unique, it incorporates the available ways to create drama through language sequences. The above conversation is in the shape of seven sub-blocks. Each block is followed by a ‘silence’. These sets of language incorporate drama through its motion. Language becomes a flexible tool for the execution of dramatic theatricality forming meaning in these small sets. It is this malleability of language the tendency to confirm and comply that helps Beckett to manipulate it through games, permutations and combinations, deliberately creating the effects of irrationality. However, semantically it maintains lucidity and comprehensibility. The table below shows the connectivity of Beckett’s language in symmetrical repetitions and coherent blocks. All the three sets are connected to each other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Set</th>
<th>Second Set</th>
<th>Final Set</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SILENCE</td>
<td>SILENCE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vladimir: They make a noise like wings.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Vladimir: They murmur.</td>
<td>Vladimir: Like ashes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SILENCE</td>
<td>SILENCE</td>
<td>LONG SILENCE</td>
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Theatrical space is not being reduced in the above exercise. The aim of this table is to project the clarity of Beckett’s language arrangement. The words are arranged thematically corresponding to meaning symmetrically. As mentioned before arrangement of words is not a reference to sand, feathers or ashes, instead it relates to ‘dead voices’. The first column is an activity identical to the third column but with an alternate variation. The variation is also synchronized in terms of alternate repetition. The entire section on dead voices terminates intensely on “Long Silence”. The language employed by Beckett in the play is precisely and accurately designed for
generating a picture resulting from the statement ‘out of nothingness’ that prevails throughout the play.

“WINGS (Column 1) is replaced by FEATHERS (Column 3)”

“SAND (Column 1) is replaced by ASHES (Column 3)”

“SILENCE (Column 1) is replaced by LONG SILENCE (Column 3)”.

Lucky as one of the four human predicaments in Waiting for Godot demonstrates the disintegration of human society and disorientation of human psyche in the twentieth century. This demonstration is given through his long and oft analysed speech which is carefully constructed as it reinforces the theme. His language in the speech conveys the existential quandary by “rendering an eternal present, a continuum, where present, past and future mix” (Icoz 281). His speech conveys a mental chaos with an outpouring of words. The beauty of the discourse lies in the fact that the whole speech consists of one long sentence. The entire utterance consists of seven hundred and forty five (745) words. It takes place in an incessant manner thereby enhancing the theatrical effectiveness of language. Lucky’s speech gives a new meaning to Beckett’s dramaturgy by articulating the incoherent and the incomprehensible. Beckett highlights “new ‘moves’ and even new rules for language games” (Malick 127) through Lucky’s speech.

Lucky’s cynical “holocaust of phrases” (Malick 135) is a declaration of the dichotomy of man’s existence and his relationship with God. This soliloquy with its use of metaphors and allusions attempts to penetrate into the human condition where man may have been deserted by God, but God still possesses the ability to share human feelings. In addition to it, the phrases used by him make it clear that even for him the speech is incoherent. The language of Lucky’s diatribe is loaded with ambiguous references, jargons and over blown lexicon to give an impression of intelligence and scholarly vocalization as if sputtered in a moment of enlightenment. Beckett criticizes in this speech man’s hunger to convince and influence those who are less informed about our profound comprehension and perception of the human predicament and human matters. Lucky tries to explain the fact that man may have achieved in abundance but despite all the laurels that he has brought to himself his stature is decreasing. Human beings have an objective but ‘that’ objective is not known. This world is mistreating man by not providing an appropriate platform for
his growth and advancement. Consequently man is in an incessant quest for an objective. Unfortunately he does not know his purpose in life, for is Lucky repeats “for reasons unknown” ten times in the scholarly discourse emphasizing man’s search for his identity.

The soul of the play lies in this speech because the waiting is the destiny and purpose of Vladimir and Estragon lives. This wait is termed as Godot. The reader finds their actions and activities incomprehensible as they are involved in irrational arguments and clumsy acts but these activities and verbal exchanges give some meaning to their existence. They are more capable of waiting for Godot for a lifetime than ending their lives. The speech begins with reference to existence “Giving the existence... of a personal God”. This address is in contrast to the non-sensical absurd half statements and observations made by the tramps.

The modulation of tone plays an important role in the transportation of thought and content in the diatribe of Lucky. The speech has multiple layers of meaning at the thematic level. The pitch and speed with which the words are uttered also correspond to meaning. As the entire monologue is in a single sentence therefore units are formed on the basis of tone modulation. Tone modulation takes its course with reference to Lucky’s emphasis. The tonality of every unit communicates the purpose with a representative value. The purpose of tone study is to exchange the lingual and gestural expression as the timbre of speech is replete with drama. Logic and sense are exploited creatively to extract meaning from this incoherent utterance. The pitch on which the speech starts is slow but emphatic. The readers and audience need to remember that the speech is a thinking process as he is directed by Pozzo to think.

POZZO: Stop! [LUCKY stops.] Back! [LUCKY moves back.] Stop! [LUCKY stops.] Turn! [LUCKY turns towards auditorium.] Think! (Beckett 39)

This command for “Think” has produced the torrent of words and is “seen as a transgression and disruption of the limits of the ultimate metagame” (Connor 47). Beckett’s meticulousness and the importance he accords to minute details help in directing the drama. The subtext furnishes the rules for discourse. A scrutiny of the language becomes necessary as it provides a platform for communicating the essence of the diatribe. The subtext followed by “Think!” offers an appropriate discourse structure.
During LUCKY’S tirade the others react as follows: (1) VLADIMIR and ESTRAGON all attention, POZZO dejected and disgusted. (2) VLADIMIR and ESTRAGON begin to protest, POZZO’S sufferings increase. (3) VLADIMIR and ESTRAGON attentive again, POZZO more and more agitated and groaning. (4) VLADIMIR and ESTRAGON protest violently. POZZO jumps up, pulls on the rope. General outcry. LUCKY pulls on the rope, staggers, shouts his text. All three throw themselves on LUCKY who struggles and shouts his text. (Beckett 40)

The subtext highlights the symmetrical pattern of reference to the tramps and Pozzo. The adjectives define the drama and assist in the language dramaturgy. The noun blocks are equated with the words which create and signify drama.

“VLADIMIR and ESTRAGON” are at attention twice, protest and violently protest twice

“POZZO” is ‘dejected and disgusted’ once increased suffering, agitated and groaning and groaning once.

“POZZO” jumps and pulls rope.

“LUCKY” pulls, staggers, shout, struggle, shouts.

Yet again the words employed are all action words. Consequently the reader is compelled to imagine or visualise movement action and drama on stage. The drama in Lucky’s speech starts with the following words-

Given the existence as uttered forth in the public works of Puncher and Wattman of a personal God. (Beckett 40)

These words are articulated in static and unhurried tone and written in “discursive rational mode” (Cohn 115). The exercise on knowledge starts with the pronouncement of ‘a personal god’ and announces that the speech is an elaborate tirade which incorporates the idea of God who has abandoned man and earth. This exercise is carried within a theological and philosophical construct. The given lines are followed by a new formulation in tone for the utterance of “quaquaquaqua”.
Incidentally ‘quaqua’ is not the only instance of the dramatist coining words or using unconventional vocabulary and dialect. Earlier in Act One in a conversation between the tramps and Pozzo regarding the status of Lucky, Pozzo absently alludes to the possibility of “parting with him”. This leads to a sequence of queries from Vladimir, “You want to get rid of him”– a question that is repeated five times along with a distorted version in between “You Waagerrim”. The word has no specific meaning other than the combined sound of ‘want to get rid of him’.

This displays the rhythmic pattern in his language. Beckett has placed the “quaquaquaqua” between the descriptions of God. This can also be perceived as the description of God interrupted by some uneven sounds which hamper the narrative. The “qua” is parodic and is used as a linguistic shaping device which sums up at the inception that life is just a “quaquaquaqua” whether it is related to God or not. The other use of “quaquaqua” is that it serves as a weapon to prevent Vladimir and Estragon to come near Lucky. Thus language is made to replace action. The sound placement in Lucky’s discourse is appropriate giving a definite direction. The “quaquaquaqua” sums the essence of the play. God is apparently being ridiculed by this quacking and it also emphasizes the metaphysical absurdity. The language of the speech becomes more unusual and paradoxically incomprehensible with words like “apathia, athambia and aphasia” which are seldom if ever used. All three are supposedly uncomplimentary attributes of God. “Aphasia” means loss of speech and an inability to communicate. This is an indication that Lucky here is referring to the divine silence of God. Apathia means insensitivity and athambia is imperturbability. These words demolish the fabric of faith by alluding to God as an autocrat and are in contradiction to the related phrase ‘loves us dearly’. Lucky’s speech is aimed at ironically commenting at the collapse of western civilization, the credible institutions
and ethical fabric which formed the support structure of humanity. Each word, its distortion, repetition tears apart the dependable structure of society and establishes the fact that ‘God is dead’. These words are articulated in a divine and distinctive tone. The entropy of the play starts from here with a gradual decline into disorder.

Cliché is an important tool in the language of Beckett’s plays. Clichés are oft used phrases that have lost their power to communicate for the very simple reason of frequent usage. They are meaningless utterances spoken without the expectation of a reply. Lucky’s discourse is abundant with clichés which later form meaningful phrases. Clichés lay emphasis repeatedly on the important aspects since the play focuses on a monotonous and endlessly pointless existence. The entire thread of Lucky’s rant is formed out of clichés which act as a linguistic shaping device for Beckett. Clichés craft the disintegrated intellect with small structures that are spoken by Lucky with echoes, mimicry and images portraying apocalyptic brooding. The worn out clichés in the rant are ‘as a result of’, ‘established beyond doubt’, ‘labours of men’, ‘labours left unfinished’, established as herein after’, ‘man in short’, ‘man in brief’, ‘so calm so blue’, ‘for reasons unknown’, ‘the labours abandoned’, ‘left unfinished’ and ‘alas alas’. The clichés are abridged in the speech and are repeated with destructive note. They convey meaning and signify the absurd world resting in Lucky’s speech. The series of clichés end at the cliché itself with the authoritative utterance clubbed within ellipsis “...unfinished...”. It is therefore evident that Beckett has employed even clichés to useful effect in his language dramaturgy by extracting meaning from these meaningless phrases, lending them an immense power to communicate. Paradoxically he also makes meaningless those words and phrases that are loaded with meaning in his mission to convey life’s absurdity. Mark Taylor-Batty and Juliette Taylor-Batty in Samuel Beckett’s Waiting for Godot asserts that Lucky’s speech “presents a deconstruction of rational academic thought and expression into comical and disturbing nonsense”. (Batty and Batty 45)

The play un-ends on “Let’s go [They do not move.]” and their failure to move is reinforced with the final statement. Waiting for Godot offers a perplexing combination of presence and absence through the demonstration of elusive meaning deeply embedded in language. The drama of words situates on stage the absent presence of Godot. The entire play asserts that Beckett has invented language for enquiry into the meaning. The language of the play offers a clear picture of a chaotic,
complex and illogical world where “language is irreverent, colloquial, sometimes obscene, and makes use of a more popular range of cultural references” (Batty and Batty 7). Connor rightly assesses,

Beckett suggests; it’s the language, the style, the rightness of the words in which the truth(less) is couched. ‘I am interested’, Beckett said, ‘in the shape of ideas even if I do not believe in them...It is the shape that matters. (Connor 38)
Work Cited


