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“OUTSIDE OF HERE IT’S DEATH”: CO-DEPENDENCY
AND THE GHOSTS OF DECOLONIZATION IN
BECKETT’S *ENDGAME*

BY NELS C. PEARSON

Too long in exile. Just like James Joyce, baby . . .
Too long in exile. Just like Samuel Beckett, baby . . .
Too long in exile.

—Van Morrison

“What impact do the long history of Ireland’s emergence from British rule and the central role of literature in Irish nationalism have on the work of Samuel Beckett?” After decades of reading Beckett, alongside Joyce, as an exemplary author of exile, cosmopolitan existentialism, and postnationalist modernism, literary critics have finally begun, and I think rightly, to turn their attention to this difficult, but pertinent, question. The merit of an Irish historical recontextualization of Beckett’s work has recently been the subject of book-length studies by Beckett scholars Mary Junker and John Harrington, and chapter-length studies by Irish cultural and postcolonial studies scholars David Lloyd and Declan Kiberd.¹ These studies argue that to enhance our understanding of Beckett we must reconsider the influence that Irish colonial and literary history and an Irish background have on his work (Junker and Harrington), or read his texts in the context of such pertinent colonial and postcolonial themes as language dispossession, oppressive empires, flawed nationalisms, postcolonial identity, and the philosophical or psychological underpinnings of the condition of exile (Kiberd and Lloyd).

What is lacking in these otherwise excellent readings and interpretations, however, is that none of them deals extensively with the reading of *Endgame* in either a postcolonial or an Irish historical context.² In the following pages, I wish to present such a reading and to argue, based on this reading, that *Endgame* is a work central to the study of imperialism and postcoloniality. This is so not only because *Endgame* articulates the problems of language, identity, and origins that are deeply intertwined with Irish and other (post)colonial experience(s), but also because it offers a formidable and thoroughgoing critique of the overarching

Hegelian or Manichaeic paradigms of master and slave, oppressor and oppressed, that have repeatedly conspired with the course of history (and historiography) to produce the colonial subject and that, in the specific case of Ireland, have done so with an alarming and consistent violence.

Let me say at the outset that I think the lack of any thorough investigation of *Endgame* as a commentary on postcolonial (and certainly Irish postcolonial) predicaments is probably due to the very aspect of the play which I believe ultimately empowers it as an astute political commentary: its vague suggestions of, but repeated *resistance* to, any specific cultural readings or singular geographic or historical interpretations. The fact is that we cannot make *Endgame* “speak” about some assumed version of a cultural past or to an *a priori* notion of Irish “identity” that would help us fit Beckett, or the discursively enslaved Clov, neatly into any master narrative of the silenced and oppressed. But, as I hope to demonstrate, this is exactly the reason not to give up the project of trying to come to terms with the play’s “Irishness,” or, more specifically, with the relevance of the play’s use of imperialist/colonial themes to both global and local (Irish) histories.

What we initially find by placing *Endgame* in the context of Irishness and colonialism is that we are dealing with a play that dramatizes many unresolved paradoxes of decolonization known acutely by the Irish and the Irish writer—most notably language dispossession and the co-dependency of identity between long-standing colonizer and colonized. But on a deeper level, we discover a play that, especially in its manipulation of representational and metatheatrical devices unique to drama, repeatedly asks its audience to see *outside* of the master/slave dialectic that it ruthlessly and scrupulously portrays. In so doing, *Endgame* becomes far more than a mere allegory of master/slave political relationships. It becomes a farsighted, mocking challenge to the essentializing discourse, hegemonic historical (re)production, and violent opposing of contrived originary identities that thrive not only in the imperial/colonial situation itself but also in many contemporary, (supposedly) liberal, intellectual, and artistic attempts to speak for the oppressed.

What *Endgame* ostensibly dramatizes is not simply a master/slave relationship, but the lingering co-dependency between two leftover participants from an imperial/colonial (or at the very least ruler/subject) historical situation that no longer exists. The important thing is that Hamm and Clov maintain the respective roles of ruler and ruled, as well as the assumption that there is no alternative to these roles, long after

the external causes or specific historical circumstances of those roles have deteriorated. In fact, we might go so far as to say that Hamm and Clov's perpetual co-dependency is what keeps *Endgame* going as a play, what gives the drama any dimension at all, or certainly what creates its apparent boundaries:

HAMM: Gone from me you'd be dead.
CLOV: And vice versa.
HAMM: Outside of here it's death!³

Of initial interest to an Irish reading of this mutually frustrating relationship are the few, vague suggestions in the text, which come mostly via allusions to language and language dispossession, that Hamm is English and Clov is Irish, such as when Hamm's British dialect comment that he feels "a bit of all right" is followed by Clov's decidedly Hiberno repetition/correction: "a smithereen" (*E*, 11-12).⁴ But of greater importance to a postcolonial reading (especially one sensitive to Irish history) is the suggestion that Hamm, who fusses over Clov's incorrect English usage of the word "laying," has, somewhere in the couple's hazy imperial/colonial past, taught Clov the words of his language:

HAMM: Yesterday! What does that mean? Yesterday!
CLOV (violently): That means that bloody awful day, long ago, before this bloody awful day. I use the words you taught me. If they don't mean anything any more, teach me others. Or let me be silent.

(*E*, 43-44)

As Charles R. Lyons has recently pointed out, Beckett is here portraying Clov as "a victim of the language of the oppressor . . . in which he must think as well as speak."⁵ I entirely agree, but I also think Beckett's commentary is more specific, and more directed, than a broad indictment of "the language of the oppressor." I would offer that these lines constitute a direct reference to the *imperialist* resonances of *The Tempest*, a play that Beckett also intertextually invokes in Hamm's repetition of Prospero's lament, "our revels now are ended" (*E*, 56), and in Hamm's aside, just prior to the above lines, in reference to Clov: "Ah, the creatures, the creatures, everything has to be explained to them" (*E*, 43). Beckett is using *The Tempest* to make neither an arbitrary postmodern pastiche of, nor a formally cryptic modernist allusion to, Shakespeare.⁶ Instead, I would argue, Beckett is invoking the imperialist theme of *The Tempest* as a postcolonial author might (and as several

have), in this case by providing us with a rewriting of the scene in which Caliban endures Prospero's boastful claim that he has brought Caliban the gift of language—a claim to which Caliban underhandedly replies, “and my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse.”⁷ Like Caliban, Clov stresses that the words he has learned are basically meaningless to him because they are inseparable from the identity of his master/teacher. In fact, Clov's violent repetition of the British English curse word “bloody”—“that bloody awful day . . . before this bloody awful day”—suggests the depth of the connection Beckett is making between Clov and Caliban, and Hamm and Prospero. What is most disturbing for Caliban is most disturbing for Clov: the presumed gift of language (Prospero's and Hamm's respectively) amounts to nothing but the ability to curse in the language of the oppressor. But it is Clov's insistence on pursuing the matter further—“I use the words you taught me. If they don't mean anything anymore, teach me others. Or let me be silent.”—that illustrates Beckett's insistence on combining the theme of frustration and paralysis with the idea (too readily accepted by Hamm, Clov, and the audience) that there are only two reductive and binarily opposed alternatives for Clov (and for the oppressed in general): either speak in the master's language or don't speak at all. If we consider this problem in terms of Irish literary and colonial history, and in terms of Beckett's own challenges in trying to write his way out of those histories, *Endgame* can be read, especially upon a closer investigation of what transpires in the following scenes, as a sentient critique of the intellectual and artistic project of speaking for the oppressed—a project which has had various and complex, but frequently visible, consequences for modern Irish writers.

Certainly language dispossession figures prominently in the relationship between Irish literature and Irish identity (just as it figures prominently in the relationship between Hamm and Clov), but among the most troubling events of Irish history for Ireland's literary exiles has been the tendency of that nation's writers (primarily its dramatists), since the Irish Renaissance, to link the linguistic, political, and spiritual problems of decolonization to the formation of a “national” language and literature. As much as the stifling conditions of imperialist subjugation of the colonized, it is the trap of essentialist discourse that thrives in the imperial situation that the aspiring Irish artist must escape. And it is in this sense that *The Tempest* constitutes the most important and historically relevant intertext of *Endgame*. *The Tempest* shares with *Endgame* the disturbing suggestion that even in a remote, historically and temporally isolated setting (Shakespeare's “uninhabited isle” being replaced, or appropriately rewritten, by Hamm and Clov's deteriorating

shack), the psychological and linguistic traps of imperialism are inescapable—in both plays they are the only certain plot that carries over into the alternate world from the “real” one that has been left behind.

What *Endgame* shows us, as Beckett’s rewriting of *The Tempest* suggests, is that the control over the mind of the oppressor/oppressed or colonizer/colonized paradigm, so frustrating at home, continues to follow and haunt the exile, just as it continues to haunt the nation that has supposedly thrown off the yoke of imperialism. Even in exile (or perhaps most acutely in exile), Beckett seems to argue, “the old questions” (*E*, 38) of how to separate the identities, linguistic or otherwise, of colonizer and colonized will always haunt the expatriate, the self-exiled author, or even the cosmopolitan, precisely because it has helped to engender him. We might say that the lingering question of identity and the past forms the subplot of exile, which, in turn, is the subplot of cosmopolitanism or the supposedly postnationalist world of late capitalism, just as the Irish question (and the colonizer/colonized question in general) forms the ghostly subtext, and the buried past, of the undeniably human drama that unfolds on the stage in *Endgame*.

Thus, while there is certainly merit in arguing that Hamm and Clov are figures to be located in reference to a specific colonial past, we gain more towards an understanding of the general link between decolonization and exile (or the concept of a cosmopolitan literature that is also postcolonial) when we realize that *Endgame* buries that specific colonial relationship (whatever exactly it may be) deep in a hazy past that Hamm and Clov have repressed but continue to play out, and which the play itself revolves around but rarely reveals. Whatever the actual history of their master/slave past (or wherever it was that Clov “inspected [Hamm’s] paupers . . . [sometimes] on foot” [*E*, 8]), the important thing is that, for some inexplicable reason, that relationship still persists while all else of substance is gone. While the root causes or original situation of that dependency are either long gone, long forgotten, or simply elsewhere, the present reality on the stage is still haunted by its ghosts. Indeed, the tragicomic theme of *Endgame* is very much the disheartening story of so many “liberated” postcolonial societies and their former, supposedly “enlightened,” colonizers: the old master and slave remain unwilling participants in a history of oppositional identity politics that continues to repeat itself despite the supposed eradication of its causal nexus.

But *who* continues to tell such “disheartening stories,” who listens to and accepts them, as well as *why* these fictions of intersubjective identity remain influential, are, it seems to me, exactly what Beckett is

critiquing. The controlling fiction in *Endgame*, Hamm's "chronicle" (*E*, 59) about how he became "a father to" Clov (*E*, 38), is a story about why origins (or narratives of origin) must dictate the present (or, in *Endgame*, the stasis of rehearsed dialogue). It is a narrative that Hamm himself must keep telling, and it is beyond both his and Clov's control to stop because they are either unable or unwilling to consider alternatives:

CLOV: I'll leave you
HAMM: No!
CLOV: What is there to keep me here?
HAMM: The dialogue.
(*Pause.*)
I've got on with my story. . . .
(*Pause. Irritably.*)
Ask me where I've got to.
CLOV: Oh, by the way, your story?
HAMM (*surprised*): What story?
CLOV: The one you've been telling yourself all these days
HAMM: Ah you mean my chronicle?
CLOV: That's the one.

(*E*, 59)

As Sean Golden and Charles R. Lyons have pointed out, the play can, in scenes such as this one, be read as an allegory or series of metaphors for the inescapable nature of the master/slave relationship and the co-dependent social and political identities it creates and perpetuates.⁸ But I would argue that these lines also introduce an important concern with narration and identity that links *Endgame* both to contemporary postcolonial concerns and to Irish colonial, and literary, history. This concern with the power of storytelling is demonstrated by Beckett's placement of a single narrative version of the past (Hamm's) in the formidable position of a controlling structure that is simultaneously "beneath," or providing unquestionable foundations for, the static co-dependency of the dialogic present and "above," or always silencing, alternative voices and histories.

Although borne of a more aged bitterness, this theme resonates with one of the darker messages of Synge's *Playboy of the Western World*, and specifically of Christy Mahon's disproved narrative of how he murdered his father, namely that the liberating power of storytelling, a source of potential freedom from the past that constitutes the subaltern's confining present, can never be fully realized. If we think about it, foregrounding narrative acts (especially those concerning fathers and origins) and linking such narratives to historical identity connects Beckett, in *Endgame*, to two important themes in Irish literature of

nationalism, decolonization, and postcoloniality—oppressive or impotent father figures (usually signifying Irish paralysis, British oppression, or both) and storytelling, alien language, and occluded identity—which are central to O’Casey, Yeats, and Synge, evident concerns throughout Joyce, and the very foundations of the political commentary of Brian Freil’s *Translations*.

In *Endgame*, the dialogue (which Hamm, in the above lines, convinces Clov is the only thing “keep[ing]” the duo alive [*E*, 58]) both represents and perpetuates the myopic binary perception of the characters and silences or subsumes the narrative act (especially that of Clov), while forcing Hamm, or so he thinks, to construct egocentric narratives that deliberately and at times desperately work to silence any voices whose presence might offer an alternative interpretation of Hamm and Clov’s history. Hamm’s “chronicle” about how he found Clov and became “a father to [him]” (which invokes Prospero’s narrative of paternity to Miranda, thus suggesting that Clov is both—as were the Irish in colonialist discourses—the adopted child and the brute beast) is one that Hamm has apparently retold on numerous occasions and continues to revise throughout the course of the play, always making sure to remind Clov of his dependence on Hamm:

HAMM: Do you remember when you came here?

CLOV: No. Too small, you told me.

HAMM: Do you remember your father.

CLOV (*wearily*): Same answer. (*Pause.*) You’ve asked me these questions millions of times.

HAMM: I love the old questions. (*With fervor.*) Ah the old questions, the old answers, there’s nothing like them! (*Pause.*) It was I was a father to you.

(*E*, 38)

Indeed, the “old questions” and “old answers” are what sustain Hamm and Clov in their perpetual paralysis, but those questions and answers about a deeply intertwined past (represented in *Endgame* by the dialogue itself) are what have robbed them of anything else to believe in or to see. When narrative does take center stage, it is Hamm who, literally forcing Clov to wheel him “right in the center” of the stage (*E*, 76), assumes full control of the narrative, as if doing so only to maintain the unscrutinized assumptions about the duo’s history (as he does in the above lines). This fact is evidenced in Hamm’s increasingly egocentric narrative construction of how he found Clov, a story in which there really is no dialogue that isn’t silenced and manipulated by intentional narrative reconstruction and in which Hamm’s increasingly desperate

attempt to maintain narrative control over the past ruthlessly occludes any actual dialogue in which the subjects of the narrative might actually speak, and in that act of speaking offer alternative histories:

HAMM: . . . (*narrative tone*) . . . It's my little one, he said. Tsstss, a little one, that's bad. My little boy, he said, as if the sex mattered. Where did he come from? He named the hole. A good half-day, on horse. What are you insinuating? That the place is still inhabited? No, no, not a soul, except himself and the child—Kov, beyond the gulf. Not a sinner. Good. And you expect me to believe you have left your little one back there, all alone, and alive into the bargain? Come now! . . .

Come on man. Speak up, what is it you want from me, I have to put up my holly.

(*Pause.*)

Well to make it short it finally transpired that what he wanted from me was . . . bread for his brat? Bread? But I have no bread, it doesn't agree with me. Good. then perhaps a little corn?

(*Pause. Normal tone.*)

That should do it.

(*E*, 51-52)

Here, Hamm's narrative, in which he asks and answers all of the questions concerning what happened, thereby silencing the actual voices involved in the original incident, operates much like the question/answer progression of the play's dialogue that it serves to maintain and perpetuate. Clearly, because the "old answers" sustain his interpretation of past and present events, Hamm "love[s] the old questions."

Even at face value, Hamm's narrative control over subjects, histories, and origins has obvious imperialist resonances, but it is his mention of "Kov," the specific geographic location of where he supposedly found Clov, or discovered information about his past from his father, that again forces us to consider that the hazy, buried past of *Endgame* has something to do with the British colonial domination of Ireland. Kov (spelled "Cobh" in Irish, or, usually, "Cov" in English, but in both cases pronounced "kov") is a seaport and naval station in County Cork, Ireland, with a military history dating to the French and American Revolutions. In 1849, Cobh was the port through which Queen Victoria first entered Ireland, and, until successful decolonization was underway in 1922 and Cobh was restored as the port's rightful name, the British had changed the name of the port to Queenstown. During British occupation, Spike Island, which lies in the harbor at Cobh, was a British military post where Irish political prisoners were kept and later transported to Botany Bay, a British penal colony in Australia.⁹

A possible and entirely new reading here is that Clov's real father was a political prisoner at Cobh, who had "left [his] little one back home" and begged Hamm to take him. But the frustrating thing is that we have no idea whether or not this is the case—all we know is Hamm's extremely opaque retelling of the story. As with Clov's use of the Hiberno dialect term "smithereen," we get a vague, but unsuppressable, suggestion that Ireland has something to do with Clov's origins. But because the only perspective on history we can get in the play is Hamm's, we can never know anything for certain.

Nonetheless, we would do well to consider these problems of language and obscured history, as well as their contemporary relevance, in terms of Irish history—if for no other reason than that the Irish, being in such proximity to, and having their language dispossessed by, their colonizers for over eight centuries, have endured a particularly brutal form of the paradoxical questions of original language, national identity, and co-dependency. Of course, we could simply argue that "[t]he old questions" and the "right in the center" (*E*, 27, 76) of the stage that Hamm prefers are analogous to the empire that "writes back to the center" of an assumed history and occludes the identity and voice of the (unspecified) oppressed.¹⁰ But rather than doing what Gayatri Spivak admonishes us against, recognizing colonial subalterns "by assimilation," it seems more pertinent (especially in light of Beckett's vague references to Ireland) for us to entertain the possibility that "the old questions" which, in *Endgame*, both perpetuate and are perpetuated by a monologic narrative of history, bear a specific relevance to the "old questions" concerning Ireland's attempts to construct a national (historical and literary) identity within the boundaries of an alien discourse and the language of political essentialism.¹¹ Patrick O' Farrell explains this co-dependent inquiry of national identity and literary form in *Ireland's English Question*:

the two searchings, the British for an answer, the Irish for a meaning to their question, intersected on each other to their mutual frustration. No proposed external solution could ever satisfy the Irish . . . for they as a people neither knew who they were, nor what they wanted—these were problems they would have to solve for themselves and themselves alone.¹²

Regardless of Ireland's answer to the question of identity, the problem was, and to a large extent still is, that because the "identity" question is inherently posed by those who have silenced the Irish or by those who now wish to make them "speak" (just as nearly all of Clov's speech is in

response to questions asked by Hamm)—any “answers” are always already stigmatized by the colonial identity implied by the question (just as Clov’s answers are almost always implied by Hamm’s questions). As O’Farrell seems justifiably to interpret it, there is no “external solution” to the colonial situation, but it is precisely this threadbare assumption about there being no outside to oppressor/oppressed paradigms that Beckett, if we read deeper into the play, is requiring *us* to question. For if we accept Hamm as a metonym for imperial consciousness, we must also contend with the fact that it is Hamm who would have us believe there is no external solution, and, as it were, no “outside” of the text.

By examining the dialogue of *Endgame* as a static question/answer dialectic that denies alternative narrative solutions, we gain a deeper understanding not only of how thoroughly the identities of Hamm and Clov are bound up in a perpetual rewriting of an assumed colonial or oppressor/oppressed past, but also of how this rewriting is monopolized by Hamm’s assumptions of the outside and of history. Nearly all of the questions in the play have answers predetermined by the source of the question (as in Hamm’s initial and final soliloquies, during which he makes egocentric inquiries to affirm his constructed identity: “Can there be misery loftier than mine?” [*E*, 2]), or, as in the case of Hamm’s questions to Clov, predetermined by the submissive role-acceptance and learned responses of Clov:

HAMM: Have you not had enough?
CLOV: Yes! (*Pause.*) Of What?
HAMM: Of this . . . this . . . thing.
CLOV: I always had.
(*Pause.*)
Not you?
HAMM (*gloomily*): Then there’s no reason for it to change.
CLOV: It may end.
(*Pause.*)
All life long the same questions, the same answers. . . .
HAMM: . . . But that’s always the way at the end of the day,
isn’t it, Clov?
CLOV: Always.
HAMM: It’s the end of the day like any other day, isn’t it, Clov?
CLOV: Looks like it.
(*Pause.*)

(*E*, 5, 13)

Clov answers Hamm’s questions as if by rote memorization, sometimes pausing only after the fact to wonder why he does so. But these numerous pauses and silences (in both characters’ speech) do possess a

certain agency. We should not dismiss the possibility that they mark Beckett's challenge to the *audience*, who ought to inquire, in those muted moments, about the nature and occasion of Clov's silence, which might be where the real alternatives to Hamm's view of the world ultimately lie.

To show that this may be the case, let us look at another moment in the play where Clov cannot escape the demeaning responses (which perpetuate codependency) that Hamm has taught him, and where it seems to the passive observer that Clov's freedom can only be considered as the answer to a question posed by Hamm:

HAMM: Did you ever think of one thing?

CLOV: Never.

HAMM: That we're down in a hole. (*Pause.*) But beyond the hills? Eh?

Perhaps its still green. Eh? (*Pause.*) Flora! Pamona!

(*Ecstatically.*) Ceres! (*Pause.*) Perhaps you won't need to go very far.

(*E*, 39)

Hamm is baiting the trap for Clov, not only because freedom for Clov would be the answer to Hamm's question, but also because Hamm has already enforced his view of the outside as "death." As Declan Kiberd points out, Hamm's enticing of Clov's escape "sounds like a mischievously devised test." "Earlier in their exchanges," Kiberd reminds us, "Hamm had established that Clov will obligingly repeat whatever he chooses to decree: that there is no more nature, that there is nothing outside their shelter but a devastated landscape."¹³ I agree with Kiberd, but I wish to go an important step further by saying that the most important perspective that Hamm controls, the most important mode of perceiving the outside world that he dominates, is not Clov's, but the *audience's*. That is, ours. To control the audience is to control public opinion, which in this case is public opinion about the inexorability of the oppressor/oppressed relationship, and that is exactly what Hamm is doing. Indeed, the closer we examine *Endgame*, the more we realize how strong Hamm's control over *our* view of the outside is, and the more we begin to wonder whether it really is "death" and "the other hell" (*E*, 26) outside of the confines of the couple's shack, or whether the entire notion of there being "no exit" to the play is nothing but a thin fiction imposed on the present by Hamm, in which case it seems that Beckett is really invoking a plethora of alternatives by scrupulously dramatizing the transparency and comic absurdity of the fiction that seems to negate them.

A closer look at the many scenes in which Hamm, who cannot stand or see, commands Clov to examine the outside world for him through the two windows (backstage left and right, directly in the audience's line of sight and corresponding to their own pairs of eyes) reveals how Hamm dictates Clov's acts of perception and expression as well as how he continues to force the audience's perception of history and external reality toward those same windows (thus forcing both Clov and the audience to depend on his version of what and where the "outside" is). In one of the play's first references to the external world, Clov is examining the outside through the windows, apparently exercising his right to subjective perception, as signified by the telescope he looks through. But, in what becomes a common theme, this act of seeing is limited both figuratively and literally by that same telescope (which Clov insists he has "no need of" (*E*, 28) but which Hamm insists that he use), by the nature of the fact that he is assuming the correctness of Hamm's instructions on *where* to look for hope (which Hamm keeps teasing Clov is what he might find outside the windows), and by the fact that he is only viewing the outside world because Hamm has asked him to do so. Importantly, however, Clov tries to subvert this perpetuation of the master/slave situation, first by giving an ambiguous but optimistic (perhaps impenetrably personal and cryptic) comment that "things are livening up!" outside the windows (*E*, 29). He then drops his telescope "on purpose" (*E*, 29), and, in an uncharacteristic moment of self-assertion and creativity, turns the telescope on the audience (the only time that the fourth wall is breached until Clov does so again in the closing moments of the play) and thus gazes upon the present and future (or the raw material of history), rather than the dilapidated structure of history, and the assumed past, that lies beyond Hamm's windows.

Turning the telescope on the audience, Clov, in a rare moment of narrative performance or attempted artistic transformation of autonomous perception and experience, stammers out the following ellipses-laden description of what he sees: "I see . . . a multitude . . . in transports . . . of joy. (*Pause.*)" (*E*, 29). In this brief narrative attempt two problems arise that characterize the inability of the Other, or subaltern, to affirm or create its identity through narratives composed in the alien language. First, the description itself is as much silent as it is vocal (each utterance is followed by a silence of equal length), thus implying that the ellipses indicate a signifying silence, which in turn suggests that there is/are a muted voice or voices beneath Clov's words—a voice that cannot speak or communicate its desires in the language available to it. Second, the

few words that Clov does manage to invent to describe his new sensation and perspective are decidedly culled from a storehouse of archaic English literary styles. That is to say, instead of giving his own account of the outside (and therefore of the present), Clov must first consider the English question, or think in relation to Hamm's words, which effectively silences and transforms his communication. Clearly this is an *occasion* for Clov to produce an alternative narrative description of the outside world, but, through a combination of influence and acceptance of Hamm's words, the potential for an alternative narrative is only suggested, not realized.

Thus we might conclude here, with Gayatri Spivak, that "the subaltern cannot speak," not simply because it cannot find or create an essentialized, unstigmatized form to speak through, but also, and most importantly, because it has been "recognized [by] assimilation," or in a sense tagged and filed by a reinscribed traditional/Eurocentric historical interpretation that (like much poststructuralist criticism and, I would add, like the assumed binary identities that Hamm's persistence and Clov's weak resistance perpetuate) takes any collision of racial, cultural or gender difference and always already assumes that a hierarchy with a silenced "other" is created. Such approaches and assumptions, Spivak contends, necessarily "assimilate" the other into the predetermined category of the voiceless subaltern and recreate the binary opposition (and co-dependency) of oppressor and oppressed.¹⁴ A parallel to this situation can be found in Hamm's need to force Clov's (and our) perception in the play toward the two either/or windows of historical interpretation that only reveal the eroded landscape of an assumed past that determines an assumed present and future.

Indeed, it is again the predetermined answer to a question—and the abrupt return to dialogue—that denies the emergence of Clov's narrative voice (or of a collective "multitude" (*E*, 29) of other voices for which Clov is a metonym). After Clov's aforementioned narrative attempt, he is compelled to ask Hamm for affirmation, a move that proves immediately fatal to Clov's, but not necessarily to our, brief attempt to get outside the confines of the play.¹⁵ Here, Clov's assumption that he needs to ask Hamm for affirmation of his description of the audience brings us back to the stasis of the dialogic present/interior world, as Hamm's answer, which Clov immediately submits to and repeats, forces us to forget about what Clov has seen and might have said. This act of submission (not so much to Hamm as to the stasis of the rehearsed dialogue that his modes of perception control) closes the fourth wall (along with the potentiality of imaginable alternatives to the oppressor/

oppressed paradigm) and gives us instead one of the most linguistically charged instances of co-dependency and erasure of Clov's autonomous voice that the play has to offer:

CLOV (*... picks up telescope, turns it on audience*): I see . . . a
multitude . . . in transports . . . of joy.
(*Pause.*)
That's what I call a magnifier.
(*He lowers the telescope, turns towards Hamm.*)
Well? Don't we laugh?
HAMM (*after reflection*): I don't.
CLOV (*after reflection*): Nor I.
(*He gets up on ladder, turns the telescope on the without.*)
Let's see.
(*He looks, moving the telescope.*)
Zero . . .
(*He looks*)
. . . zero . . .
(*He looks*)
. . . and zero.

(E, 29)

Content that Clov has affirmed the view of the outside that he is most comfortable with, Hamm, in the next lines, confidently begins a narrative paraphrase of the situation, as if to ensure its reinscription, but Clov, knowing already how Hamm will describe things and knowing that his fate is to repeat that description, cuts Hamm off before he can finish—a suggestion of Clov's awareness of his own condition that enrages Hamm, who then dares Clov to come up with an alternative description of the outside world:

HAMM: Nothing stirs. All is—
CLOV: Zer—
HAMM (*violently*): Wait till you're spoken to!
(*Normal voice.*)
All is . . . all is . . . all is what?
(*Violently.*)
All is what?
CLOV: What all is? In a word? Is that what you want to know?
Just a moment. (*He turns the telescope on the without, looks, lowers the telescope, turns towards Hamm.*)
Corpsed.
(*Pause.*)
Well? Content?

(E, 29-30)

With Hamm's telescope, and looking out of Hamm's windows, Clov can only confirm Hamm's desired perception of the outside world ("Outside of here it's death"), try as he might to describe it with a fresh, creative metaphor.

Here we are obliged to remember that, in the lines that best encapsulate how co-dependency creates the confines of the play, it is Hamm who introduces the subject, determines Clov's response, and then writes the play's most damning epitaph-in-epigram:

HAMM: Gone from me you'd be dead.

CLOV: And vice versa.

HAMM: Outside of here it's death!

It is hard to imagine a stronger declaration of the inexorable co-dependent psychology of oppressor and oppressed. But this way of looking at the master/slave situation is *itself* a form of blindness, itself incomplete, because even though mutually agreed upon by oppressor and oppressed, it is still only *one* way of framing the identity question, and because it is based only on the enlightened perspective of the one who claims to have objective, exterior and interior, knowledge of the situation (but who is actually blind). Hamm, in this sense, is not simply an imperial oppressor, but a metaphor for the enlightened, ex-imperial figure whose modes of writing and interpreting relationships with his various others perpetually fall back on binary and hierarchical perceptions of those relationships. That Hamm is fully aware of the co-dependency problem, but unable to stop perpetuating it, bears a striking resemblance to the socially enlightened First World intellectual who is aware of and able to recognize the debilitating paradox of oppressor and oppressed but who, perhaps because of this awareness, is unable to see outside of it to consider other alternatives of perceiving the relationship—a condition for which both parties are equally to blame, and a condition present in the long-standing relationship between Ireland and England, especially as perceived by literary exiles like Beckett and Joyce.

Thus Clov's repetition of Hamm operates on at least two levels with respect to a postcolonial reading of the play, the first being that Clov is a metonym of the linguistically dispossessed voice of the colonized (the adopted sons of "Father England"), and the second being that Clov's problematic identity is partly a result of his own acceptance not simply of a slave role, but of an elitist reading of history that must identify and assimilate the slave before it can free him (an acceptance of the conditions of identity that anyone aware of Joyce's and Beckett's view of

their homeland will immediately recognize as a painfully acute condition of Irish paralysis). There is, however, yet a third level of representation/consideration of the colonial identity at work in the play, namely, that Clov's repetition of Hamm's words may constitute acts of mimicry which subversively parody the view of the colonized identity as a reproduction or repetition of the imperial. Again, we are drawn to consider the occasion and nature of Clov's speeches and silences. When we read his repetitions of Hamm's words as slight displacements of what we expect him to repeat, they begin to indicate a disempowering mimicry of dominant ideology by forcing us to see its imperfections—or, by analogy, by forcing Prospero, and not Caliban, to rage upon seeing his face (or not seeing his face) in the glass of reflection. "The figure of mimicry," writes Homi Bhabha,

problematizes the signs of racial and cultural priority, so that the 'national' is no longer naturalizable. What emerges between mimesis and mimicry is a *writing*, a mode of representation, that marginalizes the monumentality of history, quite simply mocks its power to be a model, that power which supposedly makes it imitable.¹⁶

Indeed, between Clov's silence and his exact repetition of Hamm's words, there often exists exactly the kind of signifying slippage in the expected mimetic act that marks the kind of "writing" of which Bhabha speaks.¹⁷ In fact, in the play's final moments, all of the postcolonial themes I have traced thus far come to a head as a result of a slight, but irreversibly jarring, change in Clov's expected repetition of Hamm's theme of the "death" outside the windows.

In the final scene, Hamm tries to silence Clov as he (Hamm) "warm[s] up for [his] final soliloquy" (*E*, 78). Clov, again at the command of Hamm, picks up the telescope to gaze outside the windows, but this time—as the often cryptic or hermetic reports of the outside submitted and withdrawn by Clov throughout the play have foreshadowed—Clov comes back with a significant variation on the theme of the outside as "death" that, in its slight suggestion (or perhaps narrative creation) of *life*, poses a serious threat to Hamm's slipping control over the narrative and the dialogue. Hamm, now shoring up his remaining symbols of authority by clutching his gaff and his dog and desperately demanding that Clov again move him "right in the center" of the shack, immediately recognizes Clov's claim to have seen life and not death outside the windows as an "underplot" (the subaltern speaking²) that threatens to dislodge all of his increasingly unstable fictions of centrality and authority:

CLOV: I warn you. I'm going to look at this filth since it's an order. But it's the last time. (*He turns the telescope on the without.*)

Let's see.

(*He moves the telescope.*)

Nothing . . . nothing . . . good . . . good . . . nothing . . . goo—

(*He starts, lowers the telescope, examines it, turns it again on the without. Pause.*)

Bad luck to it!

HAMM: More complications! . . . Not an underplot, I trust.

(*Clov moves ladder nearer window, gets up on it, turns telescope on the without.*)

CLOV (*dismayed*): Looks like a small boy!

HAMM (*sarcastic*): A small . . . boy!

CLOV: I'll go and see. . . . I'll take the gaff.

HAMM: No!

(*Clov halts.*)

CLOV: No? A potential procreator?

HAMM: If he exists he'll die there or he'll come here. And if he doesn't . . . (*Pause.*)

CLOV: You don't believe me? You think I'm inventing?

HAMM: It's the end, Clov, we've come to the end. I don't need you any more. (*Pause.*) . . . leave me the gaff.

(*E*, 79)

As the ellipses which cut off Hamm's either/or response signify, it doesn't matter whether Clov is "inventing" or reporting the existence of life outside the windows. Either way, Hamm has lost control of Clov, and Clov has found a way out—either actual or by "inventing" his own fiction. In fact, the story Clov is retelling here, or the story threatened by the real presence of the boy, is the chronicle about finding Clov as a "boy" that Hamm has enforced throughout the play in order to deny or silence alternative histories. Through Clov's report of a young boy outside the windows, we have reached the center of *Endgame's* controlling fiction, and found it to be, at the very least, suspect and unstable. Hamm recognizes this, and tries to force closure by announcing "we've come to the end." This is a very sly maneuver, because he then immediately asks Clov to give a final speech "to ponder . . . in my heart" (*E*, 79), which, of course, is his final attempt to force the play back into the question/answer dialectic that, in turn, forces us yet again to forget what Clov has seen and said with respect to the outside world.

On one level, there is a final, bitter turn of the screw in Clov's seeming emergence of identity. Clov's final speech is perhaps a triumph of self-awareness, but it is also given at the urging of Hamm. It is,

despite (or perhaps because of) Hamm's narration to the contrary, nothing but a response to Hamm's final question:

CLOV: I'll leave you.
(*He goes towards door.*)
HAMM: Before you go . . .
(*Clov halts near door.*)
. . . say something.
CLOV: There is nothing to say.
HAMM: A few words . . . to ponder . . . in my heart.
Clov: Your heart!
HAMM: Yes. . . . With the rest, in the end, the shadows, the murmurs, all the trouble, to end up with. (*Pause.*) Clov. . . . He never spoke to me. Then, in the end, before he went, *without my having asked him*, he spoke to me. He said . . .

(*E*, 80; my emphasis)

What are we to make of this? Is Hamm sincere? Is this a moment of genuine pathos? Perhaps. Perhaps Hamm is sincere, but only as sincere as the enlightened ex-imperial intellectual who wants the other to speak, somehow, "without being asked," but who, nonetheless, cannot do so without asking, which is exactly what Hamm does here. In fact, sincere or not, he cannot help forcing the other to speak, as if he himself had scripted the speech and is now directing it:

HAMM: Something . . . from your heart.
CLOV: My heart!
HAMM: A few words . . . from your heart.
(*Pause.*)
CLOV (*fixed gaze, tonelessly, towards auditorium*): They said to me, That's love, yes, yes, not a doubt, now you see how—
HAMM: Articulate!

(*E*, 80)

Clearly the speech is stigmatized by Hamm's direction, but this does not entirely strip Clov's words—or, more accurately, the speech occasion itself—of meaning, especially when seen in light of Bhabha's comments on mimicry. Again, Clov's expression may be suspect, but his perception—the direction of his gaze—begs us to notice the significance of what he is attempting to do, whether he succeeds or not. Clov has finally turned his gaze back on the audience, and his speech is given from the position of one able to observe and comment on—as the audience hopefully can—his own troublesome condition. He even disregards Hamm's command to stop speaking, and he continues to narrate his own story, albeit with the painful awareness that he is only doing so at the

request of, in the language of, and against the trope of the savage employed by those now asking him to speak:

Clov (*as before*): How easy it is. . . . They said to me, Come now, you're not a brute beast, think upon these things and you'll see how all becomes clear. And simple! They said to me, What skilled attention they get, all these dying of their wounds.

HAMM: Enough!

CLOV (*as before*): I say to myself—sometimes, Clov, you must learn to suffer better than that if you want them to weary of punishing you . . . you must be there better than that if you want them to let you go—one day. But I feel too old, and too far, to form new habits. Good, it'll never end, I'll never go. (*Pause.*) Then one day, suddenly, it ends, it changes, I don't understand, it dies, or it's me, I don't understand, that either. I ask the words that remain—sleeping, waking, morning, evening. They have nothing to say. (*Pause.*) I open the door of the cell and go. I am so bowed I only see my feet, if I open my eyes, and between my legs a little trail of black dust. I say to myself that the earth is extinguished, though I never saw it lit.

(*E*, 81)

If we are looking for Clov to establish his own voice, his own view of the outside world, and his own independent identity, this is as close as we will get. But the speech itself, as well as the fact that he does not finally leave (although Hamm thinks he has), reveals the reasons why an allegorical reading of subaltern revolution cannot be completed. The entire problem of the play is encapsulated in Clov's comment that, if he can summon the courage to leave, he will "say to myself that the earth is extinguished, though I never saw it lit." No matter what the outside world actually is, he will always know it only through Hamm's interpretation. The world may in fact *be* "lit," but he only knows, and can only repeat, Hamm's description of the outside as a place that has been "extinguished" (as of course it would be to someone who is blind), no matter what it may actually look like. The problem is that this blindness to alternatives has become so entrenched in the duo's minds that they can never see external solutions because they only know the world through the *language* of blindness and the language of an assumed history. But this is exactly where *our* insight into alternative solutions should come in. Hamm and Clov's inability to see outside of the Hegelian paradigm of master and slave that subsumes them is a performance which demands to be read, or rather *watched*, as a frustrating enactment of our own desire for the use of such models to interpret and correct the problems that, ironically, we feel that dialectic

has created. The trick to seeing *Endgame* in an entirely different, more promising light is to realize that this is the case. Yet this is exactly what the few political readings of *Endgame* available to us do not realize.¹⁸

The only study of *Endgame* to examine the play's political and Irish historical significance in depth, a Marxist reading by Sean Golden entitled "Familiars in a Ruinstrewn Land: *Endgame* as a Political Allegory," is a thorough and well-crafted, but ultimately limited, reading that helps pave the way toward a more valuable historical interpretation of the play. In a lengthy prolegomena, Golden clearly lays out his own agenda in reading *Endgame* as a political allegory, and it is an agenda with an undeniably familiar refrain. "My premise," writes Golden,

is that all art and all traditions of art as they exist in the present age are by definition bourgeois and tainted by capitalism, created for, if not by, the bourgeoisie within a hegemony of ideas and ideals which reinforce the bourgeoisie. . . . The problem facing the contemporary artist, then, is complicated by form as well as content. How can the proletarian, or colonial, or feminist writer create art without using the forms and conventions handed down by bourgeois, imperial, or patriarchal systems without thereby perpetuating the hegemony and ideology of those systems?¹⁹

Indeed, these are relevant questions to ask with regard to the play. But, not unlike the questions in the play itself, they are questions whose answers we already know, and Golden's thesis, which we fully expect after the above formula for investigation is laid out, leaves us to consider whether an allegorical reading is able to deal with the full weight of the historical comment Beckett is making. "I would suggest," writes Golden, "that in his plays Beckett provides an allegory for the problems I have been outlining [in that they] illustrate the mutual dependence and deformation of the relationship between exploiter and exploited."²⁰ "Hamm," he contends,

represents the bourgeoisie, the capitalist, while Clov represents the proletariat, and the action of the play portrays 'the more or less veiled civil war raging within existing society up to the point where that war breaks out into open revolution, and where the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat' (Marx, *Communist Manifesto*). . . . Hamm and Clov are familiars, intimately bound together by the relationship of oppressor to oppressed, of owner to worker. What shocks profoundly in the play is that there is no longer any world to exploit, only leftover remnants of the results of exploitation.²¹

Golden tries to find a suggestion in *Endgame* to complete his allegory of the Marxist reversal of the hierarchy and argues, in part rightly, that Clov's development of "a language of his own, a poetic language in contrast to Hamm's mannered narrative or dramatic style," and his "inexplicable gift" for "solipsism" and "metaphor" (in such expressions as the outside being "corpsed" or "grey" [E, 30, 31]—as opposed to black or white—and in his hermetic, metaphorical explanation to Hamm that when alone in his room "I look at the wall . . . [and] I see my light dying" [E, 12]) represent Clov's possible subversion of Hamm, or, to put it in Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin's assimilating postcolonial terminology, Clov's representation of the "emergence of an effective post-colonial voice."²²

The problem, as I have explained it above, is that *Endgame*, like any text held up to the test of essentializing the voice of the other (but perhaps more acutely and intentionally so), denies closure to any form-based allegorical reading in search of a successful subaltern voice. Caught in the trap of desiring an essential/autonomous identity for the subaltern to be allegorized by Clov's narrative production in opposition to Hamm, Golden cannot finally conclude for sure whether Clov succeeds in overturning, or suggesting the potential for overturning, the master/slave hierarchy. In Clov's final soliloquy, Golden can only offer, Clov seems "able to express himself authentically . . . unless he is repeating a set speech written by Hamm, in which case the dilemma is still more dreary."²³ And here, of course, is the problem with all such readings: insightful and moving in the right direction as they are, Beckett, in what might be considered his most "Irish" move, has clearly prefigured them. He has done so by making such modes of perceiving historical relationships into the very form of "blindness and insight" (to force de Man's phrase back upon the critical models he helped engender) that both rightly perceives but inevitably perpetuates the Hegelian problems of master and slave. The problem in *Endgame* is, as Golden rightly points out, binary perception and reinscribed hierarchies of constructed identities, but the answer to this problem is not an applied intellectual awareness of binary thinking or master/slave dialectics, whether that awareness be of a neo-Marxist or poststructuralist mold. Rather, that awareness is the problem *too*, for it offers no solution, no outside, to the seemingly perpetual co-dependency that paralyzes Hamm and Clov.

Of course to call the neo-Marxist or poststructuralist reading incomplete is to put oneself in the difficult position of having to suggest an alternative, the tremendous difficulty of which *Endgame* itself brilliantly

depicts—and I am certainly less able than Beckett to suggest a philosophical or theoretical answer. But perhaps *Endgame* does not call for a philosophical or theoretical answer, and instead forces us to look at history, specifically Irish history, through different windows. While the play is about the inability of Clov to find a voice of his own, it is also, as I have tried to show, a play about why expecting him to develop this alternative voice is in part what prevents him from doing so. It is a play in which the initial, unquestioned assumption that we must constantly raise our ladder of perception to the same high windows in search of alternatives becomes the very thing that negates all alternatives. Thus, what we, I think, are obliged to do—our own theoretical apparatus having doubled back upon and negated itself largely because of the manner in which the artist has prefigured it—is to allow this irresolution to reopen the book of history that the search for alternatives is really always trying to close.

Put simply, the theoretical impasse of the search-for-alternatives-that-denies-alternatives situation may get us nowhere in trying to find a way for the subaltern to speak, but it may go a long way towards teaching us something about the psychology of history—in this case about why domestic concerns over Irish literary identity engendered so many Irish literary exiles, about what it might feel like to be in the frustrating situation where, as Stephen Dedalus sees it in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the only means of production for the sentient Irish artist is “silence, exile, and cunning,” and about why, as Barbara Gluck has it in *Beckett and Joyce*, “Ireland . . . was a spiritual assassin to its writers, whose only hope for creative achievement lay in exile.”²⁴ The view that assumes Irish literature must be an alternative to its English father is not merely a theoretical problem, but, in the eyes of many an Irish exile, a very real and unresolved practical problem. Beckett sees the Irish situation much as Joyce does. His characters are paralyzed, even more acutely than Joyce’s Dubliners, but share with them the frustrating acceptance of or inability to see beyond modes of conceiving themselves which assume that, as Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin assume too readily in *The Empire Writes Back*, there is a “continuity of preoccupations [among colonial peoples] throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression” and that this “continuity” applies to and assimilates the Irish situation and the question of an autonomous Irish literary identity.²⁵

Thus the degree to which we, as intellectuals observing the postcolonial drama from behind the fourth wall, feel trapped by the paradoxes of identity we see played out before us amounts to the degree to which we

fail to consider, or have faith in, the possibility of eschewing those modes of perception that lead us to assume that the preconditions of the drama themselves are unalterable or even stable. What David Lloyd has said of Beckett's *First Love* must also be said for the potentiality that underlies the dialogic stasis of *Endgame*: Beckett's "opposition is made in the name of a recognition of 'a new thing that has happened,' the breakdown of the object, or by reverse, that of the subject. His working out of that new condition, by no means complete . . . , approaches the threshold of another possible language within which a post-colonial subjectivity might begin to find articulation."²⁶ Of course with *Endgame* as drama, the point becomes even clearer that the postcolonial subject cannot simply "find articulation," nor can we speak for him or her, unless we take an active part in changing, or considering alternatives to, the very assumptions about language and modes of perception that we bring, as invariably as our evening finery, to the staging of the play.

The closest thing to a real answer, as the overwhelmingly, intentionally problematic binary stasis of *Endgame* all but forces us to realize, is not to ask the question in the first place, or that freedom (whether it be artistic, psychological, or social and political) cannot be achieved as long as a specific colonizer/colonized paradigm is the foregrounded assumption. Beckett knew this for himself as well as from Joyce, and specifically from his close contact with the production of *Finnegans Wake*, in which Joyce's decentering of family authority, linguistic/cultural hierarchies, and linear narrative discourse can be read, as I have argued elsewhere, as a freeing of the Irish literary mind—*not* a freeing from England, specifically, but from the much larger snare of dominant philosophical, historical, and theoretical paradigms that assume, explain, and perpetuate cultural hierarchies in general. The endgame, that is to say, is only an inevitable result because, like Hamm and Clov, we have assented without scrutiny to the black and white rules and oppositional strategies of the game.

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NOTES

¹ See Mary Junker, *Beckett: The Irish Dimension* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1995); John Harrington, *The Irish Beckett* (Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1991); David Lloyd, "Writing in the Shit: Beckett, Nationalism and the Colonial Subject," in his *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Postcolonial Moment* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1993), 41-58; and Declan Kiberd, "Beckett's Texts of Laughter and Forgetting," in his *Inventing Ireland* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1996), 530-50.

² Of these four, only Kiberd offers a brief commentary on the play. See also Charles R. Lyons, "Endgame as Political Drama," in *Irish Writing: Exile and Subversion*, ed. Paul Hyland and Neil Sammells (New York: St. Martin's, 1991), 188-206, and Sean Golden, "Familiars in a Ruinstrewn Land: Endgame as Political Allegory," *Contemporary Literature* 22 (1981): 425-55. While these last two studies each argue the play's political implications, they are limited to the argument that the play's political commentary rests mainly with its being an allegory for the discursive dynamics of the oppressor/oppressed hierarchy and the master/slave dialectic in general. Since my aim is to demonstrate that both actual Irish experience and Beckett's embedded *critique* of the master/slave dialectic add important layers of political, and specifically postcolonial, meaning to the play, I will argue both the valid points and the shortcomings of Lyons's and Golden's (as well as Kiberd's) arguments in the course of my own.

³ Samuel Beckett, *Endgame* (1957; New York: Grove Press, 1958), 70. Hereafter abbreviated *E* and cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

⁴ Also see my comments (pages 222-23 of this essay) on Clov's origins having something to do with Cobh ("Kov, beyond the gulf" [*E*, 52]), which was an important seaport in Cork, renamed Queenstown under British occupation, where Irish political prisoners were kept before being transferred to the British penal colony Botany Bay in Australia.

⁵ Lyons, 193.

⁶ Who, it seems fitting to remember, was for James Joyce, Beckett's friend and contemporary, the Irish writer's unassailable, ever-present literary father.

⁷ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, in *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*, ed. Alfred Harbage (New York: Penguin, 1977), 1.2.425-26. For postcolonial treatments of *The Tempest*, see in particular Aimé Césaire's play *Une Tempête* (*A Tempest*, trans. Richard Miller [New York: Editions du Seuil, 1985]), in which Césaire, an African dramatist writing for the audience of the "Black Theatre" in 1969, rewrites Shakespeare's play from the perspective of Caliban, who, in Césaire's version, is a black slave from whose perspective we see the subjugation and silencing (via language dispossession) of the African subject. See also George Lamming's *The Pleasures of Exile* (London: M. Joseph, 1960), 188-89, and his rewriting of *The Tempest* in his novel *Natives of My Person* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1992). There is also a postcolonial adaptation of *The Tempest* in Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1985), a novel about the Maori people (native New Zealanders).

⁸ See n. 2. I deal directly with Golden's reading in the final pages of this essay. Drawing primarily on Marxist models and social theory, as does Golden, Lyons maintains that "Hamm and Clov transform the images of master and slave . . . into a pair of post-modern figures who articulate the tropes of a bourgeois ideology that has become archaic" (193) and that "Beckett plays with the paradigmatic structure of the oppressor, and with the oppressed and the uses of language to implement that tyranny" (200). However, choosing to remain in the limited specificity of Marxist and Hegelian models, he makes no argument about the possible relevance of these symbolic enactments to Irish (or even to general) postcolonial experience. He concludes that the play can be read as a critique (or simply a representation) of the deterioration of productive labor and the psychological alienation that characterize a late-capitalist society which has "lost the idealism of rebellion and retains only the inflated rhetoric of dominance and the self-protective irony of subservience" (193). Implicit in my later critique of Golden's similar (but more thorough) Marxist interpretation of the play is a criticism of Lyons's conclusions.

⁹ *Collier's Encyclopedia*, under the word "Cobh." See also *Encyclopedia Britannica* (15th ed.), under the word "Cobh." The discovery of this reference belongs to my colleague and mentor, Brian Richardson, whose suggestions and support throughout my work on this project have been invaluable.

¹⁰ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* (London: Routledge, 1989), 1 ("writes back to the center").

¹¹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in her *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-313, 292 ("by assimilation").

¹² O'Farrell, *Ireland's English: Anglo-Irish Relations 1534-1970* (New York: Queston, 1971), 14, quoted in Kiberd, 16.

¹³ Kiberd, 546.

¹⁴ Spivak, 292, 306-8.

¹⁵ In fact, Beckett has written in an important part for the audience to play by having Clov, when he turns the telescope on the audience, report to Hamm that the members of the audience are "in transports of joy." Ironically, the audience is at that moment not "in transports of joy," because there is nothing to laugh at. However, the silent, gazing audience is what allows Clov's punchline, "That's what I call a magnifier," to work. Importantly, the audience laughs at the fact that it hasn't been laughing. And it is in this sudden shift of perspective—the joke both for and at the expense of the audience's silent transfixed gaze—that, for a brief moment, the audience (that is, we) are actually seeing the comic absurdity of the duo's situation, and thus, perhaps, seeing past it.

¹⁶ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 87-88.

¹⁷ We might even say that the entire play itself offers such a mimetic critique of dominant historical assumptions about the "no exit" view of colonizer/colonized relationships.

¹⁸ See my summary and critique of Lyons's argument in n. 9.

¹⁹ Golden, 432-33.

²⁰ Golden, 443.

²¹ Golden, 444.

²² Golden, 435-36; Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 7 ("emergence").

²³ Golden, 449-52.

²⁴ James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1914-15; London: Grafton, 1977), 222; Barbara Gluck, *Beckett and Joyce: Friendship and Fiction* (Cranbury: Associated Univ. Presses, 1979), 75.

²⁵ Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 222; Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 7.

²⁶ Lloyd, 56.