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Godot's Shakespeare

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ABSTRACT

While the connection between Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and *King Lear* has become something of a critical commonplace, references to other Shakespeare plays can also be found throughout. This essay traces *Godot's* debt to two plays in particular. First it argues how *Godot* not only draws on *Hamlet's* graveyard scene for macabre imagery, but how it also construes an extended meta-theatrical parody of *Hamlet's* soliloquies about the contrast between acting and talking/thinking. The second half of the essay proposes a number of connections with *The Tempest*, and specifically with its "salvage and deformed slave" Caliban. It argues how the figure of Caliban not merely functions as a model for a colonial power-dynamic that can be seen to operate here and elsewhere in Beckett, but how Caliban is equally significant as a lyrical figure whose great speech about sleeping, waking, and dreaming informs Beckett's play in a number of ways.

KEYWORDS

Samuel Beckett; William Shakespeare; *Waiting for Godot*; intertextuality; postcolonial; soliloquy

I

LUCKY: [...] considering what is more much more grave that it appears what is still more grave that in the light of the labours lost of Steinweg and Peterman it appears what is more much more grave that in the light the light the light of the labours lost of Steinweg and Peterman that [...]

— Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*¹

Shakespeare is a privileged author in the Beckett canon. In their recent study of the reading "traces" that Samuel Beckett left in his library, Dirk van Hulle and Mark Nixon note that "Most of his texts contain some kind of nod toward Shakespeare [...]. It is striking how Shakespeare furnished Beckett with more than just the nicely turned phrase, or the apt verbal confluence, but often chimed in a more direct way with Beckett's poetic enterprise."² Shakespearean references and allusions throughout his oeuvre – from the *More Pricks than Kicks* stories of the early 1930s, to works such as *Company*, *Ill Seen Ill Said* and *Stirrings Still* in the final decade of his life – are often important markers pointing to Beckett's most deeply held ideas and preoccupations, and to some of his novels' and plays' central themes.³ This is not to say of course that, especially in the private correspondence and the fiction from the earliest phase of his career during the pre-War decades, Beckett was not drawn to the allure of the easy Shakespearean pun that could be employed for humorous effect. The interjection of

a parody of *Richard III* – “A cow, a cow, my Free State for a cow” – in a letter to Thomas McGreevy is one of the better known examples of this.⁴

The twice-repeated, triple-alliterative reference in Lucky’s speech in Act 1 of *Waiting for Godot* to things considered “in the light of the labours lost of Steinweg and Peterman” (44; emphasis added) appears at first to be another example of these more playful, casual instances of literary quotation. Yet that seemingly throwaway pun on the title of one of Shakespeare’s early comedies may also serve to highlight one or more of Beckett’s ideas about the theatre. Firstly, it is perhaps intended to parody the vapid allusive style of the kind of pompous orators who are one of the targets of Beckett’s satiric intent in that speech (a subject explored at greater length in section III of this essay). Perhaps more significantly, the reference to *Love’s Labour’s Lost* may also be said to develop another preoccupation that is introduced earlier in the same speech, when Lucky invokes the “labours unfinished of Testew and Cunard” which are in some way connected, as far as it is possible to gather from his disjointed monologue, with “the strides of physical culture the practice of sports such as tennis [...]” (43). Lucky initially lists a whole gamut of different sports, but towards the end of his speech that list is reduced to tennis alone (44), perhaps to highlight the particular importance of that sport. The tentative connection between “labours lost” and tennis points to a metaphor introduced in Act 5 of Shakespeare’s play of that name, in which the Princess of France congratulates two of her ladies-in-waiting on the virtuosity of their banter by comparing its toing-and-froing to the dynamics of a tennis match: “Well bandied, both; a set of wit well played.”⁵ As his various biographers have all documented, Beckett was interested in tennis and other sports all his life,⁶ and this is not the only time that an idea that originated in the sporting arena entered his literary thought – although it is one of the very few occasions on which a sporting reference also has an additional Shakespearean connection. The relevance of Shakespeare’s tennis metaphor in Beckett’s play is clear. The preoccupation of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* – a play not merely “of excessive verbal sophistication,” as Stanley Wells’ introduction glosses it,⁷ but also *about* verbal excess⁸ – with constructing conversational rallies is of course well suited to one of *Godot*’s major concerns. Throughout the play, Vladimir and Estragon are regularly concerned with keeping the conversational ball in the air for as long as possible, lest they are forced to silence and contemplation once one of the players either scores a palpable hit (if the mixed metaphor may be excused) and thus finishes the conversation in his favour, or simply drops the ball, as Estragon in particular is often in danger of doing as his side of one of their rallies begins to repeat itself. But if the reference to *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, despite its capacity for offering an idea on the nature of banter, or indeed the shape of a play, nevertheless remains a minor element of *Waiting for Godot*, then the obvious pun on the title of that play also serves the more mundane function of drawing attention to the presence of other, more central Shakespearean echoes and allusions. This essay will now turn its attention to a number of these.

II

I know those little phrases that seem so innocuous and, once you let them in, pollute the whole of speech. *Nothing is more real than nothing.*

— Samuel Beckett, *Malone Dies*⁹

One Shakespearean intertext has long been regarded as more pervasive than any other in Beckett’s early dramatic oeuvre. The presence of *King Lear* in both *Waiting for Godot*

and *Endgame* has been pretty well established ever since the publication of Jan Kott's influential 1964 study *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*. The argument of his chapter entitled "King Lear, or Endgame" ranges from identifying localised allusions to *King Lear* in Beckett's plays (such as his identification between Lear's order at the end of one of his great frantic monologues that one of his shoes be taken off [IV.v.169] and the pinching shoe that Estragon removes at the beginning of Act 2 of *Godot*), to establishing larger thematic and structural analogies between the two playwrights.¹⁰ Kott's example has been routinely invoked by subsequent generations of critics investigating Beckett's debt to Shakespeare. Following the lead of Kott – and of Peter Brook's notoriously "Beckettian" stage and film productions of *Lear* (1962 and 1970, respectively) – critical discussions of Shakespeare's presence in Beckett's dramatic outputs from the 1950s have often focused on the two playwrights' shared sense of nothingness, futility, desolation, despair, and deterioration; on their mutual awareness of the absurdity of living in a godless universe where justice has been replaced by chance. Recent essays such as David Wheatley's bleak account of Beckett's Shakespearean nothingness, and R. A. Foakes's more nuanced reading of how *King Lear* contributed nihilistic as well as comic and playful elements to *Endgame*, are in their different ways representative of this approach.¹¹ There are other distinctly *Lear*-like elements in *Godot*, too. In Act 2, Estragon points out that "We all are born mad. Some remain so" (80), recalling the Fool's rebuke of Lear: "Dost thou call me fool, boy?" "All thy other titles thou hast given away; that thou wast born with" (*Lear Q*, sc. 4, ll. 144–5).¹² Shortly afterwards it becomes clear that Pozzo has gone blind since the conclusion of Act 1, and critics have been quick to identify the shadow of *Lear* that looms behind this particular example of tragic destruction or decay. For many, Pozzo's loss of his sight between acts cannot but recall the blinding of Gloucester; and what is more, when "Blind Pozzo [is] led by dumb (perhaps mad?) Lucky" in Act 2, this recalls, for Ruby Cohn and others, a line from *King Lear*: "'Tis the time's plague when madmen lead the blind" (*Lear F*, IV.i.47).¹³

This essay does not seek to quarrel with such by now familiar readings of *Godot* as a *Lear*-like chronicle of what Kott describes as "the decay and fall of the world,"¹⁴ but neither will it seek to further reiterate what these and other critics have written about *Godot's Lear*. Instead, this essay will explore the presence in Beckett's breakthrough play of two other Shakespearean intertexts that have received considerably less critical attention. Section III of this essay will deal with *Godot's* variations on ideas from *Hamlet*, while section IV analyses its various connections with *The Tempest*. By tracing its close connections with those two plays as well as with *King Lear* and others, the essay seeks to establish a fuller picture of *Godot's* complex relationship with its author's most illustrious dramatic forebear.

III

POZZO: (*suddenly furious*) [...] One day, is that not enough for you, one day like any other day, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? (*Calmer.*) They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more.

— *Waiting for Godot* (89)

It is not a new thought that *Waiting for Godot* shares its vision of the proximity between the cradle and the grave with that of Shakespeare's tragedies. In his classic study of the contemporaneousness of Shakespeare's themes, Jan Kott remarked how "the blind Pozzo, who has fallen down and cannot get up, [...] would find it easiest to understand [Gloucester]" in *King Lear*; and how his speech in essence duplicates Edgar's "Men must endure/Their going hence even as their coming hither. Ripeness is all" (*Lear F*, V.ii.9–11).¹⁵ Other Shakespearean intertexts are equally present in Pozzo's speech, and in its reprise by another character that soon follows it in the play. When Pozzo "furious[ly]" articulates his bleak vision of how mankind "give birth astride of a grave" (89), and especially when Vladimir expands that thought in a calmer, more lyrical mode soon afterwards as he muses "Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the gravedigger puts on the forceps" (91), both these characters in Beckett's play may indeed share Edgar's stoicism in the face of the cruelty and meaninglessness of the universe; but they do so using imagery that more closely resembles the witches' gruesome invocation of a "birth-strangled babe/Ditch-delivered by a drab" in Act 4 of *Macbeth* (IV.i.30–1).

Not just *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, but *Hamlet*, too, is an important presence in those same speeches of Pozzo and Vladimir. When *Godot*'s protagonists equate those two events that bound a human life, burial and birth, one literary precursor to that idea is young prince Hamlet's disgust with how "The funeral baked meats/Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables" (I.ii.179–80) after his father's death and his mother's hasty recommitment into another potentially fertile union. Moreover, there may also be a direct textual echo of a line from the final act of the same play. For as Robert Brustein has observed, Pozzo's repeated use of the word "one" in his identification of the "awful brevity of life" revives Hamlet's comment to Horatio shortly before his fatal duel with Leartes, that "a man's life's no more than to say 'one'" (V.ii.75).¹⁶ The final act of *Hamlet*, with its extended reflections on mortality, is a presence throughout *Godot*. When Beckett's two vagrants are unable to hang themselves after the cord they intend to use breaks (94), they farcically bear out the observation of one of *Hamlet*'s gravedigger-clowns that it is "the more pity that great folk should have count'nance in this world to drown or hang themselves more than their even Christian" (V.i.26–9) – in the process transmuting the abstracted theological argument of the original into an absolute *material* reality. It has been widely acknowledged by historically-minded critics of Beckett's work that the references in Vladimir and Estragon's conversation early in Act 2 to "all these corpses" and "skeletons" in their "charnel-house[s]," and to the "billions" who have been "killed" (64, 62), are informed by the horrors of the Holocaust in the first half of the 1940s, a period Beckett spent working for the French Resistance and hiding from the Gestapo in the Vaucluse.¹⁷ But to critics who prefer to think of Beckett as a reader *as well as* a war hero, it is equally clear how, with its obsessive attention to the bones of the dead, that same conversation also has at least a tinge of the graveyard scene in the final act of *Hamlet*, in which human bodies in varying stages of decay are imagined in great detail.¹⁸

But *Hamlet* is more than merely a source of macabre imagery. Shakespeare's Danish prince also informs Lucky's great feat of "thinking" in Act 1. Lucky's speech about "the skull the skull the skull the skull in Connemara" (44) probably contains the highest concentration of Shakespearean allusions of any passage in the play; it is also one of *Godot*'s most overtly and self-consciously theatrical passages. Lucky's "thinking" not only "parodies and mocks the language of philosophy and science," as has

sometimes been suggested;¹⁹ nor must it be seen exclusively as a version of Hamlet's disjointed gibbering rants to Polonius and other courtiers during his feigned madness in Act 2, scene 2. It has elements of both those things, of course; but in addition it is also a recognisable version of the theatrical convention of the soliloquy (that quintessentially modern mode of address defined by Matthew Arnold as "the dialogue of the mind with itself"²⁰), and specifically of the way that device is used by Shakespeare in *Hamlet*. Lucky's "thinking" in his "skull in Connemara" speech is a satiric version of the activity that occupies Hamlet throughout the play, not least in the scene in which he is confronted with a physical manifestation of transience in the form of a human skull that "has lain in the earth three and twenty years" (V. i.168–9). Lucky, then, is an absurd descendant of Hamlet – or perhaps an ageing Hamlet whose facility for thinking aloud has degenerated since his prime, as Pozzo's comment that "He even used to think very prettily once, I could listen to him for hours" (39) suggests. That this analogy is intentional is suggested by a couple of details in the same speech and elsewhere in the play. First, at the end of his speech Lucky twice prefaces a reference to the "skull in Connemara" with the words "alas alas" (44), an archaism that evokes the oft-quoted exclamation that opens the soliloquy delivered by Hamlet holding a skull: "Alas, poor Yorick" (*Hamlet*, V.i.180). Even more suggestive of the idea that Beckett intended for Lucky to be identified with Shakespeare's mad Danish prince is a comment by Estragon, who will later remember him as "a lunatic who kicked the shins off me. Then he played the fool" (61). This is not just a very funny line; it is also an ironic version of Hamlet's "antic" lunacy (*Hamlet*, I.v.173), a reformulation of that condition comically cast in the colloquial Irish idiom of the down-at-heel.

Lucky's "thinking" is a parody of the process that occupies Hamlet for most of Shakespeare's play. Few other characters in the history of literature or the theatre are as immobilised by their own thinking as Hamlet – a distinction borne out by a long critical tradition stretching back to Coleridge. Shakespeare's extended use of soliloquy in this play is part of his aesthetic of procrastination, and it has long been clear to scholars that the relationship between soliloquy and delay is twofold.²¹ On the one hand, engaging in soliloquies gives Hamlet the opportunity to delay action. At the same time, the subjects of Hamlet's soliloquies are often that very delay which they allow him to achieve, as he repeatedly reflects self-referentially on his habit for putting off action. (The textbook example of this is the soliloquy prompted by his reception of news of the resolute actions taken by his rival Fortinbras at IV.iv.39–46.)

Hamlet's tendency for procrastination is parodied throughout *Godot*, and the play's satire on Hamlet-esque feats of thinking, reasoning, and talking – of soliloquising, in a word – is by no means confined to Lucky's rambling monologue in Act 1. Because if Lucky's speech is a ridiculous parody of a Shakespearean soliloquy, then a number of Vladimir's speeches also bear hallmarks of the same genre. When, about two-thirds through Act 2, Lucky and Pozzo fall and lie helpless "*among the scattered baggage*" (77), Vladimir and Estragon discuss at length what their course of action should now be. Estragon proposes that they take advantage of Pozzo's helplessness by "[giving] him a good beating" while he is down. Vladimir, in contrast, responds by launching into a full-blown soliloquy:

VLADIMIR: Let us not waste our time in idle discourse! (*Pause. Vehemently.*) Let us do something, while we have the chance! [...] Let us make the most of it, before it is too late! Let us represent worthily for once the foul brood to which a cruel fate consigned us! What do you say? (*Estragon says nothing.*) It is true that when with folded arms we weigh the pros and cons we are no less a credit to our species. The tiger bounds to the help of his congeners without the least reflection or else he slinks away into the depths of the thickets. But that is not the question. What are we doing here, *that* is the question. (79–80)

With its obvious echo of what is probably the most famous line not just from that play but in all of English literature – Hamlet’s “To be, or not to be; that is the question” (III. i.58) – the last two sentences are clearly intended to signal, in a more overt way than Beckett normally allows himself, a relationship with *Hamlet*.²² (The echo is so overt, in fact, that we may classify it among the rare humorous Shakespearean puns in Beckett’s work, alongside such examples as the variation on the most famous line from *Richard III* in his letter to McGreevy quoted at the start of this essay.) But not just those last words but the *whole* of Vladimir’s speech may be read as a conscious elaboration of *Hamlet*’s interest in the theme of procrastination. Beckett is clearly playing with the tendency to let contemplation take the place of action which is the subject of Hamlet’s “To be or not to be” soliloquy. Vladimir may start his soliloquy with a resolute “Let us not waste our time in idle discourse! [...] Let us do something,” but this initial resolve soon fizzles out as the speech deals in verbal excesses (appropriate, as the opening of this essay argued, to a play that invokes *Love’s Labour’s Lost*) seemingly designed for the purpose of putting off the moment when action must follow speech.²³ Or as Declan Kiberd put it, Vladimir offers nothing but “insincere rhetoric [...] Instead of offering help, Didi makes a pretty speech; instead of taking upon himself the reality of Pozzo’s suffering, he becomes a professor of the fact that someone else is suffering.”²⁴

The inevitability of Vladimir’s procrastination and inaction is clear to all, including Estragon – the companion who, in stark contrast to the other’s static attitude, had opportunistically proposed to take immediate advantage of the situation by giving Pozzo a beating while he is down. That Beckett intended this is clear from one of his Theatrical Notebooks. There, Beckett signalled Estragon’s awareness of his comrade’s tactic for stalling and delaying by adding to the stage direction that comes a couple of lines into Vladimir’s speech the direction that Estragon “*pulls free and, tired, sits*” – as if resigned to the all-too-predictable inaction of his comrade, inaction that must be a habit as predictable as most of the other things they do.²⁵ It is perhaps ironic, then, that Estragon should himself become the victim of Vladimir’s evasive loquaciousness not much later. When he struggles to take off his boots and entreats Vladimir to “Help me!”, Vladimir again fails to offer practical help, even to this closest of companions, and starts another one of his soliloquies instead (90).

Beckett is clearly enjoying himself at the expense of the cult of the pensive Hamlet when Vladimir, momentarily reflecting, Hamlet-like, on his own reflectiveness, remarks that: “It is true that when with folded arms we weigh the pros and cons we are no less a credit to our species” (80). Folded arms, for one thing, are a “melancholy” pose traditionally associated with performances of the role of Hamlet.²⁶ But Vladimir’s speech also ironically contrasts tragic characters like Hamlet who “weigh the pros and cons” of the actions available to them “with folded arms” with the character of “The tiger,” who “bounds to the help of his congeners without the least reflection or else he slinks away

into the depths of the thickets" (80). That Beckett should choose "the tiger" as the animal most suited for this comparison may itself be informed by Shakespeare's use of that particular animal as an emblem of heroic decisiveness in the most famous speech of another of his heroes, one whose character is in this important respect the opposite of that of Hamlet:

Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more;
Or close the wall up with our English dead.
In peace there's nothing so becomes a man
As modest stillness and humility:
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
Then imitate the action of the tiger [...] (*Henry V*, III.i.1–6)

Warlike Henry emphasises the vital contrast between the "modest stillness and humility" that become a man in peacetime, and the need to "imitate the action of the tiger" in times of crisis (*Henry V*, III.i.1–6). Vladimir, however, like Hamlet, finds it impossible to adapt his peacetime stance into one appropriate for an age that requires action.

Vladimir's speech contrasting those who "bound", tiger-like, into action with those who "with folded arms [...] weigh the pros and cons," then, revives the juxtaposition at the centre of Hamlet's most famous soliloquy: that between those who passively suffer "in the mind [...] /The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," and those who "take arms against a sea of troubles/And by opposing end them" (III.i.56–60). Or to put it another way: the contrast between the valiant young prince Fortinbras (the *forte braccio*, or "strong arm", who functions as Hamlet's mirror-image or double²⁷) or the martial King Henry (or indeed the pugnacious Estragon), on the one hand; and the static, pensive Hamlet on the other. This might still beg the question, though, why Beckett should include such an extended Hamlet parody in this play.

While this Shakespearean element of *Godot* has a clear meta-theatrical purpose connected with Beckett's thinking about conventional theatrical practices and poses, his interest in Hamlet's procrastination and delay may also have wider implications beyond the theatre in the immediate historical moment of the play's conception. It may be no coincidence that Beckett should explore this particular Shakespearean trope in a play that grew directly out of his experiences of the Second World War. The War had reduced many individuals and even whole nations (Beckett's native Ireland included) to a state of horrified paralysis, while only a few mustered the mental fortitude and clarity of purpose to "bound" into action. In 1939, Beckett had decisively refused to return to neutral Ireland and joined the French Resistance, first in Paris and then in Roussillon; but the magnitude of the sudden need to choose between "France in war" and "Ireland in peace" to which he alluded in later years²⁸ could just as easily have left him paralysed and confused and unable to act at all. This paralysis or confusion brought on by the necessity of making a choice of unprecedented gravity is the subject of the speech in *Godot*.²⁹ Vladimir's Hamlet-like evasions into the static pose of the soliloquiser, and the even-handed treatment in that soliloquy of the competing merits of standing idle *with folded arms* on the one hand, and of *taking arms* on the other, may be read not exclusively as a parody of the trademark attitude a well-known literary figure. Vladimir's weighing of the pros and cons of those contrasting attitudes is also Beckett's sensitive reflection – not a critique exactly,

but certainly not a defence either – on the different possible responses to the feelings of anxiety, confusion and futility that defined the age.

IV

ESTRAGON: We always find something, eh, Didi, to give us the impression that we exist?

VLADIMIR: (*impatiently*). Yes yes, we're magicians.

— *Waiting for Godot* (69)

One more Shakespeare play repeatedly suggests itself throughout *Godot*. When Vladimir suggests – however facetiously – to Estragon that they are “magicians” conjuring a sense of reality out of thin air, he is perhaps casting himself and his companion in the role of a couple of latter-day Prosperos, the fallen-gentleman-turned-magician from *The Tempest* who has conjured a make-believe version of the civilisation he has lost on the desert island he now inhabits. Projecting that intertext onto what could reasonably be seen as a fairly innocuous remark in Beckett’s play may seem like a critical indulgence, but such a reading is licensed by the fact that there are other references and allusion throughout *Godot* that more overtly suggest the presence of Shakespeare’s last play. Specifically, near the beginning of his manic soliloquy in Act 1 Lucky casts himself in the role of a character from *The Tempest* when he invokes the name Miranda. By interjecting his admiration for “the divine Miranda” (42) in his impassioned soliloquy,³⁰ Lucky betrays his affinity, perhaps not so much with *The Tempest*’s courtly but “limp” prince Ferdinand (“Admired Miranda!” [III.i.37]), as with the more virile Caliban, the “*salvage [sic] and deformed slave*” whose bestial lusting after Prospero’s daughter has led to his punishment at the hands of her magician-father.³¹ While we can know nothing of Lucky’s sex drive, most productions of *Godot* certainly do emphasise his savage servility, and ground the part in some form of mental or physical otherness. The *Sunday Times*’s description of Timothy Bateson’s Lucky in the first English production of 1955 as a “white-faced gibbering slave” is felicitous in this respect, suggestive as it is of the role’s Calibanesque progeny.³²

In *Godot*’s unlikely Shakespearean mash-up, then, Lucky is Hamlet and Caliban rolled into one. Beckett had long been interested in ideas of degeneracy and debasement: one leitmotif of his early fiction from the 1930s is Belacqua Shuah’s conscious adoption of the manners and language of the subaltern – his need to “troglodyse himself”³³ – to signal his resignation from his Protestant middle-class origins. This broad thematic interest in degeneracy and reverse-evolution (a not uncommon theme of Modernist literature) developed into a more particularised, and potentially more complex and multifaceted, fascination with the savage slave of *The Tempest* in the period that followed. The figure of Caliban clearly held a continual fascination for Beckett during the 1940s and early 1950s, as there are versions of that character in a number of his works written during that period. Not least of these is a minor character in *Watt*, a novel not published until 1953 but written, as Beckett wrote to George Reavey after the Second World War, “in dribs and drabs, first on the run, then of an evening after the clodhopping, during the occupation” in the south of France – a period of his life on which he also drew in the composition of *Waiting for Godot* later in the decade.³⁴ *Watt*’s Mr Nackybal – an anagram, as Ruby Cohn pointed out long ago, of Caliban³⁵ – is an “impoverished bachelor of repulsive appearance” who suffers the same denigration as

Prospero's monstrous servant at the hands of his lettered betters.³⁶ In this case, those superiors are an academic committee who decide that "this man's mental existence is exhausted by the bare knowledge [...] of what is necessary for his survival" (like Caliban, who, as Alden and Virginia Vaughan point out, "responds chiefly to appetite"), and who thus deny the possibility that this apparent rural naïf may be possessed of an inner life or mental faculties as complex and sophisticated as their own.³⁷ The episode in *Watt* chronicling the confrontation between Mr Nackybal and the university committee satirises the romantic Anglo-Irish cult of the illiterate peasant from the Irish-speaking west that flourished in the early decades of the twentieth century.³⁸

Equally politicised incarnations of Caliban and Prospero are also presences in Beckett's drama of this and subsequent periods: in *Waiting for Godot* (written between 9 October 1948 and 29 January 1949) and in *Endgame*. Daniel Albright has remarked that "the more Beckett worked on *Endgame* [between 1952 and 1956], the more he transformed Clov from a figure like Ariel to a figure like Caliban, sullen, recalcitrant, earthbound."³⁹ It has been well established before and since Albright wrote those words that Clov's "violent" outburst – "I use the words you taught me. If they don't mean anything any more, teach me others. Or let me be silent" – echoes Caliban's accusation of Prospero: "You taught me language, and my profit on't/Is I know how to curse" (*The Tempest*, l.ii.366–7); and that Hamm is aligned with the masterly Prospero when he ironically quotes that character's "Our revels now are ended" (IV. i.148) after Nagg, at the end of one of his theatrical outings, sinks back into his dustbin like the defeated Ariel into his cloven pine tree.⁴⁰ *Endgame's* Caliban is precisely the dispossessed colonial subject who is both feared and patronised by his imperial master, and who yearns to return to a state that existed before imperialists arrived to confiscate his lands and impose their language and their alien culture. As Declan Kiberd and others have pointed out, Caliban and Clov both act out the early stages of decolonisation later described by Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), that in which the colonised must face up to his reliance on the language and forms of the coloniser even in the very process of articulating the case for his own essential separateness.⁴¹ To both Shakespeare and Beckett it is evident how for those possessed of such a nascent sense of national or individual independence, learning the master's tongue affords a vital means of cursing both the master and his tongue, but how doing so always means cursing oneself in the process too.

Some of these ideas can also be applied to *Waiting for Godot*. In his classic study of Beckett's work, for example, Vivian Mercier draws attention to "the searing caricature of exploitation by one class or race of another that is represented in the Pozzo-Lucky relationship."⁴² In this relationship, Pozzo is the colonial master (modelled as he is on an Anglo-Irish landlord); Lucky is the monstrous, gibbering, subhuman slave who, like Nackybal and Caliban, "responds chiefly to appetite" (the only occasion on which he shows genuine enthusiasm or excitement is over Pozzo's discarded chicken bones), who may have learned his master's language but who cannot meaningfully express himself in it, who suffers crude physical punishments, and who is made to do his heavy lifting – in short: the Caliban to his Prospero. (In this scheme, Pozzo's baggage stands in for the "burden of wood" that Caliban seems to be forever carrying.) Lucky, like Caliban and Clov, is one who, in Frank Kermode's succinct summary of the plight of Shakespeare's character, "acquires language without acquiring its social contexts of respect and privilege."⁴³ Such lack of context for the words he has learned to speak are another way of accounting for the disjointed nature of Lucky's speech when it is finally delivered

in Act 1: he may be able to grasp the correlation between things and even ideas and the words used to signify them, but he cannot connect them together into a cohesive pattern of meaning intelligible to the wider society who share his acquired tongue.

The correspondence is perhaps too schematic to be fully satisfactory, though; and so it is felicitous that *The Tempest's* presence in *Godot* is not restricted to the feudal or colonial dynamic that is dramatised in the Pozzo-Lucky relationship. As Alden and Virginia Vaughan point out in *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History*, in the post-War era to which Beckett's mature work belongs, Caliban, rather than Prospero, increasingly became the figure in whom poets and critics – chief among them W.H. Auden – could identify contemporary themes and concerns. This shift is attributed to the fact that Caliban's role in the play and on the island not only encompasses the experiences of postcolonial nations, but also quintessentially modern struggles like "his ambivalence about language, his sense of being weighed down in a universe he does not understand, his aching desire, and his despair," all of which are central themes in twentieth-century literature.⁴⁴ This assessment of the versatility of Caliban as a literary signifier in the middle decades of the twentieth century is certainly borne out in *Waiting for Godot*. That play also contains a number of very different references to *The Tempest*, as two of the other characters are also sometimes cast in the role of Caliban. Interestingly, one of them is Lucky's master Pozzo. *Godot* fits less comfortably into the post-colonial paradigm which twentieth-century critics have identified in *The Tempest*, and comparisons with which Beckett invited for *Endgame's* master-servant relationship through Clov's paraphrasing of Caliban's curse on language and Hamm's quoting of Prospero's "Our revels now are ended." Because in *Godot* it is, perhaps ironically, not the monstrous slave Lucky but his master, Pozzo, who must endure the tortures of a modern-day Caliban, as the themes and ideas Beckett borrows from *The Tempest* in that earlier play are not exclusively those same questions of class-hierarchy that define the Calibans of *Endgame* and *Watt*.

In Act 1, Pozzo's view of humanity appears on three separate occasions to be inflected by farcical spins on lines from *The Tempest*. When Pozzo first encounters Vladimir and Estragon, he contrasts their bedraggled appearance with his own:

(*halting*). You are human beings none the less. (*He puts on his spectacles*.) As far as one can see. (*He takes off his spectacles*.) Of the same species as myself. (*He bursts into an enormous laugh*.) Of the same species as Pozzo! Made in God's image! (22)

Pozzo's begrudging concession of Vladimir and Estragon's humanity may contain a faint echo of Miranda's "brave new world/That has such people in't!" (*The Tempest*, V.i.186–7). The people he finds in front of him may not be the most perfect examples of the species, but to eyes starved of human forms any sight, even that of a bedraggled bunch of shipwrecks as presents itself to Miranda or of the two tramps in ill-fitting clothes who now stand before Pozzo, will appear "beauteous" (V.i.186). (Miranda is not aware of this. Prospero's wry response to her speech – "'Tis new to thee" [V.i.187] – makes it clear that he knows the human beings now arraigned before them are far from perfect. Pozzo feels what Miranda feels, and knows what Prospero knows; his awareness of this absurd position may be the reason for his "enormous laugh.") On the other hand, the indignant question that immediately follows this initial observation, whether Vladimir and Estragon have been waiting for Godot "Here? On my land?" (23), links Pozzo less with the ingénue Miranda than with the usurping Prospero, or even the territorial Caliban. And when, a little later still, he meets Vladimir's announcement that he is leaving with

the melodramatic reply: "He can no longer endure my presence. I am perhaps not particularly human" (28), this observation squarely aligns him, in his own jocular fashion, with the monstrous "strange beast" Caliban (see II.ii.31), whose "basic physiology" may be "on the human side of the animal kingdom," but who is defined throughout *The Tempest* by the savage deformity that sets him apart from the mainstream of human society.⁴⁵

More importantly, his and others' obsession with the crucial theme of "time" is also rendered through a recurring echo of Caliban.⁴⁶ In Act 1, Pozzo carries a watch which he consults frequently and obsessively, and he is horrified by the thought that time may cease to exist:

VLADIMIR: Time has stopped.

POZZO: (*cuddling his watch to his ear*). Don't you believe it, sir, don't you believe it. [...] Whatever you like, but not that. (36)⁴⁷

But while the absence of time is consistently regarded with horror in Act 1, that attitude has changed drastically when the same characters, ravaged now by that bloody tyrant time, reappear in Act 2. Reminders not of the absence but of the *existence* of time now make a couple of the characters equally uneasy – thus illustrating what Beckett had argued in *Proust*: that time is a "double-headed monster," one of "salvation" *as well as* "damnation."⁴⁸ When Vladimir asks how long Lucky has been mute, the Pozzo of Act 2 responds with sudden fury:

Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time? It's abominable. When! When! One day, is that not enough for you [...]? (89)

This outburst had been anticipated earlier in Act 2 by Estragon who, in response to Vladimir's question whether he cannot remember what they did yesterday, answers wearily: "Don't torment me, Didi" (66). In expressing their aversion to time in this way, both characters echo a line from *The Tempest*. Pozzo's "furious" (89) outburst and Estragon's "weary" (66) reply to Vladimir's questions in Act 2 of *Waiting for Godot* repeat Caliban's repeated entreaty of Stephano and Trinculo: "Do not torment me!" (II.ii.56, 71). In Caliban, Beckett found a model for suffering and torment that could be applied not only to the servant or slave classes, but to all of humanity. What is more, *Godot* revises not only the question of *who* must endure torment and suffering, but the *nature* of those torments. In the twentieth-century world of *Godot*, not just the downtrodden Lucky must suffer the tortures of the damned. His master, too, experiences torments, and his are not mere physical "cramps,/Side-stitches," "pinch[es]" and "sting[s]" (*The Tempest*, I.ii.328–33), but metaphysical torments much more insidious in nature. Pozzo's torments in Act 2 may be expressed through an echo of Caliban, but the nature of those torments is quintessentially modern – or even *Modernist*. *Godot* reprises a key theme of Beckett's early study of Proust, written under the philosophical sway of its subject, whose great novel is exemplary of a particular strand of Modernist thought that regards people as "victims and prisoners" of time.⁴⁹ *Godot* dramatises the revolt of Proust, Woolf, Wyndham Lewis, Benjamin and Bergson against the tyranny of time (a subject also of Shakespeare's sonnets), in an era when many feel enslaved by clocks and watches.⁵⁰ Through its echoes of *The Tempest*, Caliban momentarily becomes the unexpected, though by no means inappropriate, figurehead of that modern revolt.⁵¹

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There is one more Caliban figure in *Godot*, as Vladimir, too, is drawn into performing that same role on at least one occasion. But where Lucky inhabits Caliban's role of raging colonial subaltern anxiously speaking his master's tongue, and where that master, Pozzo, ironically fancies himself "not particularly human" and is subjected to Calibanesque "torments," Vladimir shares an altogether different aspect of Caliban's performance. Caliban is not simply a grunting slave or a monster; he also shows how he is articulate, and capable of profound lyricism. He does, after all, speak throughout the play either in elegant verse, or (when he addresses low characters like Stephano and Trinculo) in rhythmic prose that aspires to the condition of verse. It is precisely this lyrical side of Caliban that is assimilated by Vladimir on one key occasion. Because when he notices, near the end of the climactic long speech delivered while Estragon is sleeping at the end of Act 2, that "The air is full of our cries" (91), Vladimir is not only displaying the kind of heightened sensibility to the suffering of the great masses in their "looped and wind-owed raggedness" that had been awakened in *King Lear* during the storm on the heath (*Lear F*, III.iv.31); he is also echoing the first line of Caliban's famous speech in the central act of *The Tempest*, a play whose intricate "soundscape," as Michael Neill has elaborated, is made up of "the chaotic tumult of inarticulate cries, groans, and sighs of suffering creatures."⁵² Vladimir's "The air is full of our cries" echoes the opening line of the "lyrical"⁵³ verse-speech in which Caliban demonstrates the depths of sensibility and longing and poetry that lie hidden beneath his "monstrous" façade:

Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises,
 Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
 Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
 Will hum about mine ears, and sometimes voices
 That if I then had waked after long sleep
 Will make me sleep again; and then in dreaming
 The clouds methought would open and show riches
 Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked
 I cried to dream again. (*The Tempest*, III.ii.138–46).

(Nor, incidentally, is Vladimir's final soliloquy the first time that "cries" have been heard by *Godot's* protagonists. In his earlier "Let us not waste time in idle discourse!" speech, Vladimir had already discerned other cries of a more concrete, embodied nature: those of the stricken Pozzo. But those very real cries for help, too, had been universalised in Shakespearean fashion:

([...] *Vehemently*.) Let us do something, while we have the chance! It is not every day that we are needed. Not indeed that we personally are needed. Others would meet the case equally well, if not better. To all mankind they were addressed, those cries for help still ringing in our ears! But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not. [79]

In the great Shakespearean conceit, not only is the world a stage, but equally the stage is the whole world and those tragic heroes who occupy it – Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth; Vladimir and Estragon – represent all of humanity. The universalised cries of suffering in the air to which Vladimir alludes in both those speeches are not *just* the cries for help of the stricken Pozzo, or psychic manifestations of his and Estragon's own dire condition, or

even those of the millions who suffered in the charnel-houses of the Third Reich in the 1940s when the play was conceived and later on the murky battle-fields of the Cold War. Rather, they are all those things at once, and more besides. They are precisely that: the *universalised* cries of suffering of all humanity, expressed in Vladimir's final soliloquy in a poetry with as much depth of suffering as that of Caliban or Lear.)

When he notices that "The air is full of our cries," Vladimir may draw on the energies of Caliban's bitter-sweet lyricism; but this should not suggest that he is simply another version of a politically oppressed or socially marginalised Caliban-figure. Instead, his final soliloquy is a much more complex affair that admits echoes not only of Caliban but also of Prospero, and of other Shakespearean texts:

Was I sleeping, while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now? Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today? That with Estragon, my friend, at this place, until the fall of night, I waited for Godot? That Pozzo passed, with his carrier, and talked to us? Probably. But in all that what truth will there be? (*Estragon, having struggled with his boots in vain, is dozing off again. Vladimir stares at him.*) He'll know nothing. He'll tell me about the blows he received and I'll give him a carrot. (*Pause.*) Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the forceps. We have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries. (*He listens.*) [...] (*He looks again at Estragon.*) At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, He is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on. (90–1)

A deep ambivalence underlies this speech. The "cries" that Vladimir discerns in the air all around him are not just those of the human suffering of all ages, but also those of newborn babies. Birth is shadowed by death; tomorrow and yesterday are equally elusive. In addition, in his observance of the way "The air is full of our cries" Vladimir's final soliloquy not only echoes Caliban's "The isle is full of noises"; he also follows the example of Caliban's greatest speech in connecting those cries/noises with the desire for sleep. This raises another set of unresolved binary oppositions, as life is both a brutal reality and an unreal dream, and Vladimir both waits to awaken from his dream and dreads the moment when he will do so, preferring sleeping and dreaming to the stark reality of being awake. Such Calibanesque longing to return to the "riches" (III.ii.144) of the dream world is one of *Godot's* recurring motifs. At the end of his final soliloquy, Vladimir finally recognises in Estragon a fellow-Caliban, abused by other human beings (he is regularly beaten at night) and tormented by his ailing body, who would much prefer to remain in the relative security of the dream-world than be restored to the "horror"⁵⁴ of the reality of country road and tree, of hunger, sore feet and prostate trouble. And sure enough, Estragon does indeed on two separate occasions cry to dream again ("I was dreaming I was happy" [90]) when Vladimir roughly wakes him and he is left twice – "Reproachfully" in Act 1, and in Act 2 with wild, incoherent gestures – to ask the same question: "Why will you never let me sleep?" (15, 90)

Some of Vladimir's ideas about dreaming in his final soliloquy can be traced back to classical antiquity,⁵⁵ but Beckett's decision to conclude the play with a character's thought that his life may be one long dream and that all these things are happening to him while he is sleeping also has distinctly Shakespearean overtones. When Vladimir asks "Am I sleeping now?" (90), this conjures the suggestion that the whole play is potentially no more than the dream of one of its characters, and that the audience are somehow part of that dream, either as mere observers or, as A.D. Nuttall remarks on *The Tempest's* remarkable *coup-de-théâtre*, as participants who may easily become engulfed

by its spreading “circle of unreality.”⁵⁶ The strategy of dissolving a play into the ethereal outlines of a dream near its conclusion is one that Shakespeare employed on a couple of occasions. He did so not only at the very end of his career as a dramatist in *The Tempest* (where Caliban cries to dream again, and Prospero, recognising his reality as no more than the “baseless fabric” of a vision, solemnly declares that “We are such stuff/As dreams are made on, and our little life/Is rounded with a sleep” [IV.i.151, 156–8]), but also near its beginning in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Thus when Vladimir asks at the beginning of his speech, “Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today?” (90), the qualifying phrase (“or think I do”) repeats the confusion of the freshly awakened Demetrius in Act 4 of the *Dream*: “It seems to me/That yet we sleep, we dream” (IV.i.191–2). At the same time, his uncertainty in that same sentence about what to report about the day that has just passed (“what shall I say of today?”) reprises the bewilderment of the *Dream*’s Bottom who, grappling to cope with the reality or unreality of the things he can recall about the night’s magical events, says that “I have had a dream past the wit of man to say what dream it was” (IV.i.202–3). Certainly, when the Boy enters almost immediately following the end his sleeping-and-dreaming soliloquy, Vladimir is confused like a man who has just awoken from a particularly vivid dream, or who is perhaps dreaming still – one who like the mortals in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* can no longer tell the difference between dream and reality.

Beckett’s use of such ideas about dreams and reality, even in the very play that became a by-word for “absurd” theatrical experimentalism, places him firmly within an established Shakespearean tradition. Perhaps he needed to borrow that particular classical-Shakespearean conceit (or specifically its incarnation in *The Tempest*) to write a play that could cope with the horrors of the period of its gestation. That this is so is perhaps suggested by the way he returned to the same aspect of *The Tempest* at the start of his next stage-play. *Endgame* begins when Hamm wakes from a dream (or perhaps he only *thinks* he does), and later he quotes a line – “Our revels now are ended” (*The Tempest*, IV.i.148) – from that same speech in which Prospero “restates the old topic of life, our world, as a dream, often hinted at in the play that has just ended.”⁵⁷

Shakespeare, then, provided Beckett not *only* with the language and imagery to write about destruction and the dissolution of old certainties in the post-War era through plays like *King Lear*, *Macbeth* and the graveyard scene of *Hamlet*; or even with examples of verbal excess or excess of thought (*Love’s Labour’s Lost*, *Hamlet*) that were ripe for parody and meta-theatrical commentary. Nor did a play like *The Tempest* merely supply a neat metaphor for colonial relations. The late romance of Prospero and Caliban’s island may *also* have suggested a theatrical idea that would allow characters like Vladimir and Estragon to transcend the traumas of their age by conceiving that it may just be possible that their lives are only a dream – the mere “impression” of existence conjured, magician-like, out of thin air of which they speak early in Act 2 (69). Estragon’s repeated reluctance to be roused from his sleep may stem, then, from a fear to wake up, even from a “nightmare” (16), only to find that reality is as horrible as the nightmare he has left behind. *Godot*’s characters are not yet prepared for that.

Notes

1. Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, 43–4. All further references will be cited parenthetically.

2. Van Hulle and Nixon, *Samuel Beckett's Library*, 25.
3. Shakespearean puns, references and allusions in early works like *Proust*, *More Pricks than Kicks*, *Murphy* and *Watt* are listed in the chapter on "Shakespearean Embers in Beckett" in Cohn, *Modern Shakespeare Offshoots*, 375–6. On some of the uses to which Shakespeare is put in those late prose works, see Van Hulle, "Beckett and Shakespeare," *passim*.
4. Beckett to McGreevy, 16 January 1936, in *Letters 1*, 299.
5. Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, V.ii.29, in *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare*. All further references to Shakespeare's plays will be cited parenthetically from this edition.
6. See in particular Bair, *Samuel Beckett*; Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*; as well as Knowlson and Knowlson, *Beckett Remembering*.
7. Shakespeare, *Complete Oxford Shakespeare*, 2:539 (emphasis added).
8. See Carroll, *Great Feast of Language*, 6–7, 11–64.
9. Beckett, *Malone Dies*, 16.
10. Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, 124.
11. See Wheatley, "Nothing"; Foakes, "King Lear and Endgame."
12. In addition to that line from *King Lear*, there may be another Shakespearean echo at work here. McMillan and Knowlson propose that Estragon's statement is a reworking of Malvolio's "Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em" (*Twelfth Night*, II.v.140–1). McMillan and Knowlson, eds, *Theatrical Notebooks 1*, 163–4. If this echo is indeed there, then this would not be the only reference to that play or that character in *Godot*. Vladimir's sudden, artificial smile, a substitute for the laughter that hurts his pubis ("One daren't even laugh any more. [...] Merely smile. (*He smiles suddenly from ear to ear, keeps smiling, ceases as suddenly.*) It's not the same thing." [11]), may recall the unnatural forced smile of Malvolio which makes him look as if he is "tainted in's wits" (III.iv.13).
13. Cohn, *Modern Shakespeare Offshoots*, 376. See also Foakes, "King Lear and Endgame," 153; Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, 124.
14. *Ibid.*, 120.
15. *Ibid.*, 120.
16. Brustein, *Theatre of Revolt*, 30.
17. See for example Ronan McDonald's comment that *Godot* is "haunted by the ghosts of Auschwitz". McDonald, *Tragedy and Irish Literature*, 142.
18. Or perhaps, in their psychic awareness of the "charnel house[s]" of contemporary Europe, Vladimir and Estragon are also remembering T.S. Eliot's imagery of a post-First World War wasteland: a "rats' alley / Where the dead men lost their bones" – an image linked by Eliot with a line from Ariel's song in *The Tempest* (I.ii.402) about an underwater boneyard where drowned sailors lie with "pearls that were his eyes". See Eliot, *The Waste Land*, 27.
19. Esslin, *Absurd Drama*, 14.
20. Arnold, *Poems*, vi.
21. For an overview of some representative critical responses, see Jenkins, ed., *Hamlet*, 136–40.
22. The doubling of the word "question" which draws attention to itself in the English text does not exist in the original French; nor does the echo of Hamlet's famous "that is the question." In French, Vladimir says more plainly, and without lexical repetition: "Mais la question n'est pas là. Que faisons-nous ici, voilà ce qu'il faut se demander" (Beckett, *En attendant Godot*, 135). It appears, then, that when Beckett came to translate the play into English ("Horrible language, which I still know too well" [Beckett to Georges Duthuit, ?28 June 1949, in *Letters 2*, 170]), the echo of *Hamlet* was too suggestive to resist – especially since the subject of Vladimir's soliloquy, and his reason for soliloquising in the first place, are so indebted to the figure of Hamlet.
23. That desire is an omnipresent theme in Beckett's work from the 1950s. The unnameable narrator-protagonist of the novel Beckett started immediately after he finished typing *En attendant Godot* in March 1949 (see the Chronology for 1949 in Beckett, *Letters 2*, 109) also finally has to acknowledge the strategies he had invented "to put off the hour when I must speak of me." Beckett, *The Unnamable*, 19.
24. Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 542.
25. McMillan and Knowlson, eds, *Theatrical Notebooks 1*, 73.

26. In the eighteenth century, for example, Garrick performed the “To be or not to be” soliloquy “with arms folded in the traditional ‘melancholy’ posture” (Dawson, *Hamlet*, 40). A late-nineteenth-century critic described old-fashioned Victorian Hamlets “stalking down the footlights with his arms folded, solemnly wagging his plume-laden head [...], and after more than a decent pause, delivering the well-known soliloquy in a sepulchral voice.” Qtd in Rosenberg, *Masks of Hamlet*, 469.
27. Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, 58–9.
28. Shenker, “Interview,” 147.
29. In addition, even those who *did* have the decisiveness to join the Resistance were often forced to spend their days waiting around (perhaps with folded arms). Beckett found the inactivity of life in the Resistance in Roussillon very frustrating, and his memory of the curious intermingling of danger and boredom in those days may be another factor informing Vladimir’s speech.
30. As Ruby Cohn pointed out, the epithet is more “literary” in the French original – “à l’instar de la divine Miranda” (Beckett, *En attendant Godot*, 72) – than it is in Beckett’s English translation. Cohn, *Modern Shakespeare Offshoots*, 376.
31. Ferdinand is described as sexually “limp” in Nuttall, *Shakespeare the Thinker*, 367. Caliban is described as a “*salvage and deformed slave*” in the list of characters in the First Folio of 1623.
32. Hobson, Review of *Godot*, 94.
33. Beckett, *Dream*, 128.
34. Beckett to Reavey, 14 May 1947, in *Letters 2*, 55.
35. Cohn, *Modern Shakespeare Offshoots*, 376.
36. Beckett, *Watt*, 179.
37. *Ibid.*, 173; Vaughan and Vaughan, *Shakespeare’s Caliban*, 17.
38. On this cultural context of the Nackybal episode in *Watt*, see Harrington, *The Irish Beckett*, 131–4. Note though, that, as Harrington acknowledges, the novel’s treatment of this trope is complicated by the revelation of Mr Nackybal’s true identity later on in the narrative: “his real name was Tisler and he lived in a room on the canal” (Beckett, *Watt*, 198). This final twist further sharpens Beckett’s satiric condemnation of the absurd cultural politics of the Free State.
39. Albright, *Beckett and Aesthetics*, 63. This same distinction between the respective qualities associated with Prospero’s two slaves is also replicated in the way Beckett remarked on the contrast between *Godot*’s two central characters during rehearsals for the Schiller Theatre production in Berlin in 1975: “Estragon is on the ground, he belongs to the stone. Vladimir is light, he is oriented towards the sky.” Asmus, “Beckett Directs *Godot*,” 21.
40. Beckett, *Endgame*, 32, 39. Ruby Cohn has carried out a sustained reading of overlaps between *Endgame* and *The Tempest*, and specifically of Hamm as Prospero. See Cohn, *Modern Shakespeare Offshoots*, 381–3.
41. See Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 276–7, 557–8.
42. Mercier, *Beckett / Beckett*, 53.
43. Kermode, *Shakespeare’s Language*, 290.
44. See Vaughan and Vaughan, *Shakespeare’s Caliban*, 252–70 (the quote is from p. 270).
45. *Ibid.*, 12. On *The Tempest*’s conflicting internal evidence for Caliban’s humanity and deformity, see *ibid.*, 9–15.
46. Time is an important idea throughout *Waiting for Godot*. In their confusion over what they have done and where they have been before, the words “yesterday” and “tomorrow” are significant markers for the main characters (in Act 1, the words “tomorrow” and “yesterday” are used six times each; in Act 2, they appear eight and twenty-four times respectively). It must be significant that both acts conclude with the arrival of a boy, apparently an envoy from the eponymous Godot, and that Vladimir’s conversation with the Boy at the conclusion of both acts is marked by the play’s highest concentration of the word “tomorrow” (91–2). The reiteration of that word may be a final Shakespearean marker in Beckett’s temporal tragicomedy. Because Vladimir’s repeated “tomorrow” must recall, to the Shakespearean ear that has been alerted by the many other allusions throughout, the soliloquy from the

denouement of *Macbeth* that had so “thrilled” Beckett when he read it as an undergraduate at Trinity College, Dublin, in the 1920s (Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, 54) – the one that begins with that most forward-looking of pentameters: “Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow”. If this is the case, does this then make Vladimir and Estragon the “poor player” (or *players*, in duplicate) conjured by Macbeth as a simile for the condition of the futility of life itself, who “struts and frets his hour upon the stage, / And then is heard no more”? And does that in turn then make the ranting, gibbering Lucky, who joins them on stage to tell his “tale [...] full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing,” the “idiot” from the same speech? (see *Macbeth*, V.v.16–27).

47. Richard Schechner offers a cogent explanation for this reaction: “Gogo/Didi (and later the Boy) have definite appointments, a rendezvous they *must* keep. Pozzo/Lucky are free agents, aimless, not tied to anything but each other. For this reason, Pozzo’s watch is very important to him. Having nowhere to go, his only relation to the world is in knowing ‘the time.’” Schechner, “Lots of Time,” 269.
48. Beckett, *Proust*, 11 (emphasis added).
49. *Ibid.*, 14–15.
50. See for example Childs, *Modernism*, 49–50.
51. It may be significant, in light of this, that Clov’s “violent” Calibanesque outburst in *Endgame* is also provoked by an allusion to the passing of time: “CLOV: I oiled them yesterday. / 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.” Beckett, *Endgame*, 32.
52. Neill, “Noises,” 49.
53. *Ibid.*, 54.
54. See Beckett’s stage direction: *Waiting for Godot*, 15.
55. See particularly Plato, *Theaetetus* 158b-d (*Complete Works*, 176).
56. Nuttall, *Shakespeare the Thinker*, 375.
57. Kermode, *Shakespeare’s Language*, 298.

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