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Staging Vestigial Domesticity
A Scenographic and Phenomenological Investigation into Manifestations of Home in Beckett's Plays for Theatre

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration of Original Authorship

I, Rosaleen Anne-Marie Juliana Maprayil, confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

R. Maprayil

Abstract

This thesis focuses on a selection of Beckett's plays for theatre starting with his major works *Waiting for Godot, Endgame* and *Happy Days* before exploring two of his shorter later plays *Footfalls* and *Rockaby*. By using the objects, props and costumes that frame the action as a prism through which to study his work, the aim is to facilitate fresh readings of Beckett's plays for the stage using the theoretical frameworks of phenomenology alongside scenography to investigate how Beckett's work challenges the audience to re-evaluate our notions of domesticity and how we define home. The work seeks to engage with Beckett's manifestations of home by examining the domestic rituals and routines that humans are bound to, even in the most inhospitable and barren settings or surroundings.

My research aims to gain a deeper understanding into Beckett's work by examining the mise en scene, with each chapter employing textual analysis alongside case studies that examine contemporary performances of the plays. These are used to evaluate the decisions by directors and designers to present Beckett's work in dynamic ways, often as a response to crisis, and to analyse how and why these choices are so effective in channelling or resonating with the wider anxieties and concerns of the societies and audiences; sometimes at the moment of performance but equally in the time leading up to and following production.

By taking account of the plays' early productions before considering modern directors and designers who are presenting challenging and progressive presentations of his work, this thesis intends to explore the way in which Beckett's work continues to resonate with modern audiences by intervening in socio-political debates about home and environment which are pertinent to audiences in the 21st century and which engage with dialogues beyond the stage.

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Table of Contents

Tables of Figures

Fig 9. *Happy Days*, Director: Sarah Frankcom, Designer Naomi Dawson. Actor: Maxine Peake as Winnie, Manchester Royal Exchange, 2018. Copyright Johan Persson

Fig 10. A dolmen in Jane Valley, Caucasian about 3000 BC, Wikipedia: *Dolmens of the North Caucus*

Fig 11. The ruins of Saint Caomhán's church, Inisheer, 2011, Wikipedia: Caomhán of Inisheer

Fig 12. Designer Ger Clancy on the Mound for *Laethanta Sona (Happy Days),* Director Sarah Jane Scaife, Company SJ, Inis Oírr 2021. Copyright Cormac Coyne

Fig 13. *Laethanta Sona – Happy Days*, Actor: Bríd Ní Neachtain as Winnie, Company SJ, Inis Oírr 2021. Copyright Cormac Coyne

Fig 14. *Footfalls,* Director Samuel Beckett, Designer Jocelyn Herbert. Actor: Billie Whitelaw, Royal Court Theatre, London, 1976. Copyright Chris Davie

Fig 15. *Rockaby,* Director Alan Schneider, Costume Design Esther King. Actor: Billie Whitelaw, 1981 Buffalo State University, New York. [Copyright unknown]

Staging Vestigial Domesticity
A Scenographic and Phenomenological Investigation into Manifestations of Home in Beckett's Plays for Theatre

Overview

This doctoral project focuses on a selection of Beckett's plays for theatre starting with a brief consideration of his first complete play *Eleutheria,* followed by analysis of his major works *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame* and *Happy Days*, and finally *Footfalls* and *Rockaby* from the shorter late plays. The aim is to facilitate fresh readings of Beckett's works for the stage using the theoretical frameworks of phenomenology and scenography, examining the objects, props and costumes that frame the action as a prism through which to analyse how the bodies on stage interact with their environment. In doing so, the intention is to observe how Beckett's theatre plays in text and performance challenge the audience to re-evaluate and re-define our notions of domesticity and our expectations of what it means to be at home through their depiction of the families, couples and individuals who inhabit his strange, hostile spaces and landscapes and their attempts to survive shocking situations as well as everyday difficulties.

This process begins firstly through the destruction – both physically and conceptually – of the set of the Kraps's bourgeois home in *Eleutheria*, Beckett's first complete play which was unpublished until his death. Beckett violently dismantles the symbols and the material trappings of comfort that the middle classes employ as a façade of respectability and financial success concealing personal and familial domestic dysfunction. The end of the play presents the audience with an almost bare stage that sets up the subsequent plays to engage in a re-thinking of how home can be manifested through rituals and behaviours that invoke or maintain a precarious or even destructive domestic routine in situations where humans are dispossessed, ill or ageing, grieving, or in crisis of any kind.

In examining each play, Beckett's vision is considered alongside those of his collaborators, by analysing scenographic elements of the text and the original productions before looking to more recent stagings from the last twenty years. These primarily feature British and Irish contexts, but branch out to include *Godot* in Sarajevo and *Happy Days* in Hamburg as notable exceptions, included here because of their response to crisis and radical scenographic interpretation. Modern case studies of his work are used to evaluate how directors and designers often present Beckett's theatre in dynamic ways, and particularly in response to

moments of disaster, upheaval or change. These case studies aim to illustrate how Beckett's work continues to intervene in socio-political debates about home and environment that are pertinent to audiences in the 21st century, engaging with dialogues beyond the stage. By exploring these specific productions alongside close readings of Beckett's texts and reflecting on his own approach to staging his work, this thesis sets out an explanation for why Beckett's theatre continues to be relevant. Each chapter draws on contextual interpretation to drive both the textual and performance analysis in early and later productions of the work. Investigating Beckett's theatre through text and performance is crucial to these readings in which the socio-political and cultural moments that frame the productions influence not only the more recent interpretations, but also the playwright's dramaturgy.

This project was motivated by and written in the light of a period of socio-political upheaval and social and cultural change that was borne of a series of overlapping contexts: Brexit, the urgency of environmental crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic. Reading Beckett's play texts in this social and cultural climate through a phenomenological, embodied approach prompted the need to re-evaluate his work through the lens of domestic precarity and ask how the spaces which his characters inhabit and occupy resonate not only with the contexts in which Beckett was writing but how these might intersect with readings of his work over the seven-year period of the project. This critical lens guided the choices of productions selected, focusing on those that illuminated the themes of Beckett's plays, and which developed his dramaturgical vision in nuanced ways that responded to my contextual readings of his texts. The productions chosen were ones that spoke to this fresh appraisals of the texts, performances that resonated and entered into a dialogue with Beckett's own engagement with home and the ways in which the specific contexts of the last decade highlighted above have necessitated new and urgent ways of thinking about how home is defined, where and how we find belonging and how we negotiate social and domestic precarity whether the result of political, ecological or health crisis.The research questions below are designed to interrogate this dissertation's claim: that central to Beckett's continued theatrical relevance is the means by which he challenges our expectations and compels us to revaluate the place that is central to all our lives – home. In doing so he reimagines our expectations of the domestic through experiments with dramaturgical forms that illustrate how non-naturalistic drama can still evoke manifestations of home in the most unusual and unexpected settings.

Research Questions

1) How does Beckett's dramaturgy and mise en scene deconstruct and redefine our conceptual and physical understanding and expectations of home and domesticity in a selection of his plays for theatre?

2) In relation to Beckett's own documented approach to staging his work, whether the premiere or subsequent productions, how can a critical framework of phenomenology combined with scenography help to analyse the significance of the interactions between Beckett's embodied characters and the stage environment, including space, costume, props etc, in terms of such a redefinition of home, domesticity and precarity?

3) How do the socio-political contexts around innovative and dynamic contemporary productions, and relevant critical approaches, facilitate fresh readings around home and domesticity that are relevant to debates around gender, isolation, ageing, illness and the environment?

Beckett's Theatrical Re-Imagining of Home

The order of the plays explored in this thesis deliberately follows the chronology of Beckett's writing in order to trace his evolving theatrical redefinition of home[1]. Beckett's decision not to publish or perform *Eleutheria,* but nevertheless to preserve the manuscript, seems to offer more evidence of an experimentation and working through of ideas and design in these early plays. Home appears to manifest in spaces that cannot always be clearly defined as inside or outside as stable or certain but which constantly engage with fragile and porous boundaries. The chronological structure enables the reader to think organically about the way text, image, design and movement are intertwined in his work but do not follow a neat trajectory of development. The project of analysing home and domesticity in this thesis was initially framed by the socio-political and literary contexts in which Beckett was deconstructing and re-thinking ideas about space, domesticity and home as he turned to theatre as a medium following the

[1] In this dramaturgical and cultural context the spaces of home that are under discussion are that are defined or associated with a European and North American context rather than the Global South.

war. For Beckett this may have been a response to his experiences both of leaving his own middle class home, Cooldrinagh, on the outskirts of Dublin and then later having to flee his home in Paris as a result of the Nazi occupation. The physical destruction of homes and lives and the ever-changing and precarious nature of the domestic day to day during and in the aftermath of war speaks to the viscerality of the collapse enacted in *Eleutheria.* In the post-war landscape of both Ireland and Europe the notion of domestic bourgeois contentment and complacency reflected in naturalistic depictions of home on the stage required a radical re-think if they were to reflect the experiences of life in post-war Europe.

The re-evaluation of home that occurred in Beckett's work resonated deeply with the contextual backdrop in which this study was both conceived and written during the years leading up to and following the Brexit referendum of 2016, when questions and debates around immigration as well as the protection of refugees had become increasingly fraught, building on and exploiting the government's hostile environment policy in the previous years. This social and political climate in the UK played out against the global ecological crisis that causes and continues to implement both displacement and irreversible environmental destruction. Finally, the effects of living and writing through the Covid-19 pandemic, the two years of intermittent lockdowns, a rising death toll and illness brought into sharp focus the importance of exploring the complex and often contradictory nature of home and domestic space. The discussions arising from these overlapping socio-political contexts, in which home felt transitory or precarious while simultaneously claustrophobic or confining, resonated strongly with the spaces and themes in Beckett's plays where isolation, illness, ageing and the strain of relationships that are rooted in care and confinement were part of everyday life.

Given these contexts, one of the starting points of this study is that Beckett's plays for theatre challenge conventional ideas around domesticity and home in ways that are powerfully relevant as a result of the rapidly transforming political landscapes in Europe and beyond, both then and now. If we consider the Beckettian conception of the domestic as destroying the binary opposition between interior and exterior and in doing so manifesting home as a space that is evoked by the residual and tenacious domestic elements that remain or persist. Home might then be defined as a space that can encompass without assimilating, behaving and operating in ways that not only disrupt our expectation of domestic comfort and security but which sometimes actively aggravate the anxieties and fears from which home should ideally serve as a refuge.

In order to explore how Beckett stages the remnants or vestiges of domestic life and to analyse how the patterns and modes of connection can manifest through rituals and objects

without being contained by what might be described as an architecturally interior space, it is important to establish how his work fits into the wider dialogue of home on the stage. and to understand how radically Beckett was breaking with, manipulating, defamiliarizing or undermining 19th and early 20th century naturalistic theatrical representations of home. Nicholas Grene argues that the 'dramaturgical revolution that put the middle class home and its occupants inner lives reflected the social reality of the time'(Grene 2014: 3). These detailed interiors explored the idea of one's home being a space in which dreams and hopes could materialise, a place distinct from the work place. Grene refers to Walter Benjamin's introduction to the *Arcades Project* where Benjamin argues that these interiors are where illusions are sustained, illusions which contain the universe (Grene 2014: 5). However, if we consider the late 19thc naturalistic modern drama of home as being defined by Ibsen's image of the dolls house, the symbol of home as a stifling space of unfulfilled desire, familial obligation and impossible expectations had already established it as a place of irreconcilable tensions. In her book *Staging Place*, Una Chaudhuri observes that although by the late 19th century the work of Chekhov begins to deconstruct home, his work exposing the conflict inherent in these representations and the 'feeling of being homesick while at home' (Chaudhuri 2008:11) was a conceptual dismantling that was still being staged or contained by representations of a naturalistic domestic space. According to Chaudhuri Beckett's work enters into the history of modern drama through its dialogue with exile, displacement and dislocation. His work along with those of the absurdist movement in the post war climate of Europe sought to re-define home. The social reality of war and destruction required a new way of thinking how life might be depicted on the stage in ways that were not bound by the conventions of naturalism that reflected the arbitrariness, complextity, cruelty and absurdity of our time on earth.

In engaging with the notion that home can be represented through something other than the interior it is essential to ask how this this conceptual manifestation of the home operates as the site of domestic drama across these texts after Beckett collapses the domestic interior in his first play. In Nicholas Grene's chapter on *Endgame* in *Home on the Stage*, he argues that the depiction of middle class domestic interiority connects *Eleutheria* and *Endgame* but is absent from *Godot.* Grene's observation that Beckett returns to a 'version of the domestic interior in *Endgame* […] [t]hough short of the social specificities of *Eleutheria* and without its theatrical polemics' (Grene 2014: 129) serves to support the argument that *Eleutheria* was jettisoned because it was too overt, perhaps too heavy-handed, in the way it expressed the playwright's disdain of middle class life as well as the means by which he wanted to lay waste to the

'representational norms of the conventionally made play'(Grene 2014:127). However, there are compelling arguments against Grene's position that in *Godot* 'Beckett was to find his vein by abandoning the middle class milieu and the domestic interior altogether'(Grene 2014:129). While the middle class interior might be destroyed in *Eleutheria*, the attitudes, power structures and bourgeois mentality continue to be exposed as they emerge in the objects, costumes and behaviours of later plays: in *Godot*, through the figure of Pozzo who still very much possesses the paraphernalia of upper middle class life, albeit carried about his person or in a basket transported by his servant; in Hamm who ill-treats his elderly parents while enslaving his adopted son; and in Winnie and Willie whose marriage and cultural past seem rooted in middle class suburbia. Finally, in Beckett's late plays *Footfalls* and *Rockaby*, the mother-daughter connections, set within shadowy interiors, continue to explore loneliness, ageing and motherhood within the physical and emotional context of middle class environments.

Therefore, the journey – both conceptual and scenographic – from *Eleutheria* to *Endgame* via *Godot* is one which is important in relation to the argument posited by this thesis; that Beckett's approach to challenging conceptions of modern drama dramatically and linguistically was inextricably bound to staging and scenography. Crucially it also exposes another of the fundamental concerns of the thesis, that Beckettian ideas around home and domesticity unfold in spaces that are not necessarily bound by a physical structure. The positioning of the *Godot* chapter as a way of negotiating the conceptual development of home and domesticity from *Eleutheria* to *Endgame* is essential to thinking through the way these parameters can be stretched and re-defined and how interiority and exteriority are boundaries that can easily be reversed, exchanged or breached. Furthermore while Grene's assertion that Beckett abandons the middle class interior depicted in *Eleutheria*, he doesn't banish it altogether, what this thesis will explore is the way these plays continue to stage a vestigial domesticity that reincarnates, salvages and evokes home through objects, rituals and routines and other elements of domestic life that persist long after the traditional space of home has been subverted or destroyed.

Re-defining the Domestic

Before exploring the twin critical methodologies of phenomenology and scenography that underpin the dissertation, this section focuses on the context of viewing Beckett's work through the lens of home. This context has been informed by critical studies and projects in this area over the last twenty years or so, including the work of queer and feminist writers such as Sara

Ahmed, Rita Felski and Susan Fraiman. Their work has engaged with domesticity in the cultural and literary landscape of modernist studies in ways that seek to explore the complexity and nuance of the everyday and home as a space that offers shelter and containment as well as both safety and violence. It has developed alongside a growing body of research concerned with the role of home and domestic space in drama and experimental art explored in academic writing that includes texts such as *Performing Dream Homes* (Klein, Mobley and Stevenson: 2019), *Kitchen Sink Realisms* (Dorothy Chanksy: 2015) and *Performing Home* (Stuart Andrew: 2019). Collections like *Performing Dream Homes* signal the interest and value of exploring the home, its objects and domestic practices, rituals and labour as a lens through which shifts in social and cultural identity can be observed and interrogated and our relationship with the wider community and nation can be negotiated. Studies that focus on the home within theatre, art and film serve to underline the way domesticity is no longer the backdrop to the action, but the concern and focus of understanding the intimate drama of the everyday that informs all our lives. This focus generates fresh phenomenological perspectives on individual agency, the relationships and interaction between the bodies and things that move within these spaces and as a result necessitates a re-evaluation of how home can be evoked, presented and defined. In this context, this thesis argues that Beckett's dramaturgical approach to re-defining and reimagining home was not only dynamic for its time but continues to be powerfully resonant and central to the wider discourses around home and domesticity that are being explored now.

In *Extreme Domesticity*, Susan Fraiman explores the susceptability of home to external and internal forces and observes that 'however invested in stability [home] is always vulnerable and provisional […] never entirely fixed or singular' (Fraiman 2017: 119). This dissertation explores the way Beckett's theatrical depictions of home are articulated through staging, the constant challenge to home as a space of solidity and stability, whether conceptual or physical, and how the relationship of humans and objects with these spaces is in a continual state of flux and transformation. Therefore, in the scenography of Beckett's texts and staging home is not a fixed or closed space but just as vulnerable as the people that inhabit it. In times of need it may be temporary and makeshift and in times of difficulty it can be traumatising, claustrophobic and dangerous. It is a dynamic and ever-changing space that is constantly made and unmade every moment, sometimes responsive, sometimes incapable of fulfilling our desires and needs. Home is an extension of our bodies and is not only shaped by the physical act of dwelling, but also mapped by the psychological projections of those that find themselves drawn back, drawn in or simply unable to leave.

The interpretation of these plays as a manifestations of home requires an acceptance that home in Beckett's theatre whereever and however it manifests is haunted by a vestigial domesticity. Bodies, memories and fragments of those that may have passed overlap with those that are present and those that may yet come. Home therefore manifests not only through the act of inhabiting or occupying space for however brief a time but is also defined by the connections and relationships of those within these spaces and crucically this vestigial domesticity means that home is manifested sometimes latently or belatedly by objects or the most basic of human rituals: walking, moving, sitting or sleeping. Seeking and exploring new definitions of home that reflect its transitory nature in Beckett's work drives the need to find new ways of thinking about how the domestic and domesticity are defined when they are no longer tied to bourgeois pre-war concepts of house and home. Fraiman refers to those for whom domesticity is not about 'propriety and status nor captivity and drudgery but safety, sanity […] survival in the most basic sense' calling these efforts to keep house ' "shelter writing" […] a mode that may centre on anyone whose smallest domestic endeavour have become urgent and precious in the wake of dislocation' (Fraiman 2017: 25). Fraiman's exploration of home offers a useful means of defining Beckettian notions of domesticity – especially when home is not only no longer defined by interiority but when, as in *Waiting for Godot* and *Happy Days*, characters continue to enact domestic behaviours when they have been dispossessed or displaced. In these situations Fraiman posits an argument that cuts to the core of the kind of domesticity enacted by those like Winnie; that ritual creates stability. She argues that what 'Shelter' writing 'helps us see – with lingering descriptions, checklists of steps, and loving manipulation of objects – is the heightened value of domestic routine for figures "below" the threshold of a reliable and sufficient home life'. What is more, in the course of 'fashioning a place to live, repeating little the little tasks involved in keeping house, they also assemble a sense of self' (Fraiman 2017: 38, 154). Exploring Beckett's theatre in performance as domestic drama means interrogating the spaces, rituals, objects that his characters occupy. Home is manifested through the bodies and objects that enact, repeat and utilise the rituals of the everyday and modes of interconnection that carry the echoes of past lives and actions that return to haunt the present and condition the future.

Accordingly, because my focus is on the relationship between bodies, objects and space in Beckett's plays, my main methodological framework is a combination of scenography and phenomenology, in addition to theoretical and sociological analyses of the domestic in situations of precarity, as explored in more detail in the section on Critical Framework. Each chapter traces the different iterations and scenographic depictions of the Beckettian home

through the details of the set, objects, and design which have their own stories, histories and dramas to be unpacked and explored. These objects may work upon the audience and the characters on stage in a multiplicity of ways that are aesthetic, functional, triggering, and reminiscent or evocative of everyday objects that connect the seemingly abstract situations on stage or in the text to real-life equivalents.

Examining Beckett's work from a domestic perspective draws on the potential new readings generated by the insight – widely accepted but not often applied to Beckett's work – that theatre articulates ordinary life even when presenting seemingly extraordinary situations. Beckettian scenography is sparse, but his spaces are marked by what is unseen as much as by what is visible. His minimalism emboldens the judiciously chosen objects on stage, casting them as active agents within the drama, and this non-human agency is a central concern of my project. This study sets out to explore how Beckettian conceptions of home accommodate the human and non-human agents that inhabit the spaces of his plays at the time of their writing and original productions, while remaining relevant to modern audiences as a means of communicating something about the way we live now.

Domesticity in the Beckettian home does not necessarily denote functionality although it is often a survival mechanism that, in the absence of freedom, forges routine as an attempt at resistance, despite being part of a cycle of repetition that narrates failure or decline. In the introduction to her work on home and everyday life, the social scientist Sarah Pink describes the way studies into home life are about:

> […] stepping into the intimate context of a domestic world [that] […] involved narratives, practices and sensory experiences that were not usually available for public view […] Each was framed by cultural, gendered and biographical reference points (2014:1)

Pink identifies one of the central objectives behind this study: the desire to cultivate an intimate understanding of the interior worlds of Beckett's characters by unravelling how these are materialised though their things, their clothes, their rituals and behaviours in what should be the most private of spaces, the place in which they live. Beckett's work reveals how homeliness is something that might be lodged and located in the smallest of items, and how the most secure spaces might also be the most frightening. Furthermore, this work will also draw our attention to borders and borderlines, asking the reader to think about home in the wider context of homeland and in doing so to ruminate on the broader issues that move from the

personal to the social or national: ideas about landscapes, environment, politics, identity, loss and loneliness within the specificity of Beckettian drama that, without claiming universality, might resonate on some level with those who have found the spaces in which they live and work threatened or compromised by forces they cannot control. The value of examining Beckett's work through a domestic lens coincides with the study of home as a multidimensional concept which has been drawing sustained academic attention across sociological, environmental, and philosophical studies. The work of Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling in their book *Home* has been illuminating in thinking about the geography of home; similarly, Una Chaudhuri's *Staging Place* has also been useful in thinking about Beckett's work more specifically. In thinking about material culture and objects, the work of Sarah Pink and Rita Felski, whose investigations into everyday experience straddle socio-psychological study and cultural theory, offers ways of exploring a phenomenology of everyday life that continues the work of scholars like Jacques De Visscher whose conceptions about the relationship between identity and objects have informed the interest in exploring domesticity in Beckett's work.

In 2011 Queen Mary, University of London established *The Centre for Studies of the Home*, focused on exploring and broadening understanding of domestic geography. In collaboration with The Museum of the Home in London, the Centre conducted pioneering work on domestic social history alongside examination of the changing face of everyday life for the diverse communities and cultures that make up Britain. The appetite and interest for such research into the nature and modes of dwelling and inhabitation alongside identity, material culture and 'the everyday' is indicated by a range of public engagement programmes, art, exhibitions, and doctoral and post-doctoral research. This growing body of work establishing the need for more detailed academic study into home frames the research into domesticity and the everyday explored earlier in the introduction, spearheaded by queer and feminist scholars whose work compliments and responds for greater analytical investigation into home and domesticity within art, literature and theatre.

Although not a focus of this dissertation, Beckett's own complicated relationship with his homeland casts a shadow over the work. His connection with home – a mixture of longing juxtaposed by the desire to make a life elsewhere – deeply influences the conception of space in his work. Trish McTighe observes that :

> Within Beckett's work, place operates as a tense, febrile slippage between identifiable signifiers and dislocated spaces, between memory and imagination and between embodied presences and their visualized or ghostly traces (2017:138)

In light of this, thinking about home in this project involves thinking about a space that is conflicted and contradictory, a space of uncertainties that resists definition but straddles boundaries in ways that are tantalising but almost unbearable. The Beckettian home is a haunted space of unfulfilled desire that is at once intimate and dysfunctional, creating a dysphoria and compelling his characters to stay at home, unable to leave and condemned to return.

Research Methods and Choices

The research methodology employed for this thesis has been driven by the three central research questions set out earlier. Responding to these has required a multi-layered approach, involving a mixture of close textual reading that examines Beckett's scenographic vision for his work and early productions, alongside modern contextual readings and the performance analysis of more contemporary productions.The textual and scenographic decisions made by Beckett in the playscripts is highlighted by the objects, relationships and spaces that are picked up on in the performance analysis in the production case studies. In a thesis that prioritises phenomenological investigation this embodied reading of plays and performances are contextually framed by the period in which the thesis was written. Therefore the sociological studies I have drawn do not attempt to explain or define Becketts work but offer the twenty-first century reader or audience member interpretative insights into elements of Beckett's work that remain resonant and compelling in relation to contemporary issues – precisely because of their abstract nature, and their exploration of the dynamic relationship between bodies, space and objects on stage.

This approach lent itself to the observations from sociological studies that resonated with the contexts of both my current reading of the texts and the productions. For example, in the case of *Endgame*, thinking about illness and domestic space or the body in pain drew together the personal context of Beckett's experiences witnessing his brother's illness and subsequent death and the political backdrop of the cold war with its accompanying fear of nuclear devastation alongside a textual engament with the plays and the modern performance case studies that took place just before the pandemic took hold and national lockdowns confined both citizens and those who were unwell to their homes. These contexts highlighted the way home should be a space of protection in the midst of crisis but, as engagement with Bachelard's exploration of boundaries and interiority highlight, the home is a porous space

which can easily be breached. Beckett's depiction of home as a shelter or refuge for those who are ill or disabled in *Endgame* had dark resonances in the context of the Covid- 19 pandemic. For example the institutional aesthetic of the shelter in the scenographic design of The Old Vic production resonated with domestic care homes for the elderly and vulnerable which would become dangerous places in which the virus could flourish, causing unprecedented loss of life in spaces that should have been able to offer protection. The sociological studies that were brought to bear on readings of the play in the context of these productions were ones that resonated with the scenographic containment that opened the play text as well as the productions to interpretations that considered how illness and subsequent containment had the capacity to potentially transform one's relationship with once familiar domestic spaces and as well as drawing the reader to the way ageing and illness could so easily become synonymous with neglect.

My textual analysis of *Happy Days* and the three modern case studies of the play in performance was framed by the wider contextual lens of the 2015 *Paris Agreement* and its judgements about the particular vulnerabilities of women in situations of environmental precarity. My textual readings were also framed by the cultural climate that was highlightint the importance of marginalised female voices Therefore the performance analysis of these modern case studies from leading female directors highlighted the way Winnie's situation in *Happy Days* resonated with wider female experiences of isolation, domestic insecturity and survival in the context of displacement. My decision to explore domesticity in relation to gender in *Happy Days,* rather than *Godot* or *Endgame,* was made because of the questions and concerns raised by the wider discussions happening around the scenographic visions of these female directors, and the prescience of engaging with contemporary sociological studies focusing on women in relation to homelessness, isolation and ecological crisis that were socially and politically pertinent during the conception and writing of the thesis. It is important to note that the studies used within the thesis are a means of exploring the texts through the phenomenological resonances of the staging and design within socio-political contexts that framed the writing of the thesis, the reading of these texts and the engagement with the modern performance case studies. These studies that were chosen because they illuminated the themes of the play and were pertinent to the social- political and cultural period in which this thesis was conceived and written. It is vital to stress that they are readings that offer subjective context-responsive observations without ever claiming to make definitive or over arching claims and subsequently force potentially reductive analysis onto Beckett's deliberately non naturalistic stagings and works. Instead they are included as a means of understanding how

modern readers, directors and designers and audiences continue to interpret or stage his work in ways that continue to assert his relevance to dialogues that go beyond the stage. This thesis seeks to reinforce Beckett's power as a writer whose refusal to situate his drama in the real world is precisely why work that conveys such broad themes that include lonliness, ageing and entrapment can be reinterpreted and engaged with by readers, directors, designers and audiences in situations that are specific or nuanced without being reductive or final.

In order to examine the plays both textually and performatively, a phenomenological approach has been employed to invite the reader to analyse the ways specific objects, costumes or spaces not only evoke ideas about home and domesticity but also connect to cultural and psychological resonances around these themes. For research question three, scenographic analysis of the staged productions facilitates this phenomenological reading in relation to the socio-political contexts around the text and performance that bring Beckett's work into discussion with more recent scholarship that addresses the contemporary crisis of domesticity and home in relation to gender, ageing, illness, isolation and environment.

This study of Beckett's work includes an exploration of five plays over four chapters. In the interest of context, it begins by touching briefly on his very first unperformed and initially unpublished work *Eleutheria*, before going on to explore, in order: *Waiting for Godot* (1948), *Endgame* (1957), *Happy Days* (1961), *Footfalls* (1975) and *Rockaby* (1980). These plays were chosen for three reasons. First, this research was embedded in a curiosity about Beckett's creative impulse to write plays as a response to his need for new forms of writing after the Second World War. These chapters cover a major work from each decade of Beckett's time as a playwright, offering valuable insights into the changing nature of his perceptions, anxieties and interests alongside his development as a scenographically attuned dramatist over the course of his life. A wealth of knowledge was available for my research into the first productions of these plays, including academic studies, reviews, archival material, production notebooks, and in some cases documentary or film material. Second, since this dissertation engages in performance analysis of both earlier and more recent stagings , Beckett's longer and better known works are more likely to be either available for viewing online or to be produced onstage. Third and finally, the performance case studies included have been accessed as live performances across the UK and Ireland where possible. Therefore I have also chosen to include the productions that I have personally seen and which I have read performatively and textually in the context of the social landscape of the last decade. Viewing live performances as an audience member has been supported by reviews and critical studies of the productions, and supplemented by interviews with directors, actors, designers and producers, conference

papers, and talks where possible. In situations where this has not been viable but is nonetheless pertinent because certain productions so powerfully illustrated the ability of Beckett's work to speak to the precarity of home in moments of extreme crisis – namely *Godot* in Sarajevo and *Happy Days* in Hamburg – I have drawn on a mixture of reviews, critical writing in the form of essays or other writing on the plays, as well as photographs, YouTube clips and other documentary material.

The scope of the works covered over the timeframe enables the reader to have an overview of the changing architecture and modes of inhabitation in the Beckettian deconstruction and conception of home. Exploring the range of work as I have chosen to do illustrates the movement between the nature of the structures and occupation in Beckett's plays, a movement that challenges any cohesive narrative that might be constructed about the changing aesthetics of the Beckettian home. Each chapter focuses on aspects of the design or selected objects to unpack and explore ideas about the ways the characters occupy the space and spend their time. In order to connect the action and scenography to wider contexts around the plays – sometimes outside of the moment of production but utilising the ideas generated or provoked by the play as a lens – each chapter draws on a range of sociological, phenomenological, environmental and material studies in order to think about issues of gender, ageing, isolaton, illness and environment and how these impact on everyday life.

Critical Framework

Approaching Beckett's set design to explore his drama as that which explores domesticity as it re-imagines and re-defines how home can manifest in latent and residual ways through textual and performance analysis of his work requires a framework that can theorise and expand on our understanding of objects, their material reality and histories, and that also has the power to engage with space in all its forms. Therefore, in addition to research on redefinitions of home and domesticity in states of crisis or precarity, the critical lens of this project negotiates the intersection of phenomenology and scenography as a means through which to articulate and interrogate the detail of Beckett's theatrical mise en scene both then and now.

Philosopher Dermot Moran posits that phenomenology was an attempt to go against traditional methods of philosophising in order to get to the 'truth' of human interaction with the external world of phenomena. Phenomenology aims to describe in the first instance, rather than to explain:

> Phenomenology's first step is to seek to avoid all misconstructions and impositions placed on experience in advance [therefore] Explanations are not imposed before the phenomena have been understood from within. (2000:4)

Its emphasis on personal experience has led some critics of phenomenology to view it as an unnecessarily subjective medium that can be experiential rather than academic in its focus. However, phenomenology's uncompromising defence of the fundamental and inextricable role of both subjectivity and consciousness in the achievement of knowledge has been crucial to its continuing appeal. Employing a phenomenological framework enables this project to provide an integrated analysis of the relationship between objectivity and consciousness, with an emphasis on the role of the body in perception, a method with clear benefits in theatrical contexts. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological theory views the position and perception of the physical body as revelatory, and views the body as a thing among things, not simply a 'chunk of space but an intertwining of vision and movement' (Merleau-Ponty 1964:162). Unpicking this 'intertwining' between our bodies in the world and those situated in Beckett's drama requires a way of looking at ourselves and Beckett's characters that resonates with Merleau-Ponty's approach to perception and embodied knowledge:

> [O]ur body is a being of two leaves, from one side a thing among things and otherwise what sees and touches them; we say, because it is evident, that it unites these two properties within itself, and its double belongingness to the order of the 'object' and to the order of the 'subject' reveals to us quite unexpected relations between the two orders […] For if the body is a thing among things […] it uses its own being as a means to participate in theirs […] as the world is universal flesh. (1968:137)

Merleau-Ponty's focus on the body as the centre of phenomenological insight, and his account of space, time and the changing world, is integral to how home is conceptualised in this project. In applying the ideas of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* as well *The Visible and the Invisible* to thinking about home and domestic space, the work of Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* [hereafter abbreviated to *Poetics*] has also guided the study in a number of important ways. In his foreword to the 2014 edition, Mark Z Danielewski writes that Bachelard's book 'has everything to do with our comprehension of space, however confined or expansive, [and] still affords an opportunity to encounter the boundaries of the self

just as they are about to give way' (Danielewski qtd in Bachelard 2014: vii). Bachelard's ideas of reciprocity and exchange between our bodies and the spaces they inhabit invites us to think about the shape of our lives, and reframes the moments of vulnerability and fear that we experience moving through the world as also the most potentially fertile or truthful. *Poetics* is a book about dreaming and possibility, asking us to imagine among other things, in a somewhat Proustian manner, how the seemingly familiar spaces of home might behave when we are absent or not looking. It urges us to consider how home simultaneously holds and reflects us, and to wonder about what happens when our lives spill beyond the boundaries and borders into the spaces that are uncertain and unchartered - all these questions are applied here in this interrogation into Beckett's manifestations of home in his plays. Bachelard speaks of space as object-like, as something that can carry the past, and in which traces of other times can be reincarnated, to indelibly mark and influence the present and perhaps the future. In the opening pages of *Poetics* he writes that 'all corners are haunted, if not inhabited' (Bachelard 2014:x). One of the many questions this dissertation attempts to address across this thesis but particularly in its final chapter, is whether spaces and things can be haunted while inhabited, and whether haunting is really a co-existence: a mutual, albeit uncomfortable and uneasy relationship that all matter and space enter into in a world that necessarily predates us and will continue after we are gone.

The critical lens of this project has also been complemented and enhanced by certain works of art that initially inspired my interest in domesticity and home, whose conceptions and forms echo the concerns in Beckett's plays. The notion of haunting, and the conscious or unconscious desire to process or absorb the past into the present, is doubly resonant in the work of the sculptor Rachel Whiteread. Whiteread's Turner Prize-winning work, *House* (1993) was a concrete sculpture cast from the interior of an East-End terraced house doomed for demolition. In the press reviews of her work, Hugo Young in *The Guardian* proclaimed that:

> *House* is a modern masterpiece. In it an ingenious idea is realised with great evocative power. Taking a derelict dwelling, Whiteread has turned it inside out by casting the interior in liquid concrete then removing the bricks. What is left is a monument to past domesticity, a coarse yet intricate edifice […]. (1993: n.p)

The project was not the start of Whiteread's seeming obsession with casting objects, and though in some ways the most radical, it was certainly not her last. Over the last thirty years, she has continued to cast domestic objects and spaces, rendering them in a variety of materials,

often taking chairs, mattresses, sometimes whole rooms or staircases, and turning them into solid objects that remain familiar and yet strange and spectral. Whiteread's means of capturing and manipulating the materiality of objects employs a kind of Beckettian aesthetic that speaks to the way his theatrical landscapes often highlight their negative spaces, framing absence and corporeality in ways that are contradictory and multi-faceted, and which focus on the materiality and immateriality of existence and memory. Her work in 2012 and then again, a decade later in 2021, took a new approach to the objects and spaces that frame our lives, painting and whitewashing over them instead of casting. The catalogue of her 2021 show, *Internal Objects,* at the Gagosian gallery London distinguished between her recent and earlier work in terms of engaging with new forms, during lockdown that built work from reclaimed materials:

> While Whiteread's sheds of a decade ago were closed, the new sculptures are open, inverting the formal system of their predecessors. They suggest that something catastrophic has occurred, allowing nature to take over […] Although the new works represent a departure from her established sculptural process, they continue her overall project in considering the intimate haptic qualities of the spaces that surround us.

Whiteread's creative work, alongside Bachelard's inventive critical writing, offers insight into the first question that drives this study – how does Beckett's dramaturgy and mise en scene deconstruct and redefine our understanding of home. Whiteread's engagement with different forms and approaches to domesticity in the context of lockdown and social and environmental crisis asks the viewer and reader to engage with notions of home that contemplates its vulnerability along the permeable border lines of interior and exterior that are integral to this study of Beckett's work. Both Bachelard's writing on home and Whiteread's sculpting of domestic objects and spaces seem driven by their desire to reveal the quiet and unsettling mystery of the places we inhabit, challenging the sense of certainty and fascinated by what is unseen or overlooked. Throughout the thesis, the Beckettian home evokes liminal spaces. *Footfalls* and *Rockaby* specifically explore ideas around haunting and modes of inhabitation that are more overtly spectral in nature – manifesting in figures, spaces and things that appear to be shadowy remainders of that which has passed but cannot leave. However all the manifestations and reimagings of home are defined by some iteration of a vestigial domesticity that evokes or invokes home through embodied rituals and the agentic force of objects that remain, and despite their persisitance continue to resist empirical certainty.

Dissecting the dramatic space of the Beckettian home requires an embodied reading that is intertwined with a scenographic analysis of the materiality and all elements of the mise en scene of his plays. The scenographical approach is a holistic one and involves exploration of how objects, props and other elements of the design, including costume and lighting, become embodied actors within the drama. There is a growing body of academic writing that engages solely with objects in a theatrical setting, a reflection of how the study of scenography continues to gain critical importance. The 2014 publication from Marlis Schweitzer and Joanne Zerdy, *Performing Objects and Theatrical Things,* identifies a key link between scenography and the material culture of performance that is attentive to the 'way that objects and things powerfully script, choreograph, direct, push, pull and otherwise animate their human collaborators', seeing these as 'active agents performing alongside rather than behind or in service to human performers' (2014:6). This study builds on the connection between scenographical analysis and phenomenology that the theatre scholars McKinney and Butterworth tease out in *The Cambridge Introduction to Scenography,* which invites a reading of objects in their own right. They refer to the writings of Merleau-Ponty which are concerned with capturing experience, and note that phenomenology and scenography go hand in hand because of the way 'the senses communicate with each other in the perception of the scenery' (2009:168).

The work of academics such as Arnold Aronson and others have re-asserted the role of examining stage scenography even after the moment of performance as integral to value of performance research and analysis. In 'Staging Beckett in Ireland: Scenographic Remains', Anna McMullan draws on Rebecca Schneider's belief that 'the material remains of performance such as theatre stills can function not just as atrophied fragments dislocated from the rhythm of a creative journey, but as the stimulus for a creative journey that entangles the past, present and future' (2017:106). Thinking about the documentation of theatre materials in all their forms offers ways of thinking about productions after the moment of performance that facilitate valuable scholarly engagement and retrospective analysis around the contexts of the production that can require time to assemble. This methodology underpins Ric Knowles's approach in *Reading the Material Theatre*, another study that is relevant to this project. His desire to 'look at the ways in which versions of society, history […] gender [and] social identities can be both instantiated and contested […] in a given performance text' is situated in a framework that reading performance as a text is the result of 'complex mode of production that is rooted, as is all cultural production, in specific and determinate social and cultural contexts' (2004:10).

A scenographical approach is crucial in 'reading the performance as a text', and for Beckett's theatre this is essential. McKinney and Butterworth argue that Beckett's dramatic focus on space and image not only make him 'the most scenographically inventive playwright' of the twentieth-century, but also that in his work, 'words and scenography are inextricably intertwined' (2009:88). Scenographically approaching the space is the only means by which to apprehend the stage space as real space, facilitating a reading of the phenomenological lives of the objects, bodies and other stage items into a dialogue that draws the drama, space, mise en scene, and the bodies of the spectators and actors into a conversation taking place not only at the moment of performance but whose relevance might also be brought to bear on the socially and politically charged discussions that take place around the production.

Research Context: Beckett Studies

This dissertation considers the experiences of the characters in terms of the challenges and hardships their imagined situations speak to in real world contexts. Until the last decade or so, studies of Beckett's drama have tended to focus on textual analysis, while performance analysis has largely taken the form of production reviews or articles in publications such as the *Journal of Beckett Studies* or *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui* that considered productions from a practitioner perspective. The AHRC-funded *Staging Beckett* Project at the University of Reading[2] (2012-15) presented a turning point in terms of how it refocused attention on Beckett in performance and brought together important critical approaches and analysis of Beckett's work for stage. In addition to mapping a history of the plays in performance through two collections of essays exploring productions of Beckett's work in the UK and Ireland and Northern Ireland, the project crucially established the value and need for such comprehensive studies of his work in performance from a socio-political and scenographic perspective. In 2014, Jonathan Heron and Nicholas Johnson co-edited the first issue of the *Journal of Beckett Studies* devoted entirely to performance issues (23.1). Following this, *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd' hui* presented a collection that explored performances of Beckett's work internationally in an issue entitled *Staging Beckett at the Margins* (2017). These three publications have been important points of reference for this dissertation. More recently, *Experimental Beckett: Contemporary Performance Practices* by Nicholas Johnson and

[2] Staging Beckett was a research collaboration between the Universities of Reading and Chester and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Jonathan Heron has continued to spearhead research that values performance in Beckett Studies as means of illuminating and articulating culture. This refocusing on Beckett in performance has been central to the framing of this thesis.

The idea of approaching Beckett's theatre from a 'phenomenological' perspective is not a new one, although the current body of work leaves considerable scope for further development. In the past the idea of applying these principles to Beckett's work was rejected by some, most vehemently by Thomas Trezise in his study of Beckett's prose, *Into the Breach.* Trezise questions whether Beckett's 'explicit preoccupation with the status of the subject necessarily makes Beckett a phenomenologist' and therefore whether his prose 'lends itself to a phenomenological reading' (1990: 5). I would caution that a phenomenological reading of Beckett's work does not necessarily imply that he should be considered a phenomenologist. Trezise's insistence in the belief that not only is phenomenological study 'exhausted' but that any application to Beckett is irrelevant and unhelpful is largely based on Husserlian and Sartrean interpretations of phenomenology in relation to critical readings of Beckett's prose rather than theatre.

My study is solely concerned with Beckett's theatrical output and exploring the work of later phenomenologists, in particular Merleau-Ponty. Ulrika Maude and Matthew Feldman have shown that phenomenological approaches have much to contribute to Beckett studies in *Beckett and Phenomenology,* a collection of essays that sets out its intention to move beyond studies on Beckett and phenomenology that have previously been 'reduced to Sartrean existentialism' (2009: 4). The essays in this book, however, do not directly address or deal in detail with the focus of this dissertation: namely the interrelationship between body, space and props in Beckett's stage plays.

These ideas are more closely explored in the work of Stanton B Garner who in *Bodied Spaces: Phenomenology and Performance in Contemporary Drama*, lays the foundations for a phenomenological study of Beckett's theatre in performance. Garner explores in great detail the theories of phenomenology put forward by Merleau-Ponty which place the body at the centre of the phenomenological experience. Garner proposes that 'Beckett's drama is a theatre 'of the body' […] in a more deeply phenomenological sense in which Beckett foregrounds the corporeality of the actor and character within the stages' exacting field' (Garner 1994:28). These ideas are pertinent in bringing fresh phenomenological insights by drawing our attention to the potential reciprocity between Merleau-Ponty and Beckett, and also in reinforcing the ideas of director Pierre Chabert who considers Beckett's theatre to be 'evocative of Merleau-Ponty'. Chabert's earlier study described Beckett's theatre as 'a deliberate and intense effort to

make the body come to light, to give the body its full weight, dimension and physical presence […] to construct […] a space invested by the body' (1982:27). Garner's study focuses on body/space, sound/voice, lighting, spectatorship, and other aspects of the phenomenological experience and his detailed analysis of these themes provide a solid foundation for the initial exploration of these ideas in my own work, with its additional emphasis on set and props.

Specific focus on Beckett's stage properties is a feature of Andrew Sofer's *The Stage Life of Props* (1998), which offers an original perspective on texts that had already been extensively analysed. Sofer's examination of staging has been instrumental in driving discussions within theatre studies about the role and perception of the object outside the realms of pure phenomenology and into the areas where art theory and scenography overlap. This interdisciplinary exploration of the object and its material life within the world both on and off stage has powerfully informed my own approach to examining props within the set of the plays under study, particularly when considering how objects can be read in different ways in different contexts. Beckett's scenography and props have been addressed in detail throughout the work of Anna McMullan, particularly in her essay, 'History in Tatters: Bodies and things in Samuel Beckett's Theatre' where she draws upon the socio-historical aspect of Beckett's staging, exploring the ways the objects 'in Beckett's theatre have a phenomenal life and also reincarnate the remains of history' (McMullan 2008:7). McMullan's method of framing the theatrical object as a living thing is fundamental as a point of reference for this dissertation's examination of different iterations of props and costumes as they are activated through their roles onstage, serving as a palimpsest of the multiplicity of contexts that are mapped onto them at the moment of performance. McMullan's work on the phenomenal life of objects was a powerful driver behind this work; the idea that objects can open up, reincarnate, map, negotiate and navigate a shared space, that they might be able to speak up, motivate and embody ideas about ourselves and our everyday lives that would otherwise go unspoken, remains a fascinating idea for me. This thesis applies these ideas to a range of productions, from premieres to more recent performances. Scholarship on scenography and space in Beckett continues to grow, and the work of Trish McTighe has been extremely valuable in this field, and has informed my own thinking about Beckettian landscapes and ideas about homeland at the intersection of scenography and phenomenology, particularly her essays 'In Caves, In Ruins: Place as Archive at The Happy Days Beckett Festival' (2018) and 'Performing Beckett at the Irish Border: bodies, lines and haunted landscapes' (2023), as well as her collaboration with McMullan on 'Samuel Beckett and Irish Scenography' (2015).

Julie Bates's *Beckett's Art of Salvage* (2017) conducts a detailed object and image-led study across his oeuvre taking the reader on a journey that invites a closer look at the way Beckett's material imagination reveals itself through the stories of the objects and the connections they spark. Bates maps the way ordinary objects and everyday things including clothing, household items, stones, props, and other miscellany recur and return throughout his prose and plays and in doing so, draws together ideas around domesticity and everyday life in his work. Her essay on *Happy Days*, 'The Political and Aesthetic Power of the Everyday' (2019) was integral to framing ideas about Winnie in the mound in Chapter Three.

In addition to paying close attention to Beckett's texts and productions of these works, the dissertation also considers the ways in which contemporary socio-political concerns may inform the staging decisions of directors and designers, a dynamic that keeps theatre work fresh and relevant. In this process, themes inherent in the work in social or national moments of crisis may be reflected in the design or aesthetics of the mise en scene. Given the specific plays under discussion, this study is particularly concerned with how this process may tap into contemporary political conversations about precarity and instability that are not confined to individuals and their homes but communities and their homeland. The idea of home and home studies is a long established field that has been integral to the critical lens of this project, but with the exception of Una Chaudhuri and her short section on homecoming in *Waiting for Godot* in her book *Staging Place* (1995) there has been no detailed and exclusive exploration of Beckett's work that analyses the broad range of his theatre through the lens of identity, dwelling and day to day life. Understanding and exploring how the themes in Beckett's plays and the spaces of production intersect with the social and political landscape is integral to this project and particularly pertinent in considering how Beckett's work represents and offers contemporary readers and viewers of his work new ways to view the vulnerabilities of gender, ageing and illness and the environment.

Original Contributions to Knowledge

This is the first academic examination of Beckett's play texts and selected performances that focuses specifically on concepts of home and the domestic through a scenographic and phenomenological lens, connecting this analysis to contemporary debates about precarity, gender, and vulnerability in relation to home and dispossession. This dissertation builds on the work of academics including Bates, Chaudhuri, Grene and McMullan who all engage with ideas of home in Beckett's work to draw together a cohesisve study that utilises the frameworks

of phenomenology and scenography to focus on ideas about home and domesticity across his dramatic works, through textual analysis and specific performance case studies that interrogate the themes of the plays through the scenographic vision of modern directors. This dissertation is the first comprehensive study across a selection of Beckett's theatrical drama that construct a scenographic exploration of how Beckett redefines and reimagines how home can manifest on the stage through a sustained engagement with domesticity, ritual and the day to day. The thesis traces the development of these plays over time in relation to the broader contexts of staging, and highlights the work of designers and directors in Britain and Ireland who have produced Beckett's work over the last twenty years. Case studies of these performances offer a number of phenomenological readings of several productions which have not yet been studied and emphasises the value of considering Beckett's work in performance alongside analysis of the play-text itself.

This study of mise en scene and object-centred scenography of Beckett's major plays and some of his later ones takes the reader across his playwriting career from the late 1940's to early 1980's. It argues that the notion of home and domesticity offers a novel way of understanding Beckett's characters and their situations; it presents domesticity as something that can exist outside the object of the house; and posits that both home and domesticity can be embodied by objects or emerge through patterns of behaviour and rituals. It suggests that all of these manifestations of domesticity have the power to reveal interpersonal dynamics; they can allow individuals and relationships to endure and survive, but can also expose the way in which it deadens and stifles. This study argues that home can be abstract or undefined; conjured and created through acts and objects pertaining to the domestic realm but also sometimes manifesting as an object that we cannot escape. This investigation into Beckett's theatre both in text and performance also contributes to the wider study of theatre as means of social reflection as it engages with ideas of domestic precarity in historical and contemporary contexts. The idea of Beckett as a writer whose work speaks to social and political crisis has long been established and this work seeks to navigate these wider conversations to guide the reader somewhere more personal, the spaces in which we live, whatever form that they might take.

Outline of Chapters: Chapter one

Chapter one begins by exploring the concepts and ideas explored in *Eleutheria* as well as outlining Beckett's personal context and how this may have influenced the nature of his

approach to experimenting with the idea of home as being something that shapes and is shaped by the complex identities of those who dwell within it, as well as the socio-political contexts around it. It considers how Beckett's evocations of home on stage begins with the destruction of the middle class interior of home as a concept and object, through the collapse of the set in *Eleutheria.* Therefore, the Beckettian locus of habitation involves a move from the bourgeois domestic house to the austere cell of Victor's bedroom.The line of dramatic action and progression from *Eleutheria* to *Waiting for Godot* [hereafter referred to as *Godot*] shows us that breakdown, collapse or dispossession does not destroy the idea of home, and neither does it prevent one from seeking it, or from reinventing it.

Taking the social and political upheaval of Brexit as the contextual starting point and backdrop to the textual and performance readings, the rest of the first chapter is focused on the way *Godot* is staged in crisis and how the domestic routines of the characters that are forged in dispossession and hardship speak to situations of domestic precarity and instability that are borne out of different situations of crisis. The chapter focuses on a wide range of modern case studies which enables the performance discussions to explore in detail how the same objects can operate in different ways or can elucidate particular nuances within the wider contexts of the performances. The productions that have been selected place emphasis on the enduring appeal and also the relevance of staging Beckett's work and particularly *Godot* at moments of socio-economic and political crisis and move from *Godot* in the wake of the financial banking collapse in Canary Wharf (2013) to the presentation by Arts Over Borders on the Irish-Northern Irish border post-Brexit (2018) and finally Susan Sontag's experimental work in Sarajevo during the siege (1993). The idea of Beckett being resonant with crisis has been explored in other studies and across productions but in this thesis the exploration of set design and the way in which objects and props in the set facilitate fresh phenomenological readings of the work in relation to how we perceive home and how these objects can re-enact or resonate with events from the past differentiates this chapter from work that has been previously done on staging Beckett in crisis. This chapter facilitates discussion on how the space of home overlaps with wider conversations and the security of our homeland in the case studies, particularly because many of the stagings take place outside of traditional theatre spaces.

Chapter two

The image of Pozzo at the end of *Godot*, blind and frightened and unable to move about unaided, informs the concept of home in *Endgame* as a bare shelter that has become a place of

entrapment because of illness or ageing. If chapter one is defined by the exploration of forging and maintaining domesticity in spite of dispossession, chapter two argues that enclosure can be just as threatening and hostile as dispossession, as the action moves to a stifling interior. The family dynamics at work within *Endgame* appear to offer something that fulfills a more traditional domestic situation, however Beckett undermines this at every turn not only through the characters' interpersonal relationships but also through the objects and rituals that should promote stability, but instead are charged with a sense of danger.

The contextual backdrop for this chapter was the national lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore the notion of being compromised and re-appropriated into a medicalised space informed both the textual and performance analysis drawing on the interplay and resonance between the social backdrop of the productions, the action and presentations of home in the play, and the heightened experience of being subjected to containment whilst writing about entrapment.

The two modern case studies of this chapter are productions that were read in the context of the global Covid-19 pandemic, with Pan Pan's production (Dublin 2019) taking place just weeks before the first of the lockdowns in Britain and Ireland, and the second at The Old Vic (London 2020) cut short by the lockdown in the UK. This chapter draws on scientific and sociological studies into the experiences of patients in long-term healthcare spaces, and it also focuses on two key objects within the production: the wheelchair and waste bins. The discussion in this chapter about staging Beckett in crisis leads on to reflections on how the depiction of the everyday in *Endgame* draws out the vulnerability of those who are reliant on others for their most basic day to day needs through a complex portrayal of power, neglect and cruelty.

Chapter three

Chapter three also explores home in relation to confinement, but this time from the perspective of an ageing couple, focusing exclusively on the plight of the female protagonist. The contextual backdrop to the textual and performance analysis in the chapter was the *Paris Agreement* in 2015 which was part of the growing awareness of the need to aknowlege the women's particular needs and experiences in situations of displacement and vulnerability due to climate change. The chapter considers *Happy Days* through an analysis of gendered experiences of isolation, displacement and disaster, and argues that Winnie may potentially be existing within the structure of a home that has collapsed. The space Winnie occupies is both

home and grave and the duality of this stage image offers a way of considering the gendered experiences of women during moments of vulnerability and danger, in the face of dispossession, environmental disaster, or ageing, in which they are uprooted from their own homes. This chapter examines Winnie's bag and how the items within it become the focus of domestic safety and ritual for the first half of the play before the objects become memento mori around the graveside as she is consumed into the earth. The chapter explores how identity and gender can condition and change our expectations and experience of home when it comes under threat while drawing on sociological and scientific studies of women in post-disaster situations, women's experiences of homelessness, and how women negotiate domesticity in public spaces that offer little privacy.

The case studies in this chapter, Katie Mitchell's *Glückliche Tage* (Germany 2015), Sarah Frankcom's *Happy Days* (Manchester 2018) and Company SJ's *Laethanta Sona* (Inis Oírr 2021), all use water in unique ways to offer new scenographical approaches to the mound. Mitchell's staging presents the play within a recognisable and traditional interior of a flooding kitchen with the mound represented by rising water. The mound in Frankcom's production is encrusted with rubbish and seeping water. The final case study, set on a small island, sees Winnie encased in a stone mound made up of the sea wall. All three explore the idea of isolation and home in relation to women, ideas about belonging and loneliness in relation to home and homeland and how the everyday objects from the past can help orient even in the most unexpected and unbearable situations.

Chapter four

This final chapter investigates ideas around home and domesticity through the lens of haunting and loss in Beckett's late plays. Written during the Covid-19 pandemic, this chapter is unable to draw on such a wide range of contextual performance case studies in the ways that the other chapters do – due to a combination of theatre closures as well as the staging choices made by companies and theatres to draw audiences back. The contextual backdrop to the textual and performance readings centres around locating the theme of haunting that permeates these plays in relation to loss, ageing, and isolation; socio-political preoccupations that were of urgent and widespread relevance during the writing of this chapter, while the scenographic examples of the staging are drawn from pre-pandemic productions.

Footfalls and *Rockaby* bring together many of the themes hinted at or explored in detail in earlier plays, where imagery of the grave, death, and illness evoked through language in

Godot and *Endgame* are realised in spectral ways. In *Footfalls* and *Rockaby*, although no apparent physical obstacles confine the characters to the areas of their homes in which the plays locate them, and although no other visible human bodies share the stage with these characters, they remain tied to memories and voices from the past. More specifically, in May's case this takes the form of her devotion to the act of care seemingly at the expense of her own physical condition and health, and in W's case of what appears to be a cyclical act of remembering motivated by loss. The bodies of these characters are shaped by interiority, and their movements seem to narrate grief while compulsively re-enacting or recalling the past. This sense of the ephemeral combined with voices that are disembodied, distant, and from another time contribute to the study and exploration of spectrality and ghostliness within the domestic structures that embody loss. This chapter draws on a comparative reading of the use of lighting and costume as part of the overall presentation of spectrality within the design of a number of pre-pandemic productions: the premiere of *Footfalls* directed by Beckett (London 1976), Alan Schneider's *Rockaby* (New York 1981), and Walter Asmus's more recent production of the trilogy *Not I, Footfalls* and *Rockaby* (London 2015).

This chapter explores the use of costume in these plays, and considers how this informs their themes of identity and haunting, drawing out these questions in relation to the porous borders within the home as well as the boundaries between self and other in the mother-daughter relationships in *Footfalls* and *Rockaby*. It explores the notion of spectral motherhood articulated by Marilyn Francis alongside Carole Lipman's work on living with ghosts. In doing so, the chapter brings the dissertation to a close by thinking of home as a space and concept that itself dwells in the shadows and is inhabited by spectres both real and imagined, returning us to the notion of disappearance, collapse and remainder with which this dissertation began.

Conclusion

The concluding remarks of the thesis set out to identify the key findings, exploring briefly how each of the chapters redefines ways of thinking about home and evaluating the efficacy and fruitfulness of utilising phenomenology and scenography as the interrogative lens. It also sums up the fresh readings that emerge around Beckett's work in relation to social vulnerabilities by viewing his theatre within the cultural context of the production.

Chapter One:

Domesticating the Inhospitable – The Search for Home in *Waiting for Godot*

For a study rooted in a contextual exploration of Beckett's drama and its dialogue with wider social concerns it is useful to begin with an overview of Beckett's influences and experiences before he turned to playwriting. Many of the ideas explored in this investigation into Beckettian representations of home and domestic spaces are foregrounded in his first play *Eleutheria*, a work which he refused to have published or performed in his lifetime but which he also refused to destroy. Written more or less alongside each other between 1947-49, *Eleutheria* and *Godot* share the immediacy of the post-war context. In *Eleutheria*, home is effectively destroyed – and this conceptual and aesthetic collapse of the domestic environment sets the scene for Becketts' scenographic and therefore visual experimentations into space. This first section of the chapter examines the ways Beckett's first explorations into playwriting and stagecraft can offer insights into his ideas, influences and concerns, tracing his scenographic explorations of domesticity as well as his experimentations into how iterations of home might be re-defined and in turn manifested on the stage.

Beckett's biographer James Knowlson argues that Beckett's exploration of material space and his development as a dramatist after 1945 was inevitably influenced by his involvement in the war. Knowlson goes as far as to suggest that the effects of the war years and their aftermath were so profound that it would be difficult to know if Beckett would have written these plays without the impact of these experiences (1996: 351). These included work with resistance cell Gloria translating vital documents alongside Suzanne Déchevaux-Dumesnil, before going on the run and into hiding after their cover was blown. It was also coloured by the aftermath of war and his time in St Lô, Normandy, a town reduced to rubble after brutal bombardment and where Beckett spent time with the Red Cross establishing a hospital[3]. The war years gave Beckett a personal insight into the darkest recesses of humanity that created the death camps which close friends such as Alfred Péron did not survive. The middle classes had been both victim and perpetrator of the worst crimes in history. Their complicity in genocide necessitated a radical re-evaluation of western culture and its driver, capitalism. Knowlson argues that 'Many of the features of his later prose and plays arise directly from his experiences of radical uncertainty, disorientation, exile, hunger and need'.

[3] Beckett documented some of these experiences in 'The Capital of the Ruins' http://www.ricorso.net/rx/library/authors/classic/Beckett_S/St_Lo.htm [Date accessed 19th Dec 2023]

Beckett's exploration into ideas about the home and domesticity were also part of his prose work around this time. In 1946 he was writing a considerable amount of prose in the form of short stories and novellas that included: *The Expelled, The Calmative, The End* and *First Love.* All of these works delve into the theme of homelessness and expulsion and offer more insight into Beckett's creative imagination in relation to re-imagining and re-thinking the space of the home in the post-war context. In *Post-Human Space in Samuel Beckett's Short Prose*, Jonathan Boulter summarises Beckett's phenomenological approach of his protagonists to the sense of being in the world and how their relationships with house or home determine their sense of identity and stability:

> *The Expelled* begins with the protagonist literally thrown out of his refuge into the street; the protagonist of *The Calmative* is always already expelled into what he calls, critically, the 'nightmare thingness' […] of the world; *The End* traces the trajectory of the protagonist from a charity institution to a basement, a sea cave, a cabin, and finally to a shed: his is an increasingly desperate discovery that being in the world means never finding refuge. (Boulter 2021:38)

So in 1947 when Beckett turned both as a 'relief and as a challenge' (Knowlson 1996:351) to the medium of theatre and wrote his first full length play *Eleutheria,* it was the start of a more visual manifestation through scenographical design that centred around the need to re-imagine and re-evaluate home that had already begun within his prose. In the introduction, this thesis explores the arguments of Nicholas Grene whose work on home in relation to Beckett focuses on interiority and moves between the destruction of the parody of 'traditional' bourgeois domestic interior in *Eleutheria* to the makeshift but equally stifling refuge in the interior of *Endgame*. While Grene explores these two works in relation to home and domesticity he considers *Godot* a disruption and disjuncture between these explorations of interiority. This chapter seeks to clarify and explore why focusing on Beckett's development as a scenographer and writer radically reimaging and re-defining domesticity and home requires the analysis of *Godot* in the light of *Eleutheria* before moving onto *Endgame* as necessary in understanding the development of how domesticity can be staged through these rituals and relationships and the objects and spaces they occupy and inhabit, manifesting home long after the it has been destroyed or lost. Crucially, it speaks to one of the central threads of this thesis that explores Bachelard's notion of the way inside and outside are so easily reversible or compromised: an idea that asks how bodies return to and find ways of adapting conventional

domestic rituals into patterns of behaviour in all kinds of hostile environments. What is more although the domestic interior in any recognisably conventional form is abandoned, Beckett continues to stage iterations of domesticity through the vestigial traces of home that remain long after the object of the house has gone.

Therefore this chapter focuses first on how the destruction of home in *Eleutheria* led to a reframing and reimagining of the domestic and how what constitutes home is determined by the behaviours of those within the space, before going on to analyse selected productions of *Godot* over the last 60 years and critically exploring the way directorial choices have changed over time and how they have been influenced by the changing socio-political and cultural climate in which they are staged. For the premieres in Paris, London, and Beckett's own production in Berlin, there is already a great deal of existing research detailing the performances, and central to these is David Bradby's *Waiting For Godot,* which provides a comprehensive and detailed examination of those performances mentioned as well as many other key productions. Jonathan Kalb's *Beckett in Performance* opens a window onto the actors' changing perspectives, particularly during their experiences of working with Beckett at the Schiller Theatre. Finally, Jonathan Croall's *Waiting for Godot: A Short History of a Masterpiece* offers comparison between Peter Hall's productions and Beckett's own from the actor's perspective during the rehearsal process. Between them, the scholarship presents a picture of the different directorial methods as well as the actors approach to working with the space and the text.

The writing of this chapter is framed by the socio-political context of political upheaval created by Brexit and so it moves from looking at the premieres to evaluating the textual readings alongside more contemporary productions that are presented, like the premiere, at moments of crisis. This approach seeks to explore text alongside performances of *Godot* where the theatrical space becomes responsive to a phenomenological reading, investigating productions where site-responsiveness has been integral to the staging of the work, and the nature of the space has facilitated a re-evaluation of the work by invoking the agency of the context in which the audience experience the performance. This juxtaposition will facilitate a way of considering how the most powerful and politically resonant of *Godot*'s modern productions are ones that are conceived at moments that resonate and intervene in discussions around domestic precarity at a national level. Selecting productions that are conceived in and take place during crisis facilitates a more direct comparison of the mise en scene, enabling the reader to see how small changes to costumes, props, or lighting can impact the nuanced

readings of the nature of home in each productions and observe how these shift and adapt, depending on the context.

The first of these modern productions is a rehearsed reading of *Godot* for the *6th Happy Days: International Beckett Festival Enniskillen*, on the Irish/Northern Irish border for what was at the time, in August 2018, thought to be the last festival prior to the finalisation of Brexit following the vote to leave in 2016. The second, an overlooked production by the Miracle Theatre in 2013 in Jubilee Park Canary Wharf, London, was presented just five years after the global financial crash of 2007/8. The final production is Susan Sontag's staging of *Godot* in war-torn Sarajevo in 1993 in a city under siege. Writing about Sontag's production, which was not from first-hand experience, will draw on scholarly work, personal accounts and filmed footage to inform the analysis of these productions. Against the backdrops of the landscape in which the plays are staged, the chapter also focuses on the phenomenological interpretations of the other elements of set design with an emphasis on props and costume to facilitate fresh readings of the text in performance. The impact of lighting and sound upon these key elements will be examined in relation to the way in which they interact with the set; sometimes illuminating and adding cohesion, and in some productions becoming 'objects' in their own right which help to inform our understanding of the performance in certain productions. Although contextually different in many ways, what these performances have in common is that they serve to continually re-frame and reassert the continued relevance of *Godot* over a period of more than 50 years by intervening in debates surrounding the role and nature of home and homeland in the face of dispossession.

Domestic Destruction in *Eleutheria*

The protagonist of *Eleutheria* is a young man, Victor, who longs for solitude. His room occupies the larger part of the stage and for the first act, is where the minor action unfolds. Victor runs away from home in order to escape his oppressive middle-class family, the Kraps, and his overbearing fiancée Mlle Skunk, in order to pursue the freedom 'to do nothing'(Beckett 1996:88). However, in Beckett's dramatisation he never manages to escape the literal confines of the stage space. He is relentlessly pursued by his family, both immediate and extended. In the face of this endless disturbance Victor remains unable or unwilling to act decisively and is trapped in a kind of cyclical nightmare. As the play ends, Victor drags his bed to the footlights so that it is parallel to the audience and he lays down, '*turning his emaciated back on humanity'* (Beckett 1996:170). The conception behind this first work for theatre allows the reader to see

Beckett thinking about space as a physical materialisation of internal and domestic conflict. Victor's situation also introduces us to a particularly Beckettian notion of homesickness that alludes to the contradictory and dangerous nature of home when it fails to function as a space which is suitable or safe for those who seek refuge; a place that should offer sanctuary and yet cannot provide comfort.

The surreal quality of the play is not only manifest in the form and the action of the play but permeates the design. Writing *Eleutheria* offered Beckett the freedom to experiment with form in ways that were radical and his design for a split set for the first two acts is detailed in the opening stage directions:

> *[T]he stage represents two different rooms, which are supposed to be in two different places, although juxtaposed here without a dividing wall. The one is Victor's room, the other a corner of the small salon in his parents' flat: it is as if the latter is an enclave of the former. Victor's room moves imperceptibly into the Krap's salon, as the dirty into the clean, the sordid into the respectable, emptiness into clutter. The two rooms share the whole width of the rear wall as well as the same floor[…] the theatrical effect of this dualist space, then should be produced less by the transition than by the fact that Victor's room takes up three quarters of the stage, and by the flagrant discrepancy between the furniture on either side*. (1996:5)

In addition to the layout of the set, another characteristic of *Eleutheria's* design is the confinement and contradictions of the domestic sphere where Beckett reveals the interior space as something porous, the movement of the design drawing out key ideas around home as a place where the psychological predicaments of the inhabitants as well as the conceptual contexts of the writing have the potential to shape the architecture of the space. The idea of reciprocity and exchange between the public, personal and private sphere where boundaries are constantly in flux is well established by the end of the play. The whole set revolves between each act, and by the final act, the bourgeois drawing room has collapsed '*into the orchestra pit'* (Beckett 1996:6). The collapse of the set is the culmination of a build-up of dramatic conflict within the presentation of the home, in which the set becomes pregnant with its own demise. From the outset, the stage directions reveal how Victor's room stands in stark contrast to the Kraps's salon explaining how they,

> *share the whole width of the rear wall as well as the same floor, but when they pass from Victor to his family they become domesticated and respectable. Like water from the open sea becoming the water in the harbour*. (Beckett 1996:5)

This metaphor betrays the manner in which the domestic is threatened by something more powerful than it can contain from the outset – the seeds of destruction are sewn into the very fabric of the set. The description of the Kraps's living room illustrates how seemingly ordinary spaces are lined with threatening detail, '*thin strip of barbed wire fixed under the edge of the table and running down to the floor*' (Beckett 1996:40). Beckett's depiction of the Kraps's home evokes the emergence of one his many preoccupations with the visible and the invisible, while also recalling the landscape of trench warfare and the atrocities of the Second World War. Monsieur Krap tells Victor's fiancée that Victor's escape from the family home is what began the lining of the space and all of Victor's favourite places within the home with barbed wire:

> [H]e took up a lot of space in this house … my wife has always wanted to keep – yet in a way abolish – our son's favourite places […] this plan was put off for a long time but last week […] my wife put into practice […] with the results that you see … and that's only the beginning. The flat will soon be covered in barbed wire [….] (Beckett 1996:41)

The barbed wire narrates Victor's absence and establishes the link between the breakdown of their relationship and the destruction of physical memory. This domestic barbarism imbues the home with a violence we associate with the battlefield and with the concentration camps. It could be interpreted that the destruction of the domestic in *Eleutheria* was a comment on the European climate in the immediate aftermath of the war, the tendency and desire to move on as a misguided attempt to heal the gaping wounds that had fractured its communities. *Eleutheria's* domestic drama and design could be read as a scenographical acknowledgment that the society and cultures that had 'allowed the holocaust to happen in the first place' were perpetuating its horror because they 'refused to learn anything at all from such an event' (Kemp 2005: 5). Beckett was not a political writer, and in his conception of *Eleutheria* he was not necessarily trying to take a political stance, but just as he turned to theatre to find new methods of creative experimentation, it may also be that the home as a symbol of bourgeois complacency and contentment had to destroyed and redefined to represent a radical marker from what had come before.

The clutter of the Kraps's living room at the start of the play contrasted with the image of Victor emaciated and alone at the end of the play is a powerful indicator of the middle classes' intellectual 'inability to address the legacies of the "unspeakable'" (McMullan 2010:24). These contrasting images also communicate Beckett's desire to shock in unexpected ways, marking the way his work for theatre would become known for its uncompromising and unflinching stark visual text and its tableaux of iconic images of confinement, horror and despair. It gives rise to a fascinating interplay between the unseen and the impossible, between the visible and the silent. In *Performing Embodiment* McMullan describes the way in which the dramatic climax, the physical collapse of the Kraps's salon into the orchestra pit, occurs during the change of scene, 'The bourgeois, domestic interior has been exorcised of its material paraphernalia. The emptied stage foregrounds the simple phenomenological reality of Victor's emaciated body' (McMullan 2010:25). This is the point at which the mise en scene itself becomes 'phenomenologised' by taking on a kind of 'consciousness' (Garner 1994:37), and what makes *Eleutheria* seem a valuable starting point for this study into Beckett's theatrical landscape using a phenomenological framework. It consolidates the beginning of Beckett's dramatic preoccupations with the exploration of space, absence and the unseen which later become established motifs within his work and sets up the notion of home as a conceptually problematic space and one which continues to elude physical and psychological definition. It also foregrounds our dramatic understanding of the behaviour of these domestic objects our relationship with them is often conditioned by their unreliability or unknowability, characteristics which enable them to move between their own real- world functions as well as their phenomenological reality on stage invoked by the reciprocal exchanges within the dramatic action.

While *Eleutheria* stages Victor's impossible yet desperate bid for freedom from his family, *Godot* presents two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon, who are compelled to wait by a tree on an unnamed country road for a mysterious figure named Godot. Despite their differences, both plays explore and expose the frustration of individuals who are seemingly powerless to escape their situations. The elaborate split-set cluttered with the domestic symbols of bourgeois success which is almost suffocating in *Eleutheria* is replaced with one that comprises a country road deprived of scenery, except for a mound (and in most productions following 1975, a stone) and a tree with (in the second act) just a couple of leaves. Both sets were unconventional and utilised the stage space in a manner which would have been unlike anything a 1950s audience would have expected or experienced. The interior set in *Eleutheria,* suggesting its design was loaded with the stifling mix of bourgeois expectation, hypocrisy and conventionality that

turned the idea of home from a place of refuge into a prison no longer exists in *Godot,* as the action is moved outside.

Godot, a play in two acts, takes place on consecutive evenings. The protagonists Vladimir and Estragon, like Victor, never achieve their desires and their waiting is never rewarded by the appearance of Godot. The only interruption is an encounter, on both evenings, with another mysterious couple by the name of Pozzo and Lucky, the latter being led on a rope, enslaved by the former in the first Act, before Pozzo returns in Act Two, this time blind and led by Lucky. It was not sufficient for Beckett to create an internally hostile domestic environment as he did in *Eleutheria*, rather it might be argued that in order to engage with the legacies of war, Beckett had to take a very different scenographic approach. In *Godot* he takes his characters out into a barren unknown landscape where the domestic has been subverted but not erased. In the absence of a house, this chapter will argue that these wandering vagabonds create a home in the space that they occupy through an enduring domesticity that emerges through the repetition, routine and the rhythm of the day to day.

Re-Imagining the Domestic in *Waiting for Godot*

The first question to tackle is how does one read *Godot* as a play that addresses itself to the domestic when the characters are not only homeless, but their location is unknown? It might be argued that domesticity in *Godot* is about the way the characters inhabit space and the domestic patterns that endure in any environment. In his approach to Beckett's theatre, Alec Reid argues, '*Waiting For Godot* is not about Godot or even about waiting. It *is* waiting and ignorance and impotence and boredom, all made visible and audible on the stage before us' (1970:52). The characters' engagement with the simple rituals of day to day survival, like eating and sleeping, stand in contrast to their inhospitable environment. Applying the framework of phenomenology to understand both scenography and domestic ritual facilitates analysis of the methods through which the objects and actions and space that the characters occupy can be viewed as 'home' through their relation to their domestic sphere. In his essay on *'*A Phenomenology of Domesticity*…',* Jacques De Visscher explores Heidegger's analysis of domestic objects in *Being and Time.* De Visscher considers the objects within the domestic space as active agents living and acting alongside each other as well as their human counterparts. He describes them as 'co-habitants', arguing that the identity of these objects is a relational one that insists on our interpretation of them being within a domestic community of objects rather than isolated and individual. 'These useful things form a world together […]

constitute a whole and as such refer to a way of life' (1998:202). However, the domestic realm conjured in the world of the play rarely provides the security that might be hoped for and its divorce from the interior space of the house where these rituals would have originated and flourished means that they more starkly embody uncertainty, a theme that characterises both the language and action of the play. A clear example of this is that for Vladimir and Estragon, the world of the domestic is most powerfully evoked through the rituals surrounding food. However, although the foods that they have on offer - carrots and turnips - are root vegetables, there is no evidence that these have come from the landscape, instead they come from Vladimir's pockets. This entrenches the notion of the living body as a domestic body, which when faced the with the prospect of an inhospitable environment reaches inward to sustain itself. In this manner one could argue that Vladimir's pockets become the sparse pantry and Estragon's hands become both cutlery and dish.

This is reinforced in the way Pozzo and Lucky also carry their belongings with them. Pozzo's first act upon setting his things down is to take out his picnic basket and enjoy a meal. The sharing and eating of food, Estragon's removal of his shoes, and the use of the stone as both bed and chair make for a convincing argument of *Godot* as a play that concerns the domestic. The role these objects play within the lives of the characters means '[we do not] encounter these objects as abstract locations on a mathematical grid bounded by four walls. Rather, we encounter these objects in the first place as things that form part of the daily life of the inhabitants' (Visscher 1998:202). This lends further support to the notion that home is not defined by the object of the house, but by the functions performed within it. Furthermore, it might even be argued that it is the rituals of domesticity that denote the sphere of the home rather than the other way around. Visscher explains that the 'network of interrelations' formed by these objects and activated by their human collaborators, 'does not form a closed world'. In short, Visscher uses Heidegger's phenomenology of objects to liberate us from the object of the house and instead focuses on the lived space as home. He goes on to argue, 'Daily life leaves its traces […] and testifies to a way of life […] a house filled with unused things is not truly a home' (Visscher 1998:203). Therefore, while the objects in *Godot* that evoke domesticity may not be numerous or traditional, their role and function in the characters' day to day survival lends them a vitality and relevance that prevents the dysphoria of 'disquieting strangeness […] when one comes upon things in daily life that have lost their substance and their power to refer to the users' (Visscher 1998:204). These objects and rituals that remain embedded within the routine of the characters allow the audience to facilitate a dialogue with productions where discourses about home and homeland are raised during moments of conflict

and crisis that coincide with the staging of the play, making it a conduit through which such debates can be channelled.

Beckett refused to be drawn into discussing the meaning of *Waiting for Godot*, keen to ensure that critics and audiences 'experience the presentation itself as the only meaning offered' (Bradby 2001:31). In fact, one of Beckett's few pieces of guidance and insight into his work was his interest in the 'shape of certain ideas'. This, when combined with the observation that *Godot* is the only one of Beckett's plays, 'not to confine its characters in some physically restrictive fashion', invites a phenomenological reading of the exploration of how the shape of ideas are reflected in the physical landscape of the play (Bradby 2001:34). By refusing the 'traditional' domestic setting, Beckett asks us to enter a world in which the everyday is no longer constrained or limited by our expectations, and in doing so creates drama in which the ordinary can flourish in surprising ways.

There are however, dramatic implications for this absence of a physical and recognisable object of home that results in the transformation of theatrical notions of the interconnection between place and the personal. In the introduction to her book *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama,* Una Chaudhuri identifies this problematization of the dramatic discourse of home as 'geopathology' which is often located within 'the framework of a failed-homecoming plot'. She cites *Godot* as a key example of this:

> Homecoming is doomed [she explains] because home itself is displaced, vanished. [Beckett, she argues] places the blame for the failure of homecoming […] not on the characters (or on human nature) but, on the figure of home itself, on the effort to force a conjuncture between place and personal identity for its own sake, without context or purpose […] That their [Didi and Gogo's] location is as indeterminate and as 'open' as it is – a homelessness so radical that it has regularly seemed to symbolise a universal condition – is the mark of its detachment from the old discourse of home, which equated home with a sense of entrapment within naturalism's famous four walls. (2008:xiii)

Beckett invites us to enter into a new dialogue; if we do not define the home by its shape, by the definition of being inside as opposed to outside, then how do we proceed? Moreover, despite Chaudhuri's suggestion that the discourse of home in Beckett is no longer 'equated with a sense of entrapment within […] four walls' is Beckett's reimagining just as stifling and confining? Returning to Bachelard and his phenomenological reading of the home may be useful to this chapter's evaluation of how we articulate the essence of home when it's

no longer defined as a specific object or place. Bachelard's fascination with what he calls the 'phenomenology of the imagination', supports Heidegger's argument, outlined through Visscher earlier in the chapter. Bachelard argues that 'all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home […] the imagination functions in this direction wherever the human being has found the slightest shelter: we shall see the imagination build 'walls' of impalpable shadows, comfort itself with the illusion of protection' (2014:27). We can gain an insight into the way in which Beckett's work seems to share this notion of the phenomenology of the imagination and how this impacted on the development of the scenography by charting the development of *Godot*'s presentation from the French premiere directed by Roger Blin in 1953 to the British premiere directed by Peter Hall in 1955 at the Arts Theatre, London to Beckett's own production at the Schiller Theatre, Berlin in 1975. *Waiting for Godot* began life in the Théâtre de Babylone in Paris in 1953,

> French audiences had come to the play with images of starvation, sickness and exploitation all too vividly in their memories of Nazi occupation. This explained to a large extent why the play was better received in France compared with the ridicule and disgust it faced in Britain the following year. For French audiences in such a frame of mind, the plight of Vladimir and Estragon did not seem so very strange or unusual and the violence implicit in the Pozzo–Lucky relationship needed no underlining to exert its sinister power. (Bradby 2001:72)

The production was borne out of war and forged in precarity, and this was reflected in the tight budget that dictated Roger Blin's extremely sparse set. Both props and costumes were either home-made or scavenged. A good example of this is the case of the tree, 'designed by Blin […] made by wrapping tissue paper that had been painted brown round a framework of wire coat hangers twisted together […] in the interval between the acts he added bits of green paper to the tree to suggest leaves' (Bradby 2001:55). According to Ruby Cohn, the costumes for Vladimir and Estragon were stolen from Blin's father, a doctor, and were ill-fitting and 'broken down'(Bradby 2001:56). The lighting in the Paris production was a testament to Blin's ingenuity for improvisation and attempted to make the most of the stage space despite its restrictive nature. His talent for design was given little scope because of the constraints of budget but nevertheless Blin used his imagination to add additional lighting by 'fixing light bulbs into empty oil cans' to add atmospheric lighting to 'represent the moon rising, a stagehand behind the backcloth directed another similar light onto the cloth while raising it in

a relatively rapid arc suggesting a sudden, unrealistic arrival of night' (Bradby 2001:55). Analysis of the premiere reveals that, from its conception, the way in which the play asserted the most poignant depictions of domesticity was when this was evoked by the precarious materiality of the scenography itself. The items that furnished Blin's set were subject to the material conditions of sparsity that endured in post-war Europe. Individually these objects may have seemed incidental or haphazard but collectively the 'figure of the "thing" lends itself' to transcend the 'atomistic' and become part of a 'congregational understanding of agency' which Jane Bennet describes as the 'agency of assemblages' (Bennet 2010:20). Just as the senses do not work in isolation, the perception of those objects acting together within the framework of a performance is a 'synesthetic process in which the senses communicate with each other' (McKinney and Butterworth 2009:167). Therefore, the agency of these objects that evoke the re-negotiation of domestic action gain another level of meaning when they are translated into different contexts and spaces.

Neither Hall nor his cast had seen the Paris premiere and by contrast he and his designer Peter Snow created a set that was altogether more elaborate, 'intended to remedy what both director and designer felt to be a sparseness of the text' (Bradby 2001:75). The set was cluttered and crowded, 'a raised bank at the back sprouted various bits of vegetation, the lone tree was fringed by beds of reeds, while at the front of the stage by the low mound was a tar barrel, a rock and several pieces of stone'. On reflection Hall commented, 'there was too much scenery, the set was too busy, I didn't understand back then that less was more' (Bradby 2001:75). In his letters to Alan Schneider Beckett made clear that he 'was worried about what he saw as a sentimental element and would have preferred a harsher simplicity. He was later reported not to like the production's 'cluttered stage'" (Croall 2005:43). Beckett sought to address these concerns in the most direct way possible, through the scenography in his own production at the Schiller theatre, Berlin, in 1975, taking place 'on a raked stage so huge that it dwarfs the stone and the tree […] the audience sees the action occurring in a nearly empty space, which discourages perceptions of theatrical illusion' (Kalb 1989:33). The 'clutter' of previous productions was removed from the stage in a performance that avoided naturalistic design. Beckett was orchestrating a physical silence through the space that was occupied by movement rather than objects. He also objected to the way in which the silences were not long enough and the audience was not sufficiently bored. In this way Beckett returns to the idea of the home as a place of anxiety, a space where the walls are drawn and defined by containment, repetition, and restraint.

Analysing Beckett's methods of staging draws us to a deeper understanding of the play and its characters that reveals meaning on stage, which could not be garnered through textual analysis alone. The tar barrel in Hall's production did not replace the mound, but instead became part of the focal point of the action, with both actors able to sit upon it side by side. In contrast, Beckett's production sought to emphasise the inability of the landscape to adequately satisfy the characters' most basic needs. It was for this reason that from 1975 onwards, the mound was replaced by a stone: 'The stone was similar in all of the productions with which Beckett was involved: grey, oblong and like the tree, inadequate for two' (Bradby 2001:35). Beckett's scenographical decisions that detail even the shape of the stone add to the pertinence of a phenomenological reading of the set design. The stone could be perceived as a reimagining of the bed in *Eleutheria*, that contained Victor without providing the functional comfort that one would associate with the object. In *Godot*, the stone is the only stage 'furniture' and becomes integral to the way Beckett implicates the mise en scene in the characters' loneliness and separation despite their interdependency, as they try and fail to take rest upon it together comfortably.

To engage with the notion that home can be represented through something other than a building it is essential to ask how this this manifestation of home is evoked. Beckett's drama of the domestic thrives on emboldening the traces of the home, a vestigial domesticity that lingers and persisits long after the illusion of the home as a privileged interior space has been destroyed, within those signifiers that cannot be erased; objects, rituals and relationships. The destruction of home in *Eleutheria* is a way of radically re-thinking the way we 'confer spatiality on thought' (Bachelard 2014:228) as it forces the reader to re-evaluate the role of interiority in defining home by eradicating the false opposition in which the 'inside is concrete and the outside is vast' (Bachelard 2014:231). In his transition from *Eleutheria* to *Godot* Beckett reveals that 'outside and inside are both intimate – they are always ready to be reversed, to exchange their hostility. If there is exists a border-line surface between such an inside and outside, this surface is painful on both sides' (Bachelard 2014:233). This painful surface reveals itself in the intimacy of the homeless, a domesticity forged by the disenfranchised: a notion of home that exists in relationships and routines which may be weathered by the elements, while yet defying them by continuing to endure. If, as Grene observes, '*Eleutheria* represented a particularly fierce and disgusted rejection of family life and its obligations' (Grene 2014: 133), then Beckett's evocations of home in his subsequent works involve an exploration of how domesticity might continue when liberated from these constraints. Susan Fraiman explores this

idea of reimagined domesticity outside of a recognisable home space that can continue to flourish outside of traditional notions of family and community when she observes,

> Domestic objects may serve to mediate desire, domestic activities to consolidate ties […] But while some pursue domesticity as a mechanism of affiliation, others do the opposite […] they do so not by escaping the domestic altoghether but by relocating/recreating it as a space of their own removed from other people and conventional expectations. (Fraiman 2017:14)

In the case of Vladimir and Estragon, domesticity is recreated as result of a life that is forged outside of convention, defined by their connection that defies the expectation of family life and the traditional home, whether out of choice, need or chance. What is more, although the domestic is evoked by objects that denote the routine of the everyday, *Godot* also asks the audience to consider the way in which Beckett evokes ideas of the home through the language and behaviour of the characters.

Estragon:	[…] But what Saturday? And is it Saturday? Is it not rather Sunday? […] Or Monday? […] Or Friday?
Vladimir:	*(looking wildly about him, as though the date was inscribed in the landscape)*. It's not possible!"
Estragon:	Or Thursday?
Vladimir:	What'll we do?
Estragon:	If he came yesterday and we weren't here you may be sure he won't come again today
Vladimir:	But you say we weren't here yesterday
Estragon:	I may be mistaken […] (1996:17)

Much of Vladimir and Estragon's conversation is marked by forgetfulness that leads to repetition, and a cyclical pattern that serves to reinforce the domestic through stasis. Their 'home' resides in their inability to continue on their travels, and the building blocks of home are formed from the characters' inaction. They are embedded in something of an oxymoron, a seemingly endless and ongoing state of temporality and as a result their routine, unchanging and recursive, is what forms the structure of their home, one that is realised in the physical structure of the play. In her essay, 'Dementia and Symbiosis in *Waiting For Godot',* Briege

Casey explains how she used the text of *Godot* as a teaching tool at the Dublin hospital where she worked, to explore the nature of symbiosis and dementia in relationships between the elderly. Casey is keen to avoid oversimplification of the themes or characters but argues that the play presents, 'a rich, complex and compelling accurate portrayal of a human being navigating the experience of cognitive decline […] from the beginning, Estragon's mental vulnerability and Vladimir's labour of love are presented […] (2017:3). She goes on to quote Al Alvarez who argues that, 'perhaps Estragon's forgetfulness is the cement binding the relationship together'(2017:3). What is more one might argue, forgetfulness not only binds them to one another but also to the space. In Beckett's redefining of the domestic there is no attic or basement in which the anxiety of the unseen can fester, instead the disquiet lives within the unknown destination of the road itself. Vladimir and Estragon's home is each other and manifests itself in the routines they create between them.

However, this definition of home does not exclude the presence of some physical markers that denote a boundary. The shoe in *Eleutheria*, which became a talisman of Victor's impotence,[4] is carried into *Godot* when it comes to life in the form of a boot, but like the shoe it fails to fulfil expectations. In an outdoor setting one might think that the boot, however uncomfortable, might serve a more practical use. Beckett's decision to have it placed at the front of the stage, quite early on in the play serves a double, albeit somewhat contradictory function by recalling the custom of taking ones shoes off at the door while simultaneously signifying the impossibility of leaving. The apparent failure of such a commonplace object to fulfil its most basic function not only demarcates the boundary of their domestic space but, when Estragon fails to recognise the boots as his own, also reinforces the idea of the home as an uncertain arena. When Estragon says 'I'm leaving them there … another will come, just as …as …as me, but with smaller feet, and they'll make him happy' (Beckett 1965:52), it reveals the way both language and action further explore the notion; that one can be alienated by the objects that should symbolise domestic comfort while at the same time acknowledging the potential comfort they could bring to another, whose needs are almost, but not quite, identical to one's own. The sense of home as a space in which one can achieve satisfaction of any kind

[4] Each time Victor attempted to escape the confines of his room by breaking the window using his shoe, the window would immediately be repaired. In Act II and again in Act III, when Victor uses a shoe to break his window. The shoe should present a possibility of actual freedom: the ability to walk away from his situation or perhaps to shatter the window of his room, but both seem to represent multiple failures. These failures do not come as a surprise to Victor or to the audience. The shoe and the window no longer represent themselves, they are conduits of Victor's own inaction and rather than objects that are anchored to the world outside of the stage, they have become 'things' facilitating the dramatic reality of the situation. As Bill Brown elucidates in his essay *Thing Theory,* "We begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us […]The story of objects asserting themselves as things … is the story of a changed relation to the human subject" (2001:4).

doesn't seem to exist. Instead, the Beckettian home is a more realistic space, one which acknowledges that the closest these characters may come to reconcilement is being resigned to their situation and accepting that uncertainty and dissatisfaction are an inescapable part of existence. Having explored Beckett's dramaturgy of re-defining the domestic in the contexts of crisis and displacement familiar to him as both author and director, this next part of the chapter moves to explore how more contemporary productions have re-interepreted *Godot's* landscape in relation to their own contexts of crisis. These performances are not explored in chronological order, but start with the Irish border performance in 2018 because the context of this performance was a powerful motivator for the exploration of home in this thesis. This is then followed by a production in Canary Wharf that engages with the legacies of the the 2007/8 financial crash before concluding with *Godot* in Sarajevo, a performance that asserts the way Beckett's work resonates with situations of war, hunger and survival while bringing the reader full circle in terms of Beckett's own war time experiences and contexts.

Beckett and Ireland

When thinking about *Godot* as engaging with the redefinition of home it may also be useful to consider how these ideas can be considered part of a wider dialogue that links Beckett's depiction of domestic alienation within his theatrical work, not only as a response to the displacement of war and its aftermath, but also as a reflection of his own complicated relationship with his homeland. In his paper '"Seventy miles away according to your Longman": The Exile's Gaze in Early Beckett', Feargal Whelan explores the way Beckett's fractious relationship with Ireland impacted on his depictions of the landscape within his novels and theatre. Whelan argues this relationship was partly a result of the way Ireland was attempting to represent itself on the international stage, but was also very personal. He begins with a poignant summation of Beckett's conundrum from a letter he wrote to Adam Tar on his last visit to Ireland in 1968, for a funeral, in which he wrote, 'The short stay in Ireland was very moving. Wicklow mountains more beautiful than ever. I understood even better than before, the need to stay the need to return, and was glad to get out' (Letters IV, 123n3). Whelan goes on to explain that,

> In declaring the paradoxical and competing emotions which he consistently felt in relation to Ireland he was rehearsing a feeling towards the country which emerged at the very beginning of his writing, and which persisted to its very end. This is the feeling

> of attraction and repulsion which the idea of Ireland, particularly embodied in the landscape of Ireland evoked in him. The landscape of his youth, the mountains, the bay the piers, the gorse, the bog […] all of which never left him, which he described to James Knowlson as being 'a bit of an obsession', emerge consistently throughout the works, whether or not they are precisely identified, they are gazed at, or from, with that same sense of ambiguous attraction and repulsion which Beckett asserts in this letter. (2018:2)

Beckett's self-imposed exile from his homeland and the ensuing struggle between his longing to return and desire to escape, creates another layer in our reading of the reimagining of the domestic in *Godot*. It can be argued that the concept of 'home' within the play reimagines traditional representations and expectations of home because his own conception of his homeland was entwined with a notion of failure and disappointment that nevertheless could not eradicate the desire to place the Irish landscape at the heart of his writing. If his wider conception of homeland was fraught with such conflicting feelings it seems natural that Beckett's depictions of the homestead should also be imbued with a reciprocity of ambivalence and desire that emerge in his work.

There is no doubt that the sense of uncertainty that is present in the landscape has been key to the universality of *Godot's* international appeal. However, what this chapter hopes to evaluate is whether *Godot's* continued relevance can actively be re-asserted as a result of the way in which, in the later part of the 20th century, the neutrality of the landscape was knowingly compromised by inserting the production into socio-politically charged spaces. For Peter Hall, who directed the British premiere in 1955, 'the most important aspect of the setting is its neutrality; it provides an empty space, neither historically conditioned nor socially appropriated […] and becomes a metaphor for the whole uncertainty within which Vladimir and Estragon flounder' (Bradby 2001:34). In the case studies that follow, the productions hinge on directors compromising the neutrality that Hall values, by designing and staging productions that are aesthetically attuned to the social and political contexts in which they are staged, but the reward in doing so is to provoke dramatic and personal responses as they challenge our understanding of home and homeland.

The first of the case studies explores the way the physical space within and around the production can be engaged as an active participant. What is more, it draws us back to Beckett's own relationship with his homeland through the production's wider context as part of the Happy Days Enniskillen International Beckett Festival conceived by Sean Doran and his

creative partner Liam Browne. The production – a staged, dramatic reading of the play billed as *Walking for Waiting for Godot* – was performed in the summer of 2018, in conjunction with Arts Over Borders and The Corn Exchange Theatre, based in Dublin, and took place along the Irish–Northern Irish border. The modern context of the staging in the wake of the Brexit vote is the key context to assert, however, it is also interesting to think about the space in the context of Beckett's relationship with his home and homeland since Enniskillen was where Beckett spent his formative secondary school years at Portora Royal School, coinciding with the Irish War of Independence. This production is included because of its pertinence to discussions around site-responsive stagings that compromise the neutrality of the performative space drawing together current discussions about the nature of home and homeland that resonate with Beckett's complicated feelings about home as a writer in exile.

According to their programme information, the intention of Arts Over Borders in conjunction with The Corn Exchange Theatre was to 'culturally occupy the border with a quintessentially Irish play on the last *Happy Days* festival before Brexit' (Arts Over Borders 2018:10). What Arts Over Borders succeeded in doing was to create an experience in which the journey to the reading was just as powerful as the play itself, as space and the text became intertwined in the body of the audience through the phenomenologisation of the performance space. This first case study, as with a number of others, draws upon a personal phenomenological reading of the play alongside the critical framework. The experience of the production began with an early morning meeting in the Enniskillen Castle Museum car park at 8am. The participants/audience were to be taken by bus to the foot of the mountain that we would then proceed to climb, following the invisible line of the border between us and the Republic. When the bus rumbled to a halt at a crossroads, amid the rolling hills and far from any town or village, we began our walk up a dirt track, muddied and water-logged at times, stones and gravel punctuating our steps. It was a steady climb at first through paths that were narrow and inhospitable. Nettles and briars spilled onto the paths, forcing us to concentrate only on the road beneath our feet. Then the road widened into a boggy field, the space opened up and the beauty of the hills around us suddenly became apparent. The view as we climbed was breath-taking but desolate. We paused to look down into the valley below that led us up and up, tracing a border that had no marker. The moment at which one tuft of grass turned from Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland remained invisible to the eye of the traveller. As we began the journey up the mountain we were encouraged to pair up in the spirit of the play; those of us who had come alone, like myself, found ourselves looking around and moving towards a companion. Mine turned out to be an academic and writer, a fascinating woman who

had spent her life trying to address the needs of those who were most vulnerable and overlooked in society and who wrote short stories. These may seem like immaterial details but in fact they are integral to the relevance of the production and the way in which the engagement of the land sought to embody the themes of the play and engage the bodies of the participants in reflecting the experiences of the characters. The beauty of the landscape of *Godot* is that, 'the emptying of the space enables a construction of an open theatrical architecture that can accommodate layers of diverse historical and cultural references, and is a dynamic inter-corporeal space where the elements of the set […] are intimately connected with the corporeal struggles of the characters' (McMullan 2008:3). For a few hours the audience members were at the mercy of the elements and the landscape, forging conversation and friendships. Alienated and (temporarily) dispossessed, carrying nothing but ourselves and some rations, in an unknown landscape, the conversations about the land and the journey that we were on and that had brought us all by chance to this place and the production illustrated how the idea of home is negotiated through the way in which we inevitably resort to finding comfort in the unfamiliar. In this way, we participated in conferring a temporal domesticity on the time that we were thrown together – through sharing our stories and food, and the act of supporting one another both mentally and physically – that echoed the behaviours of the characters in the play.

The director's decision to make the border integral to the production, by making the audience walk along it, forced us to seek it out. The border only existed in the eye of the beholder, each eye picked out a tuft of grass demarcating the arbitrary line and for the length of our journey, absorbing and carrying it along inside ourselves. When we reached the top, the summit was breathtaking and vast, the wind cold and the sky tumultuous. The grey metal branches of Anthony Gormley's tree, cold and bare, stood steadfast and proud and incongruous. It drew us to its uncompromising gaze while remaining just out of reach in the grassland. Once seated on the border, we could take in the landscape: the Cuilcagh mountain in the distance and a row of lush green trees, framing Gormley's tree. Looking towards Gormley's sculpture set against the backdrop of the Republic, we noticed that all around us were smaller, real trees, bent against the elements, perhaps more fitting natural candidates for the job. However, Gormley's metal construct, with its hard edges and nuts and bolts, imitating nature without the possibility of passing as such, encapsulated the madness of what Brexit could represent without

a need for words. Its materiality resonated with the absurdity of needless human intervention in a tranquil landscape that has flourished since the end of the Troubles[5].

Both the walk along the border and the material resonance of Gormley's tree were the most poignant illustration and empirical manifestation of the moment at which the notion of the home becomes synonymous both with homeland and with the individual. It was a bold reminder that many of the UK politicians in the Brexit debate discussing the possibility of enforcing a 'hard border' simply had no appreciation of how nonsensical and destructive it would be. To consider the space phenomenologically revealed that marking the land indelibly, through the use of a physical border, would in fact mutilate the daily routines of the people whose lives depend on freedom of movement and whose homes and farmland may be quite literally cut in half.

By locating the country road in a landscape under dispute, the production enabled the audience to gain a physical, embodied and phenomenological understanding of the way discussions about land also inevitably raise questions about home. Perhaps most importantly, the production offered another means by which the space could acknowledge those within it, by entering into a dialogue with the representation of domesticity and dispossession in *Godot* through the engagement of this particular landscape by bringing to the forefront the notion of embodied space and the way in which home can never be defined by the boundaries of a house,

> [P]laces belong to our bodies and our bodies belong to these places. We learn how to orientate and re-orientate ourselves in relation to them and form internalized representations of them (cognitive maps) which play a powerful role in how we perceive them, and which in turn become articulated through a somatic nexus. So what is in front of me, and behind me, above and below me, to the right and to the left, extends through my lived body. (Tilley 2004:26)

It also revealed the potential power of site responsive theatre to engage with and materialise the border and in doing so to understand experientially the reality of the day to day domesticity that makes up the survival and existence of those people living on and around the border that

[5] Ireland was portioned in 2021 with 6 counties constitututing Northern Ireland, ensuring a Protestant majority, and 26 counties constituting initially the Irish Free State, and, in 1948, the Republic of Ireland. This division of the Island of Ireland contributed to a protracted period of violence and political and religious friction: 'Between 1969 and 2007 the "Troubles", as the conflict would become euphemistically known, claimed the lives of around 3,700 people, with over ten times as many injured in countless bomb and gun attacks' (Edwards 2023: 5). The visible security checkpoints along the border were dismantled in 1998 in accordance with the Good Friday Agreement of that year.

was once again being threatened because the unmarked space was in danger of being delineated: a physical barrier established by a 'foreign' body of government officials that would re-open an old wound upon the landscape and leave a lasting scar across the land and people that were still in the process of healing from the history of violence.

The reading of the play began with another walk, this time that of the characters Estragon and Vladimir as they came into view along the road that we had just arrived from ourselves. At first the fact that the actors were holding scripts seemed jarring and at odds with the landscape, but their skill lay in almost immediately allowing us to suspend our disbelief; without props, the words and the voices - a medley of Northern Irish, English and Dublin accents - refocused us on the text. As I found out later, they had had only one rehearsed reading prior to the performance. It was almost impossible to believe, given their natural embodiment of the characters and the chemistry of the easy, playful repartee between Andrew Bennett and David Pearse's Didi and Gogo. The gamble of this audacious approach paid off, and in the context of the space, the words that I and many others in the audience had heard so many times took on a fresh resonance. When in Act 1, Estragon asked Vladimir if they'd 'lost their rights' and Vladimir replied 'we got rid of them' (Beckett 2006:20), it immediately called to mind the double-edged sword of democracy. Ned Dennehy's Pozzo was magnificent, sweeping into view wearing what once must have been a luxurious gentleman's gown that conjured the faded glory of the English landowner and delivering a performance that was at once tragic and captivating. His references to 'my land' and the 'disgrace' of the road being 'free to all' (Beckett 2006:24) left a chill in the air at the implication of what might be if Pozzo were to get his way. Then in the final act when the boy reappeared and we heard the insistent bleats of Godot's sheep and goats ringing through the valley and the hills, the collusion between art and nature was almost too much, the absence of props allowed Ryan's subtle and evocative direction to shine and to focus us on what was really important: the words, the men and the space.

If we interpret the domestic in *Godot* as a way of referring to the everyday and the basic requirements of day to day existence then the performance was effective in communicating the delicate balance that is required for communities and individuals to sustain themselves and to engage the audience with the disruption and panic that arises if the most basic human needs of those on the borderlands are compromised. The border itself became phenomenologised and in doing so it seemed to be given a voice with which to elucidate the contemporary human anxieties and political concerns of those who lived on or around it through the medium of the performance. The invisible border was given a physical manifestation through the acknowledgment of its invisibility and so became visible through the actualisation of the

performance. It supports McMullan's argument that 'Beckett's theatre […] stages a vision that, while rooted in the phenomenological present, encourages an expanded perception which places the human in the frame of a dysfunctional creation including the human, animal [and] vegetable […] but also in a temporal frame that layers the present with fragments of memory and history, both recent and ancient' (McMullan 2008:1). It struck me that *Godot* is often staged in moments of crisis because it is a play about the everyday, about home, homelessness, and dispossession. It is about the way that being seen and acknowledged is integral to the way we feel valued. For the people living at and around the border, the very least they deserve is for those in power to understand that they have made their lives there, that the land they occupy, in which they were thrown into existence, is one that they are tied to either inevitably or inextricably.

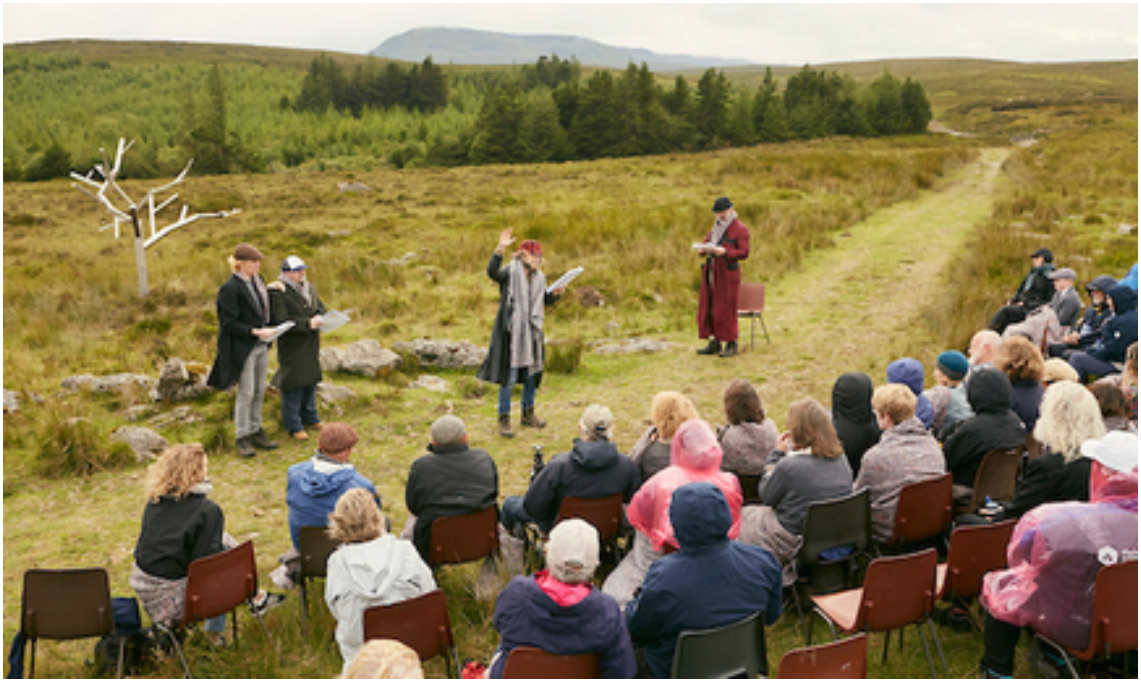

Figure 1: Walking for Waiting for Godot, Arts Over Borders, Enniskillen 2017, Actors: Andrew Bennett as Vladimir, David Pearse as Estragon, Alex Murphy as Lucky and Ned Dennehy as Pozzo, Copyright Matthew Andrews

By reinserting *Godot* into the Irish borderlands, this reading of *Walking for Waiting for Godot* explored the way 'home' can be conjured not only without its physical object, but even without the objects and rituals of domesticity. Instead, there is an urgency of belonging that is evoked by agitating the land, the stone, the grass and the soil, to assert that home is where we are when we engage the ground beneath our feet, where we stop and sit, landscapes we know

like our own bodies. Despite Peter Hall's insistence that the landscape of *Godot* is contingent on its neutrality, the most exciting productions seem to suggest that 'home' can never truly be neutral, because there is too much at stake in the relationships, the family and community and places that we invest and commit to. People can never identify with the neutral because we are phenomenological beings – the lived body encounters the world through a multiplicity of contexts that are deeply rooted in shared experiences that we interpret and absorb in uniquely personal ways.

Embodying Failure Through Costume

If Arts Over Borders and The Corn Exchange presented a way of engaging the landscape in a discussion around home and dispossession that resonated with the plight of the protagonists, then situating the following production in the context of the global economic crash that occurred in 2007/2008 with the collapse of Lehman Brothers continues those conversations, this time activating the dramatic space through costume and architecture.

Miracle Theatre's small outdoor production of *Godot* in Jubilee Park, Canary Wharf, in 2013 is another example of the way the performative space can be transformative in the reappraisal of the work, not only exploring ideas about dispossession in the midst of a financial district in crisis but by utilising costume to express the juxtaposition between appearance and reality. The setting for the performance, where the peaks of glass rise up out of the East End, just outside of the city of London, mark out a kind of city in itself. The square is penned in on all sides by security barriers and guards that monitor vehicles coming in and out. It is the heart of the banking district, a testament to the power of money and the continued faith that capitalism will prevail. In 2013, the banks were still trying to steady their feet in the wake of the Lehman Brother's collapse and that of Northern Rock and Royal Bank of Scotland which were part of the aftershocks of the financial crisis. The square is reflective of the isolation and detachment of the workers who are encouraged to not only work but shop and eat within the square, able to purchase anything from diamonds to sandwiches, provided with landscaped park areas, nestled between the banks, all under the watchful eyes of the looming towers.

Al and Jude Munden's design of the performance was notable for the way the boundary between stage space and audience was not clearly delineated, which drew both the action and the buildings closer. While *Godot* at the border had reflected on the nature of home as symbiotic with the homeland, highlighting the way domestic stability could be threatened by political uncertainty, performing the play in a financial district focused on the way domesticity, security

and by extension the home (particularly in situations as precarious as those depicted in the play) are predicated by fiscal stability. It fueled the frisson between the performance space and the environment, reflective of what scenographer Edward Gordon Craig calls 'architecture as scenography', which intends and imagines 'architectural space to be harnessed to make a key contribution to the dramatic action in such a way that the audience would be enfolded and thoroughly implicated in the experience' (McKinney and Butterworth 2009:116). The audience in the Wharf may have been acutely aware that their expensive suits and fancy picnics may have made them outwardly different from the characters, but what the production sought to recognise through its wardrobe was that this distinction could not provide an intellectual refuge or physical boundary that was impenetrable or unshakeable. In their analysis of costume as stage scenography, McKinney and Butterworth explain that,

> [C]lothing on stage can produce additional signs to those that operate in social life. An object appears on stage both as the object itself and as a sign of the dramatic situation or fictional space […] stage depiction goes beyond everyday life by isolating or distilling aspects of our culture and reflecting them back: Theatre, in other words, reflects the reality of the culture in which it originates in a double sense of the word: it depicts that reality and presents it in such a depiction for reflective thought. Clothing has a significant role in the construction of social meaning and personal identity in everyday life. (2009:156)

In the original production costume and clothing were dictated by the post-war economy and at the 1953 Paris premiere, director Roger Blin's budget was small and most of the costumes were scavenged or borrowed. However, Pozzo's costume was clean and new and gave the impression of a 'well to do English country squire'. Prior to production the only explicit instruction that Blin had received from Beckett regarding costume was that all four characters should wear bowler hats. However, post-production Beckett had expressed his unhappiness about the stark contrast in the costumes of Pozzo and Lucky. 'The clear class differentiation was one of the aspects where Beckett felt that Blin had pushed his interpretation too far, and in his own production (22 years later at the Schiller Theatre in Berlin) he costumed them in a more similar style and suggested a greater interdependence between them' (Bradby 2001:62). This reading of The Miracle Theatre's production of *Godot* immersed itself in the narrative of socio-economic failure to be part of the fabric of the theatrical landscape through both context of the

setting and costume. True to Beckett's vision, Pozzo and Lucky were dressed in clothes that at first glance seemed similar.

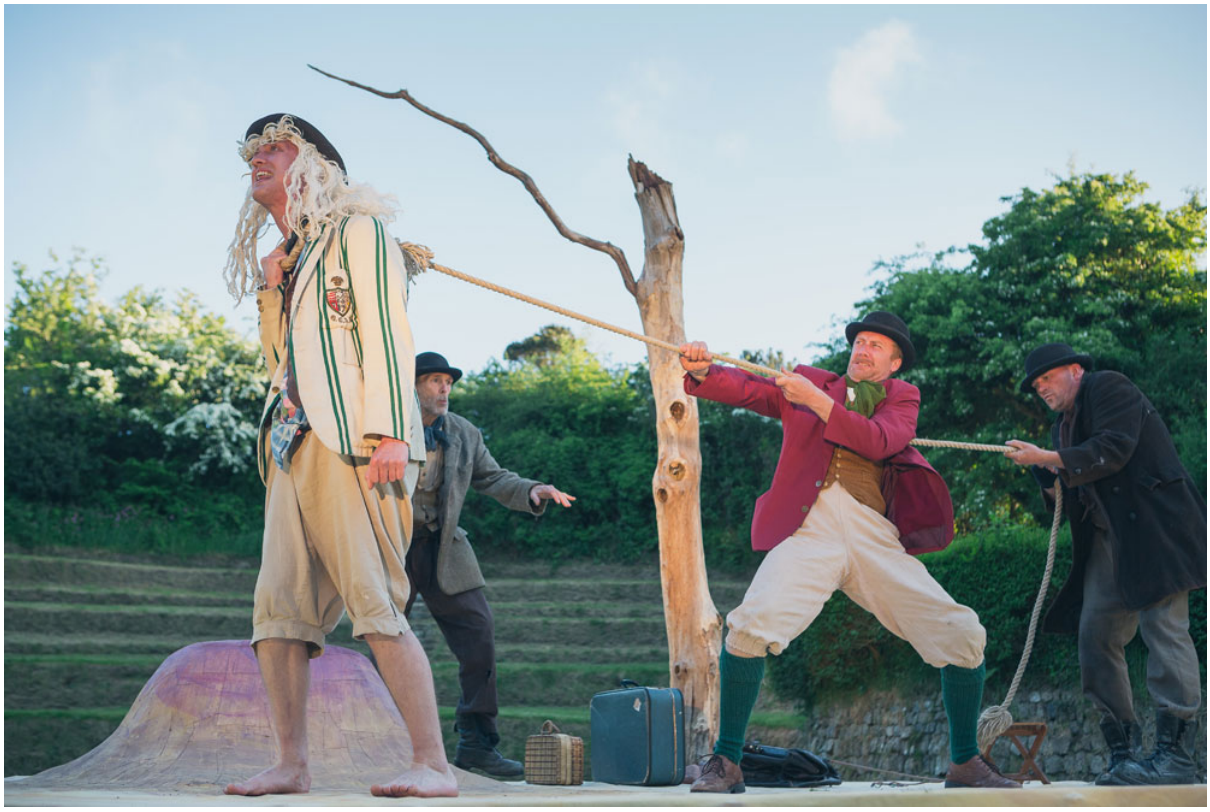

Figure 2:Waiting for Godot, Director Bill Scott, Designers Al and Jude Munden, Actors: Angus Brown Steve Jacobs, Ben Dyson and Ciaran Clarke, Miracle Theatre, Canary Wharf London, 2013Copyright Miracle Theatre

Pozzo's costume had more sartorial cohesion, the blazer of a country gent, with waistcoat, necktie and white shirt and trousers tucked into riding boots that evoke the style of an English planter at home on the estate, dressed for riding, while Lucky's costume straddled the delicate balance between the city worker and the financial markets absurdly; a Hawaiian shirt combined with a boating jacket. His shirt was the symbol of the carefree, while the boating jacket aped the look of a public-school uniform with its house colours and stripes. Their combination, out of context on either a beach or a boat race and paired with bare feet rather than deck shoes or flip-flops meant the outfit lent Lucky the chaotic look of one who had little control or care over how they were perceived. In the context of the financial turmoil in recent years, the audience might have been more sensitively attuned to the notion that the line between master and servant, financial success or unemployment, was subject to market forces beyond the control of the individual and that, out of context, the coded signs of clothing seemed a cry for help. In Lucky's case domesticity was an act of servitude and compliance experienced through enslavement, as his body physically bore the trappings of domesticity for Pozzo without even

the security of servitude as his fragile sense of belonging, of being at home with Pozzo, was threatened by Pozzo's wish to sell him.

Read in this way, Lucky's outfit become a parody of capitalist success, as Andrew Sofer points out, 'the most resonant props cement their identity through metonymy and metaphor' (2003:21). As a result, the cohesive, sartorial success that one might relate either to the shirt or the jacket become distorted when combined with his bare feet. The only cohesion is through the embodiment of Lucky, which reveals the way the 'the stage object must be "triggered" by an actor in order to become a prop' (2003:12). This de-familiarisation of the material symbols of success, unified in the body of a man who is enslaved and then becomes 'dumb' is one which would have a particularly tragi-comic resonance in the setting of Canary Wharf, where a single bad deal can make or break a career. By re-contextualising the country road as a landscaped path within the city and the mound as a carefully sculpted lump of earth, Miracle Theatre invited the audience, largely made up of bank workers and their friends, to see *Godot* from the perspective of those who cross the mound daily. Like the characters, the audience are tied to the spot, a space in which the drama unfolds in the theatre of the financial markets that determine the country's fate and where employees are forced to return day after day until they are asked to leave, as so many were following the crash, with their possessions in boxes. Instead of Godot, they wait for retirement or some other immeasurable point after which they will be released from their bonds. So far, all the case studies have observed the effect of economic privation and political precarity on the interpretation of domestic security. The final production continues to frame uncertain socio-economic contexts as integral to discussions around home in *Godot,* as cruelty and fear become embedded in the mise en scene and dispossession and homelessness occur through the brutal forces of war and the chaos that ensues.

Home Under Siege

Over the course of this chapter *Godot* has been explored in relation to its reimagining of the domestic and the way in which certain productions engage the audience with notions of identity relating to their own renegotiation of what it means to be at home in a wider sense. In the first case study this was linked with Beckett's own relationship with Ireland that resonated with the current reading of the play in the context of Brexit. This fractured relationship with home in the context of personal and political upheaval or turmoil is valuable to the reading of home across the chapter. The following reading of *Godot* in Sarajevo in 1993 directed by Susan Sontag and designed by Ognjenka Finci, explores the resonances and interpretations that are

evoked when the play was produced during the Bosnian War that led to a prolonged blockade of the city, known as the Siege of Sarajevo. The wider context of home in Sontag's production adds another layer to the discussion around the safety of home and the domestic rituals of the play that were part of the reality of those involved in the production as well as the audience who were living through an extraordinary re-imagining of domestic life themselves. Their city remained besieged for 3 years, 10 months, 3 weeks and 3 days, during which time vital services were cut off for hundreds of thousands of people and terror reigned as the people waited, not knowing when or how they would be liberated. Homes and homeland were quite literally being destroyed, and domesticity forcibly reimagined in the context of violence and fear.

Unlike the previous case studies, in Sarajevo the play was staged within a traditional theatre space – The National Youth Theatre – but in fact utilising a traditional theatre was just as fundamental to this staging as involving the border in *Walking for Waiting for Godot*. In her own words, Sontag 'was not under the illusion that going to Sarajevo to direct a play would make [her] useful in the way [she] could be if [she] were a doctor or a water systems engineer […] but it was the only one of the three things that [she could do] […]which yields something that would only exist in Sarajevo, that would be made and consumed there' (1993:1). By attempting to maintain the cultural normality of domestic routine that included theatre, Sontag's *Godot* asks us to consider the act of maintaining the everyday in the extraordinary circumstances of war as an act of political defiance. The production provides a unique insight into the way individuals attempt to navigate the day to day in order to survive, so that creating a home in a landscape that is inhospitable came to resonate with the war-stricken audience that attended the production. Their very presence at the performance an attempt on the part of the audience to preserve and maintain the domestic intimacy of existence in the most extreme circumstances. The play itself attracted a huge amount of attention from the worlds' media, but was in fact part of a cultural movement within the context of the siege that attempted to defy the constraints of their situation, retaining some element of domestic autonomy by subverting the politics of war through maintaining their cultural life. During the war years theatre became part of what was later described as a kind of 'cultural resistance', becoming known as 'theatre under siege'. This attempt to make theatre was a form of resistance on several levels,

> [A] resistance to attack, to death, to siege, to chaos. These atrocities as well as the hope that the war would stop at any moment were part of everyday life. Returning to work in the theatre seemed the only option for the actors, the only reasonable choice. The

> cultural life of the city and the life during the siege were unfolding at the same time. (Abazović 2015:39)

Dina Abazović who experienced the war first hand and completed her 2015 dissertation 'Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo 1993, Susan Sontag's war production of Samuel Beckett's play' at the University of Stravanger, Norway, is a key primary source alongside my own viewing of the filmed production, shown at the University of Reading (2013) as well as media accounts and Sontag's own writing on the performance.

One of the reasons for choosing this production as a case study was because of the way elements of the scenography were able to resonate so deeply with those in the audience in the context of the risky day to day existence of city life during wartime. As hardship compelled citizens to try and replicate or manufacture everyday household items that the war had rendered unavailable, it could be argued that the very act of doing so forced the people of the city into 'staging' a version of the precarious domestic existence in their own homes out of necessity:

> Being inventive was a task that people were forced to engage in as a part of everyday survival. The absence of some simple objects that can be found in every household posed a big problem for families during the war. Handmade stoves for heating and cooking, improvised lamps, beds, to name a few, are today exhibited in the Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as an example of what the standard kitchen or living room looked like during the war in Sarajevo […] Some of these objects now look like an art installation or scenography. (Abazović 2015:75)

The most obvious manifestation of this mirroring in the lives of the residents and their cultural life was in the way the shortage of food was presented on the stage. In *Vibrant Matter*, Bennett considers the material agency of food from the Nietzschean perspective, 'edible matter appears as a powerful agent, as stuff that modifies the human matter with which it comes into contact […] the efficacy of a food will vary […] depending on the other foods in the diet, the particular human body that takes them in, and the culture or nation in which the diet is consumed' (Bennett 2010:45). This final point is particularly interesting when we consider the Sarajevo production, the role of food within the 'assemblage' is that of a key player. The preparation and sharing of food is perhaps one of the most clearly defined actions of the domestic sphere and the rituals and ideas around food constitute a powerful social bond.

The sharing of food and the choice between carrot or turnip that Estragon is given by Vladimir would have been a painful parallel of the audiences' situation, where macaroni or rice were the most readily available foods. Like the chicken in Pozzo's basket, meat was a luxury not afforded to them; the only option for such came in the form of canned beef whose origin and quality were so dubious that it was joked not even cats and dogs wished to consume it (Abazović 2015:90). There are painful parallels in the situation in Sarajevo with the malnutrition and desperation that Beckett witnessed first hand during and after the war which would have been fresh in his mind while writing *Godot*, just three years after the Holocaust and liberation of the concentration camps. In his essay on 'The Aesthetics of Genocide' Jonathan Kemp asks,

> Suppose, for a moment, that we take Adorno's famous remark about the barbarism of post-Auschwitz poetry not simply as a chronological marker or end-point, an 'after-which' something follows […] suppose we take it not, that is, as a purely temporal expression of something passed [but] as an 'after-which' that attempts to name the non-identical by marking it with an aesthetic of negation, genocide, annihilation; an aesthetic, that is, which takes Auschwitz as its greatest influence; not just its apotheosis. (2005:2)

The living conditions during the genocide and ethnic cleansing that defined the war in Sarajevo less than 50 years after the the Holocaust lends a chilling credence to Kemp's observation and highlights the link between food, home and survival not only as means of sustenance but as a means of resistance, preserving identity through a connection to the domestic everyday. This resonance is articulated in Vijay Agnew's collection of essays *Diaspora, Memory and Identity: A Search For Home,* writer Malene Kadar details the way in which the memory of special meals was documented in the camps in Recipe books or *Kochbuchs.* These material documents trace the importance of sharing food and the essential domestic rituals of cooking and eating as a means of manifesting home through interconnection even in the gravest of personal situations as,

> Starving, literate Jewish women exchanged recipes in the in the camps at great personal risk and they sometimes 'published' these recipes in collections using meagre found camp materials […] which were retrieved from trash cans […] Elizabeth Raab's Récepték is one such example […] Recipes for Hungarian delicacies […] reproduced

when the writers were being starved represent an act of defiance and spiritual revolt and ensure Raab's link to home and hearth. (Kadar 2005:97)

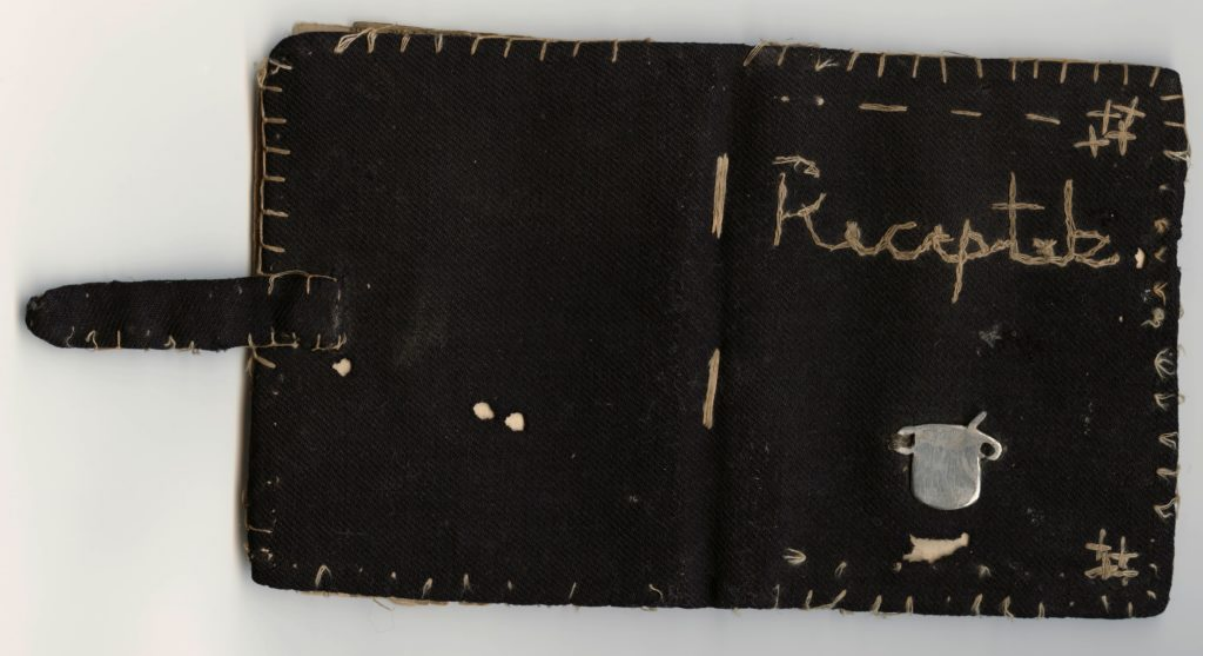

Figure 3: Holocaust survivor Elisabeth Raab Yanowski's cookbook Receptek, Copyright Thelma Rosner – Loop Gallery Toronto

The legacy of the Holocaust that had deep resonances with the ethnic cleansing and genocide in Sarajevo was not only reflected in the bonding aspects of sharing food but also illustrated in the way desperation caused by food shortage and starvation can lead to selfishness or even cruelty. In Act I Estragon's hunger leads him to bargain for Pozzo's discarded bones, even though he is depriving Lucky of what is rightfully his,

Estragon: (Timidly.) Please, sir …
Pozzo: What is it, my good man?
Estragon: Er … you've finished with the ... er… you don't need the … er… bones sir?
Vladimir (Scandalised.) You couldn't have waited?
Pozzo: […] Personally I do not need them any more […] But …[…] in theory the bones Go to the carrier […]

(Beckett 2006: 27)

Estragon barely waits for an answer and Lucky's silence is taken as assent before he darts towards them gnawing on the bones with delight. When Pozzo returns blind in Act II Estragon

suggests they refuse to help Pozzo without receiving food in exchange. This reveals his calculating nature, borne of hunger, 'We should ask him for the bone first. Then if he refuses we'll leave him there' (Beckett 1965: 78). This may be one of the many reasons there is no second act in Sontag's production as she offers, 'Perhaps I felt that the despair of Act I was enough for the Sarajevo audience […] (Sontag 1994b: 97). The rituals of the everyday that were brutualised by the violence of genocide were not only recalled by through the depiction of hunger but also to be found woven into the fabric of the play. The costumes of the characters which in previous productions recalled Irish colonial history through the clothing of Pozzo, now became something even more sinister, 'In Beckett's interplay of substitutions, where the body takes on multiple guises, the interface between body and costume becomes blurred. Beckett uses costume to materialize the remnants of history […]' (McMullan 2008:8). Sontag and Finci chose striped clothing for the characters, a deliberate decision to echo the clothing of prisoners and more specifically the prisoner uniforms worn by those in the Nazi concentration camps during the Second World War. The clothing worn by the characters does not simply become defamiliarized but dehumanised, they 'reincarnate the remains of history […] an exchange of flesh Merleau-Ponty might say between the embodied human world and the world of things' (McMullan 2008:9). The actors within the production represented a range of ethnicities, though not as a result of a selective process on the part of the director who was at pains to stress that 'the population of Sarajevo is so mixed […] it would be hard to assemble any kind of 'group' in which all three 'ethnic' groups are not represented – and I never inquired what anyone was […]'(Sontag 1993:3). The costumes went beyond the materiality of their task in the moment, recalling the horror of the Holocaust through their stripes and also becoming a portal into what Jane Bennett describes as an 'agency of assemblages' (2010:20) that transcends the 20th century. In her fascinating essay 'Reading Prisoner Uniforms: The Concentration Camp Prisoner Uniform as a Primary Source for Historical Research', Lizou Fenyvesi explains,

> In European visual cultures, stripes have a long association with loss of freedom and their pejorative meaning goes back hundreds of years…This strange aversion to stripes is probably due to a faulty translation of a passage […] in Leviticus, Chapter 19, verse 19, and it deals with forbidden mixtures. For example, it states that that it is forbidden to mix linen and wool in the same fabric […] The church interpreted this as forbidding the juxtaposition of two different colours […] in the 13th century [the pope] instituted a general ban against the wearing of stripes by the clergy. At about the same time, the

> laws of Saxony […] imposed the wearing of stripes on prostitutes, serfs and those condemned as criminals […]. (2006:1)

The bodies of the actors, malnourished and half-starved, embodied a phenomenological reality that means we cannot try to intellectualise the dramatic reality of the world of the play without first asserting the physical actuality represented by the context of their situation. Sontag describes how the actors arrived to rehearsal exhausted, they had usually spent hours queuing for water which they had to carry in heavy containers up several flights of stairs; they were so weakened and underweight from lack of food and the conditions in which they were surviving that as soon as she stopped the rehearsal they would 'instantly lie down on the stage' (1993:2). There are some critics who questioned the motivations of the production. This visible manifestation of the suffering may seem to some to question the ethics of presenting a play of this nature to exploit the predicament of those involved. In his work *Performing Ruins,* Simon Murray discusses the ethical quandry of staging of Beckett's work in crisis in relation to the term 'ruin porn' this critique is encapsulated he explains by the idea that the makers and consumers of work in certain situations are simply 'performing' sympathy and as a result 'nothing changes' and 'in depth examination' of the situation may be overlooked 'in favour of an easily […] manufactured gesture of compassion' (Murray 2020: 168) However, it seems patronising to those who participated both in the production and as the audience to reduce it to such, their choice must be respected. Sontag's role in the production was to facilitate a means by which the rich cultural heritage of the city could continue it was not produced for outsiders but for those within the city. Murray is clear that 'far from being "parachuted" in as a well-heeled New York intellectual, Sontag's Godot project only emerged after meeting with Sarajevan theatre director Haris Pašović […] producer of the play (Murray 2020: 169). Furthermore those who choose to write about it have a responsibility to ensure that their experience is not viewed as an experiment which gains authority or importance through academic analysis, but one through which we engage with the spirit of the play itself through its presentation. This is not to say that the discussions that arise should be dismissed, on the contrary these are a powerful marker of the way in which the legacy of the Holocaust has left an indelible stain on the landscape of human interaction.

Within the first few moments of watching the filmed footage[6] it is immediately apparent that although the play takes place inside a theatre, the combination of lighting and the two

[6] Shown at the University of Reading in 2013

levels of the set alongside the stage – there are three sets of Vladimirs and Estragons – creates a cramped cave-like space. Abazović paints a portrait of the situation in which the production takes place, 'the whole city was ravaged from shelling […] infrastructure was destroyed, power and telephone lines broken […] not a single building could be seen without holes in it […] wires hung from above, pipes stuck out from the asphalt. Burnt vehicles […] just stood in the streets […] snipers would open fire each and every time civilians attempted to cross the street […]' (Abazović 2015:49). This terror extended to all parts of civilian life and the theatre was no exception. Rehearsals had to take place in the dark and the actors had to stand close to one another in order to see. The scripts were carbon copies made from one master copy typed on a typewriter and the poor quality meant the actors found it difficult to even learn their lines because it was so hard to read them. 'Not only could they not read their scripts; unless standing face to face, they could barely see one another' (Sontag 1994:95).

This case study shows that war can have a physical impact on the stage space that refuses the oppositional dialectic of inside and outside as being clearly demarcated boundaries. Sontag's staging within a space that doesn't function as expected is all the more poignant because of the way the space that houses the theatre is no different to so many other spaces in the city. This offers a new way to think not only about the imagined space of the play, but the way in which setting and space work in a broader sense by considering Merleau-Ponty's assertion that 'space is not the setting (real or logical) in which things are arranged, but the means whereby the position of things becomes possible' (Merleau-Ponty 2003:284). The way the characters attempt to maintain their lives in the hostile landscape of the play is reflected in the production's attempt to familiarise the alien nature of a city at war. While rehearsals took place in darkness, the performance took place by candlelight that was occasionally illuminated further by torches held by the performers themselves. This use of candles and torches in lieu of professional stage lighting not only recalls the simplicity of the very first performance of *Godot* in Paris following the war, but summons and engages the phenomenological imagination by returning us to the physical object of the home and the spaces within the house that give rise to a primal response.

This response is perhaps best summed up by Bachelard in *Poetics* when he refers to the imagery used by Carl Jung to explain the fears that can inhabit parts of the home. These connections encourage exploration of the phenomenological repercussions of the lighting used in Sontag's production that have the effect of causing the theatre space to mimic an underground shelter or cellar space. Bachelard describes the cellar as the 'dark entity of the house, the one that partakes of the subterranean forces' (2014:39). In Sontag's production the

theatrical space attains a kind of symbiosis with the cellar. 'In the attic, fears are more easily rationalised. Whereas in the cellar […] rationalisation is less rapid and less clear; also it is never definitive […] In the cellar, darkness prevails both day and night and even when we are carrying a lighted candle, we see shadows dancing on the dark walls' (2014:40). In Sarajevo, the shadow dancing on the sheeted walls is the image of the tree. Like Gormley's sculpture on the border, the tree is stylised but, while Gormley's tree was corporeal, Sontag's shadow tree was disembodied. Its bold, sharp edges that symbolised nature served to replicate the urgency of the audience to maintain normality in the absence of such. There was no room for a physical structure on stage, the shadowy glimpse of the crude construction reminding the audience of their precarious position by asserting its agency through light and shadow rather than tangible materiality. Its existence becomes contingent on the interplay of light and darkness literally reflecting the way the theatrical space during war time no longer allows the audience the privilege to willingly suspend disbelief, but instead becomes an actualisation of the active decision to contend with the reality of their situation. The reality that they were living was one in which 'actors and spectators alike can be murdered or maimed by a sniper's bullet or a mortar shell on their way to and from the theatre; but then, that can happen to people in Sarajevo in their living rooms, while they sleep […] fetch something from their kitchens, or go out their front doors' (Sontag 1993:1). In this context against the backdrop of war, lighting in Sontag's production becomes an active agent, phenomenologically manifesting the psychological and physical terror of war but also symbolic of the persistence and courage of those determined to assert their right to establish a domesticity that is not defined by fear. Sontag's production reasserts the idea of home as a place and idea that is constantly under threat and is continually being made and unmade in order to survive. The negative dialectic of home creates a sense of uncertainty through an 'othering' of what should be familiar. In the world of war and disaster the cellar is no longer somewhere we avoid, but instead where we gather when fear itself is the architect of domesticity. In Sontag's production it is both fear and resilience that negotiate the border between inside and outside. The domestic has retreated into the cellar, mapped out by anxiety but equally by an attempt to reach outwards from the darkness. The violence that destroyed the bourgeois ideal of home fails to establish certainty and Beckett's redefinition of home and domesticity through ritual and relationships in *Waiting for Godot* does not aim to establish a supremacy of 'truth' but resides within multiplicity.

The postiting of home and homeland as a secure space is contingent on political and financial stability; and the possession of a physical object of the home established as the mark of privilege. Another layer to this discussion is to ask where *Godot* comes home and where

Godot feels most at home. What these case studies seem to suggest is that *Godot* feels most at home in the spaces where home has come under threat or is in dispute, drawing its dramatic potential from those spaces in which the performance becomes an act of defiance, with characters for whom domesticity is not something that is taken for granted but where the mundane details of the everyday are elevated into tiny monuments of survival.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the ways in which phenomenology can facilitate an understanding of how the lived body navigates the space around it. I have considered home as an extension of that body and the domestic as expressions of the body's need to use objects and habit and repetition to ensure survival. The analysis of these case studies has intended to illustrate the way a theatrical landscape can become intertwined with the phenomenological reality of the bodies of the audience and actors. The examples explored have exposed the way that in extreme circumstances like war, the landscape seems to wage its own war on the body, the very flesh that houses the individual leaving little room for refuge.

What all these productions serve to reinforce is that the landscape of *Godot* is the landscape of the margins, it is the hinterland, that bit that lies beyond the border, the fringe, the scrubland where only the hardy survive and only the desperate choose to wait. One could argue that while we may agree on one level with what Una Chaudhuri describes as the failed 'home-coming' plot of *Godot,* on another, one could suggest that if 'home' is about belonging, there are spaces in which *Godot* does in fact, come 'home'. It finds itself taking off its' boots and waiting in all those productions in which the space outside the performance is metaphorically indistinguishable from the space that denotes the 'stage'.

In the final scenes of the second act, Pozzo returns blind, stumbling and falling, grasping for help from those he spurned and dominated. The land which was once his no longer visible to him. It recalls the moment between the acts in *Eleutheria* when the Kraps' living room falls into the orchestra pit, burying the domestic interior in a dramatic gesture that occurs outside the audience's gaze and encasing it out of sight. As long as we continue to repeat the same mistakes we cannot hope to redefine home, instead we scrabble around beneath the stage, out of sight, searching for the broken furnishings that can no longer represent what they once did and hoping to make sense of those structures that no longer make sense. If home cannot be made outside or inside then we have no choice but to retreat, to move back down into the earth from which we came, making our homes in the 'grave' before the lights go out and it is 'night

once more' (Beckett 2006:83). This darkness leads the reader to *Endgame*, which marks a return to an interior space but one where, following the re-evaluation of how home maifests in *Godot*, through bodily interactions and rituals, the space of home has been radically destabilised and defamiliarized and although the interior exists, the boundaries are porous and precarious.

Chapter Two

Domestic Waste: Illness and Entrapment in Beckett's *Endgame*

The sense of life's brevity, darkness and confinement expressed through Pozzo's visceral image of the momentary gleam of light quickly overwhelmed by darkness offers a transition to *Endgame* that not only speaks to claustrophobia within the domestic space but also to the protagonist Hamm's inability to see. *Endgame* originally premiered in the French language as *Fin de partie* at the Royal Court Theatre, London, just four years after *Godot* in 1957, and, unlike Vladimir and Estragon who fantasise about refuge in Godot's loft, the characters in *Endgame* are already sheltering, contained within an interior, surrounded by an unknown landscape, marked by what seems to be the aftermath of disaster. *Endgame,* Grene argues 'begins where *Eleutheria* left off, with a comprehensively cleared stage featuring only the covered shapes of Hamm's chair and the two ashbins' (2014: 132). It continues Beckett's exploration of staging a vestigial domesticity, offering up fragments of lives no longer viable, in spaces that are dysfunctional and struggle to support their needs. If the notion of being compelled to wait endlessly for something that may or may not happen on the open road was the worst kind of purgatorial entrapment, then Beckett seeks to present us with an even more nightmarish possibility.

In *Endgame* the characters are bound to one another through familial obligation and servitude. The shelter in which they make their home doesn't fit within traditional ideas of what a house might constitute, nor do the characters occupy spaces in the ways we might expect. Not only are the characters under scrutiny for the duration of the play, there are no alternative spaces. The main character is blind and confined to a chair while his parents - who are only visible from the chest up - are left in adjoining bins. Their servant and adopted son cannot sit and does not rest during the duration of the play. Although we are told there is a kitchen, this space is never visible to the audience, nor does it fulfil its expected functions. The claustrophobia of the design and the action are reflected in the one act structure of the play. In *Endgame* the sense of terror created by declining health towards the end of *Godot* becomes embedded into the lives of the characters and the spaces they inhabit.

If home can be conjured through repetition, ritual and stasis in *Godot,* then in *Endgame* home is a space that bears the burden of bodies that are unable to move freely. The notion of confinement is echoed literally and structurally in the architecture of the shelter and in the ailing, ageing bodies and the objects that denote waste and failure. Home and body become

synonymous with ruin and illness. Written in the aftermath of the Second World War and in the early years of the Cold War, *Endgame,* evokes through a fragile interiority external landscapes that are born of the destruction of our natural surroundings. This reasserts the idea that the safety of home, especially as a shelter, is inextricably tied to the situation in the wider homeland, both socio-politically and environmentally. This chapter begins by investigating the origins of *Endgame* in relation to Beckett's dramaturgy, with a focus on objects and space through the lens of personal and global contexts. Written in domestic confinement during the lockdown of the UK due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the conceptualisation and writing of the chapter became unexpectedly intertwined with the phenomenological exploration of home through the lens of illness over 2020-21. The context of the pandemic is the backdrop to the textual examination of the play's setting and informs the reading of two case studies of the play in performance from 2019 and 2020 prior to the national lockdown and in the early days of the virus. These case studies draw on sociological and phenomenological discussions around domestic space and the nature of home as a means of unpicking the wider conversations about nation and homeland that reflect retrospectively on how the well-being of the nation can impact on how we engage with private domestic spaces and institutional places of care in the context of illness and old age. The performance analysis of this chapter focuses on two key productions in detail that were seen before the lockdown began: Pan Pan's staging at The Project Arts Centre in Dublin in December 2019, designed by Aedín Cosgrove and directed by Gavin Quinn, followed by The Old Vic production in London in January 2020, designed by Stuart Laing and directed by Richard Jones. These case studies were chosen because of their unwitting proximity to the pandemic and subsequent lockdown, which took place less than 12 weeks after Pan Pan's production and which led the Old Vic to cut their run of the play short.

It is important to assert that the lens of the pandemic applied to the design and themes of the play in this chapter is a retrospective one; neither productions were deliberately or directly responding to the pandemic, although the prescience of two new productions in Dublin and London within a couple of months of each other offered the chance to explore how Beckett's work and production design can sometimes enter into unexpected dialogues with their socio-political settings. In the context of illness, death and confinement, the design of *Endgame* in Dublin and London came to resonate powerfully with the transformation of domestic space within private domiciles and public care home environments. Reading the mise en scene through the lens of a global medical emergency, ideas about home and domesticity present in Beckett's work can offer a means of thinking about some of those that are most vulnerable in such situations; the elderly, the disabled and those that are enlisted to care. The

pandemic brought about the medicalisation of domestic spaces that were not designed to be cut off from the outside world and highlighted the inadequacy of designated care spaces in nurturing good health. This brought about a re-evaluation of individual domestic spaces that, upon reflection, could be read into the dramatic conception of the play and its scenographic manifestations.

The chapter begins by exploring the origins of the play and situating the context in which Beckett was writing as a means of framing the way ideas around home and domesticity are approached in *Endgame*. The focus then moves to the scenographic detail of the play investigating the way pain and illness not only affect the bodies of the characters but informs their relationships with the material objects that surround them. By giving the objects an opportunity to speak, the aim is to engage with the wider concerns of the chapter; namely, how pain, illness, age and disability change our relationships with home and how the rituals and routines of domestic life are impacted by the failure of bodies to function as we would wish. Moreover, it asks how this changed relationship with our environment can cause objects to behave in ways that are at worst hostile, or at best fail to meet the needs of those who are forced to exist in a space that betrays its primary function. The chapter will focus on different aspects of the scenography from a phenomenological perspective to interrogate the means by which Beckett's characters challenge our ideas about domesticity and what it means to be at home through Beckett's own radical spaces as well as the progressive and compelling interpretations of the set by modern directors and designers.

The final part of the chapter brings together explorations of interior domestic space in the context of illness and confinement into dialogue with medical and sociological studies about the phenomenological experience of space in a hospital or care environment in an attempt to address the way the textual analysis of the themes and ideas of the play resonated with the unique contextual circumstances of a state of medical emergency that confined people to their homes. It attempts to evaluate both text and performances by situating these readings within the socio-political moment around the production, in the context of governmental action that revealed the disposability of an older generation and particularly those who were not only advanced in years but whose health was failing, which gained a heightened relevance retrospectively in the light of testimonies from the Covid-19 inquiry. In an unprecedented example of art mirroring life, the modern productions of *Endgame* facilitated a means of reading Beckett's scenography in a way that was unique to this unprecedented global event. These productions successfully intervened in debates around old age and illness, asking what happens when individuals who are in need of hospitalisation or care are placed into a space

which no longer functions in a way that supports their needs. What this chapter intends to show is that domesticity can become a kind of terror when it manifests as cruelty instead of care, particularly when 'Beckett depicts everyday domestic items that resist their specificity, failing to function as convention dictates' (Price 2014:161). Just as the previous chapter considered how fractured socio-political landscapes can shape and re-frame our understanding and conception of domesticity, this chapter will consider how the dysfunction of an enclosed interior space can be just as precarious or painful as dispossession. It will examine how illness and disability are woven into the objects and implicated in the scenography. The ideas of designing a family home as a place of danger that first emerged in *Eleutheria* returns here in complicated and nuanced ways – instead of barbed wire lining the objects and spaces, Beckett embeds cruelty and suffering into domestic routines that manifest in similar results that present the shelter as a sickly space in which the inhabited interior can potentially be more harmful than the unknown exterior.

The Origins of *Endgame*

In a letter to long-time correspondent Alan Schneider, Beckett reveals his intention to make *Endgame* 'more inhuman than *Godot*' (Byron 2007:25). It is a decision that may have been inadvertently influenced by Beckett's own personal experiences at the time of writing – the death of his beloved brother Frank that made him feel 'lousy and miserable and so nervous that the bawls are out of me, in the house and in the street before I can stop them'(Knowlson 1997:405). This outpouring of grief resulted rather paradoxically in a 'huge surge of creative energy […] as he wrote fairly rapidly, a first version of *Fin de Partie*' in 1954 (Ibid). Knowlson is clear in pointing out that *Endgame* is not an autobiographical play, but 'it followed hard on the heels of Beckett's experience in the sick room and of waiting for someone to die, and is not only preoccupied with the slowness of an approaching end but haunted by the tiny practical details of caring for a dying patient' (1997:406). For Beckett scholar Colin Duckworth this was even more remarkable, 'since bitterness is often a response to grief, Beckett's ability to universalise private grief through vaguening un-specificity in *Endgame* is a tremendous feat of creativity' (2007: 34). The first production of *Endgame*[7] was at the Royal Court in 1957, directed by Roger Blin who had previously directed *Godot* in Paris. This was the start of

[7] It is interesting how Beckett had great difficulty in finding a home for *Endgame*, the contracts for the French theatre production fell through despite the early success and infamy of *Godot* – which is how *Fin de partie* had its premiere in London.

Beckett's lifelong friendship and professional relationship with director George Devine and designer Jocelyn Herbert. It was Devine who offered The Royal Court for Beckett's use and it was Herbert's first job for Beckett as a scenic painter before going on to design for *Endgame* in 1958. Her comment to Devine upon reading the play, the first time she had read his work, was 'I don't know how someone could write that and go on living' (Courtney 1997:27). The influence of deeply painful personal loss, coupled with the impact of the Second World War allows us to frame the landscape and action of *Endgame* within the context of experiences that pushed domestic relationships and themes of home/homeland to the forefront of Beckett's post-war writing. Furthermore, 'the play was written in the 1950's in the wake of a […] devasting war and with the new threat of cosmic destruction […] what had been myths or fantasies about the end of life on Earth took on a literal new reality' (Grene 2014: 131). The development and formative entrenching of tensions that led to the period of Cold War seems undeniably present in the scenographic portrayal of the refuge and its inhabitants and even more so in the description of surroundings in which nothing grows on account of there being 'no more nature' (Beckett 2006: 99). The action takes place inside the house that has been their home since before we meet them, while outside is 'death' – an apocalyptic wasteland or so we are led to believe (Beckett 2006: 96). However this does not, as Grene asserts,

> turn *Endgame* into a naturalistic play, if only because it so determinedly refuses to yield the explanations that naturalism must give the audience […] The challenge of the play is in fact the way in which it imprisons an audience in that place […] without the let out of symbolism or allegory. (Grene 2014: 130)

The staging of a vestigial domesticity is not only present in the interiority of the shelter space but echoed in its architechtural formation, through the sense of salvage that become apparent as Grene explains that according to preliminary drafts, the house it seems was 'progressively destroyed in the autumn of 1914, the spring of 1918 and the following autumn under mysterious circumstances' (2014: 129). Grene highlighting the way Beckett's depiction of interiority conveys simultaneously the sense of retreat within the ever declining space that intensifies the claustrophobia. The play unfolds within a domestic situation that challenges conventional notions of how we define home. We are thrust into a familial dynamic that has disintegration and decay at its core. The main character Hamm is blind, in a wheelchair and cannot stand. His servant Clov can see, although his vision is failing, and can move but cannot sit down. Hamm's parents Nagg and Nell are only visible from the chest upwards, living in

metal ashcans beside one another. *Endgame* explores two themes that recur throughout Beckett's work: stagnation and entrapment. Fundamental to this thesis is the way that discussions around these themes are located within a discourse about the nature of interior space which we define as 'home', and how the character and nature of a space that constitutes home comes to be redefined. All the characters within the play are reluctantly bound to one another and the interior during the action of the play that is visible to the audience. The only character who has the possibility of escape is the servant Clov, and the dramatic tension hinges on his desire to leave: the one thing that appears to keep him prisoner is the need to eat. However, without the combination to the larder, which Hamm controls, there is no possibility of food. The need for sustenance and survival keeps them tied to one another in what seems to be a bond of mutually assured destruction. This chapter will begin by investigating the means by which the living space enters into a reciprocal exchange with the bodies that inhabit it and what this entails when the bodies and relationships within the space do not behave in the way we would hope or expect. It asks how the demonstration of physical ill-health combined with dysfunctional relationships may not only be mirrored by the space, but also reinforced by the objects they are aligned with.

The Architecture of Home: Inside the World of *Endgame*

The element of friendship in *Godot*, however fraught, is gone, replaced instead with a scenography that is constructed through the psychological suffocation of stifling familial bonds that bleed into the design of the space. While Vladimir and Estragon created a sense of home that emerged through their routines and interdependency, fashioning a precarious domesticity of sorts, the characters in *Endgame* whose lives are grounded within the interior of a shelter, make and inhabit a very different kind of home. In her essay, 'The Invention of Everyday Life', Rita Felski argues that,

> The vocabulary of modernity is a vocabulary of anti-home. It celebrates mobility, movement, exile […] but is silent about the return home […] the longing for home, the desire to attach oneself to a familiar space is seen by most theorists of modernity as a regressive desire. (2000:86)

The Beckettian home in *Endgame* is a place of horror; not only entrapping characters, but featuring architectural detail that is unruly, with doors and windows that seemingly refuse to

open. What is more, Hamm, Clov, Nagg and Nell do not long for home, their attachment to the space is not born out of regressive desire so much as the impossibility of doing anything else. Their bodies are contained, not just by the wider interior space, but by objects that cannot support their independence. They are failed on multiple levels, first by their bodies as old age and disability overwhelm them, and secondly, by the space of home that refuses to offer comfort or accommodate a basic understanding of their needs. For Clov, the only member of the family who can move, his relationship with the shelter and those in it is marked by complicated desire to leave. In *Staging Place*, Una Chaudhuri discusses the fact that:

> The painful noncongruence between the literal dwelling and the feeling of being at home provides early modern drama with its fundamental motivations. As the century wears on, this noncongruence is recast in a less tragic mode, yielding the drama of failed homecoming, in which the nostalgia for and the disappointment in various models of belonging [...] Are gradually exorcised, and the ground is cleared for seeking subjective coherence outside the narrow discourse of home. (2008:49)

As Chaudhuri explores in her concept of failed homecoming, the idea that home often falls short of its expectations is not a new one, despite this, the concept of home, as Felski observes, 'home constitutes a base, a taken for granted grounding which allows us to make forays into other worlds' (2000:85). It might be argued that Beckett's work asks what happens when home does not act as a grounding springboard into other worlds, that his work exposes what happens if failed homecoming means that subjective coherence becomes impossible both inside and outside the discourse of home. Presenting Beckett as a domestic writer returns to the discussion of home as a subversive space and works to facilitate a modern appraisal around ideas about illness and disability, old age, the environment and gender that are essential to current conversations about how we lived then and how we live now. This failure of homecoming also draws out the connection between the exploration of home in *Godot* and *Endgame*: once interiority offers little or no protection, the reliance on rituals of the everyday and repeated patterns of behaviour between those who share the space are what define the domestic sphere.

In the opening stage directions, we enter the world of the play through the depiction of the 'bare interior' of their home, furnished only by the covered objects that hide the bodies on the stage. Clov is the only character fully visible to the audience. The interior reveals a door, front right '*hanging near door, its face to wall, a picture*'. To the front of the stage and on the left are two ashcans '*touching each other, covered with an old sheet*', and in the centre of the

stage '*in an armchair on castors, covered with a sheet*' is Hamm (Beckett 2006:92). Duckworth argues that: '*Endgame* can be read as a form of third act for *Godot* and when viewed in this manner it offers a winding down of the play's action which consisted of waiting for the future' (2006: 55). The use of the old sheets is suggestive of a home that is paradoxical in nature – defined by emptiness rather than occupancy – indicative of a home that is in waiting and narrated by absence rather than a thriving domesticity. The characters' physical presence is undermined by being hidden, reducing them to pieces of stage furniture that are covered by dust sheets, in the manner of an unoccupied home, to prevent decay while the owners are away. Yet when Clov uncovers Hamm and his parents, Nagg and Nell, it becomes apparent that this gesture has been in vain; time continues its passage of decay whether or not perceived by the human eye.

When considering Clov's relationships with Hamm and his parents and the space it is important to remember that Clov came to the shelter as a young boy. In her study of *Home and Homelessness*, Kimberly Dovey states that 'Home thus has strong roots in the experience of childhood where the visual images of the home were formed […] the homes of our past set the ground for our very perceptions of attractiveness and ugliness' (1985:3). Hamm's implied role as surrogate father to Clov not only illuminates our understanding of their relationship, but also provides insight into Clov's relationship with the house. Hamm's decision to 'rescue' Clov into a childhood defined by servitude and entrapment may also reflect the dynamics of Hamm's own relationship with his biological parents and their confinement to ashcans. The internal space provides a useful starting point from which to analyse the way in which its structure, fabric and function can illuminate the dynamics of the relationships that unfold within it. In *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed explains:

> [B]odies do not dwell in spaces that are exterior but rather are shaped by their dwellings and take shape by dwelling […] spaces are like a second skin that unfolds in the folds of the body […] spaces "impress" upon the body, involving the mark of unfamiliar impressions, which in turn reshapes the body surface […] this is not to say that one has to leave home for things to be disorientated or reorientated […] homes too can move, as we do […] after all homes are effects of the histories of arrival.
> (2006:9)

The space within *Endgame* has its own story to tell: the story of the bodies which inhabit it as well the way it has shaped the bodies and behaviours of those who shelter within it. Hamm and

Clov's relationship is defined by an interdependency that is physical as well as emotional and intellectual. Hamm's reliance on Clov seems to be determined by his confinement to an armchair with castors that does not facilitate much physical autonomy. When combined with his blindness it leaves him dependent on Clov not only for food and medicine, but also for determining the waking and sleeping hours of his day. In a monologue halfway through the play Hamm reveals something of his past; a time when he was capable of compassion, albeit limited, when he shares the story of a dying man who pleaded with Hamm and asked if he might take in his child, to which Hamm tells us: 'to make it short I finally offered to take him into my service. He had touched a chord' (Beckett 2006:118). The story seems to suggest that the child in question may have been Clov. Beckett wished to maintain a deliberate ambiguity surrounding this, perhaps in order to ensure that the dynamics between them avoid any trite psychological readings of their relationship;

> At the Riverside Studios, Rick Cluchey, playing Hamm at the time, asked Beckett directly if the little boy in Hamm's story is actually the young Clov. 'Don't know if it's the story of the young Clov or not', was Beckett's response. 'Simply don't know'. (Gontarski 2019:61)

Although Clov is the servant, he is also the facilitator of the action; it is his words that open the play and his removal of the sheets that provokes Hamm's awakening. Despite the fact that removing the sheets will reawaken the process of care, Clov chooses to undertake this action and begin the cycle once more. There is a sense of resignation and defiance from Clov in relation to the seemingly endless cycle of domestic labour and care. Clov's behaviour exposes the burden of unpaid care as a complex one, summed up in his opening lines, 'it must be nearly finished … I can't be punished anymore' seem to be immediately contradicted by his decision to go 'to my kitchen …and wait for him to whistle me' (Beckett 2006:93). However, as Gatti argues in the 'Choreography of Disobedience', the removal of the sheets also 'alludes to the theatrical practice of keeping scenery covered between show days, explicitly taking responsibility for the play's organisation" (2014:229). This responsibility reveals the depth of Clov's connection to the scenographical space born out of his desire for order and stasis. When he remarks 'I love order. It's my dream, A world where all would be silent and still and each thing in its last place, under the last dust' (Beckett 2006:120), Gatti argues that 'Clov is not announcing his desire to escape the bunker and Hamm's domination. The end he aspires to is the return of the scenic space to a state of repose or suspension' (2014:230). His behaviour is

not only conditioned by the space in which he grew up, but it is part of his relationship with Hamm and their lives together. As we will explore in the rest of the chapter, *Endgame* resists the temptation of meaning or conclusion, 'the structure organises itself according to symmetries, analogies and repetitions' (Gatti 2014:227). As with much of Beckett's work, there is a sense of a choreographed musical score, one which eschews harmony but thrives in discord, in doing and undoing, creation and negation.

The action within the text of *Endgame* is confined to one room. From the movements of Clov and Hamm we know that the dimensions of the structure include a kitchen, but in most productions this is not visible and there is no cooking or preparation of food that would offer the audience the familiarity of a domestic relationship. The largest window into the space is the dramatic one which opens onto the audience, while the 'real' windows echo Victor's window in *Eleutheria* in the way they fail to function as an escape route. Their access is only via the use of a ladder operated by the only member of the family who is able to climb it. The height of the window and lack of easy accessibility means that it undermines its function as an object designed for visibility and means that Clov is as blind as Hamm to the 'outside' without the assistance of the ladder. In her essay on 'Memory and Its Devices in *Endgame*', Jane Gatewood notes that:

> Before any character speaks in *Endgame*, memory pervades the stage […] Clov enters and stands below each window, looking up […] re-entering with a ladder […] as he moves […] he forgets the ladder […] he repeats this process … moving back and forth between the windows; but each time the space between forgetting and remembering diminishes, linking the physical space of the stage with the mental space of memory. (2007:49)

This failure of function and memory resonates with other aspects of the architecture. The door which is visible to the audience and the characters may open, but it does not conform to its expected behaviour. Bachelard's rumination on the role of the door offers insight into the way the psychic properties of the door has a strong connection to Clov's narrative:

> When so many doors are closed, there is one that is just barely ajar. We only have to give it a slight push! […] and our fate becomes visible […] and what of all the doors of mere curiosity, that have tempted, being for nothing, for emptiness, for an unknown that is not even imagined? […] How concrete everything becomes in the world of the

> spirit when an object, a mere door, can give images of hesitation, temptation, desire, security, welcome and respect. If one were to give an account of all the doors one has closed and opened, of all the doors one would like to re-open, one would have to tell the story of one's entire life. (2014:239)

The fact that the door in *Endgame* remains an impossible threshold to cross to Clov – the one character who is capable and desiring of its use – is central to the dramatic tension of the play. If, as Bachelard suggests, doors tell the story of our lives, then the door that Clov cannot walk through not only tells the story of the inhabitants but also the house itself since 'space is not the setting (real or logical) in which things are arranged, but the means whereby the position of things becomes possible' (Merleau-Ponty 2003:284). Doors and windows are not only familiar markers of domestic architecture, but they are both literally and symbolically objects that denote freedom and escape. In *Endgame* these objects have been defamiliarized; tainted with failure and impossibility, and as a result they redefine and question the nature of domestic space that surrounds them. The behaviour of both these objects also recalls the domestic architecture of *Eleutheria*, firstly, in the inability of Victor to ever truly escape, but also in the way the collapse of the house gave way to a space that was defined by aftermath. This aesthetics of remainder and partiality are engrained into the design of *Endgame* that suggests the interior was once part of something larger engaging *Endgame* both spatially and conceptually 'with the limits of seeing' that first emerge in *Eleutheria* (McMullan 2010:28).

Inside and Outside

The space of *Endgame* purports to be a shelter, which the Cambridge English Dictionary defines as both noun: something that is designed to 'give protection' such as a building or tent, or the protection provided, and a verb: 'to protect yourself, or another person or thing, from bad weather, danger, or attack'[8]. A generous initial reading might argue that the unexpected behaviour of the structural features within the shelter might in fact be a defensive response to the surroundings, and there are several indications at the beginning of the play that the landscape around the house is not only inhospitable, but also incapable of sustaining life. This would imply that the failure of the door and windows to offer movement and mobility is in fact an attempt to protect the inhabitants from the environment outside, whose unnatural

[8] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/shelter [date accessed December 17 2023]

behaviour evokes the imagery of a post-disaster wasteland. Clov states in the opening scenes that 'it will not rain' (Beckett 2006:94) and in the following pages, Hamm seems to confirm this when he informs both Clov and us that 'outside of here is death' (Beckett 2006:96). This is an idea that is confirmed when Hamm suggests that 'nature has forgotten us' and Clov says, 'There is no more nature' (Beckett 2006:97). Despite this, Hamm still enquires 'Did your seeds come up?' a question which highlights the fact that Hamm's understanding of what lies beyond requires a renewal of empirical evidence to satisfy him rather than Clov's word – which he hesitates to trust.

The idea of clear demarcation and boundary between the interior of the home and its surroundings is one which Kimberly Dovey's study of the home problematises. She explains that home does not simply stop at the front door; the house functions as a marker of the home space which extends beyond the walls, doors and windows of the house.

> Home is demarcated territory with both physical and symbolic boundaries that ensure that dwellers can control and access behaviour within […] To be at home is to know where you are; […] to be orientated in space. A certain ambiguity in the phenomenon of home become apparent at this point because home as territory also involves a kind of home range that can include neighbourhood, town and landscape. Yet this larger home is a kind of ordered centre within which we are orientated and distinguished from the larger, stranger surroundings. (1985:3)

The fact that neither the interior nor the immediate surroundings abide by these terms suggests that while the dramatic disobedience of the door and window may afford temporary protection from the unnatural surroundings, the structure remains weak. The behaviour of the shelter and those who inhabit it does not suggest knowledge or orientation inside or beyond its walls. The 'larger, stranger surroundings' that Dovey speaks of are not the unknown spaces beyond the town or village in which their house sits, instead it's the very land that surrounds it. Most sinister of all is the suggestion that if the very 'strangeness' that the home should keep at bay is capable of invading the immediate vicinity of the home, then what is to stop a little seeping in through the cracks? In this scenario the door and window become unwitting pawns in the battle between the inside and outside; they do not encourage escape, but they cannot prevent contamination. As the title of this section suggests, if the exterior can bleed into the surroundings there is no evidence that this exchange has not been reciprocal and that the boundaries between inside and outside have already been breached with the sickness of the

shelter also permeating the world outside. The world of *Endgame* explored in the text recalls Bachelard's observation that,

> Outside and inside are both intimate – they are always ready to be reversed, to exchange their hostility. If there exists a border-line surface between such an inside and outside, this surface is painful on both sides. (2014:233)

The concept of inside and outside is one that has been explored previously in relation to the transition from *Eleutheria* to *Godot*, where the painful border between the two was navigated and narrated through the disenfranchisement of characters who either cannot be at home or who are homeless. However, in *Endgame* the audience is compelled to engage with this idea in a different way; the scenography conjured by the text asks us to conceive of a situation where shelter or the physical object of a home does exist but has become uninhabitable. Not because of external familial forces as in *Eleutheria,* but because the interior no longer behaves any differently to the exterior. Sara Ahmed's phenomenological exploration of space details the 'work' of inhabiting successfully as a reciprocal and sensitive process that requires the acquisition of embodied knowledge through movement and understanding.

> The work of inhabitance involves orientation devices: ways of extending the body into spaces that create new folds, or contours of what we could call liveable or inhabitable space. If orientation is about making the strange familiar through the extension of bodies into space, then disorientation occurs when that extension fails. Or we could say that some spaces extend certain bodies and simply do not leave room for others. (2006:11)

The scenographic depiction of home as a place that is disorienting and unknowable resonates with and is exacerbated by the physical disabilities of the characters. In the case of Hamm an intimacy of orientation is impeded by blindness as well as his mobility issues. Even though this is Hamm's home that we assume he has grown up in, his knowledge of the space is uncertain and must be repeatedly reconfirmed. Neither Hamm nor his parents can extend their bodies into the space, and instead they are confined and contained, the chair and the ashcans' becoming another layer of oppression. If we accept that consciousness is linked with perception and the way we 'perceive the world around us, then consciousness is also embodied, sensitive and situated …[it] can also help show us how bodies are directed in some ways and not others […]

what is perceived depends on where we are located and gives us a certain take on things' (Ahmed 2006:27). The combination of Hamm's immobility and blindness drives him to ask Clov to help him conceive the dimensions and it is useful to return to the original text for deeper exploration. It prevents Hamm and his parents from ever having physical intimacy or from understanding the space in which they are compelled to remain; it inevitably shapes their attitude towards their home as well as their relationships with one another. Despite his lack of sight, one might have expected Hamm to be able to imagine the space of the home through physical movement, but his confinement to a wheelchair that is cumbersome and not fit for purpose means he is reliant on Clov for the movement that might have otherwise rendered him capable of envisioning the boundaries of the space:

> Hamm: Take me for a little turn [*Clov goes behind the chair and pushes it forward*]
> Not too fast! [*Clov pushes chair*] Right around the world! [*Clov pushes chair*]
> Hug the walls, then back to the centre again. [Clov pushes chair] I was right in the centre, wasn't I?
> Clov: [*Pushing*] Yes
> Hamm: [*Groping for wall*] It's a lie! Why do you lie to me?
> Clov: [*Bearing closer to wall*] There! There!
> Hamm: Stop! [*Clov stops chair close to back wall. Hamm lays his hand against wall*]
> Old wall! [*Pause*] Beyond is the …other hell…
> *The scene continues with Hamm striking the walls with his knuckles, feeling their hollow bricks*. (Beckett 2006:104)

In material terms, the hollow make-up of the walls means that they cannot uphold their function as a barrier or means of enclosure and are thus unable to provide any physical certainty. The implied and assumed dialectical geometry of the house therefore becomes unreliable and this means that 'simple geometrical opposition becomes tinged with aggressivity' (Bachelard 2014:228). This aggression reverberates through the house, from Hamm striking his knuckles against the wall, through to the violence implicit in the relationships between the four characters. This tangible embodiment of metaphysical aggression is one that is comparable to the barbed wire that lines the objects in *Eleutheria*, and the need to narrate absence and loss within the architecture of domestic spaces is one that runs through Beckett's work. If we consider the notion of homesickness as an individual missing or longing for their home, then

in all the plays in which there is an object of home Beckett turns this concept on its head; the home may cause or compound their sickness.

This next section moves to briefly consider Beckett's scenographic composition in relation to the history of the wheelchair and its perception before exploring the phenomenological resonances of this central object as well as the ashcans textually and through the modern case studies from Pan Pan and The Old Vic that took place in the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2019/2020. In the discussions of the objects that follow, sickness and disability as well as the treatment of the vulnerable and elderly come to the fore in this exploration of domesticity and illness. The global context of the Covid-19 pandemic frames the textual and performance analysis around the presentation of old age and ideas around disposability and waste in the play through the ashcans/wastebins that Hamm's parents inhabit and explores the way in which the stagings retrospectively resonated with the treatment of the elderly in both domestic and care home environments during the pandemic. The choice of performances was guided by the re-reading of the text in the context of lockdown, therefore this chapter explores the themes of the play in the light of the pandemic. For this reason it drawis on sociological studies around the way illness changes our engagement with home to consider how Beckett's staging of vestigial domesticity resonates with the the situational context of what happens when domestic space becomes medicalised in situations of long-term care, unprecedented global events such as nuclear or environmental disasters or a health crisis like a pandemic. These sociological studies are not intended to offer a deterministic view of the play that suggests a naturalistic reading but they are used instead as a means of thinking about the play when the context around reading and watching the play resonates with the themes of illness, old age and disability in interior spaces that are just as claustrophobic and threatening as the ones that they attempt to offer shelter from.

The Wheelchair and Disability

Textually, the importance of Hamm's chair to the action is immediately indicated through its scenographical placement centre stage; even when Hamm is moved from this position by Clov, Hamm insists that he is returned to the centre. In *The Art of Salvage,* Julie Bates argues 'The opening stage directions establish Hamm as the undisputed locus of *Endgame*' (Bates 2017:136). The movement of the chair marks out Hamm's world. Once he has surveyed the room he demands to be brought back:

Hamm: Back to my place! (*Clov pushes the chair back to centre*)
Is that my place?
Clov: Yes, that's your place.
Hamm: Am I right in the centre?
Clov: I'll measure it.
Hamm: More or less! More or less!
Clov: (*Moving chair slightly*) There!
Hamm: I'm more or less in the centre?
Clov: I'd say so
Hamm: You'd say so! Put me right in the centre!
(Beckett 2006:105)

The wheelchair is described in the opening stage directions as an '*armchair on castors'* (Beckett 2006:92). Even at the time *Endgame* was first being staged, the wheelchair that is presented in the play does not reflect the advances in wheelchair technology that would have existed at the time. Rather it is more representative of the earlier iterations of wheelchairs that would have been issued to veterans between World War One and Two. In her study of wheelchair design, *Enwheeled*, Penny Lynne Wolfson explores the way in which:

> Chairs are particularly revealing of cultural values because they so easily become human surrogates […] aspects of an object that seem to echo the human anatomy may reflect in abstract terms the way in which individuals […] perceive themselves.
> (2014:1)

Beckett's decision to place Hamm in an improvised mobile chair that reflects the more cumbersome, less developed models seems deliberate and characterises the attitude towards wheelchairs as opposed to prosthesis. Wolfson quotes Nick Watson and Brian Woods' 2008 investigation into *The Social and Technological History of the Wheelchair* in which they explain:

> The assumption was with prosthesis you could replace or augment what had been lost (on the other hand) wheelchairs denoted failure and ran counter to a wider ideology which it was the duty of disabled people to adjust themselves to society.
> (2014:40)

The recollection of paraplegic World War Two American veterans testifies to the fact that:

> The wheelchair was not meant for routine, personal use because the type of wheelchair that was commonly used by the military in those days […] had a wicker seat and back […] it was extremely difficult for even a strong paraplegic to propel this kind of chair. (2014:53)

In The Old Vic production designed by Stewart Laing and directed by Richard Jones, Hamm's wheelchair is a reddish pink pleather armchair, high-backed and with wooden arms and easy to wipe clean; the kind that would not be out of place in a hospital waiting room or care home. The armchair is mounted onto a wooden board which is on castors and therefore impossible for Hamm to move himself as it does not fulfil in any mechanical way the function of a wheelchair. This idea that the wheelchair in *Endgame* is not only shaped by its intention but also by its role within each production can be summed up by Ahmed's proposal that, 'objects not only are shaped by work but that they also take the shape of the work they do' (2006:44).

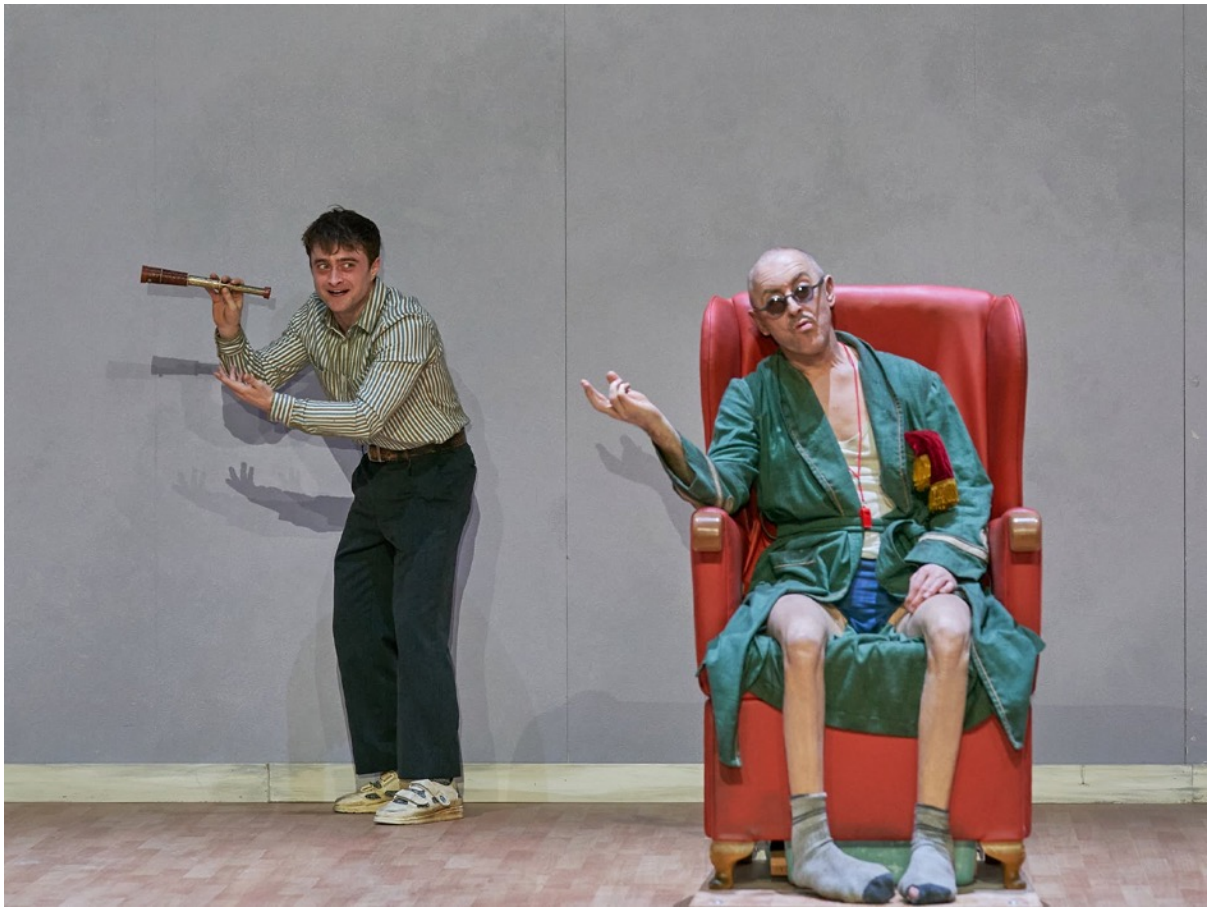

Fig 4. Endgame, Director Richard Jones, Designer Stuart Laing, Actors: Daniel Radcliffe as Clov and Alan Cumming as Hamm, The Old Vic London February 2020, copyright Manuel Harlan

The chair in the Old Vic performance was part of a set that was designed to evoke the aesthetics of an institutional environment without having to resort to any obvious gestures that would have destroyed the fragile balance that kept the space both recognisable and slightly out of time. This was subtly portrayed through how the papered walls had been painted over to give an impression of newness while underlining their age; other similar suggestions of covering up served to act as a mediator for the way in which the play highlights the limits of seeing described by McMullan both literally and theatrically. This interplay between illusion and transparency converged on the figure of Hamm; the set was brightly lit, almost as though no corner should remain hidden or covered. This form of intrusive lighting, typical of institutional care spaces, participated in the illusion of control through visibility that was contrasted with the way the bodies of those on stage remained shrouded in mystery.

This interplay was also evident in the emphasis of Hamm's disability and Jones' and Laing's decision to explore the nuance of Hamm's containment within the chair by showing his disabled legs to the audience in a way that could be seen as potentially problematic because

of an over-emphasis of a disability that the live actor did not have. Alan Cummings's bare legs were on display throughout the performance; withered and discoloured, splayed apart exposing his underwear and presenting another layer to his vulnerability. Both Hamm and his parents lack of agency over their surroundings was grounded in contrasting ways through the dramatic presentation of their bodies, while the parents bodies were consumed or concealed with objects that were meant for waste, the vulnerability of Hamm's body was exposed in ways that also hinted at neglect.

The armchair as wheelchair in *Endgame* seems to have an agentic power of its own engaged in a complicated dialogue with the space in which Hamm is confined. It presents us with a situation where Hamm's blindness or disability is not the biggest barrier to his experiences of the material world around him. The armchair recalls the domestic interior of the Kraps' living room in *Eleutheria*, which is cluttered with armchairs and lamps that are destroyed as they fall into the orchestra pit in between the acts. The destruction of such middle-class symbols of complacency and comfort in the post-war climate indicated the necessary acknowledgement of the need to re-evaluate the role of material wealth among the privileged. In *Endgame*, the armchair on castors, repurposed as it is to contain and convey the body of Hamm, Clov's tyrannical master and father figure, cannot escape significance. Bates argues that:

> The use of the wheelchair as a stage property creates a visual echo of the painter Francis Bacon's less individuated Popes. Bacon is an apt reference point for […] weak but opinionated wheelchair bound old men in Beckett's writing: by placing them in large eye-catching chairs …[they]… command authority but are also trapped within the material signifier of their status. (2017:136)

If we consider that Hamm may be a reiteration of Pozzo, the chair no longer represents wealth or status but evokes the failure of a pre-war power structures of aristocratic wealth and power that should have become obsolete. The material properties of the chair, adapted badly with its castors, reflects the fractured nature of its occupant. Hamm is difficult to pinpoint or position, and his complexity comes from the fact that he is both victim and perpetrator, a fallen tyrant who~~se~~ still commands the air of a feudal lord, but simultaneously an old man whose body has failed him and left him at the mercy of his adopted son. A typescript entitled *Avant Fin de Partie* reveals that in the very beginning when Beckett was first writing he:

> [U]sed a decidedly more realistic ambience in order to develop the play […] the play was set specifically in the region of Picardy […] and more precisely Boulonnais […] near Wissant […] your dwelling, erected on a cliff, is composed of a living room and passageway composed into a kitchen […] the protagonists are obviously survivors of a World War I battle […] progressively destroyed […] under mysterious circumstances […] these realistic details, necessary for the creative process were progressively eliminated in revisions. (Gontarski 2019:43)

Despite Beckett's attempts to eliminate these details, their shadows remain and it seems that Hamm belongs to a multiplicity of worlds; echoes of King Lear chime with those of the forgotten war veteran or the deposed tyrant. The material signifier of the armchair is one that is tainted by the past; in the scenographical context of the play, and through its repurposing as a wheelchair, it no longer symbolises comfort and wealth but highlights an uncomfortable interdependency. The armchair as wheelchair manifests on stage as an outdated relic that not only signifies Hamm's disability but also acts as a reminder, inserting itself between the old world where Hamm's power was certain and defined and the post-war or care home scenario where his agency is limited. If we consider that 'the failure of something to work is a matter of failed orientation: a tool used by a body for which it was not intended, or a body uses a tool that does not extend its capacity for action' (Ahmed 2006:51) then Pan Pan's decision in their 2019 production of *Endgame* in Dublin to position Hamm in a real wheelchair serves to explore this dynamic further.

The aesthetic of Pan Pan's set seems to present Hamm and Clov in a world defined by a sense of retreat or collapse. The design of the 'walls' have the appearance of reclaimed or salvaged wood, cobbled together to form a refuge, that is dislocated or annexed from what might have once been an altogether grander whole. The scenography hints at absence while maintaining the focus on the bodies within it. The compromised figure of Hamm asks us to imagine the room as a part of a house, suggesting that the place in which they take refuge is the remainder of a space that is no longer able to support itself and has subsumed the domestic narrative of the functioning family home into an interior that is compromised and haunted by loss. In Ahmed's discussion on the way bodies inhabit space, she argues that space does not 'contain the body as though they are "in it"'. Rather bodies are submerged, such that they become the space they inhabit' (2006:53) and this observation is reflected not only in the scenographic directions in the text but visually in both productions that reinforce the idea that

the architecture of the space not only acts as a container but that the bodies within it are equally shaped by the space in which they are restricted.

The design choices made by director Gavin Quinn and designer Aedín Cosgrove to seat Hamm in an actual wheelchair are undercut by the inability of the object to function efficiently. The wheels of Hamm's chair, like those in the subsequent Old Vic production and the textual description, are not big enough for Hamm to even attempt to wheel himself independently, only serving to highlight the way the surrounding space is no more accessible to him than in other productions. Ahmed observes that an object is 'not reducible to itself' as 'the actions performed on the object […] shape the object', suggesting that the nature of the wheelchair in both productions is shaped by how the characters interact with it (2006:43). The failure of the wheelchair in *Endgame* is the story of a failed transaction between the subject and object. As Ahmed comments, it comes down to a question of 'fit' and the 'failure of subject and objects to work together'. What is more, 'the failure would be the failure of the object to enable the action with which it is identified' (2006:50). In this manner one might argue that the decision by Pan Pan to present an object that would seem more likely to fulfil its function than Beckett's original armchair on castors serves to underline the failure of the object and the incapacity of Hamm's situation in a more direct way.

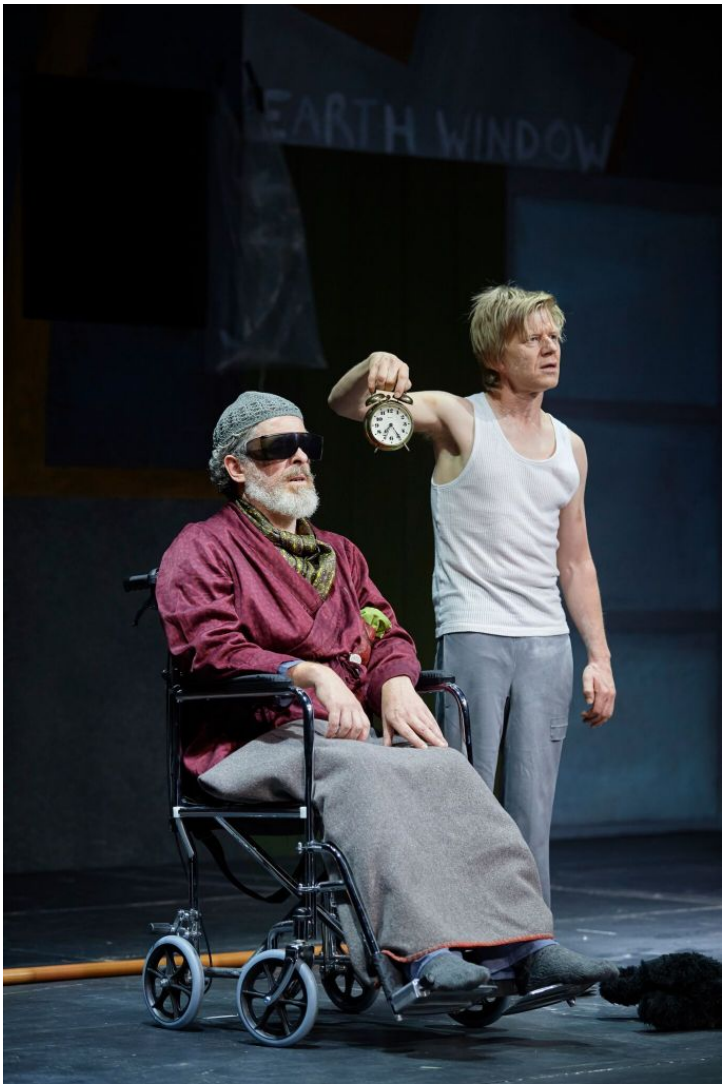

Fig 5. Endgame, Pan Pan, Director Gavin Quinn, Designer Aedín Cosgrove, Actors: Andrew Bennett as Hamm and Antony Morris as Clov, Project Arts Centre Dublin, December 2019, Copyright Ros Kavanagh

Hamm's position in the wheelchair cannot be seen in isolation, the costuming choices for Hamm in both the Old Vic and Pan Pan productions should also be examined further in relation to the presentation of disability within the scenographical space. The lighting that conjures the clinical visibility of a medical care home environment in the Old Vic production is juxtaposed in stark contrast with Hamm's costume that evokes a sense of abandonment and disenfranchisement. In his essay 'Beckett's Bedrooms: On Dirty things and Thing Theory', Alexander Price makes the point that,

> The dressing gown is a well-worn, but underexplored, motif in Beckett's oeuvre" although he uses *Eh Joe* as the basis of his argument, pointing out that "it is unable to

> shield Joe from the embarrassments of wandering around undressed because it evokes equivalent feelings of unease due to its grimy materiality. (2014:171)

Jones and Laing's decision to place Hamm in a soiled green gown that is thrown open to reveal his grubby undergarments is one that immediately places the subject in a position of vulnerability and opens up the conversation to one of neglect. The gown underlines his dependency by reasserting his confinement to the chair. In the Old Vic production, Hamm's vulnerability is conveyed as he finds that despite his obvious incapacitation and his cries for medication, he is not afforded the care that he needs. His visual fragility seems at times contradictory, on the one hand it conveys his reliance on Clov and yet his flagrant refusal to show any appreciation or gratitude to those who sustain him ensure his tyranny seems even more stark. Pan Pan's approach to costuming also revels in this double edged depiction of Hamm as both victim and perpetrator. The blanket over Hamm's legs, combined with his socked but shoeless feet, articulates something of the infantilisation of the elderly but just as with The Old Vic production, Pan Pan also uses costume to highlight the irony of his desire to dominate those around him, impervious to their pain despite being so reliant on their care. In Hamm's monologue at the start of *Endgame*, he muses on his own misery and suffering and wonders if anyone can really share in it, or whether there are others who suffer as much. A generous interpretation might draw on Elaine Scarry's observations on the communication of pain that

> For the person whose pain it is, it is "effortlessly" grasped (that is, even with the most heroic effort it cannot *not* be grasped); while for the person outside the sufferer's body, what is "effortless" is *not* grasping it (1985:4)

However, both Hamm and Clov inflict cruelties on each other creating a space in which figures of vulnerability are also more than capable of causing pain and harm towards one another. Even in the opening scenes they reiterate their long established and entrenched bitterness,

> Hamm: […] Why do you stay with me?
> Clov: Why do you keep me?
> Hamm: There's no one else.
> Clov: There's no where else […]

Hamm: You're leaving me all the same
Clov: I'm trying
Hamm: You don't love me
Clov: No (Beckett 2006:95)

Despite Hamm's apparent position as the master, both through the scenographical postioning of his chair and through his actions as the figure who orders everyone else around, he is now dependent on Clov, who is therefore also capable of inflicting pain on Hamm. Linguistically Hamm's dialogue and his chronicle both portray his role as one who has inflicted pain and even death on others in the past. However now he is compromised by blindness and disability he relies on Clov not only for his medicine but also depends on his continued presence as a way of maintaining the social hierarchy of power. Intimate and reciprocal cruelty becomes not only the abiding mode of interrelations within the domestic space but also one which may be exacerbated by the necessity of caring when also requiring care oneself – which is explored in more detail later in the chapter. The bodies represented on stage are bodies in pain, old bodies, and dysfunctional bodies that are not just metaphors but ones that are also grounded in the reality of ageing and illness. In his book *Aesthetic Nervousness: Disability and The Crisis of Representation*, Ato Quayson makes the important point that often in Beckett's work,Physical disability is assimilated to a variety of philosophical categories in such a way as to obliterate the specificity of the body and render it as a marker of something else (2007:56). While on the one hand, Hamm's failing body becomes a metaphor for dislocation and fracture and his disability compounds and elucidates the destruction of domestic certainty, on the other, it is essential we do not limit our reading of the play and its characters to such neat conclusions. To avoid reassigning Hamm's physicality in Quayson's words as a 'marker of something else' while simultaneously acknowledging all that it represents, it is necessary to orient our discussions of the set through the body.

In the next section of the chapter, which focuses on the scenographic detail of Hamm's surroundings and his parents, the intention is to analyse how the physical designations of the characters and the objects they are contained or restrained by facilitates insights into the phenomenological reality of the body in decline. The representation of the domestic in this familial drama is defined by absence, with the characters having retreated into a shelter which was once just a piece of the whole but is now the entirety. Just as the interior space has retreated, so too the material body is represented by collapse and confinement. What could or should be viewed as a domestic space has itself become sickly: 'In its portrayal of these dark days of

decline, *Endgame* plays on an inevitability that has become an important axiom for disability studies; that if we live long enough, we will all become disabled' (Bixby 2018:127*).* This inevitability conditions domestic spaces into something more akin to a makeshift field hospital engaged in the process of sufferance rather than restoration. This sense of survival and endurance shapes the body through its orientation towards the other bodies within the space, the 'surfaces of bodies are shaped by what is reachable' (Ahmed 2006:55), rather than in isolation. This does not just impact on Hamm's relationship with his surrounding space but also to the relationships between Hamm and his parents as well as between the parents themselves. If we return to Dovey's point at the start of the chapter that 'Home thus has strong roots in the experience of childhood where the visual images of the home were formed […]' (1985:3), it poses the question of whether the dysfunctional relationships that are shaped by this claustrophobic space may have been the result of the absence of physical intimacy borne out of desire and replaced by a forced intimacy created by necessity or desperation. The result is that a reciprocal cruelty is embedded in the bodies of those who are also trapped in cyclical roles of care. If these bodies 'take the shape of this repetition [… and we acknowledge that] the work of repetition is not neutral work; [orienting] the body in some ways rather than others'(Ahmed 2006:57), it adds to the impossibility of breaking out of destructive patterns of behaviour that can act as psychological containers of confinement in the same way as the physical space. Linguistic repetition of destructive behavioural patterns also shape the space as we see how Nagg and Nell communicate,

> Nagg: […] I thought you were going to leave me
> Nell: I am going to leave you (Beckett 2006: 101)

The spectral force of the past decaying in the present is no better summed up than by the image of Hamm's parents, caught in a purgatorial state of disposal while still alive, figures of both comic relief, pity and tragedy but also figures of oppression. These parental modes of interconnection foreshadow and echo the destructive dynamics of care and coercion inherent in Hamm and Clov's relationship.

The Bodies in the Ashcans

Endgame perpetuates the idea that progression is synonymous with decline through the material presence of the waste bins or ashcans that house Hamm's parents, which are located

inside the interior space in Beckett's text. Their continued existence within objects that are traditionally employed to demarcate waste, and more specifically ash – suggests something beyond waste and evokes a destruction and disintegration that resonates with cremation. This harrowing scenographic depiction of elderly bodies reinforces the observation that 'there is no language for pain' because of the way in which it resists 'verbal objectification' (Scarry 1985:12). Perhaps the most important means of temporal comfort to the body in pain is through physical comfort and compassion through the intimacy of touch. Separated as they are, Nagg and Nell are unable to seek solace in a bodily union. When Nell asks her husband upon waking if it is 'time for love' and Nagg says 'Kiss me' he is informed by her with surety that 'we can't'. He implores her to 'Try' and their painful efforts are unbearable to watch; 'Their heads strain towards each other, fail to meet, fall apart again' (Beckett 2006:99). Their past intimacies have no future and any previous union is evident only through the existence of their son, Hamm. Nagg and Nell also cannot access their own bodies in their entirety: when Nagg asks Nell to 'give me a scratch' she refuses, not necessarily because she doesn't want to but because ultimately she cannot do so even if she wished. Nagg himself cannot find the language to describe the area of his body on which he would like to be scratched except to describe it in spatial terms 'in the hollow', and Nell's advice to 'rub yourself against the rim' suggests that their bodies are not simply contained within the cans, but perhaps part of them (Beckett 2006:101). Their failure to express the areas of discomfort without linguistic accuracy reinforces the idea that their containment has disrupted the phenomenological perception of their own bodies that is contingent on self-knowledge:

> Every external perception is immediately synonymous with a certain perception of my body, just as every perception of my body is made explicit in the language of external perception …We have relearned to feel our body; we have found underneath the objective and detached knowledge of the body that other knowledge which we have of it in virtue of its always being with us and of the fact that we are in our body. (Merleau-Ponty 2003:239).

The fact that Nagg and Nell cannot access their own bodies and that their bodies cannot be accessed by others is significant to the way in which the play communicates ideas about the ageing or incapacitated body. It is also useful to consider the way the physical distance that is established between the parents and the rest of the characters contributes to their demise. The care they are provided with amounts to the bins – which also act as vestibules for their

excrement – being filled with sawdust at the bottom. Once this ran out, they were filled with sand, which Clov is indicated to have collected from the seashore. During the course of the play, this is never refreshed and it is interesting to note that:

> This reference to Clov's activity outside the shelter was cut by Beckett in Berlin. With this cut, the only reference to Clov's external activity is eliminated, and of course the likelihood of Clov's actually leaving Hamm is diminished. The line, however, was retained in the London production and for the Revised Text. (Gontarski 2019:53)

The fact that this detail was included in later performances and in both the productions analysed here does not diminish the lack of care provided to Nagg and Nell but only serves to heighten its inadequacy. The defamiliarisation of Nagg and Nell's own bodies is compounded in the visual disembodiment of the figures on stage. Unlike the Old Vic's presentation of a failing institution, Pan Pan's production placed the world of *Endgame* within the realms of a ruined private, domestic shelter where the parents reside within imposing galvanised metal cans. Pan Pan's production presented a stark portrait of the failing body through their use of light and texture. The way the body in pain inhabits space is expressed through the lighting that invites an unflinching gaze towards those on stage. As Byrne Keane notes in her review,

> While Beckett's stage directions are famously stringent, there appears to be room for interpretation here. While the interior is indeed 'bare' and the light 'grey', suggesting a less than welcoming space, nowhere in these directions does it expressly say that the interior must be in any way shadowy, dilapidated, or unclean. Aedín Cosgrove's set design thus takes this ambiguity in an interesting direction (2020)

The production's use of lighting was extremely effective in framing the characters with a transient and spectral quality. The white light that glanced off the bins underlined the idea that Nagg and Nell were not in their bodies so much as submerged in their tombs.

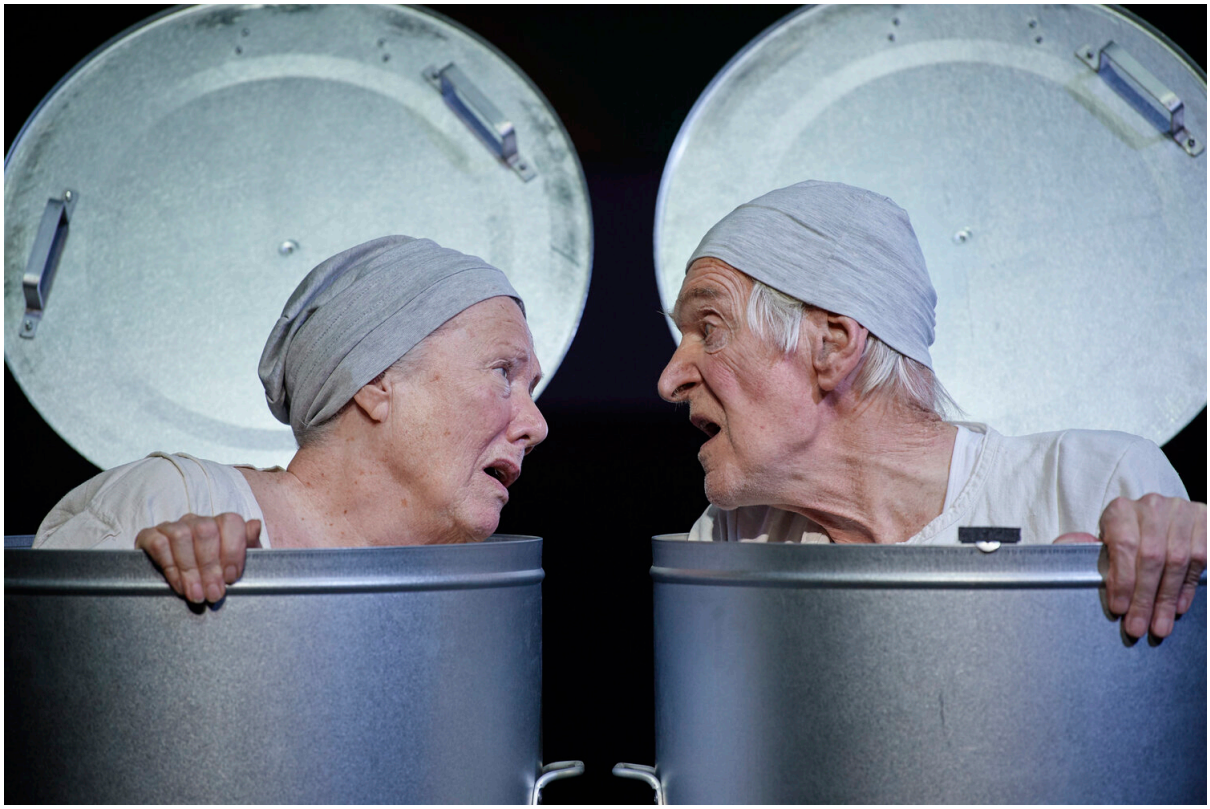

Fig 6. Endgame, Pan Pan, Director Gavin Quinn, Designer Aedín Cosgrove, Actors: Rosaleen Linehan as Nell and Des Keogh as Nagg, Project Arts Centre Dublin, December 2019, Copyright Ros Kavanagh

When Nagg and Nell emerge, they are only visible from the chest up, clad in white gowns and caps that denote Victorian night-dress, casting them as relics. The soft fabric is contrasted with the harsh metallic aspect of their containers: bins that were evidently doubling as beds as well as their bedrooms and day chairs. Hamm's costuming choices suggested a different kind of vulnerability to the Old Vic Hamm; their Hamm, clad in a what might have once been an expensive dressing gown, gold neck scarf and slippers, drew attention to their vulnerability to the outside, reasserting a fragile domesticity. The intimacy of sleeping and what should be the most private space in the home was undercut by the material reality of what contained them. Rather than confirming the existence of a whole, what was visible of their bodies seemed to prove the absence of their lower regions. In our understanding of the imagery within *Endgame* and the subsequent development of the scenography it is interesting to note that:

> In a preliminary two-act version of *Endgame*, a coffin, the presence of which was denied by both characters, sat on the stage for the entire play …That overt emphasis on death and the surreal quality of the coffin was cut, but the image survives […] Moreover, the coffin existed before the introduction of the ashbins and may have been their anticipation. (Gontarski 2019:68)

The way in which the ashcans were foreshadowed by the material presence of an actual coffin takes on a poignant resonance when considering the Old Vic production's portrayal of elderly care in the light of the pandemic[9]. While in Pan Pan's production the presence of the parents conjures the neglect of a private home environment, Laing's decision to position them in what *The Guardian* describes as 'modern municipal wheelie bins for the old folks' home' (Lawson 2020) adds another dimension to the reading of the space in *Endgame.* The space takes on the appearance of functionality and efficacy associated with a care home environment while overlapping with the domestic mundanity of suburbia.

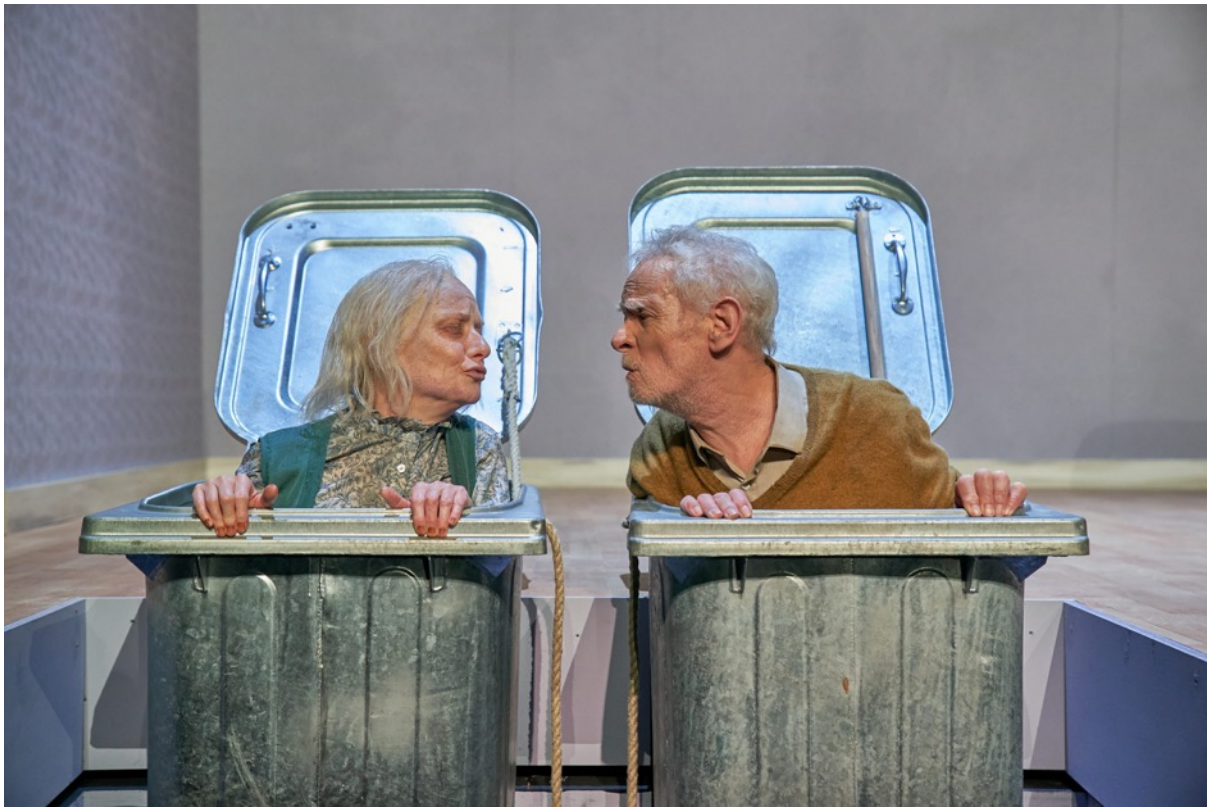

Fig 7. Endgame, Director Richard Jones, Designer Stuart Laing, Actors: Jane Horrocks as Nell and Karl Johnson as Nagg, The Old Vic London February 2020, copyright Manuel Harlan

This contrast between the notion of a more personal neglect conjured by Pan Pan's scenographics and the sense of institutional abandonment in the Old Vic production was also manifested using costume. Instead of nightgowns, Laing's Nagg and Nell were costumed in shirts and blouses, cardigans and jumpers. Nell's green patterned cotton blouse and Nagg's faded off-green shirt both showed signs of long wear; soiled and worn with age, their collars

[9] A reading which becomes quite uncanny on reflection, given that *Endgame* was scheduled long in advance, as were Jones and Laing's intentions for the production.

had long lost their stiffness though Nell's was modestly buttoned to her neck while Nagg's gaped a little, his top button undone for comfort as well as providing a gentle reminder of the fact that any need for a tie had long since passed. Their woollen garments hung loosely over their tops, Nagg's mustard jumper was more heavily soiled. The impression was one of a couple dressed for the day, awaiting visitors or a trip outside but left waiting.

While Pan Pan's Nagg and Nell seemed to inhabit another time and place in the past, the Old Vic production hinted at a time that's ended up speaking to the future – highlighting gaps in the care system that would become fatal in the context of the pandemic. While Pan Pan's presentation of Nagg and Nell sees them wearing soft cloth caps on their heads that hints at old age vulnerability to the cold, Laing's decision to leave them uncovered, thereby revealing their lank, greasy, tousled hair suggests a neglect that is marked by the passage of time and active ill-treatment. That is not to say that concealment does its opposite, but more that their appearance in the Old Vic production embodies a sense of deterioration that is inherent in abandonment to a fate they are ill prepared for.

While many other directors and designers choose to place the bins within the boundaries of the stage space, Laing's interpretation places them in a space that lies below the stage, in a cut-out panel that means they are contained within an area that does not occupy the same level as Hamm and Clov, but instead is slotted into the front of the stage space beneath the level of the floor. The added element of distance from the main theatrical space, which forces Clov to lie prone on the floor to access their living quarters, emphasises the way in which they are resigned to waste. By locating them below the action, their continued existence takes on a Dante-esque quality which further underlines the suggestion that proximity to their containers may be dangerous. Much like the biohazard waste bins in hospitals that are clearly marked by their highlighted appearance, the objects in which they reside become paradoxically elevated by their infectious nature while also being relegated to things which cannot safely share the space of others. What is more, these objects should, in the normal function of a domestic space, be placed outside the interior space, so that they can be emptied or cleaned – to remove the rubbish or waste from the home. Yet, even when placed slightly outside of the action, these remain firmly inside, their situation signalling another breach of the inside outside boundary that draws attention to the nature of the permeable border that is incapable of protecting those inside.

Sterility, Parenthood and Procreation

This section returns to textual analysis to explore the ways parental relationships and power structures feed into the way Beckett challenges preconceptions of domestic space being associated with female dominance. In his reappraisal of the interior domestic environment Beckett's presentation of procreation and reproduction is no longer the responsibility of the female body. While Hamm's relationship with his parents is one fuelled by anger: he cannot comprehend what could have motivated them to bring him into existence, his rage is directed towards his father referring to him as 'accursed progenitor' and again moments later more crudely as 'accursed fornicator' (Beckett 2006:96). Though not communicated, it seems implied that Nagg and Nell's residence within the cans was facilitated by Hamm, or perhaps Clov under Hamm's instruction. Hamm's irritation at their persistence is clear when he commands them to 'silence' and then, 'exasperated' at his father's recollection of the story of the tailor, demands to know 'Have you finished? Will you never finish?' before ordering Clov to 'clear away this muck! Chuck it in the sea!' (Beckett 2006:103). Hamm's references to his parents as 'muck' and the use of the pronoun 'it' combined with their pitiful subsistence within the cans affirms one of the central themes - that 'horror with natural reproduction haunts the play' (Garrard 2011:383-397). For Hamm, Nagg and Nell's presence continues to evoke in him the loathing of his own existence.

> Hamm: … I was like a father to you
> Clov: Yes. (*He looks at Hamm fixedly.*) You were that to me.
> Hamm: My house a home for you.
> Clov: Yes. (*He looks about him*.) This was that for me.
> Hamm: (*Proudly.*) But for me (*gesture towards himself*) no father. But for Hamm (*gesture towards surroundings*) no home.
> (Beckett 2006:111)

In adopting Clov into servitude, Hamm has ensured that the cycle of parenting being synonymous with infantilisation and decline continues in its process by conferring the relationship he has with his own father onto the relationship between himself and Clov.
The attempt to assign them to waste has failed since the waste continues to have a voice; the borders of the ashcans are an effort to demarcate their bodies from his, yet they continue to rise out of them, regaling each other and him with stories of their courtship and their lives prior to

their current position. Hamm does everything he can to prevent them from speaking by silencing them, refusing to acknowledge their autonomy and by trying to throw them out because, according to Kristeva:

> The abject confronts us […] with our earliest attempts to release the hold of maternal entity even before ex-isting outside of her […] it is a violent, clumsy, breaking away, with the constant risk of falling back under the sway of a power as securing as it is stifling. (1982:13)

This Kristevan abjection of the maternal bond is addressed in the second half of the play when Hamm contemplates his own suicide in the form of a watery death on the seashore. He becomes almost instinctually aware that his mother may have passed on. He instructs Clov to 'see if she is dead' (Beckett 2006:122). The theatrical notebooks give some further insight into the development of this scene which is pertinent here:

> When German actress Gudrun Genest asked Beckett directly if Nell had died, he answered smilingly, "so it seems, but no one knows" (although in the *Schiller Nb* Beckett clearly indicates that she is dead) […] Beckett also indicated that a "new feeling" is arising at this point in Clov because the death of Nell suggests the possibility of change […] In Riverside, Clov's announcement of Nell's death is delivered like "good news"; the fact that Nagg still lived was delivered as "bad news". (Gontarski 2019:63)

Hamm's rejection of his parents is a revolt against his own being, that it is directed towards the paternal may be rooted in the fact that he himself is a father figure to the adopted Clov. Despite this, Hamm still longs to be touched and to touch, yet the only person who is capable of it refuses him intimacy. After his mother's death Hamm begs Clov to kiss him, even on the forehead, but Clov replies 'I won't kiss you anywhere' (Beckett 2006:125). Pursuit and destruction of the rat which Clov spots well before Nell's death is the excuse he gives for his turning away from Hamm, yet moments later he announces that 'he got away' (Beckett 2006:126). The notebooks are illuminative on this point,

> Clov takes great pleasure in announcing the escape of the rat. Hamm is helpless, seated, unable to move and the half- dead rat will eventually get him. Of this report of the rat's

> escape and Clov's tormenting Hamm about the possibility of pain-killer […] Beckett said during Riverside rehearsals, "One of the cruellest sections of the play". (Gontarski 2019:65)

Yet what is even more revealing is Beckett's expectations of the responses to the play, his desire is not to produce any sense of pity or compassion for as he remarks in the Berlin diary, 'Pathos is the death of the play' (Gontarski 2019:65). The sense of enduring suffering seems to be at the crux of the action, there must be no let up, no pause for quiet contemplation or reflection. There is no room for such emotions which might create an artificial and peremptory climax of feeling resulting in an attempt to find resolution. Instead, we are invited to participate in the world of the play, a space in which ending gives way to ambiguity and the everyday becomes entangled in the forever after. Hamm's desire for some existential confirmation of the present moment is the same reason he narrates his chronicle, even to the reluctant ear. The hope that by narrating the past he might be able to negotiate the future. He wakes his father to hear his story, not caring whether he engages in dialogue, merely that he is conscious of his speaking.

The episode of Hamm's request for a dog and Clov's subsequent 'making' of the dog has a symbolic quality that Paul Lawley in his essay on 'Adoption in *Endgame*' explores:

> The connection between adoption and servanthood is an important one. Hamm sees all relationships, whether with his 'son' or with his toy dog […] or with his 'bottled' father, in terms of dominance or servitude. Upon an adopted son he can bring to bear a pressure of obligation [...] the adopted child is expected to feel he owes a debt because he was chosen. The trouble with biological parenthood […] is that you can't choose. (1988:530)

Hamm commissions Clov to make him a dog that fulfils certain aesthetic and genetic characteristics, a white Pomeranian with silky fur. However, in both the Pan Pan and the Old Vic productions, the dog fails to meet the requirements; it is incomplete, black and more closely resembles a small terrier or poodle than a Pomeranian. Its fur is coarse rather than silky and it cannot stand because it only has three legs. The ribbon that Hamm asks to be tied around its neck doesn't exist because it is not finished. When Clov angrily tells Hamm 'First you finish your dog and then you put on his ribbon' (Beckett 2006:111) the exchange explores Hamm's frustration at his inability to assert his dominance over this creature even though he brought it into existence which serves to further Lawley's argument. It highlights Hamm's need to assert

himself in the space through domination. Hamm's persistence in asking Clov if the animal can stand despite the absence of a limb is really a way of asking if the animal can be obedient and imploring in ways that match the expectation of his adopted son to be grateful. In the final scenes of the play, as Clov is looking out of the window with the telescope, Hamm demands his dog. Clov is angry, but searches on the floor and as he 'hastens toward Hamm and strikes him on the head violently with the dog', the dog falls to the ground and Hamm is horrified and hurt:

> Hamm: He hit me!
> Clov: You drive me mad, I'm mad!
> Hamm: If you must hit me, hit me with the axe… or with the gaff, hit me with the gaff. Not with the dog. With the gaff. Or with the axe.
> [*Clov picks up the dog and gives it to Hamm who takes it in his arms*]
> (Beckett 2006:130)

Clov's deliberate cruelty in striking Hamm with the dog seems to spark in Hamm a sense of shock at this imaginative punishment: it appears to be the one thing that Hamm cannot bear in amongst all the unbearable scenarios he has faced. As he cradles his creation, Clov returns to the window and spots a small boy in the distance. He tells Hamm that he will go and see, and that he will take the gaff; we assume that he intends violence towards the child, presumably to end the cycle of adoption and fatherhood that the child may continue if he were to try and find shelter in their company. Hamm's instruction to Clov is clear, 'No'. Clov takes Hamm's instruction for disbelief, perhaps as a way to prevent him from going outside and therefore leaving for good. But this does not appear to be his intention, and he tells Clov to leave the gaff before he announces with seeming finality 'It's the end, Clov, we've come to the end. I don't need you anymore' (Beckett 2006:131). It is difficult to know with any certainty what brings about Hamm's seeming acceptance of the situation, but the connection between Clov using the dog to exert violence upon Hamm is significant. One could argue that the appearance of the boy moments later is what brings about the ending of the play. Hamm cannot bear the potential for continuity that the boy may embody; he has used his own adopted son as a servant and prisoner, believing himself to be justified in his actions by the act of saving him from a certain and more immediate death. Yet to see his own creation - the dog - used against him is a step too far. In that moment of violence Hamm sees the limits of his own endurance as well as Clov's and understands that the cruelty inherent in parenthood is one that cannot continue

unchecked. The game they are engaged in is one of pretence, that fatherhood necessitates kindness and gratitude on the part of the child, whatever form it may take and however that child may have come into the home, whether biologically or through adoption or even manufacture. Parenthood is marked by resentment as Hamm asks himself preparing for Clov's apparent departure, 'You want him to bloom while you are withering?'. Ideas about waste and destruction in the text therefore extend to the set in the most unexpected way, not through preponderance or proliferation but through its opposite, a fastidiousness that hints at closing, of things coming to an end.

How Illness Transforms Engagement With Domestic Space

This final part of the chapter returns to the case studies of the productions through the retrospective lens of the pandemic during which this chapter and much of the thesis was written. It aims to explore the way in which the nature of domestic homes and care homes and the day to day lives of those within them might offer a means of retrospectively framing and interpreting the nature of the domestic space and ideas around illness and old age within the play. Pan Pan's production in Dublin at the end of 2019 just as the virus was gaining traction globally was then followed by the Old Vic production that opened in Jan 2020. The Old Vic made the decision to close less than 8 weeks after opening and prior to the national ~~the~~ lockdown being imposed in the UK in March 2020, the first theatre to close in an independent response to the growing threat of the pandemic and the danger posed to those in close confined spaces such as those of a theatre. The binary oppositions of inside and outside that were so aggressively charged within the play had escaped the stage and entered the real world. Hamm's suggestion that 'outside of here is death' (Beckett 2006: 96) was no longer a supposition.

The most poignant of the parallels was the way the hospital/medical space had become synonymous with the domestic one because of the need to quarantine a nation within their homes. The spaces had not physically changed but the modes of inhabitancy, perception and experience of them certainly did. Quarantine meant that the elderly and those who were suffering with serious disability or illness but still able to live independently were asked to 'shield' for up to six months which meant in practice having to avoid all unnecessary contact with the outside world, even from their extended families and those outside of their own home. For the elderly or disabled who were living in care homes it meant that access to those outside their environment was avoided at all costs but with a more chilling caveat; the discovery that

care home staff were told to apply do not resuscitate (DNR)[10] policies to their clients, often without their knowledge because of the pressures on hospitals. The fact that this led to unprecedented numbers of elderly people dying within care homes is one which resonates deeply with the play's presentation of the elderly as being synonymous with waste. The personal situations of those who had seen the play just months before they were confined to their homes during lockdown in the UK and Ireland just a couple of months after these productions allows a unique phenomenological insight into the dynamics of the space of *Endgame* and the way hostile situations outside their domestic space have transformed the way they mediate the interior action of the play[11].

For Merleau-Ponty, space does not have an objective existence outside of our experiential relationship with it. The bodies that are contained within the space and the function and condition of these bodies dictates the way the space is presented and perceived by its occupants. The bodies in *Endgame* are ones which are physically deteriorating or unable to function in expected ways. There is a reciprocity between their physical conditions and the conditions in which they live determining their existence, but also influencing and being influenced by the space around them. *Endgame* invites the audience to consider the inevitable recalibration of the modes of interpersonal relations when illness by its very nature necessitates an intimacy of interpersonal relations that may have been absent or unwanted by the independent body.

In the 2013 paper 'Getting to know Patients' Lived Space', researchers conducted a detailed study that attempted to 'relate patients' lived space to a phenomenological view of lived space in order to illustrate the radical influence of illness on patients' lifeworld […]' (Norlyk, Martinsen, Dahlberg 2013:1). Their paper was aimed at grasping the way those who are ill relate to their surroundings and how illness can change their relationship with their domestic space. Underpinning their study was a phenomenological approach rooted in the belief that fundamentally the 'body is our general medium for having a world' (Merleau-Ponty 2003:169), and that 'To be a body, is to be tied to a certain world, as we have seen; our body is not primarily in space: it is of it' (Merleau-Ponty 2003:171). As a result, for those whose

[10] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/12/inquiry-begins-into-blanket-use-in-england-of-covid-do-not-resuscitate-orders
[date accessed December 19 2023]

[11] It is interesting to note that the pandemic, the situation of being confined at home, the sense of isolation and illness generated articles and conferences into the parallels and resonances with Beckett that generated an online conference **At Home with Beckettians (Notes from the Lockdown)** (JOBS, vol 29 issue 2, September 2020) as well as the virtual roundtable discussion documented in '***Endgame* for Our Times? A Virtual Roundtable on Beckett, Celebrity, & Crisis**' (JOBS vol 30 issue 1, April 2021)

illness requires hospitalisation, the study found that there was a complex system of relations emerging between the patient and their environment. Norlyk et al.'s research led them to several studies that showed a clear link between the healing process and the physical environment which showed a difference in the speed and quality of recovery being directly linked with their access/view of a natural landscape.

In the Old Vic production, this sense of a care home environment gone awry was particularly acute through the manifestation of the scenographic detail. The faded blueish-grey of the walls worked in tandem with the floral printed curtains to create the impression of a care home. The UPVC double-glazed windows, with their plastic handles out of reach except by ladder to prevent easy opening or breakage were noticeably institutional and added to the semantic field of the hospital environment. The patients' inability to have visual access to the outside world is a theme that emerged as a major factor in Norlyk et al.'s study, which proposed that 'post-surgical patients recovering in a room looking out on a natural scene tend to recover faster than do patients in rooms that face a brick wall' (Norlyk, Martinsen and Dahlberg 2013:2). Similarly, a study commissioned by the National Gardens Scheme for The Kings Fund in 2016 states that 'Increasing people's exposure to, and use of, green spaces has been linked to long-term reductions in overall reported health problems' (Buck 2016:6). Much has been done in the real world to absorb the results of these and many other studies into the design and architecture of spaces designated for those who are recovering from mental or physical illness. What adds to the dysphoria of the hospital environment is the sense that:

> Despite being constantly surrounded by people, patients also experienced the space of the hospital as a place in which they felt lonely, on their own and even deserted […] patients described how they feared having been forgotten by the professionals … the experience of loneliness […] is clearly connected to a sense of belongingness and not to the number of people by whom one is surrounded. (Norlyk, Martinsen & Dahlberg 2013:7)

This sense of alienation is particularly jarring precisely because hospitals are meant to be a place where individuals should feel their needs are being met, and that their care and well-being is paramount to those who are responsible for them and which should be reflected in the physical backdrop against which these acts of care take place.

In an essay by the writer Sinéad Gleeson for the *Wellcome Collection* the disconcerting fracture between the intentionality of the space and the way in which it is received is explored from a literary perspective. Her first observation, which she makes when visiting a friend in hospital, recalls the way in which a lack of privacy can play a vital part in the paradoxical nature of what is meant to be a healing space, 'Except for a curtain, there is little privacy in this shared space. This woman deserves to be cared for in a single room. In her vulnerable state, this should be a fundamental right' (2020:2). In the shared experience of pain within a medicalised setting, there seems to be an uneasy intimacy - an encroachment of private trauma into a public domain. This breach is seen to be acceptable because all those who are in hospital are suffering in some way and have left the privacy of their homes to seek treatment and relief. Their new homes become the space occupied by their bed, with the 'walls' of their house demarked by their cubicles. Illness and pain are so subjective in their individual manifestations that the shared understanding of what it is to be in pain defies a universal definition, and yet it is at this point of vulnerability and inexpressibility that necessity dictates we force these individuals to share a communal space that cuts across age and gender. Pain creates a world of uncertainty and fear, and the hospital space can compound the patient's worst nightmares; lending weight to the possibility that their suffering may continue indefinitely or even get worse. Illness has the ability to strip people of their normal inhibitions, which in turn resets and redraws the boundaries of social acceptability. Not only were the aesthetics and visual surroundings an important factor in healing, sound was also was a significant factor in the quality of patient recovery. Hospitals are frequently loud, noisy places and the intrusiveness and inability to control the sound in their environment is another aspect of the patient's experience within the hospital space. Rest may be integral to regrowth and repair, but:

> Hospitals are also a cacophonic noise bin. Footsteps, the pulse of equipment, the clatter of trays, doors opening and closing. There is rarely a time when a ward is fully devoid of sound. Someone somewhere is always doing something. Eating, talking, watching TV, wailing. (Gleeson 2020:8)

The unwelcome intimacy that compounds the sufferer's isolation combined with the incessant noise of the care environment is bound to the object of the whistle in *Endgame*. It immediately conjures associations with the playground and the infantile modes of control utilised by teachers as well as early iterations of law enforcement. The whistle in the Old Vic production is worn on a red string, dangling against Hamm's soiled vest and bare chest. While both Clov

and the grandparents' costumes gently suggest the post-war aesthetic: blouses and checked shirts are combined with sweater vests and bow ties, Hamm's dressing gown takes on the faded glory of the bohemian gone to seed. His red whistle has a piercing shriek, but its aural command and associations with power are undercut by its material property; plastic instead of metal – the object becomes at once associated with fragility and impermanence, imitating its metal counterpart without embodying its solidity. Hamm's whistle is a toy that with each 'pip' marks its owners attempts to command the air around him without the ability to consolidate it in physical movement. His blow of the whistle is a way for him to draw attention to his needs, to bring Clov to him. By replacing speech with the sound of a whistle, it seems that Beckett's intention is to show Hamm's reliance on objects that attempt to control the world around him where his body has failed. Yet the whistle, like any call, still relies on the whistled to respect the whistler, it only works if he who is being summoned comes when called:

> Hamm: I can't leave you
> Clov: I know. And you can't follow me.
> [*Pause*]
> Hamm: If you leave me how shall I know?
> Clov: [*Briskly.*] Well you simply whistle me and if I don't come running it means I've left you […]
> (Beckett 2006:114)

However, Hamm is not satisfied with this answer, he ponders the thought that Clov's failure to answer may lead to more than one possibility, that of Clov's death or worse, Clov's disobedience. He demands that Clov comes up with a solution:

> Clov: You whistle me. I don't come. The alarm rings. I'm gone. It doesn't ring. I'm dead.
> […]
> *Enter Clov with alarm-clock. He holds it against Hamm's ear and releases the alarm. They listen to it ringing to the end* […] (Beckett 2006:115)

Clov's plan to signal his departure with an object whose name not only describes its sound but also sums up the physical response to its call is a dastardly one. His instalment of the alarm clock allows him to assert his dominance over Hamm's whistle, by supplanting its

phenomenological sovereignty as an object by ensuring that its sonic dominance is quieted by the final ring of the alarm that only he can control. The implication that the alarm will only ring if Clov decides to leave or chooses no longer to answer Hamm's whistle is one that removes all agency from Hamm: the alarm will not ring immediately, its blistering sound is foregrounded in the notion that it will be set for some unknown time within the clock's 24hr capacity, presumably long after Clov has left and means that Hamm is left with the possibility of waiting, long after his whistle has beckoned Clov, to wonder if he has died or escaped. Beckett uses sound to illustrate the transfer of power from father to son through the inadequacy of the whistle which relies on the agency of the whistle blower to give the object its authority. Clov's superiority is achieved by virtue of his command over an object that can do his bidding without the need of physical immediacy.

This rendering of the domestic environment as a space in which those who are unwell or incapacitated must cede their sense of control reminds us of the precarity of existence that the healthy body may attempt to ignore. Oliver Burkeman in his column 'How to cope with Radical Uncertainty' for *The Guardian* during the pandemic in March 2020, draws on an interesting observation from C.S. Lewis just before the outbreak of WWII;

> In 1939, in a sermon preached at Oxford University in the midst of a different global crisis, CS Lewis made a distinction that's worth revisiting today. It wasn't the case, he pointed out, that the outbreak of war had rendered human life suddenly fragile; rather, it was that people were suddenly realising it always had been. "The war creates no absolutely new situation," Lewis said. "It simply aggravates the permanent human situation so that we can no longer ignore it. Human life has always been lived on the edge of a precipice […] We are mistaken when we compare war with 'normal life'. Life has never been normal. (2020)

C.S Lewis' comment suggests writing about *Endgame* during a global health emergency does not change the nature of the play, but simply emphasises the fragility of its characters because our own precarious hold on health and life have been made so apparent. The nature of the body is such that we are either living in the moment before we are unwell, or enduring ill health. What the pandemic highlighted was that in unprecedented situations any space can become a medical space and in the context of the pandemic this facilitates a reading of the domestic interior of the play as one that is as crucial to recovery or as susceptible to failure as the medical space of the hospital in maintaining or compromising quality of life.

Returning to the study by Norlyk et al., it becomes apparent that their findings into the nature of the patient experience within the medical environment are consistent with the dynamics of the domestic power structures within *Endgame*.

> The hospital setting seems to have its own modality of spatial meanings. It is like a world of its own that the patients cannot influence. Lived space at the hospital is characterized by a specific logic and atmosphere. In this space, there is a complex and potentially intimidating web of power [...] In the hospital, space is a specific set of implicit expectations related to expected behaviour […] The lived space at the hospital has its own norms and its own script, which implicitly define the patient's role as that of the good, cooperative patient. (Norlyk, Martinsen & Dahlberg 2013: 6).

The sense of expectation of 'patient' behaviour is interwoven into the relationships between the characters, as well as the aesthetics of the space. While in a hospital these structures manifest themselves in a 'top down' imbalance of power, in the play there is a more complex interrelation at work. By supplanting the dynamics of patient-care ethics into a domestic environment, Beckett has presented a situation where there can be no medical hierarchy of care; there are no doctors – only patients, and these patients are all in various states of decay whose personal connections with one another create a multi-layered system of oppositions that serve to undermine or bolster their dominance or subservience in a manner that defies neat definition. In Hamm's relationship with Clov as his primary carer for the household there is familial conflict that intercedes in the possibility of a resolution. In their study Norlyk et al., note that the home space is usually one which engenders a healing quality: 'patients described how things such as sleeping in their own beds and having their own familiar belongings have an important healing influence […] one patient described it as follows, 'At home I can be myself'' (Norlyk, Martinsen & Dahlberg 2013:7). This ability for the individual to be themselves is key to the way in which the home space becomes diametrically opposed to the hospital or medical space. The patient's independence or feeling of empowerment is key to their progress, and this goes hand in hand with the way they can control or impose their specific needs or routines which may be in conflict with the structure of a hospital space where these decisions are taken out of their hands.

> In such a personal space, patients change the role from complying and adapting to taking over and taking charge. Professional recommendations are adjusted on the

> patient's own framework of understanding … for example, one patient stated: 'I decided to throw out the painkillers […]' In this personal space at home, the patients adhere to their own principles … patients who needed assisted feeding could emphasize the relational aspect of the meal by choosing to eat together with the personal assistants, relatives or visitors. (Norlyk, Martinsen & Dahlberg 2013:7)

Yet in *Endgame,* the role of the patient having control over their care within a familiar setting is given a fresh layer of complexity through the relationship between Hamm and Clov. The domestic space should bring greater control and sense of well-being to the patient, however, what causes disorientation and a breakdown of relations between the space and its occupants is not only created by the objects to which they are bound, but the carer upon which they depend. In James Knowlson's detailed study of the production notebooks which examined Beckett's role as director he observed:

> One of the important changes that Beckett made in the 1980 San Quentin production of *Endgame* was to add further deliberate deceitfulness to Clov's relations with Hamm". This deceit also emanates from Clov's desire to move about the refuge as little as possible, since he finds movement acutely painful. (1987:455)

The current socio-political climate allows us to reflect on the most recent staging of *Endgame* at the Old Vic with a philosophical and literal urgency. The fact that it was compelled to close within a few weeks of opening lays bare the subtext that was always present: that our physical health is the major factor that intervenes in the conception of a domestic space as one that is safe and one that is fraught with uncertainty. The fact that Clov's deceit and refusal to comply with Hamm's needs stem from his own illness and incapacitation are a telling reminder of the way the domestic space cannot transform into a care environment if those who are administering the care have their own health needs. It is a reminder that the domestic space as a care environment breaks down when those in charge are forced out of necessity to fulfil professional care roles and/or ill equipped to serve the needs of those around them.

Food and Medicine

The role of food in *Endgame* could be read as a metaphor for the relational dynamics in the play. Nagg is the only character who seems to crave it; in the opening scenes of the play his hunger sets him apart from the others, he repeatedly seeks nourishment and his requests are his first words in the play, 'Me pap' he cries some four times. His demands for this gruel-like substance, a soft polenta-style carbohydrate made from maize, reveal two things: firstly, the way in which age has brought about a reversal of roles – Hamm's father is now infantilised in his dependency on his son for food – but secondly, that the food he wants is so basic that it is not rooted in desire but simply hunger. Hamm does not wish to deny him; it is Clov who announces that 'there is no more pap', but Hamm's delight in proclaiming, 'Do you hear that? There's no more pap. You'll never get any more pap' (Beckett 2006:96) is controlling and cruel. Hamm uses food as a means of power over the household, despite his inability to physically administer or dole out the rations. Food becomes the commodity that reinforces the boundaries of dominance, and the reserves of food are seemingly controlled by Hamm and are his only means of enforcing his sway over his father and Clov:

> Hamm: I'll give you nothing more to eat.
> Clov: Then we'll die.
> Hamm: I'll give you just enough to keep you from dying. You'll be hungry all the time. (Beckett 2006:95)

The fact that Hamm neither enters the kitchen, nor provides even the meagre rations of biscuits, exposes the imbalance of power between them. Clov allows Hamm to be in control and to exert his authority through food over the entire household; he is complicit in Hamm's fantasy of control, allowing him to believe that he is the one that regulates the management of food, and permitting his fallacy of domination by playing into this narrative and reinforcing the illusion. However it is Clov who first informs Nagg that he will not be getting any more 'pap', and it is also Clov who negotiates the hard biscuits that Nagg preciously hoarded to share with Nell. When Hamm suggests there may be 'sugar plums' Clov doesn't intervene and stays silent as Hamm gleefully informs his father that 'there are no more sugar plums' (Beckett 2006:119). Clov wants Hamm to believe that he is in charge, and it could be argued that by maintaining this falsehood Clov is able to assert a level of control that could never be gained through honest

means. His manipulation of Hamm is exerted at a level that is invisible to Hamm both literally and figuratively; a form of coercion borne of resentment just like Hamm's with his parents.

While Clov does allow Hamm to dominate him using food and the combination to the larder as a way of controlling his movement, Clov uses more subversive tactics to bend Hamm to his will, by playing on Hamm's disability and illness. His rituals of power use sound and touch to create illusions that Hamm does not have the power to dispel because of his blindness and physical incapacity. As the only character with physical agency, Clov is in command of the objects around the home, and as caregiver his authority on medication and waking hours as well as the sounds of the environment are within his charge: he rules the phenomenological landscape of their refuge and manipulates them at his behest.

Although Hamm and Clov cannot individually control the immediate surrounding space, Clov achieves dominion over the immediate surroundings in a way that is not practically possible for Hamm. As a result, their power struggle is fought on a more intimate level – by attempting to engage with the internal space of the bodies themselves. Their battle is mapped out in a number of ways, the first of which is through medicine. Hamm never calls for food, we assume that he is in too much pain to be hungry or, perhaps it is that he does not wish to give Clov the satisfaction of denying him. Yet medication is a basic need on both a physical and symbolic level; Hamm wishes to quell the pain of being alive. Over the course of the play, Clov allows him to ask for his pain-killer four times before he finally responds in the affirmative:

Hamm: Is it not time for my pain-killer?
Clov: Yes
Hamm: Ah! At last! Give it to me! Quick!
(*pause*)
Clov: There's no more pain-killer
(*pause*)
Hamm: (*Appalled.*) Good …! (*Pause*) No more pain-killer!
Clov: No more pain-killer. You'll never get any more pain-killer.
(*Pause.*)
Hamm: But the little round box. It was full!
Clov: Yes. But now it's empty.
[…]
Hamm: (*Soft.*) What'll I do? (*Pause. In a scream*.) What'll I do?

(Beckett 2006:127)

Hamm's trust in Clov seems curious, and one might question why he does not keep the pills that he needs about his person. Why does he allow Clov to control his suffering and his relief, when it seems that he considers it Clov's role to take care of him, however inept or uncaring he may appear? Like all parents he projects onto Clov his needs and expectations. Since Clov finds himself flitting between son, servant and carer all at once, it becomes impossible to tell if he revels in the secret knowledge of keeping Hamm waiting only to deny him, or whether he keeps Hamm from hysteria by maintaining the possibility that there may yet be some relief.

For Clov, this relationship has become one in which he maintains his authority by implicating the routines and behaviour of their environment into a structure that mimics the most disempowering elements of the hospital setting. Clov does this through a variety of means that ensure Hamm remains at his mercy as caregiver. In the conclusion of the study, the authors found that patients whose ill health impedes on their home space can have the effect of transforming what was once a refuge into a space that is fraught with anxiety:

> Illness has the power to radically change an individual's lifeworld and that the experience of lived space in illness changes significantly […] physical space itself takes on a restrictive character. Also, in illness other people and the outside world recede into the distance […] Consequently, illness itself means a disruption of lived space in which functional space assumes a problematic nature […] [to the point that] the former well-known home became a strange and even dangerous place. (Norlyk, Martinsen and Dahlberg 2013:8)

Crucially, in the play as well as in the real world, when the characteristics of medicalised or care spaces impede on life in the home it may be subsumed by the negative connotations,

> Positive spatial experiences of home may change during illness […] home can become unmanageable and unfriendly and a place in which patients feel alone and unseen […] the meaning of home among people suffering from an illness may be an ambivalent experience and is different from the meaning of home among healthy people. (Norlyk, Martinsen & Dahlberg 2013:9)

Clov's care for Hamm belies his seeming subservience. He is not only responsible for his adopted father, but also his grandparents. His own health is failing, and the physical rest that Hamm is afforded beneath the sheet while being wheeled around is not available to him, nor is the seclusion of the ashcans. Clov cannot sit and therefore cannot relax, he is subjected to their vocal demands and so he takes his revenge by subjecting them to what lies beyond their physical capacity. First and foremost, this happens by his uncovering of the characters, which immediately ensures that the start of their day is not in their hands. By removing the most basic of rights – the decision to begin one's day – we see an immediate parallel between the space of *Endgame* and that of a hospital/care space where patients are awoken by those in charge. Hamm finds waking an unbearable reminder of his situation and demands that Clov should 'get me ready, I'm going to bed' to which Clov responds, 'I've just got you up'. This scene disempowers Hamm from the outset by reinforcing his lack of agency in the most simplistic of actions, while it also recalls the changed role reversal of parent and child. The child has now achieved dominion over the parent in their most primary function – that of being awake and taken out of bed, but also recalls the way patients in hospital are bound to routines of day and night that are dictated by the authority of the carer. Clov tells him, 'I can't be getting you up and putting you to bed every five minutes, I have things to do' (Beckett 2006:94). Clov's needs as his carer are immediately supplanted over those of Hamm and the space in which he is awake is no longer one over which he has control. In the caring environment of a medical space this disenfranchisement of the patient is one that is supported because the needs of the many are considered over those of the individual. However, this forced waking and sleeping is also a method used by torturers and kidnappers over those they have imprisoned or incarcerated as a way of breaking their spirit and forcing them to succumb to their captors' agenda.

Conclusion

The home in *Endgame* is destroyed by the rupture of routine and a form of dispossession, as the status of domestic space becomes defined by loss and absence. By taking in Clov, Hamm was robbed of his role as child and his sense of dominion over the domestic space, the appearance of the boy would serve to further supplant Hamm's role as father. He may never have wished to become a father to Clov but, in that moment of apparent compassion, Hamm found himself filling a position that he never expected to occupy. It is not choice or a chance that Clov is willing to take, since it would then force him to be cast in the role of father. The question of whether the boy Clov sees through his telescope outside the refuge exists is also in

question, and it is therefore essential that we take into account the possibility that the sighting of the boy is simply an excuse for Clov to leave, or another way to torture Hamm with the prospect of the unknown. All his minor disobediences and betrayals have been leading up to this, and this idea of deception is made clear by Beckett in his guidance to Clov during the Berlin production, 'You are not looking outside anymore; Clov already knows there is nothing there' (Gontarski 2019: xix). Parenthood should be a selfless act, but in *Endgame* it is one which perpetuates harm under the guise of care: the relationships between parents and children are marked by neglect and resentment and a bitterness for prolonging their existence or keeping them in a state of perpetual obligation.

The space that they fill cannot be described as a shelter if it does not provide nurture or safety. When new life represents the impossible rather than its opposite, there is no future. Neither Hamm nor Clov seek or desire redemption – for that they would have to learn a new language, but instead they long for silence. The final moments of *Endgame*, regardless of the production, inform the very essence of the play:

> To Beckett's sensibility, the whole of *Endgame* had been driving to that final 'frozen posture', outside, beyond language, yet as tied to and dependent on it as Lucky to Pozzo, as light to dark, as music to rest, as being to nothing; Clov dressed to leave, yet hesitating: Hamm resigned to an inevitable end, yet resisting. (Gontarski 2019:xx)

The sense of home has been destroyed by the purgatorial hinterland that they are resigned to, on the verge of action but incapable of the decisiveness required to realise that home as we understand it no longer exists. In the lead up to the final scene, Clov declares that there are no more coffins, exorcising the concept of home not only for the living but for the dead. He recalls Hamm's prophecy that one day the interior will reflect the exterior as their home becomes a graveyard:

> You'll look at the wall a while, then you'll say, I'll close my eyes, perhaps have a little sleep, after that I'll feel better, and you'll close them. And when you open them again there'll be no wall any more […] Infinite emptiness will be all around you, all the resurrected dead of all the ages wouldn't fill it, and there you'll be like a little bit of grit in the middle of the steppe. (Beckett 2006:110)

The image of a wasteland, where emptiness abounds as walls crumble is a powerful one, recalling the collapse of the home in *Eleutheria*, but offering something less benign than the country road of *Godot.* This description of the future could be interpreted as a powerful transition through Beckett's development and portrayal of the domestic in his work. The idea of home doubling as a grave is one that permeates the plays across these chapters and it always returns to the notion of collapse that begins in *Eleutheria.* Here though Beckett allows Hamm to speculate on the Bachelardian notion of the house as the protector of the dreamer, what happens then if the walls crumble and 'infinite emptiness' abounds? The imagery of war, of decimation and a vestigial domesticity that is haunted by destruction is the lens through which Beckett's domesticity endures, particularly when home in all its manifestations seems to incubate the anxieties and horrors of the exterior. The concept of shelter, of refuge is exposed as a fallacy. In this exploration of Beckett's theatre one might argue that the little bit of grit that finds itself in the middle of this waking nightmare transfigures into the character of Winnie in *Happy Days*. Alone in a wasteland, surrounded by what might be the decimated structure of what was once a home Winnie tries to draw on what resources she has.

Chapter Three

Disaster, Displacement and Domesticity: Winnie's survival strategies in *Happy Days*

While the chapter on *Godot* served to examine the way the domestic rituals and routines of an unrelated pair of elderly companions can habituate - and to some extent tame - a hostile outdoor space even in the absence of a traditional home, the analysis of *Endgame* sought to ascertain what happens when we are presented with a non-traditional familial unit, where each member is physically compromised and confined within a makeshift interior.At the end of the previous chapter, Hamm's prophecy of a future where even the dubious structure of the shelter has been compromised by disaster offers a segue into the space of *Happy Days,* Beckett's fourth major theatre play. Written between 1960-61, Beckett's design of the mound continues the dialogue with home and its manifestation in the post war context but is also set against the backdrop of the fraught political relations emerging during the sixties. The situation of political brinkmanship between the US and Cuba during this period included the Bay of Pigs invasion that led to the Cuban Missile Crisis, drawing the world into yet another close encounter with the very real possibility of all out nuclear war.

Happy Days exposes the predicament of a middle-aged woman named Winnie who is being swallowed up by a mound in which she is already half buried or surrounded. While Beckett's first three plays focused largely on male characters and relationships and dialogue, *Happy Days* marks a departure from his earlier writing with the key role played by a woman and, although her husband is present, the work largely takes the form of a monologue. The infinite space that Hamm describes is hinted at through scenographic landscapes that offer no refuge except subterranean enclosure. In the text, Winnie and Willie are presented almost as time travellers, leftovers of a bygone era of bourgeois contentment and mundanity. Winnie talks endlessly of the 'old style' (Beckett 2006:151) in reference to the way things used to be and her language and belongings are, just like herself and Willie, at odds with the location and situation in which they find themselves. Beckett encapsulates and revisits some of the critical attitudes towards bourgeois complacency and denial that he initially explored in his first play *Eleutheria*. In this, the protagonist Victor finds himself caught in a web of hypocrisy that his family continue to cling to even in the aftermath of war. The family home in which Victor is contained against his will at first attempts to construct the trappings of

middle-class status and respectability through its proliferation of furniture and supposed home comforts. However, this façade of banal domesticity is undermined by the barbed wire that lines the interior and which foreshadows its physical collapse. Evoking the material reality of destruction and juxtaposing it with the markers of bourgeois conventionality is a theme that Beckett keeps returning to in his work. While Beckett may have refused to have *Eleutheria* published, these ideas continued to emerge in different scenographic representations; none more poignantly than the predicament of Winnie and Willie, who are removed from the irreverent complacency of European middle-class dissatisfaction and transplanted into a world which they haven't the tools to negotiate, let alone escape. The scenography is central to the world of the play and Winnie's character as designer Sophie Jump argues:

> The setting is necessary to convey the absurdity and hopelessness of her relentless optimism. If Winnie were placed in a wheelchair rather than being buried up to her waist then the contrapuntal positioning of her psychological state and physical environment which stops the play tipping into bathos would collapse. (2015:175)

Despite her predicament, Winnie attempts to normalise the situation by clinging to a fragile domesticity that she reclaims from the material remnants of the life she once had, while her husband Willie all but ignores her, hidden in a corner of the mound that consumes her. This chapter argues that the mound in all its many staging iterations remains the key to interpreting *Happy Days* seeking to establish that the mound's actions of engulfing and burial, whether it be water, soil or stone, are central to both its power and our understanding of Winnie's attempts to survive through the precarious domesticity that she establishes. By utilising objects that would normally be asscociated with the everyday this thesis seeks to evaluate how these items behave when taken out of context and how their use can establish or generate new ways of thinking about what it means to be home even in unexpected or extreme situations.

Just as the analyses of home in *Endgame* were explored through the social and medical contexts of the pandemic, the textual reading and modern performance analysis of *Happy Days* case studies are set against the backdrop of the landmark judgements of the 2015 *Paris Agreement*[12]. This context coincides with the work of three prominent female directors whose

[12] https://unfccc.int/topics/gender/workstreams/chronology-of-gender-in-the-intergovernmental-process [date accessed 19 Dec 2023]

productions of *Happy Days* are interpreted here through their focus on the female experience of forging domesticity and home in situations of precarity and instability whether as a result of natural disaster, ageing or homelessness. Reading *Happy Days* in relation to a framework focusing on the impact of climate change specifically on women can facilitate fresh and nuanced understandings of Winnie's predicament and temerity. The textual and performance analyses in this chapter hone in on Winnie's relationship with her bag and its contents, which provide a familiarity and recreation of domesticity that is relatable to women in situations of displacement.

The 2015 *Paris Agreement* of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change recognised and made provision for the fact that women are likely to be disproportionately affected in the context of environmental disaster. Winnie's predicament in *Happy Days* does not directly reference any specific event, meaning that individual directors can bring contemporary resonances to bear upon the work through their staging: two of the three modern productions explored in this chapter take their lead from the devasted depiction of the natural environment, emphasising the climate emergency and its consequences. The design by Alex Eales for director Katie Mitchell's version (2015)[13] places Winnie inside the kitchen of her home and instead of soil she is submerged in water which threatens to drown her. Sarah Frankcom's production, designed by Naomi Dawson (2018)[14], presents something closer to the original mound but studded into the earth are detritus and plastic waste; the mound revolves as it draws Winnie deeper and from its edges seeps a constant trickle of water, moving slowly outwards towards the audience. Mitchell and Frankcom's different but equally dynamic use of water as well as the innovative reimagining of the mounds may contravene Beckett's stage directions that it be executed with the 'maximum of simplicity', but their decision to do so ensures that Beckett's work remains relevant to key debates around women and the role of gender in the face of environmental crisis. The final and most recent of the case studies from Ireland's Company SJ, presents a radical reimagining of the play through a site-responsive Irish language production on the island of Inis Oírr, *Laethanta Sona* (2021)[15]. Water was embedded

[13] *Glükliche Tag* directed by Katie Mitchell and designed by Alex Eales was presented in 2015 at the Deutsches SchauSpielHaus, Hamburg.

[14] *Happy Days* was directed by Sarah Frankcom (– artistic associate Maxine Peake) and designed by Naomi Dawson in 2018 at the Manchester Royal Exchange Theatre.

[15] *Laethanta Sona* was directed by Sarah Jane Scaife (Company SJ) and designed by Ger Clancey and collaboration with several of the islanders in 2021 on the Island of Inis Oírr in Galway Bay Ireland.

in this production not only through the journey to the island for those who were visiting but through the position of the mound on the back of the island that reinforced the immediacy and connectedness of the island population of being surrounded by the Atlantic waters. Company SJ and the designer Ger Clancy alongside a number of stone masons from the island constructed a mound built from the karst limestone of the land that surrounded and consumed Winnie. This production spoke to the isolation and specificity of island life and the performances were preceded by an exhibition that detailed the stories of the women of the island alongside their portraits.

These case studies of *Happy Days* in performance aims to shed light on the way that modern female directors have highlighted the relationship between Winnie's female body and her environment to reappraise the connections between home and domesticity when the physical shelter of home has collapsed.. By evoking the post-disaster landscape without confining it to a specific event, Winnie's body becomes a conduit for the way women negotiate disaster, violence, and displacement in moments of crisis. From the original text to the first productions and in the radical reimaginings, Winnie's bag remains her connection to her old life and her identity. The bag becomes a material palimpsest that channels a multiplicity of dimensions through which the female body accesses past and present and the material world through the objects it contains. The relationship between Winnie and her bag becomes a medium through which we can understand the precarity of the female experience in situations of violence and vulnerability, whether that be ecological disaster, homelessness or ageing. As with previous chapters, this one will begin by presenting the conception and context of the original production and the design of the play. I will then move on to analyse the action, language and relationships, before discussing the case studies and how they reimagine and redefine ideas about home, marriage, domesticity and gender.

By viewing the mound in which Winnie is held captive as both home and tomb, this chapter will employ the critical frameworks of material object theory, scenography and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of objects. These will be used as a means of examining the way that both set and setting give us an insight into how the themes of isolation, femininity and ageing are explored through the female body and its relationship with its environment. In addition to these philosophical and theatrical approaches this chapter will draw on work from sociological and housing studies that examine the connections between home and place from a gendered perspective as well as sociological studies into the gendered nature of objects - such as Winnie's handbag - and how the lives and roles of these objects off stage can provide fresh interpretations and understanding of Winnie. It is important to assert that these sociological

studies are not intended to present a reductive analysis of Beckett's drama but instead they aim to offer contextually resonant interpretations in the light of the socio-political backdrop outlined earlier and through the lens of ecology, environmental disaster and and isolation that are pertinent to a reading of both the text and the play in performance over the time period of writing the thesis from 2016 to 2022. It is also necessary to aknowledge that gendered readings of domesticity in the female centred plays are framed by the same contextual backdrops to both the analysis of the texts and the productions. In the light of the *Paris Agreement* and this chapter's analysis of women in situations of homelessness it is useful to return to Susan Fraiman. Like many of the feminist writers who explore home and domestic practices, her work actively seeks to move discussions around domesticity and the everyday away from the stereotypical association with what is considered to be both feminine and inferior. She argues that domesticity, with all that it entails from the 'ordinary' to the 'emotional', may be linked or 'coded' with 'feminized qualities' but nonetheless cannot be regarded as having 'a natural, necessary connection to women' (Fraiman 2017: 17). However she does acknowledge that 'the difficulties stemming from domestic insecurity are more pronounced where women are concerned' (Fraiman 2017: 156). This focus therefore on gendered domesticity in relation to women in this chapter draws on the contexts not only at the time of writing this thesis but also in the light of Beckett's work in performance and its responsiveness to socio-political concerns highlighted by the directors through their design choices at the time of production. It will concentrate on three case studies of recent productions as a means of thinking about Beckett's work in relation to the way unexpected or radical changes in the domestic environment resulting from climate change or natural disaster, homelessness or old age can draw discussions around the survival of Winnie in *Happy Days* into wider debates about how the female body responds to radical changes in its surroundings.

The Early Productions: Setting and Design

The text of *Happy Days* is for the most part a monologue performed by Winnie, whose husband Willie - though he is beside her for the entirety of the play - is mostly out of direct view. In a fitted dress and hat, Winnie finds herself trapped in the earth from the waist down and mainly relies on the objects contained within her bag to keep her company, except for a few key moments of reciprocated interaction with her husband. There is no nightfall, no escape from the searing heat and her days begin and end with a piercing alarm. James Knowlson explains

how Beckett shared the thinking behind the play with Brenda Bruce, the first actor to play Winnie:

> Well I thought that the most dreadful thing that could happen to anybody, would be not to be allowed to sleep so that just as you are dropping off there'd be a "Dong" and you'd have to keep awake; you're sinking into the ground alive and it's full of ants; and the sun is shining endlessly day and night and there is not a tree […] there'd be no shade, nothing, and that bell wakes you up all the time and all you've got is a little parcel of things to see you through life […] And I thought who would cope with that and go down singing, only a woman. (1997:501)

What is most fascinating about these comments on *Happy Days* is not simply Winnie's endurance, but the way she forges a sense of normality in a situation that is both macabre and absurd:

> In *Happy Days*, we encounter an isolated female protagonist who contrives from scant material resources and habitual bodily rhythms a shelter within a hostile environment, and an everyday despite the shattering of the social and temporal conventions that underpin the everyday in stable periods and benign circumstances. (Bates 2019:65)

It is Bates's observation about Winnie's abilities to maintain the everyday even in the most extraordinary circumstances that makes this play so pertinent to the study of Beckett's exploration of home and domesticity in his work for theatre. Previous chapters explored Vladimir and Estragon creating domestic routines in the wasteland while observing that Hamm and Clov found that captivity and incapacity can turn the physical space of home into something that is dangerous and toxic. *Happy Days* combines the two: it explores how material objects of the everyday behave in hostile spaces removed from a domestic context.

Before considering the modern case studies, this chapter grounds them in details of earlier productions during Beckett's lifetime in order to gain insight into his own ideas about the scenography and dynamics of the play in performance. The first production of *Happy Days* took place in 1961 at the Cherry Lane Theatre in New York and was directed by Alan Schneider and designed by William Ritman. Ten years later Beckett directed his own production at the Schiller Theatre in Berlin, designed by Matias. What is notable about the later performance is that Winnie's relationship with Willie is essential to the understanding of the play:

> Although the focus had to be on Winnie, Beckett wanted Willie to be very much in the picture, their relationship is a crucial thing. Beckett slightly modified the stage picture to this end. Instead of being in the *'exact centre of mound'* as the text specifies. Winnie was moved slightly to stage left. The *'maximum symmetry'* originally envisaged had been marginally disturbed […] Winnie and Willie were to be seen as a pair […] Willie, said Beckett in his Schiller notes, was an 'old turtle', a creature of the earth, Winnie in contrast was 'air and fire'. (Worth 1990:87)

Winnie's survival relies on the way in which she is able to exist across different times and spaces. Beckett's depiction of Winnie through her dress and pearls to the objects in her handbag and the fastidious care over her appearance not only evokes the stereotype of the dutiful 1950s housewife but is also central to how Winnie uses her belongings to ground herself in domesticity despite being far from home – while her ongoing dream of escape demonstrates her complexity. The way Winnie embodies a multiplicity of borders is vital to the understanding of her character and the setting of the play. It is the means by which Beckett is able to convey a sense of the ordinary in a situation that appears extraordinary. *Happy Days* thrives on this juxtaposition and Beckett's collaboration with Jocelyn Herbert illustrates the delicate balance required to prevent the seeming solidity of the mound from having a tyrannical hold over the set. Capturing the spirit of the play and the predicament of Winnie relied upon this nuanced interplay between the earth, sky and sun. The emphasis on Winnie being of 'air and fire' is one that manifested itself most clearly in the Herbert's design of the sky:

> I had a terrible problem with the blue sky which Sam Beckett referred to in the text as being azure. I just couldn't make it work with the yellow sand although I tried three or four different drawings and eventually I did one with an orange sky. I sent them all to Sam and said did he think orange was better because it gave the idea of more concentrated heat? He wrote back and agreed, and from then on *Happy Days* was done with an orange sky. (Courtney 1997:54)

That orange sky conveys more than just an idea of concentrated heat, it also underlines the collaboration between writer and designer; Herbert's designs charting the importance of the sky's colour for her thinking, which were different to Beckett's stage directions. They paint a portrait of Winnie as the bird that can never fly, because if she were to be loosed from her

earthy confinement and float up she should at once become part of the air, vapourised like her parasol.

While it may be difficult to determine the exact whereabouts of Vladimir and Estragon or Hamm and his shelter, there are at least certain logical conclusions that can be drawn from the scenography and stage directions. However, Winnie and Willie present a more challenging task. Unlike Vladimir and Estragon, there is no real suggestion from the text that they have been wandering or that they are homeless; there are no signs of a shelter nearby, nor are there any other human inhabitants of the landscape. What they do have in common is that they are stuck. Winnie's confinement is manifest in her stomach and legs being trapped beneath a great mound of earth, and leads us to speculate on what might have brought Winnie there and how we might interpret the situation. The landscape in which she is embedded is barren and 'scorched' although still open to interpretation, these descriptions of the design capture something of the way that the scenographical texture and depiction are integral to our understanding of Winnie's situation. In the first collaboration with Bruce at The Royal Court in 1962, Herbert commented:

> The mound I did for this was a failure as far as I was concerned. In the drawings I had a perspective of sand dunes going away, but in the theatre you could only see it properly from the Circle because the mound got in the way. Unfortunately it was too egg shaped, and it should have been covered so that it wasn't so smooth but somehow that never got done. (Courtney 1997:54)

However, Peter Hall's production with Peggy Ashcroft in 1975, designed by John Bury at the National Theatre, displayed a mound that was faithful to the stage directions according to Katherine Worth:

> A strong, unremitting light on Winnie and on the mound, which had a convincing look of scorched earth. No further suggestion of heat was made here, the ruddy tones of the cyclorama representing the receding distances of plain and sky, as the text describes. Ashcroft's feeling for the actuality of her character's experience came through in her way of reacting to her mound of earth (never sand for her, as it has sometimes been taken) […] she gave her full attention to the fact that she is encased in earth. (Worth 1990:90)

The stage directions which call for her to repeatedly 'pat' and 'stroke' the earth (Beckett 2006: 149) draw attention to her inability to touch her own body. The connection to the earth suggests a permanence and irreversibility as though the flesh has become at one with the earth rather than simply placed in the ground. It emphasises the notion that Winnie is able to inhabit multiple spaces simultaneously, which different directors and designers express through the shape, texture and colour of the set:

> If Peggy Ashcroft's Winnie was close to the earth, drawing her poetic strength from that source, Billy Whitelaw's was a thing of air. Any Winnie is bound to seem grotesquely trapped- the mound always has its shocking power- but this Winnie's situation seemed strange in a more ghostly way. Beckett wanted this emphasis on strangeness. (Worth 1990:94)

The physical texture of Whitelaw's mound for the 1979 production at the Royal Court with Billie Whitelaw, directed by Beckett and designed by Herbert, was quite different to the first iteration, although Herbert was again dissatisfied.

> The second time I did *Happy Days* the mound was more elaborate and layered. I think Sam Beckett had changed his attitude to the mound too and thought we should have it more broken up with bits coming off it… if the mound for the first production was too simple then this one was too elaborate. (Courtney 1997:55)

Whether Herbert is unfair in her critical approach to the mounds is subjective, but what is undeniable is the way the physical aspect of the mound influences the nature of Winnie's confinement and how we receive it. The relationship between Winnie and the earth and air is a complex one. While Ashcroft drew on her alignment with the earth as her captor, Whitelaw on the other hand 'kept her ability to rove and range above and beyond it. An airy lightness with something wild and alien behind it …' (Worth 1990: 95). These distinctions all add to our understanding of Winnie and her predicament and the way that even in a situation where one assumes there could be little room for nuance, Beckett's work continues to court uncertainty.

The Liminal Space of the Mound

To understand Winnie's mound, one must first investigate the origins of Beckett's enchantment with stones and mounds which did not begin their literary manifestation with *Happy Days,* or even with *Godot* where we see their first theatrical appearance. Knowlson details how Beckett's childhood fondness for stones on childhood visits to Greystones beach may have sown the seeds of a life-long return to these mineral objects and earthen mounds.

> May and Bill Beckett noted their younger son's need for solitude […] It was on these occasions that he indulged in what he described as his 'love' for certain stones. He recounted how he used to take stone of which he was particularly fond of home with him from the beach in order to protect them […] Later in life he came to rationalise this concern as the manifestation of an early fascination with the mineral, with things dying … with petrification. He linked this interest with Sigmund Freud's view that human beings have a prebirth nostalgia to return to the mineral state. (1997:29)

Indeed, stones features in the hands and pockets of Beckett's characters much more frequently in his stories than his plays, and their uses and approaches resonate with Beckett's own connections,

> The narrator of *The Expelled* attracts the attention of the driver […] by knocking […] with a stone he takes from his pocket […] Malone claims that 'pretty' objects such as stones inspire in him […] 'pity', prompting him to stoop and pocket them. For several characters, holding a stone in their pocket or hand is not intimate enough […] they comfort themselves by putting the stone in their mouths instead. (Bates 2017:209)

While stones and mounds share a material similarity, the mound in *Happy Days* is the first time anything of this scale takes such a leading role in his work. Firstly, its sheer size separates it from the small friendly stones of Beckett's prose, furthermore, the comforting properties of the stones rely on the notion that they are the ones being rescued, while the mound seems to be possessing Winnie instead. Although Beckett tells us that she is 'sinking' one might equally consider that the earth is rising up to meet her, so that Winnie's predicament asks us to consider the difference between the passive act of sinking to the altogether greedier act of consumption. Bates elaborates on this idea, proposing that the decision to replace the stone in *Godot* with a mound was the beginning of an idea that comes to its inevitable conclusion in *Happy Days*,

> Beckett observed that 'Estragon is on the ground, he belongs to the stone' […] a distinction that might be understood to identify Estragon with the earth, materiality and the body, in other words, with the everyday […] Perhaps Winnie's entrapment by the mound […] might be considered a later, more extreme iteration […] if the mound is a material marker for the everyday, Winnie has been all but devoured by it.
> (Bates 2019:58)

If the mound in Beckett's work begins life as a material marker for the everyday, then it seems pertinent to understand how it becomes something more sinister in *Happy Days*: no longer a symbol but an active agent capable of exerting its own influence over Winnie. In her study of objects Julie Bates's reading of the mound draws on Katherine Weiss's interpretation of Beckett's theatrical work in the context of his wartime experiences and images that may have influenced his writing:

> Reading the play as a reflection of the Second World War, Katherine Weiss quotes Phillip Gaffney, whose father was a doctor with the Irish Red Cross in France at the same time as Beckett. According to Gaffney, the stage image of Winnie echoes 'the real experience of a St Lô citizen who was found by rescue workers standing upright, unable to move, stuck in the ruins of his house'. According to this argument, Winnie unites the image of the male survivor of the bombing campaign with the scrupulous attentiveness given to their appearance by the 'women of the town' of St-Lô who 'would emerge into the sunlight from their dusty cellars, beautifully turned out […]' (Bates 2019: 59)

Bates's ensuing argument that the mound in *Happy Days* therefore embodies the material remainder of what was once a home helps us to understand Winnie's attempts to negotiate and survive the mound from a fresh perspective. It also develops a particularly Beckettian navigation of home as a space and a ritual of domesticity that is forged in crisis and which opens itself to interrogation when it is wrenched asunder in the midst of crush or collapse, or when it is partially resurrected. The earth around Winnie is no longer benign or neutral ground, it is charged with the emotional and intellectual geography of home, albeit without the structural integrity that might have once afforded the protection we associate with the physical presence of the house. Therefore, in order to understand the agency of the mound, one has to understand the psychology of the structure of the house. In Bachelard's detailed study of

interior space he explains some of the fundamentals needed to grasp the significance of the shape of home,

> A house is imagined as a vertical being. It rises upward. It differentiates itself in terms of its verticality. It is one of the appeals to our consciousness of verticality […] Verticality is ensured by the polarity of cellar and attic […] it is possible, almost without commentary, to oppose the rationality of the roof to the irrationality of the cellar […] up near the roof all our thoughts are clear […] as for the cellar […] it will be rationalized and its conveniences enumerated. But it is first and foremost the *dark entity* of the house, the one that partakes of subterranean forces. (2014:39)

With its verticality compromised, the house is reduced to its most anxiety-laden space – the cellar. The anxieties of the cellar are embodied by the unseen interior of the mound – holding Winnie hostage with its subterranean power. Winnie's head and heart remain committed to the logic and reassurance offered by domestic routine but in conflict with the darker memories that emerge from the confines of her underground prison.

As a result of its agency over Winnie, the mound takes on the characteristics of a liminal space, transgressing the boundaries of life and death, conjuring a perverse domesticity that merges house, body and grave. No matter how busy her hands, Winnie's mind cannot sever the connection to the parts of her body that remain buried and she is haunted by her buried limbs, which continue to trigger memories of incidents real or imaginary from what appear to be her childhood.

The story of Mildred and her doll is a vivid recollection, yet it is hard to know for certain whether this is the story of Winnie herself, or of a sibling or a fantasy. What is interesting is that the memory does not surface till Act II when Winnie is almost entirely contained within the mound. The memory of Mildred is one that is traumatising; one night, while everyone is sleeping, without any warning and causing great shock, 'a mouse ran up her little thigh and Mildred, dropping Dolly in her fright, began to scream […] screamed and screamed and screamed till all came running in their night attire […] to see what was the matter' (Beckett 2006:165). The memory is so horrifying that Winnie herself screams out loud, repeatedly, but this time there is no one to heed her. The body entombed seems to finally allow itself to speak out about its memories, which suggest some form of sexual violation or trauma from her past or damage that might potentially be evoked by the suppression of her sexual organs and lower part of her body through this slow burial.

The connection between her entombment and the unleashing of subconscious memories is addressed by Julie Campbell, who explains that Winnie's appearance reflects the stereotype of the repressed middle aged Irish woman – which would have been familiar to Beckett at the time of writing. Campbell argues, '[…] the lower part of the body is buried in the ground, symbolically dead… the sense of what it has cost her is made manifest in the dramatic image […] now she is only a head. She can see, she can talk, she can think' (2005:167). Campbell draws out the connection between Jung and Beckett, and of the influence of the Third Tavistock Lecture, which Beckett not only attended but which also affected him profoundly; one example of this being the image of the head without a body, 'which seems to have a real bearing on Beckett's powerful dramatic image of Winnie as only a head poking out of the surrounding mound that has engulfed her' (Ibid). The idea that consciousness is something that belongs to the body as a whole and of which our head is 'only one end' means that these recollections from Winnie's past become closed off within the mound. As the earth closes in on her, the memories seem to travel up, finally being given expression in language long after the site of the trauma is closed off. Memories of her childhood and the sensation of some other being trespassing on her bare legs are seemingly intermingled with her last memories of freedom.

The memory of the last human beings to pass by, whose names she cannot recall with certainty, weave their way through Act I and Act II, encapsulating the desires of her gradually disappearing body to be freed from the earth:

> This man Shower – or Cooker – no matter – and the woman – hand in hand - in the other hands bags […] standing there gaping at me – and at last this man […] What's she doing? he says – What's the idea? […] stuck up to her diddies in the bleeding ground […] Why doesn't he dig her out? he says – referring to you, my dear – What good is she to him like that? – What good is he to her like that? […] I'd dig her out with my bare hands, he says […] Next thing they're away – hand in hand – and the bags […] last human kind – to stray this way. (Beckett 2006:157)

Winnie's attempt to remind Willie of this incident provokes as little action as when the incident first occurred. The man and his wife do not stop long enough to help, and we can only assume that it is either fear that motivates their escape or, more disturbingly, the fact Winnie is no longer sexually viable means that she is not seen as a prospect worth saving. We learn in Act II that Mr Shower/Cooker asks repeatedly 'Is there any life in her legs? [...] has she anything on underneath' having already made the observation that her breasts cannot have been 'bad' in

their ‘day’ immediately resigning Winnie as a woman long past her best (Beckett 2006:165). As Winnie is an unreliable narrator, we cannot be certain if Mr Shower/Cooker did in fact make such crude observations or sexual overtures, or whether the story reveals more about Winnie’s own need to be the object of sexual desire in order to feel seen as a woman. Without Willie’s desire she feels the impending terror of what will happen when she is inevitably swallowed up by the earth, ‘I shall never have seen my breasts, no one ever seen my breasts’ (Beckett 2006: 154). Winnie’s observation that the couple are hand in hand may hint at her jealousy and her own dissatisfaction - not so much at her predicament, but at Willie’s indifference to her.

The Breakdown of Marital Relations and the Refuge of Domestic Routine

The question posed by Shower/Cooker is one that is on everyone’s lips: why has Willie not dug her out? Susan Henessey suggests that ‘perhaps Willie has not dug her out of her hole because it is he who has placed her there’ (2016:71). What seems more likely is that Winnie’s continued existence in the mound is a combination of Willie’s neglect and apathy and Winnie’s desire to conform to the gendered notion of the happy housewife as described by Sara Ahmed, ‘a fantasy figure that erases the signs of labour under the sign of happiness. The claim that women are happy and that this happiness is behind the work they do functions to justify gendered forms of labour’ (2010:50). Furthermore, although we do not see Winnie doing any of the obvious forms of gendered labour such as housework, we do see the effort and time that goes into maintaining her image and keeping up the appearances of happiness and contentment as a middle class woman. This theory allows for the idea that Winnie’s unhappiness with her situation is just another opportunity to prove her worth and therefore ultimately achieve the happiness she deserves for having gone through such an ordeal without complaint. Hennessy explains that Winnie does not show any signs of rebellion because ‘hers is submission to the cultural, gendered script of fifty years ago that dangles happiness like a carrot […] the pursuit of which will lead her to conformity’ (Hennessy 2016:72). Hennessy points out that Ahmed’s reading means that the mound can be seen as both a literal and figurative entombment, and one that mimics the supposed security and happiness of marriage, which according to Simone de Beauvoir, ‘fails to assure woman the promised happiness [as it] mutilates her [and] dooms her to repetition and routine’ (Beauvoir 1997:496). While it may not be possible to blame Willie for putting her in the mound, it is impossible to erase his culpability in leaving her there; however, Winnie’s observations seem to infantilise Willie while continuing to make him the focus of her attentions. Willie has full use of his limbs, but seemingly cannot adapt to his

surroundings. He has to be reminded by Winnie not only when to stop ‘sprawling in the hellish sun’ and ‘go back into your hole’ but also not to go in ‘head first, stupid’ (Beckett 2006:147). Willie’s physical positioning within the mound and his limited access to a world of objects seems to manifest in his decline and withdrawal. His behaviour and actions are mostly unseen by the audience and we learn of them through Winnie’s narration of her fleeting glimpses of him. Willie’s apparent decline while he resides in his burrow draws us to conclude that without the refuge of domestic routine, breakdown of social rules and the embrace of the primal become the natural order. As Willie begins to consume his own bodily fluids, Winnie is horrified, ‘Oh really!.. have you no handkerchief darling?... have you no delicacy… oh Willie, you’re not eating it! Spit it out dear, spit it out!’ (Beckett 2006:156). His indulgence of the primal is reflected in his occupation of his designated space, hollowed out from a subsection of the mound. If the lower half of Winnie’s body could be said to inhabit the subterranean and be subject to the anxiety we associate with underground dwelling spaces, then Willie’s situation is influenced by his decision to take cover instead of taking action. Willie clings to an old newspaper – Reynolds News – an object rendered antiquated when separated from the phenomenological and material reality of the day-to-day. He reads out headlines and snippets from the paper, no coherent narrative or story is constructed; the reading stands in for thinking and his utterances are only indicators that confirm to Winnie that he is still alive. In addition to the outdated paper, he also has a postcard that he does not read from, but which he examines at length. The postcard depicts images that Winnie deems to be crude and shocking as she proclaims it would, ‘make any nice – minded person want to vomit’, yet as soon as it is returned to him, he ‘continues to relish card, varying angles and distance from his eyes’ (Beckett 2006:144). Despite Winnie’s protestations she seems to take her time observing the card, perhaps another reminder of how Willie’s lack of interest in her physicality is not a sign of his dwindling libido, but another legitimate reason for Winnie’s insecurity. It seems interesting that the almost-mute Willie’s possessions are those that belong to the world of news and writing, relying on the borrowed words of the text to summon up monosyllabic responses to Winnie’s questions. Furthermore, language or conversation is something that is rooted in the physical and the phenomenological; navigating and narrating our experience is what keeps language alive and relevant, and prevents it being reduced to Willie’s staccato utterances. Willie’s behaviour also reveals a dependency on normalising routines that speak to stereotypes of gendered domesticity and a compulsion to find control through mundane and everyday activities that are performative.

Winnie makes constant excuses for Willie's inability to verbally engage or respond to her and explains that language is failing him: with words in sparse supply, they are in danger of being spent like loose change. Winnie's understanding towards her husband seems to stem from a desire to avoid hypocrisy, '[…] it would ill become me, who cannot move, to blame my Willie because he cannot speak […] Fortunately I am in tongue again' (Beckett 2006:153). However, she knows that this cannot continue indefinitely as she chides herself, 'Winnie […] don't squander all your words for the day' (Beckett 2006: 155). Language is not something reliable, and Willie and Winnie seem to be at the mercy of chance which may determine their ability to communicate with each other. What is most revealing about these explanations is that, while Winnie continues to uphold her end of the bargain as the dutiful wife, she also attempts to uphold Willie's dignity by 'authorising his neglect of her' (Hennessy 2016:73). It is not until the end of the play that we realise that Willie, for all of his shortcomings and failures, is ultimately 'free to leave his hole all along […] albeit with some difficulty' (Hennessy 2016:74). These readings of Winnie seem to suggest that she is complicit in her situation to some degree, however, to criticise Winnie for not being able to break out of the gendered cultural norms ascribed to her is to fail to account for just how much she does to protect and save herself through the only means available to her. Winnie's domesticity is forged not just out of necessity but out of helplessness, she relies on routine when language flounders, seizing upon the order provided by the mundanity of the remnants salvaged from her old life:

> Words fail, there are times when even they fail […] Is that not so, Willie? […] Is that not so, Willie, that words fail, at times […] What is one to do then, until they come again? Brush and comb the hair, if it has not been done, or if there is some doubt, trim the nails if they are in need of trimming, these things tide one over. (Beckett 2006:147)

Winnie's speech gives us insight into her relationship with the objects and the personal domestic rituals that differentiate her from Willie. The world that Winnie conjures through her objects is her attempt to control the present and her immediate environment. Her relationship with the objects around her tries to fill the void left by the breakdown of their marriage and to replace the companionship Willie may have once provided. Though the relationship between Winnie and the contents of her bag will be analysed later in the chapter, there are clear parallels that can be drawn between the ability to express oneself and the connection with the material world. The next section will explore the way in which this relationship is contingent on the way these objects are called into action and how they embed meaning into our lives.

Perhaps what is most extraordinary about Beckett's theatre work is that despite being set in hostile places and unimaginable circumstances, each play conveys something relatable and fascinating because of its affinity with the everyday and survival. The notion of how we define home and the role of the domestic can only be appraised when we remove the traditional structures and associations of home: without these, the threads that tie the phenomenological body to the everyday come under strain and, in doing so, the fabric of their relationships is slowly revealed. An actors' perspective is an interesting one, as it allows us to consider the way in which those who play the part of Winnie come to relate to her inherent ordinariness, albeit in an extraordinary situation. In her autobiography, Billie Whitelaw - Beckett's long-time collaborator and muse - talks about her affinity for the role and how she felt upon first reading:

> Instinctively, I felt the play showed the universal human task of *getting through the day.* To me, this meant sometimes having to hang on by one's fingernails – just to survive. And who is to say that what we do just to get through the day, such as acting in a play, or having a coffee morning […] is more or less significant or typical than poor Winnie's desperate, pathetic ways of getting through her day […] Filling in the time between the 'bell for waking' and the 'bell for sleep' is what her life amounts to. Sometimes it satisfies her, sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes she is filled with happiness about her activities; occasionally – like all of us – she has to dodge despair.
> (Whitelaw 1995:149)

The notion that Winnie's life might resonate with our own existence is a good starting point for our exploration into the role of the domestic in *Happy Days.* Rita Felski notes that 'While everyday life expresses a specific sense of time, it does not convey a particular sense of space. In fact, everyday life is usually distinguished by an absence of boundaries and thus a lack of clear spatial differentiation'. The symbol of home is one that has achieved a kind of 'privileged' and protected status that Beckett's work breaks down and, one might argue, thereby gets the audience closer to a sense of the everyday that exposes something more authentic about the nature of day to day existence (2000:85). Without the physical structure of a house, the

domestic routines that in part define the everyday inevitably attempt to seek refuge elsewhere. In *Godot,* Vladimir and Estragon's routines create a sense of domestic interdependency and often intimacy that form a conceptual structure through their shape that stand in for the physical home. Although this offers comfort, the mundanity simultaneously erodes and drives their relationship. On the other hand, domesticity in *Endgame* presents an interdependency that often perpetuates a kind of abuse, contained as it is within the literal shelter or the wastebins from which there is no escape. What emerges in both these chapters is that movement through the space and between the characters creates a dramatic frisson that interprets and marks out the boundaries and limitations of the domestic domain. It enables the audience to understand the parameters of home as a lived in space that extends from the bodily movement of the characters and delineates that which is theirs from the unknown. Furthermore, the ties that drew all these characters together did not just hinge on the psychological co-dependencies that had come to define them, but were also driven by what might be described as intimacies of physical need that arise from the act of sharing food and physical touch.

Happy Days explores rituals of domesticity and a domestic space that are different to the previous chapters because of the absence of both food and touch – it's a difference which has a profound influence on the relationship between Winnie and Willie creating a distance between them that is insurmountable. The need for food and physicality between the characters would necessarily have generated an intimacy – whether caring or cruel – without it the sense of loneliness experienced by our protagonist through her dramatic isolation as well as her linguistic monologue fuel the gendered analysis of female experience in moments of crisis. While Winnie may appear to turn to her husband for reassurance and reference, the central relationship, which Winnie acknowledges will outlive any spousal relations, is that between Winnie and her bag. The notion that the material world provides an even more reliable sense of reassurance over its living counterparts is established very early on in the play when Winnie seems to protect herself from the possibility of Willie's demise or escape by telling herself, 'There will always be the bag […] even when you are gone Willie' (Beckett 2006:148).

Making Home in a Hole

This next section explores the experience of establishing home in an environment that is unfamiliar by understanding gendered experiences of home and displacement as well as the need for home-making outside of a private domestic setting. Before considering the more contemporary interpretations of the work in performance, this section will engage with textual

analysis as a means by which to examine the set and the situation focusing on Winnie's perspective. The bag is Winnie's most treasured possession and has a central role in the construction of Winnie's 'home'; it contains all the material possessions she still has access to and its contents are what facilitate the conjuring of her world, sustaining her by offering refuge in a fragile domesticity. The bag becomes the last bastion of Winnie's identity when the boundaries of domestic space no longer offer protection or privacy.

In exploring the repercussions of what happens in the wake of homelessness and how home and domesticity are forged in places that do not abide by the traditional rules of home, this chapter will draw on the findings of a recent paper 'Homeless women, material objects and home (un)making' (2020) in which the author Lindsey McCarthy presents a summary of findings from her doctoral project exploring homeless women's construction of home and their identity. McCarthy explores what she considers to be an overlooked area of homeless studies which specifically considers the gendered differences within the experience of homelessness. The legal definition in England and Wales as outlined within the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, Housing Act 1996 and Homeless Act 2002 'is relatively broad […] in that everybody without permanent housing is considered homeless, including those that are 'roofless' as well as those who cannot be 'reasonably expected' to live in their current accommodation' (2020:1317). These descriptions echo the predicament of Winnie and Willie. Furthermore, the women who were included in McCarthy's studies shared an even more pertinent point of comparison with the characters of *Happy Days*, in that their 'domestic spaces […][are] not the private refuge' but shared spaces within temporary accommodations that were often noisy and chaotic, 'these were truly porous spaces with thin wall and permeable boundaries where the outside could easily seep in' (2020:1315).

This uneasy border between the inside and outside has been explored in previous chapters. In *Happy Days* this border is not only malleable but fails to offer even a semblance of protection; moreover it openly discloses its failure to distinguish between one or the other, with both sides threatening and dangerous in different ways. The interior world of the mound that encases Winnie's lower body becomes a repository for unresolved childhood trauma that is never fully elaborated on, while the exposed part of her body is subjected to the vagaries and menaces of a belligerent environment. For the women in McCarthy's study it was recognised that 'both home and homelessness go beyond the physical dwelling (or lack of dwelling); that housing on its own is not sufficient to the attainment of home'(2020:1310). In fact, McCarthy considers that the terminology that is used to define homelessness (being entwined with the word house), is limiting to Western ideals and for this reason prefers to rely on the term

'dwelling' as one that is theoretically less restrictive when discussing homelessness. This approach is one that could be helpful in understanding the space occupied by Winnie and Willie and their particular window on the world. While they may have to make their home in the mound out of necessity, their literal and metaphorical 'roots' are something that Elena Windsong expands on in her paper 'There is no place like home: Complexities in exploring home and place attachment'. In her introduction she draws on the work of geographer Edward Relph who states, 'To be attached to places and have profound ties with them is an important human need […] roots in a particular place give one a point of world outlook, a grasp of one's own position […] being inside and belonging to your place […] without reflecting on it' (Windsong 2010:206). The notion that one's physical position inevitably informs one's world view seems obvious perhaps, but what is less so is the way in which Relph points out the sense of knowing without questioning. This sense of acceptance is one that both conflicts and resonates with Winnie's sense of place. While she dreams of the earth letting her go and floating up into the blue, she also seems to accept the earth's grasp, patting the ground around her and noting its 'tightness' without attempting to rebel against it. Her repeated refrain that today is a 'happy day' paints a picture of a woman who may live in hope that her situation may change but who is under no illusions about the everyday, a landscape that she must inhabit with patience and resourcefulness and for whom complaint is futile.

What these studies into housing and home establish beyond doubt is that underlying this approach is the idea that material culture within the home appears as 'both our appropriation of the larger world and […] as the representation of that world within our private domain' (Miller 2001:1). Crucially, what emerges from this study and others like it is that the house is not a stable entity and that the notion of home-making and un-making are symbiotic acts:

> Recognising the importance of the materiality of home and homelessness […] contributes to understanding of the meanings of material objects in the lives and identities of homeless women. Additionally, it contributes to work on home and place to argue that home is far from being a home or state that remains static or constant once constructed. (McCarthy 2020:1312)

If we think about home as a repository for the material objects that help us to negotiate and define our identity, then in the absence of any permanent dwelling that denotes home, these objects are a way of negotiating identity. Removed from their original context, the objects may

take on new meanings, ones which are often laden with expectations that may exceed their possibilities. How these objects behave and their significance and role in establishing a domestic space will be explored in greater detail, but before we can do that it is essential to understand the role of the vessel which contains, conveys and offers some protection to Winnie's precious objects in lieu of a house – her bag.

The Bag

Bags by their very nature are objects of mystery. They contain clues, messages about the carrier's identity, and by their very presence reveal secrets about the owner's intended travels. Winnie's bag, Beckett tells us, is a 'capacious black bag, shopping variety' (Beckett 2006:138). The contrast of the kind of bag Winnie carries with her outfit and appearance, not to mention her predicament, creates a mystery around her situation. While on the one hand Winnie is carrying what would appear to be a large shopping bag, she is also dressed for a formal event at a reputable establishment, 'arms and shoulders bare, low bodice, big bosom, pearl necklace […] to her right a collapsible collapsed parasol' (Beckett 2006:138).

Like her homeless predecessors of past plays (Vladimir and Estragon with their ill-fitting and unmatched suits which recall a time of past affluence, and Hamm's old-world decadence), *Happy Days* presents a person of status who no longer holds sway. Winnie's dress, her material possessions and her demeanour place her firmly in the upper middle class. Towards the end of the play, when Willie attempts to escape his hole and climbs the mound, he emerges from hiding in full evening dress, matching Winnie's costume. The predicament of Winnie and Willie continues Beckett's interest in presenting the fractured psyche of a post-war bourgeoisie, who I have shown throughout this thesis captures a class of people who are embroiled in a crisis of identity, forced to re-evaluate their role in society in the light of World War Two. McCarthy points out that 'there is a tendency within the material culture literature to focus empirically on the middle classes and those with financial capital' (McCarthy 2020:1312), yet with *Happy Days* we are taken into a realm in which wealth has no sway. Although her appearance betrays her middle-class trappings, Winnie's predicament means she can no longer benefit from them. By applying McCarthy's observations as well as those of other sociological studies to *Happy Days*, it is possible to interrogate Beckett's work from a female perspective, in a play that focuses heavily on a woman's relationship with the material world during a moment of social or personal crisis.

The bag has a multifaceted role within Winnie's landscape: first and foremost it acts as a concealer and container. The findings of a Scottish study into *The Psycho-social Benefits of Home* focused on the house and the occupation and ownership of a home as the basis of ontological security. What is more, ontological security might only be 'maintained when: the home is a site of constancy in the social and material environment; the home is a spatial context in which the day to day routines of human existence are performed; the home is a site where people feel free from the surveillance of the modern world'(Kearns, Hiscock, Ellaway &MaCintyre 2000:389). For Winnie, trapped as she is in the earth, the idea of home as a refuge of privacy is unviable. However, just as the earth conceals her body and the site of her childhood traumas, so the bag is able to keep the objects that enable her to maintain a connection to her past life and to the everyday. In Bachelard's study of space within the home, he notes that even within the private domestic sphere, there remain nooks and crannies and spaces that not everyone can enter, the pockets of the dwelling itself. These intimate spaces are in Bachelard's view the wardrobes, desks and chests:

> Wardrobes with their shelves, desks with their drawers, and chests with their false bottoms are veritable organs of the secret psychological life. Indeed without these 'objects' and a few others in equally high favour, our intimate life would lack a model of intimacy. They are hybrid objects, subject objects. Like us, through us, and for us, they have a quality of intimacy […] intimate space that is not open to just anybody. (2014:99)

In the absence of a house, the bag therefore negotiates a private sphere that is Winnie's alone to control within a very public space. Integral to the way in which Winnie asserts a kind of domesticity and dialogue of the everyday over the space is the notion that occupation is only one aspect of possession, in order for one to truly make the space their own they have to enjoy it and desire to be there (King 2008:3 cited in McCarthy 2020:1313). In Winnie's case the agency of her temporal home exerts a greater hold and the relationship between home and owner cannot be said to be a reciprocal exchange. The bag acts as a kind of intermediary, filled with objects of its owner's choosing that are hidden within the 'capacious' interior, and it finds a way of establishing its own gravitational pull. In some ways the bag exerts as much sway over Winnie as the mound.

In their illuminating study into the behaviours of women with dementia who have had to move to a care home environment, 'Negotiating identity, privacy and 'home' through

material culture', Christina Buse and Julia Twigg make a number of observations that provide a useful framework for understanding Winnie's relationship with the most important of the material objects in her store. Although Winnie is not living with dementia nor in a care home, the comparisons here are relevant because of the way she has nonetheless been forcibly separated from her private dwelling place. Much like the subjects of the research, Winnie's bag has become a kind of transitionary object, allowing her a small portal into the home of her past. Although the bag is not strictly a handbag it has the properties of such: the bag is her sole property and Willie does not have access to it or any such similar item himself. Thus the gendered nature of the bag is also established as a item that 'provide[s] support in the enactment of self […] they are spaces that others may not enter without permission […] their privacy and interiority mimics aspects of the female body, so that their secret enclosed character stands as an emblem of the embodied self'(Buse & Twigg 2014:1). The bag is clearly visible on the stage and one of the first things she touches as soon as she is awake, rummaging inside as soon as the play opens. From then on she continues to reach inside, removing objects one by one and examining them, using or discarding them and occasionally replacing them. It seems to be an endless repository of items, an idea that Buse and Twigg consider when they speak about the interior space of the bag as an 'unruly space' (Buse and Twigg 2014:2). Winnie's own musings on her bag are useful as a means of understanding her relationship with it: it is her companion, a comfort and a transitional object, one by which she orients herself and on which she hinges her identity. The bag, its contents and Winnie's possession of it form part of what McCarthy describes as the process of 'salvaging' and 'anchoring'. These are sociological terms given to describe the connection between the material world and their role in the lives of those who are homeless. 'Anchoring refers to the sense of home and solace women found in meaningful possessions. Salvaging is adopted from […][the][…]term 'salvaging the self' used originally to refer to the attempt made to hold on to core aspects […] placed at risk due to the adversity of homelessness' (2020:1318). What seems most astonishing is the faith and hope that Winnie invests in material objects, and in particular the bag, even though the material world has seemingly let her down. We know that this is a woman who has either lost or cannot return to her home and who is trapped in a hostile landscape, yet the destructive and barren nature of the environment has not poisoned Winnie's relationship with her things:

> There is of course the bag [...] Could I enumerate its contents? [...] No [...] Could I, if some kind person were to come along and ask, what have you got in that big black bag Winnie? Give an exhaustive answer? [...] No [...] The depths in particular who knows

> what treasures [...] What comforts. [Turns to look at bag] yes, there is the bag [...] But something tells me, do not overdo the bag, Winnie, make use of it of course, let it help you [...] along, when stuck, by all means, but […] cast your mind forward, Winnie, to the time when words must fail [...] and do not overdo the bag [...] perhaps just one quick dip. (Beckett 2006:151)

The bag contains more than the sum of its parts, in the way that the home might be considered 'as an assemblage of memories that had been collected and were now stored in material objects' (McCarthy 2020:1322). Winnie's bag has become a stand-in for the home she once had, a repository that contains more than she can remember. Steven Connor notes that bags in their fleshy, malleable nature 'enact as nothing else does our sense of the relation between inside and outside' (Connor 2013:16), a way of reinforcing the borders that Bachelard suggests are permeable. Perhaps it is for this reason that Winnie is reluctant to breach the bounds of the bag without reason and feels that to 'overdo" the bag' might consist of some sort of violation or indiscretion. She fears that, in the future, 'cast your mind forward Winnie', accessing the bag on a whim may result in having to pay consequences (Beckett 2006:151). The seeming agency or power that the bag holds over Winnie may have a phenomenological explanation, 'we carry bags, but we design them to also cling onto us, our shoulders, or the crooks of our arms, or even to hang at our waist. When we give the bags handles, we give them hands' (Connor 2013:16). In grounding the bag, it is possible that Winnie feels it has been granted an independent power, one that is no longer tied to her physical person and by virtue of this distance treats her bag with an uneasy respect. However, Winnie cannot keep her hands out of her bag, despite her many warnings to herself, until the earth swallows up her choices and the contents of her bag are no longer at her command. Perhaps this explains in part some of the findings of Twigg and Buse's study, that uncovers the possessive quality that women with dementia have over their handbags.

Beckett's interest in the ageing body, mind and memory and all that it entails is something that has been noted in the study of Vladimir and Estragon and the way that their behaviour and situation has many resonances with those of Winnie. Certainly, there is no clear evidence that she has been mentally compromised in any way, but there are peculiarities that pertain to her predicament that mean these sociological studies into female vulnerability allow us an insight into Winnie's relationships with her belongings and her material attachments. Her dreams of freedom are undercut by the claustrophobic memories of childhood, but despite this, there is nothing clear in Winnie's narrative to explain how she ended up in her position. Her

attempt to carry on with some semblance of everyday life may not only stem from stoicism but also a fundamental inability to understand why or how she came to find herself living in the mound. Buse and Twigg explain that for dementia sufferers, the illness causes a significant disruption to ones' embodied way of what Merleau-Ponty describes as 'being in the world' and therefore their relationship with the material world. This fracture or disjuncture with their surroundings and inability to recall actions and habits that might have been once second nature mean that patients may have to spend time finding or learning to use objects or possessions they would once have been familiar with. Twigg and Buse note that dressing and clothes are particularly important to the 'performativity of the self' and identity, not only in the sense of appearance, but in the way they form 'the immediate physical surroundings of the body' (2014:3). For Winnie, steeped in earth, the choice of dressing herself has been removed from her. The clothes she is wearing seal her identity in the moment of action, the low-cut dress[16] and pearls suggest affluence and leisure, they are the clothes of a woman who may have had a life beyond the home. However, in the context of the mound her clothes become a marker of a past life, that no longer hold any sway in the one which she now occupies. The bag and its contents are a more practical currency in Winnie's new world.

Crucially the size of Winnie's bag also holds significance. According to research, the size of a woman's bag may indicate a liberation from the immediate domestic sphere, while simultaneously revealing the way women's multiplicity of roles has not created freedom, but rather leaves them saddled with the burden of domestic materiality that anchors them to the home. The size and contents of Winnie's bag suggests that she and Willie have been displaced from a very different life. It is through these objects that she attempts to 'contact' home in a metaphorical and psychical sense. As Buse and Twigg establish, the handbag is a biographical object but also a repository of sensory memory and nostalgia. The bags are an embodiment of an identity that may no longer be easily inhabitable to the individual, yet in these circumstances they can become a conduit for recollection and reconstruction, allowing the owner to shake off their current conditions and relive an identity prior to confinement (2014:6).

This sense of the bag as a transitional object that enables Winnie to survive in situations where her surroundings and security have become difficult and unfamiliar is one that receives prominence when considering research into women who are no longer able to live at home. The displacement faced by many of the women in these studies means that disparate objects

[16] When Beckett directed Billie Whitelaw he placed her in a black evening dress and although not always black – a variant on the formal wear dress was used in all the productions explored in this chapter.

carried from their old lives, that may seem random to the observer, can have a restorative role. In the case of those who are placed into institutional care they became a way of maintaining 'ontological security […] instead of being something which could be discarded in a safe corner upon arriving home, handbags become something which was constantly held on to, carried or clutched against the body' (Buse and Twigg 2014:8). For Winnie, the handbag is not something she holds onto physically but it is one that she cannot leave alone, despite her own warnings to herself, and draws a striking similarity with those women who find themselves estranged from home for whom, 'the tangibility of a handbag, being able to touch it and know it is close at hand, could itself provide reassurance, particularly when the owner felt vulnerable' (Hagerty 2002 qtd in Buse and Twigg:9). The transition from bag to contents might be easily navigated when we acknowledge that, 'In general women do not carry bags with them when at home: bags belong to public space'. For the women in care homes 'sorting, organising and holding onto a handbag represented a state of waiting, of preparation to return home'. Equally, for all women, whether they are having to make a home elsewhere or whether they are expecting to return, 'carrying a handbag could be used as a strategy for creating a sense of private space, something that is difficult to do when most of the day is spent in public areas' using their handbags as 'props, 'part of rituals to create privacy in public spaces' (Buse and Twigg 2014:10). In *Happy Days* Winnie uses her handbag as means of re-establishing and creating a space of home while performing her identity through her interactions with the contents of the bag.

If we return to the study on homeless women and the concept of salvaging and anchoring through material objects we discover that unlike these women, who often 'kept possessions that held symbolic value' (McCarthy 2020:1311). Winnie's items may be commonplace but one could argue their universality speaks to their intimacy as we consider her objects in order of appearance: Toothbrush, flat tube of toothpaste, small mirror, spectacles in case, handkerchief (removed from bodice), parasol (on the ground), revolver (kissed and replaced), almost empty bottle of medicine (consumed, thrown away and bottle smashes – but always returns to the bag the next day), lipstick, small ornate brimless hat with feather, magnifying glass, brush and comb, music box, nail file. Yet if we consider the definition of salvaging to be 'less about holding onto core aspects of being placed at risk due to homelessness and more to do with a conscious agentic practice of creating home through personalisation, control and boundary making' (McCarthy 2020:1324) then Winnie's objects allow us a glimpse into the life that she had. The bag and what it contains is integral to the staging of domesticity, these objects, vestiges of a past life have an almost spectral quality to

the way they are used up or thrown away but continue to return. The impersonality of the objects such as the toothbrush and toothpaste, mirror, brush and comb are nonetheless ones which denote maintenance, self-care and hygiene. Interestingly they all focus on the top half of her person; while the mirror and brush are perhaps common objects for women to carry on their person, the toothbrush and toothpaste change their context a little as these are more likely to be the contents of someone expecting to stay away from home. However this theory is not borne out by any of the other objects: the spectacles and lipstick are all commonly found in the handbags of women everywhere, and the hat is also the preserve of any respectable middle-class woman going about her business in the 1950s. However, Andrew Sofer in his study on Beckettian props argues that:

> Like Winnie herself, Winnie's props are jolted out of the frame of realism […] Beckett's props are fragments of reality unmoved from history, memory and function… [the props are] Neither metonyms grounding the characters in a recognisable socio-economic milieu, not metaphors standing for ideas beyond themselves, they are just there. We are not told where they came from or how they got there although […] we learn […] Winnie's bag was a gift from Willie. (2003:185)

While the objects may seem to reveal little of Winnie's identity, what is most significant is the way in which she uses them and it is the juxtaposition of these everyday objects in a de-familiarised or estranged setting that makes us see them anew. Fraiman points out that '[W]e are all familiar with the abject figure of a 'bag lady' and even well – off women are known to joke nervously about becoming one […] the bag lady inverts respectable femininity while also performing a caricatured version of it' (Fraiman 2017: 178). The knowledge that the bag was a gift from Willie offers an insight into the way the bag may also perform as a reminder or re-enactment of the memory of a more uncomplicated time from their marriage – an attempt to reconnect with the stability of her social status as a respectable, married, middle class woman. Winnie's dependence and constant need to touch and open the bag is a constant reminder of her husband that she can both see and touch, even when Willie is both out of sight and out of reach. The act of gift giving is an intimate one and the bag might therefore also narrate a time when they were connected romantically. The contents of the bag are almost secondary to Winnie's need to organise, utilise and arrange these items, removing and replacing them in the bag, and surrounding herself with its contents. The act of opening the bag is key to the creation of the world that Winnie attempts to immerse herself in. Bachelard once again provides us with

valuable insight into understanding the behaviours of the objects around us through his metaphor of the casket, which for our purposes is easily replaced by the object of the bag,

> The moment the casket is opened, dialectics no longer exist. The outside is effaced with one stroke, an atmosphere of novelty and surprise reigns. The outside has no more meaning. And quite paradoxically, even cubic dimensions have no more meaning, for the reason that a new dimension – the dimension of intimacy – has just opened up. (2014:106)

Winnie's endless rummaging has a number of consequences when viewed through the lens of home as a 'dynamic and porous space. It could be made and not made and switch between home and not home simultaneously. It supports the idea that home is made and unmade through everyday practice and memory' (McCarthy 2020:1325). This idea that home is not a fixed entity is particularly useful when considering the hostile spaces in which Beckettian characters find themselves. Furthermore the act of searching and drawing out items is one that Buse and Twigg recognise as a common practice by women in care homes as a kind of 'distraction' and 'means of looking busy or purposeful when sitting alone in a public space, disguising a sense of discomfort' (Henderson 1975 qtd in Buse and Twigg: 2014:11). Winnie's rummaging leads to the surface of the mound becoming a kind of display cabinet for Winnie's possessions, a practice that once again attempts to subvert the connotations of vulnerability associated with displacement and to recall the stability of domestic stability by marking her territory and space in manner that the placement of the bag cannot adequately manage on its own.

While both McCarthy and Buse and Twigg discuss how women who are displaced tend to treasure items which are of sentimental and emotional value, the sheer number of Winnie's belongings – alongside the juxtaposition of the personal and the practical – assert their agency as a group which means that as the number of items along the plateau of the mound grow, so one might assume does Winnie's dominion over her surroundings. The placement of these objects as well as their selection presents a number of questions about Winnie's experience of the everyday before she became encased in the mound, and as consequence, the means by which she tries to recreate a home from the past through her curation of the available objects in the present. In the article 'Souvenirs: Magical objects in everyday life', Michael Haldrup explores the notion of so-called magical objects, brought back home to co-exist with their human owners that then have the power to evoke and recall memories and emotions from the past. The Cambridge University Dictionary defines a souvenir as 'something you buy or keep

to remember a holiday or special event'. What Haldrup insightfully argues is that souvenirs have a property that goes beyond the kitsch associations which may cause us to dismiss their material value; that is their meaning is not fixed, but like the homes in which they reside their value is subject to shift and change over time and via the multiplicity of contexts through which they may literally and figuratively travel. What is particularly interesting is that:

> Studies of souvenirs have frequently pointed to the role of the souvenir in the home as a mediator enabling the narrative construction of identity in the home […] souvenirs (re)present distant places in people's homely environment. Hence souvenirs performing a 'magic" role in bringing distant, faraway places in to the orbit of peoples ordinary lives. (Haldrup 2017:53)

The objects that Winnie engages with on the mound take on a new quality if we allow them the room to grow into the roles in which they are now cast. The toothpaste, toothbrush and comb must not be underestimated as markers of the mundane middle class existence Winnie was stifled within, but are reframed or reborn as souvenirs of the everyday - relics and mementos of a past life whose banality is now savoured and relished with each dip into the bag. But not everything travels well, and objects of the day to day now nestle cheek by jowl with those that are less than benign. Brownie, Winnie's gun, makes for an uncomfortable bedfellow and in bringing it with her, Winnie allows its presence to cast a dark shadow over the other objects, disrupting their agency just by their shared context:

> the single most significant material and affective space through which the interrelation between everyday life and things are organised. Yet the home is not a secluded 'private' space but a space in which outside forces make their entry […] plans, imaginations, fears and dreams are anticipated, remembered, rehearsed and retold. Material artefacts in the home, including souvenirs, photographs, and other travelling objects placed in the home play a crucial role for enacting these personal emotions and relationships and reinforcing bonds as well as boundaries between home and the world outside. (Haldrup 2017:53)

The presence of Brownie represents the outside forces Haldrup describes, bringing the potential for disruption even among the objects that should provide stability. The gun represents danger in a literal way while also capturing a threat that goes beyond the immediate dramatic

representation, only realised at the end of Act II when Winnie no longer has the use of her limbs and Willie emerges from his hole. The gun lies in wait it seems until Act II when the mound has consumed Winnie up to her neck. When Winnie is at her most vulnerable, unable to access her bag or her objects Brownie then comes into her own. Brownie is a reminder of the forces that threaten her fragile and precarious domesticity. At first she is pleased to see it, kissing the revolver but nonetheless hurriedly replacing it. Brownie however refuses to remain hidden, and before long bobs back up to the surface, and this time Winnie is disgusted:

> You again![…]You'd think the weight of this thing would bring it down among the […] last rounds. But no […] ever uppermost […] remember how you used to keep on at me to take it away from you? Take it away, Winnie, take it away before I put myself out of my misery […] *Your* misery! [...] oh I suppose it's a comfort to know you're there, but I'm tired of you […] I'll leave you out, that's what I'll do […] there, that's your home from this day out. (Beckett 2006:151)

Winnie's disgust seems at least partly borne of fear, but directly addressing Brownie before placing it on the mound and making it part of the fabric of her new home she hopes that she may have some control of its behaviour. Yet, greater visibility gives it greater agentic power and the ability to insert itself more firmly into their narrative, evoking recollections and memories that will eventually see Willie climbing the mound seemingly to reclaim it. The gun is the only one of Willie's belongings that makes it into Winnie's bag and its role seems to be an abide by stereotypes that align patriarchal forces with violent means and ends. Brownie attempts to dominate the other objects, always reaching for Winnie and coming into her grasp, defying its' weight to rise to prominence among all the other objects and manipulating its way onto a permanent spot on display on the mound. Its existence is a reminder of Willie's frailty and Winnie's strength, the fact that his wife who is trapped in the earth is also the one who has to protect him from his own weapon tells us a great deal about Winnie's resilience and fortitude. Her sarcasm when she talks of '*Your* misery' speaks to Winnie's complexity and suggests that despite her outward display as a woman who conforms to the idea of the 'happy wife' she is also aware that she is vulnerable and that keeping the gun is not simply protecting Willie but is also the only way to keep herself alive. In the end one might argue, Brownie is triumphant as the only object that has agency once Winnie is no longer able to move, calling to Willie and dragging him out of his hole.

The second part of the chapter now moves from exploring the female body in crisis arising from displacement and the loss of home because of homelessness and ageing to situations relating to climate change and environmental crisis, where the female body is threatened by disaster, explored through the case studies of three versions of the play in production. These studies from Katie Mitchell, Sarah Frankcom and Company SJ consider the feminine and the ecological in a way that connects water, home and the female experience of the environment from a gendered perspective. In doing so this section will draw upon environmental and sociological studies into how we define home for a woman in the 21st century framed by the context of climate change that threatens our surroundings and homeland.

'Water Water Everywhere, Nor Any Drop to Drink': *Happy Days* in the Age of Emergency

In the first part of this chapter I focused on the relationship between Winnie and her bag as she negotiated displacement from home either because of some catastrophe such as war or due to homelessness or ageing. This section examines three modern case studies of *Happy Days* in production from three female directors over the last decade whose work engages with ecology and climate change. Writing against the backdrop of the impending climate emergency, these performances are explored contextually through the interpretative framework of international studies on social and environmental science that examine the effects of climate change and disaster. This chapter also draws on the work of Tim Robinson, Tim Ingold and Timothy Morton whose studies in ecological and environmental psychology explore what might be defined as a phenomenology of dwelling in addition to feminist environmental readings from Astrida Neimanis and Tanja Beer that touch on feminist posthuman phenomenology and ecoscenography. All three productions harness the power of water in different and dynamic ways. Giving particular focus to the mound and its different iterations in order to understand the enduring connection of Beckett's work and its resonances with the changing socio-political backdrops against which they unfold.

The first is Katie Mitchell's *Glückliche Tage* (Deutsches Schauspielhaus, Hamburg, 2015) which places Winnie inside the kitchen of her house and replaces the scorched earth with water that threatens to drown her. The second is Sarah Frankcom's production (Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester, 2018), which presents something closer to the original mound but which is studded with detritus and revolves as it draws Winnie deeper, while water seeps from its edges. Both Mitchell and Frankcom's respective scenographical interpretions present the mound in ways which highlight the need to for eco-critical readings that feeds into the growing

anxieties surrounding climate change and environmental disaster. The third is Sarah Jane Scaife's (Company SJ) *Laethanta Sona* which presents a stone mound in a site-responsive outdoor production (Inis Oirr, Aran Islands, 2021), introducing a transformative juxtaposition of ideas that draw us into an island community through the materiality of the stone but simultaneously highlight Winnie's isolation and loneliness. Although the Katie Mitchell production was accessed through a mixture of video clips, interviews and scholarly writing, Frankcom and Company SJ's productions were examined through live performance.

All three ask us to consider the relationship between the feminine, domestic and ecological in a dynamic and challenging way. In Mitchell's production we evaluate the role of water in the modern urban home and how extreme events can threaten the controlled use of water within the private domestic space. Frankcom's production looks at water and waste within the modern world as a threat to our life on the planet. Finally Company SJ's Irish language production invites the play into dialogues around the notion of water as landscape and border; it goes beyond the discussions around water and climate change to look at the materiality of stone and invites eco-scenographic readings that explore the way the lives, labour, landscapes and objects of the island and its people are interwoven from the conception to the presentation of the performance. It is important to note that:

> Scholars approaching Beckett's work from an ecological perspective agree that such readings need to go beyond the literal level of representation or context. Beckett evidently was not an eco- activist or concerned with saving the planet – indeed salvation of any kind is always a myth in Beckett's work – but his texts might be aligned with what Timothy Morton has called the ecological way of thinking, which decentres the place of the human and emphasises rather the interconnectedness of all elements in the planet's ecosystem. (McMullan 2021:5)

However what all three productions encourage us to think about are the ethical questions raised by water – availability, pollution, infrastructural dimension particularly in island communities, and its role in immigration and borders. These ideas highlight the way water – just like land – can be the site of social and political crisis and draw out the inextricable link between the oppression and marginalisation of women and the climate crisis, going beyond the specifics of environmental disaster and avoid reductive or limiting interpretations to engage the play in debates around home and homeland and what it means to be alive in the 21st century. In all three the directors and designers create a vision that allows us to understand Winnie not simply

in the context of her situation or relationship, but as a woman whose body is tested to the limits of its endurance in radically different and powerful readings that address the relationship between the female body and the environment.

The past ten years have seen significant attempts to address concerns around the consequences of global warming and to understand the way the changing climate has impacted different communities to varying degrees. In the lead up to the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement there was a growing body of academic and practical work that also called for a need to understand the impact of disasters from a gendered perspective. The agreement that followed enshrined in law the necessity to consider gender inequality in the face of disaster, and highlighted that women should be involved in all parts of the decision-making process in order to address their specific and particular needs and vulnerabilities. Indeed both Mitchell and Frankcom place these concerns at the heart of their interpretations of the mound, and provoke vital and prescient readings of the play that intervene in debates around climate change.

In addition, Company SJ succeeded at embedding a sense of the interconnectedness of things - and what Timothy Morton defines as 'ecological thinking' - within their production. The ecology of thought is not defined or limited to ecological disaster or the destruction of nature. In *The Ecological Thought*, Morton's argument encompasses the poignant metaphorical descriptions invoked by Bachelard when describing the domestic, but believes that in order to address the current situation the landscape and environment needs to be considered with the intimacy which we afford our private spaces. This thesis is a study of how Beckett's work engages with the changing meaning of home and domesticity not only at the moment of its first production, but in the artistic vision of those who are remaking and reimagining his work responding to social change as well as utilising his work to explore the vulnerabilities in our society. This chapter frames those discussions through the different and radical depictions of the mound, understanding that the construction of our world cannot be limited to the building or architecture that shapes it. In the same way that an exploration of the domestic cannot be confined or tied to the physical object of the house, we begin to analyse Morton's logic that ecology cannot be defined by or limited to discussions about nature or environmentalism:

> Ecology isn't just about global warming […] and also not just to do with everyday relationships between humans and non-humans. It has to do with love, loss despair and compassion. It has to do with capitalism and what might come after capitalism […] it has to do with society. It has to do with co-existence. (Morton 2010:2)

This co-existence is not just one that connects different things and ideas but one which necessarily needs to exist through practice. In order to understand how to make things better, we must learn that ecology is about the breaching of boundaries, not only the physical ones which have often proved destructive but the re-writing and redrawing of our associations in our day to day lives that allow us to be open to new ways of thinking that 'permeates all forms' and embodies a 'radical openness' (Morton 2010:11) in order to view the world as it is as a kind of 'sprawling mesh'(Morton 2010:8). It may seem strange beginning with an exploration of ecological thinking by rooting it in productions that directly address the climate emergency. However as Morton explains, his own thinking led him to write about nature before addressing ecological thinking as a more holistic approach. Furthermore, 'the ecological thought is intrinsically open so it doesn't really matter where you begin' (Morton 2010:12). With this in mind, it seems judicious that any reading of two productions that use water to strategic and dramatic effect may be best framed by beginning with a discussion about water and its role inside and outside the home.

In an article entitled "Domesticating nature and constructing the autonomy of the modern home", scholar Maria Kaika presents her insights into the processes of urbanisation and domesticity that offer interesting ways of thinking about the use of water in modern productions of *Happy Days*, in particular Katie Mitchell's use of floodwater within a domestic setting. Kaika begins by exploring the way the right to private space was a modern phenomenon that began with a patriarchal, white, western notion of personal freedom associated with the rise of the European middle class in the 18th century. She notes Ruskin's observation that the creation of an 'autonomous protected utopia' can only be established through exclusion, not only of the undesirable masses that constitute wider society but also 'undesired natural elements and processes'. The concealment and what Kaika describes as the 'othering' of natural processes results in these being alienated from the interior of the domesticated and civilised bourgeois home, and in turn the breakdown and subsequent uncontrolled breakthrough of these elements will compromise the interior and result in crisis (2004:266). The breakdown of the processes that leads to the breaching of the interior returns the carefully curated domestic space to one that is uncontrolled and dangerous, reminding the inhabitants that very little stands between the civilisation they have cultivated and the untamed exterior. As Kaika points out, the need to keep natural elements out of the domestic space is hardly a new idea; the desire to control and condition the interior goes 'hand in glove with the whole

history and raison d'être of architecture[…] however what distinguishes the modern home[17] from the earlier forms of 'dwellings' is that never before has the level of control over the outside been so high or achieved so fully'. What comes with the breakdown creates not just the destruction and defamiliarization of the home space, but the encroachment of other undesirable elements that are of a psychosocial nature such as 'fear and anxiety' that are suddenly entwined with unwelcome practical elements such as 'sewage and homelessness'[…] which were previously 'exiled […] outside the modern home' (2004:272). Although it is difficult to pinpoint the moment or reasons why Winnie ended up buried in earth, most would agree that Winnie once had a life outside of the mound and that she and Willie once cohabited in different circumstances. The idea that Willie and Winnie once shared lives that might have been recognisable to their audience seems like an appropriate place to introduce Katie Mitchell's German production of *Glückliche Tage* in Hamburg in 2015. The production is unusual for two reasons, the first is that the mound is reinterpreted as a rising flood water, the second because the action takes place within the kitchen of a modern home.

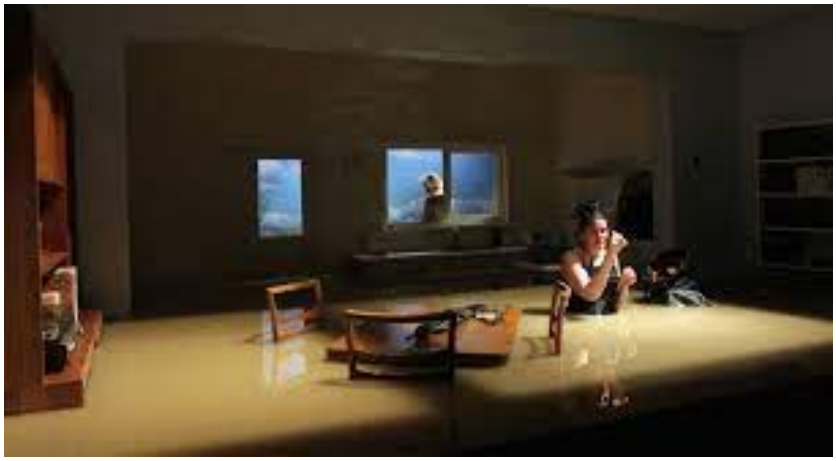

Fig 8. Happy Days (Glückliche Tage), Director: Katie Mitchell, Designer Alex Eales, Actors: Julie Julie Wieninger as Winnie and Paul Herwig as Willie, Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg, 2015, Copyright Klaus Lefebvre

The idea of relocating the stifling atmosphere of *Happy Days* to the interior of the domestic space encourages a reading that returns the focus to the relationship between Winnie and Willie and reminds us that the play is also a love story, albeit one that focuses on the mundanity and perseverance of the long-term partnership instead of the heady romance of first love. The

[17] Kaika appears to be distinguishing the modern home as one which contains the infrastructure of modern plumbing which would argue that the modern home is a 20th century home.

audience are presented with what appears to be a traditional and unexceptional kitchen area, except for the terrifying fact that it is filling with floodwater. To their left is a wooden dining table, half of its four legs already submerged in Act I, with the table-top still acting as a space for some of Winnie's items. A tall white fridge-freezer occupies the back left corner, and in the foreground to our right we see the arms and headrest of an armchair; perched atop one of the arms is Winnie's bag, splayed open and within easy reach.

At first Willie is unresponsive and lies just out of reach of Winnie behind her on the draining board of the sink. He is curled up with his back to her, beneath the modern UPVC windows that present a blue sky juxtaposed by the claw-like branches of the bare skeletal trees that are framed against it. His posture echoes Victor's in the final scene of *Eleutheria*, the body language of a man who refuses to engage with the situation or the world around him. Later as the water rises, Willie escapes. However, despite his escape from the kitchen, Willie remains outside, unable to escape the lure of the house and haunting the exterior and not entirely abandoning Winnie. Katie Mitchell's vision for this radical departure from the stage directions is a decision that designer Alex Eales defends on account of its return to reality:

> [Mitchell] Doesn't betray Beckett if her setting ignores his obsessive insistence on strictly following directions. The nightmare she sends Winnie into is more real and concrete than the abstract Beckettian wasteland which has become an icon over the decades. (The New Zurich Times 2015)[18]

In an interview with Katie Mitchell in 2018, Anna McMullan asked her to elaborate on the justifications for such a radical reimagining:

> I think Beckett's so modern, he's a vanguard artist, way ahead of all of us, even now. So when I directed *Happy Days* I really wanted to focus on the terror of the situation the character is in. Because there's something about knowing that it's a very famous actress in a pretend hole in a rock or in a fake bit of earth that for me takes away the real terror in the writing. And Winnie's cheerful refusal to face the reality of her situation only functions emotionally if we can see the horror of that reality [...] One of the many fears that we have now in Western Europe is of an environmental disaster and for me that fear is connected very strongly to water, to the sea level rising or inland

[18] https://www.alexeales.co.uk/portfolio_page/gluckliche-tage/ [Date accessed Dec 19th 2023]

> flash flooding. So, I thought I would replace the idea of 'scorched grass' with the idea of a flooded room.
>
> It was just after the big floods that had happened in the United Kingdom so I thought that it would be amazing to set the action inside a flooded kitchen, almost as if Winnie could be like someone in one of those flooded towns but in a futuristic world where the flooding had wiped out everyone else. (2018:130).

Mitchell's interpretation may play into the narratives surrounding growing western anxieties about climate change, but the production also opens the play up to conversations about the plight of women whose stories originate outside Europe. In her much-lauded academic study on the gender data gap, Caroline Carido Perez addresses gender and disaster, outlining the way women are disproportionately affected by conflict, pandemic and natural disaster:

> There is little doubt that climate change is making our world more dangerous. According to the World Meteorological Organisation, its nearly five times more dangerous than it was forty years ago: between 2000 and 2010 there were 3,496 natural disaters from floods, storms, droughts and heat waves, compared to 743 natural disasters in the 1970's […] A 2017 report in the Lancet Planetary Health predicted that weather related disasters will cause 152,000 deaths a year in Europe between 2070 and 2100 […] and as we will see, women tend to dominate the figures of those who die […] it's not the disaster that kills them […] its gender – and a society that fails to account for how it restricts women's' lives. (2020:301)

Eco-feminist scholar Astrida Neimanis reflects on how feminist post-human phenomenology can be useful not only in understanding the disproportionate effect of climate disaster on women but on how a hydrofeminist approach can offer a means of thinking in ways that draw on water as a 'connector' precisely 'because it expresses or facilitates difference' (2019: 67). The statistical data that Perez highlights frames the way natural disasters that are the result of climate change and in essence driven by the dysregulation of water within the eco-system is the result of capitalist and patriarchal structures that embed oppression and fail to take account of vulnerabilities, difference and perpetuate violence both against the planet and those who are marginalised. As Neimanas argues, aknowledging our shared materiality as watery beings and,

> Reframing ourselves as bodies of water is […] not only an experiment in human embodiment, but also a feminist commitment to following the flows of marginalisation and injustice , as well as those of connection […] and joy that our watery corporelities collaboratively engender. (2019: 64)

Theatre that facilitates scenographic engagement with water in the context of climate change and disaster draws our own bodies of water into encounters with other assemblages, systems and crucially linking our 'human, specifically situated bodies to other bodies' (2019: 64) . By placing the action within a claustrophobic and real-world situation that has been affected by environmental disaster and flooding, the characters are presented as agents within a domestic drama instead of an abstract manifestation of end times. The use of water to articulate crisis within the production facilitates something more terrifying precisely because it is as Neimanis explains 'entirely mundane, and […] common' (2019: 67). This quality of ordinariness is what imbues it with such power when it exceeds or extends its boundaries to impose, spill and overwhelm through unexpected breaches that displace people and things from the spaces it threatens to fill and consume.

In their paper on the impact of flooding and the role of gender in the experience of post-disaster security, Timothy J Haney and Daran Gray-Scholz note that while the scale of disaster is often measured by the number of lives lost, the vast number of those affected survive but are nonetheless highly traumatised. Of those survivors, women are often the worst affected because of their sense of isolation as a result of dislocation from the wider community network: 'Women are more likely to benefit from positive interactions and bolstered emotional support within the wider community, whereas men seem to thrive when they can exercise agency in directly affecting their immediate material condition' (Haney and Gray-Scholz 2019:262). In *Happy Days* there is no recourse for Winnie to access external support, and her husband ignores his own needs as well as hers by choosing to hide in a hole or, in Mitchell's production, literally turning his back on the situation before finally escaping. Willie's apparent sense of impotence at dealing with disaster is contrasted with Winnie's attempts to preserve a sense of normality despite the impending terror of drowning. It is interesting to note that globally women and children are 14 times more likely to die during a disaster [19] although it must be maintained that:

[19] https://www.undp.org/publications/gender-adaptation-and-disaster-risk-reduction
[Date accessed Dec 19th 2023]

> where the socioeconomic status of women is high, men and women will die in roughly equal numbers during and after natural disasters, whereas when the socioeconomic status of women is low, more women than men die (or women die at a younger age). These results corroborate a vulnerability approach to natural disasters since the more adverse impact of disasters on female compared to male life expectancy is clearly contingent on the extent of socially constructed vulnerability and there is nothing natural in the gendered impact of disasters on life expectancy. (Neumayer and Plümper 2008:552)

Neumayer and Plümper's detailed study goes on to explore the way in which the impact of climate change and natural disaster has a way of heightening pre-existing disparities between men and women. These are naturally more pronounced in places where the social, economic and cultural situation for women may be more unbalanced or discriminatory. This is not to say that women in western countries always escape the trauma and fracture of post-disaster relocation. Certainly, the design and directorial choices that lead to Willie's denial through body language followed by his escape resonate with studies conducted in the West which seem to show that men are more resistant to change, with women being 'twice as likely as men to report post – flood changes in their environmental views' (Haney and Gray- Scholz 2020:264). Another study in Canada by Haney and Milnes following a serious bout of flooding in 2013 also highlighted among the men:

> A framework consistent with traditionally masculine conceptions of the environment […] when asked about how climate change may affect them, the men spoke about minor inconveniences … rarely acknowledging any locally felt effects. This is particularly salient given that the interviews took place after a catastrophic flood and given that all the men interviewed were directly affected by the flood. (2017:268)

By placing Willie within the frame of the action and having his life also held in the balance by the behaviour of the 'mound' before allowing him to escape the confines of the home, Mitchell's production leaves less ambiguity around Willie's behaviour than traditional productions. There is little room to doubt that Willie abandons his wife, choosing his own personal safety over any attempt to help her or protect their home. Interestingly, his behaviour falls within the pattern of relationships in the post-disaster landscape where these 'experiences may also contribute to increased tensions and interpersonal conflict between partners and

families, sometimes resulting in separation or divorce, which further compromises ontological security' (Haney & Gray-Scholz 2020:268).

Choosing to set the action in the kitchen, a traditionally female space, which is then compromised by rising floodwater presents a vision of the play that allows the production to facilitate discussions about the effects of climate change on women. Women are often the worst affected in situations such as flooding or earthquakes because they are more often at home, and frequently remain in the house to protect both property and children. Furthermore, Kaika's exploration of the role of water within the domestic space and the notion of 'good' and 'bad' water observes that in the modern home 'It is always *good* water alone that becomes women's, and it does so only after it enters the protected 'space envelope' of the domestic sphere' (2004:271). This contrasts with the fact that traditionally water was once a commodity that was 'searched for outside the house, often outside the settlement area and brought into the house through painstaking efforts, predominantly carried out by women, practices still found outside of western societies' (2004:267). However, in the modern age, "the process of taming *bad* water as well as producing good water – the construction of dams, wells, aqueducts […] remains predominantly the task of men' (Kaika 2004:271). To follow this line of argument, Willie's apathy becomes more than just an indictment on their marriage but an apparent failure of masculinity and duty.

In the immediate aftermath of such disasters women's dietary needs are also often overlooked as they place themselves at the bottom of the pecking order. In the original productions, the absence of food creates a narrative around the way Winnie's world is sustained and dominated by routines that focus on appearance and self-care, highlighting by their omission the most essential of these, the need to eat and drink. This makes the dislocation from her home even more painful, allowing us to imagine how the barren landscape offers no nourishment or shelter, forcing her to rely on a curious collection of items whose relationship to one another is not always clear. By locating Winnie and Willie within their home, Mitchell brings the terror closer by showing us the process of destruction. The production draws attention to the way flooding can have phenomenological resonances within the home that recall the trauma of the original incident even after the moment has passed. The story of a 59-year-old woman who was the victim of flooding 'recalled the effect of seeing water rush into her basement: "for a long time I couldn't have a bath because the sound of water running into the tub triggered me"' (Haney & Gray-Scholz 2019:278). This testimony, and many others like

it, draw attention to the fact that, even if Winnie were to be rescued, the ontological security of the home as a safe space will have been irreversibly compromised and domestic rituals that once brought comfort might now be tainted with the horror of disaster.

One horror that Beckett spares us in his original productions is that we are catapulted into disaster: the damage has already been done. Mitchell on the other hand, uses the scenographic framework of the domestic home and the recognisable and realistic portrayal of a kitchen dining room that is being submerged to draw the audience into a situation where they are compelled to watch a life that is both recognisable and relatable being destroyed in front of them. Mitchell's production of *Happy Days* begins to resonate with *Endgame* and *Eleutheria* by making the home a space that is central to anxiety and terror. Instead of refuge, the home becomes a prison, stifling life and preventing escape. Just as the barbed wire that runs along the edges of the furniture in *Eleutheria* embeds claustrophobia and danger into the fabric of the set, Mitchell's murky water laps at the corners of the kitchen. The breakthrough of floodwater in a western setting also resonates with Beckett's return to the scenography of *Eleutheria*, and his aesthetic preoccupation with the material complacency of the middle classes being undercut by disaster. In this way, Mitchell's production not only participates in conversations around climate change but utilises water as a means of undermining the security of the bourgeois interior. The control of water is arguably what distinguishes a middle-class home from its more primitive iterations. In effect the control of water both in production, usage and nature meant that water became imbued with moral judgement and this progress and change in the relationship with water was also a way of mapping the progress of domestic spaces through the development of modern plumbing as the 'dwelling space shifts geographically from the countryside to the city' a process that undergoes the most radical upheaval in the late 19th and early 20th century:

> Increasing incorporation of water into the economic and social life of expanding urban areas, combined with the discovery of the link between water and epidemics, generated a […] practice of treating and purifying water. This practice led to the material production of purified drinking water […] and to the discursive construction of two distinct 'types' of water: *good water* (clean, processed, controlled, commodified) and *bad water* (dirty, grey, metabolized[…]). (Kaika 2004:268)

Just as Victor's family home is pregnant with its own destruction, with ordinary pieces of furniture destroyed through the hidden fabric of barbed wire, in Mitchell's production

nothing is safe. Objects such as the table which are impervious to water are defamiliarized in other ways. The water we think we know - life-giving fluid that acts as nourisher and protector - is nowhere to be seen. In its place is the dirty brown water of disaster, the colour acting like a shroud and destroying the objects that fall foul of it. The fetid water acts in a particularly cruel way by surrounding Winnie and yet not offering a drop to drink. Mitchell's mound seems to draw parallels between the disproportionate effects of environmental disaster on women by enclosing Winnie's within the traditionally female domain of the kitchen and then enveloping her torso within a kind of perverse take on the amniotic sac. 'The amnion is the innermost membrane that encloses the embryo of a mammal […] it contains the amniotic fluid that […] facilitates the watery world necessary for the gestation of all life' (Neimanis 2019:163). Astrida Neimanis explores the idea that,

> As bodies of water, our being is facilitated by a watery environment but as bodies of water we necessarily incorporate that gestational element within us. We are thus a repetition of the water that gestates us, but a repetition that also differentiates a body from its gestational habitat. (2019:163)

Neimanis' argument can be unpacked further in relation to Mitchell's production, since her scenography adds another layer to the notion of the body being at once a repetition and a separation from the gestational environment. The containment of floodwater within the home leads to another kind of incubation which brings destruction instead of life, generating anxiety and fear in what Kaika explains can produce,

> a 'domestic network' crisis […] precisely because it forces the dweller to reflect on the existence of social and economic relations to which the home is connected and which, when disrupted, render the normal function of our lives anomalous. Such crisis reveal that the familiarity based on the supposed autonomy of the private space is itself a form of alienation. (Kaika 2004:277)

Mitchell's production explores what happens when the disaster outside cannot be contained and the consequences of environmental crisis breach the walls of home, creating situations where destruction plays out in a kind of ecological endgame. Her interview with Anna McMullan highlights Mitchell's desire as a director to give the audience a visceral as well as conceptual means of accessing the horror of Winnie's predicament. In Act II the mound that consumes Winnie takes on a new quality when presented as water, 'in the second half, she

was up to her neck in water and if she moved too much the water could have literally gone into her mouth, and audiences found it very frightening' (McMullan 2018:4). This idea that the mound in its fluidity, as dirty floodwater that has already breached the walls of the home, might enter Winnie's mouth and contaminate, drown and destroy her from the inside is even more terrifying because of its believability.

Female Identity and Props

For an object-centred thesis, Mitchell's production presents a fascinating interpretation of the mound because of the way it challenges and threatens Winnie's hard-won relationship with her precious objects within the scenographic field. The observation that 'props do not just identify; they also characterize' (Sofer 2003:21), and the fact that 'a key prop like […] the contents of Winnie's bag […] may even anchor an entire play' (Sofer 2003:22), requires that we understand the way the props and objects are threatened can provide unique insights into the female body in situations of peril. If we consider that the contents of Winnie's bag provide a kind of dramatic anchor within the play, the effect of Mitchell threatening this seems to be a direct attack on Winnie's person: the props are in danger of falling into the murky water even before Winnie is consumed by it. Despite their importance to her, she does not attempt to move them entirely out of harm's reach, instead insisting on their easy accessibility. However, one could also argue that the position of the bag could suggest that she prizes their safety over her own.

In studies on the effects of flooding among men and women, the feelings of loss resulting from the destruction of personal possessions was felt by both genders. However, during interviews the authors chose to highlight the heightened sense of loss felt by middle-aged women in response to the destruction of material items and personal spaces. One 60-year-old woman commented that after the flood, the failure to keep any kind of inventory of loss meant 'you spend a lot of time looking for stuff that may not be around anymore' (Haney & Gray-Scholz 2019:277). Eales' set design enforces the connection between Winnie's survival and her belongings, but these objects fail to reward her with their obedience. Winnie may think she exerts control over the objects that she has chosen to rescue but they 'adamantly refuse to play along'. Echoing the behaviour of the window in *Eleutheria*, Winnie's props defy her by refusing to behave according to the natural order, they cannot run out, be destroyed, or be misplaced, no matter how she attempts to exert control.

By Act II, when she is up to her neck in the mound, she remarks to Willie that even the things she treasures have an independence that cannot be conquered and that this autonomy is

not dependent on their position, 'In the bag, outside the bag […] Ah yes, things have their life, that is what I always say, things have their life' (Beckett 2006:162). She 'marshals her props against psychic disintegration but every attempt to do so only underscores their failure to console' (Sofer 2003:185). Eales' design highlights the adaptability of the female body under strain and Winnie's need to maintain her physical appearance is as much about distraction and survival as it is about female notions of propriety and social expectation, 'Keep yourself nice, Winnie, that's what I always say, come what may, keep yourself nice' (Beckett 2006:156). Winnie's terror and consumption is also her power, which manifests in her refusal to move from the centre of the room, to abandon her things or to leave her home. In her hour of need Winnie must still deal with Willie's absence and indifference, as well as the knowledge that even her objects are apathetic towards her, 'Take my looking-glass, it doesn't need me' (Beckett 2006:162). These objects are sustained in the knowledge that Winnie will always need them, even when she cannot use them, as they remain essential to her identity. Another root of this confidence is the way her toothpaste, lipstick, her medicine 'seem to inhabit several temporalities at once […] things are running out', but all the while 'things are going on' as Winnie continues to remove and replace items from her bag:

> Most mysteriously of all, things are coming back. Winnie announces that the mirror she shatters on the ground will be in her bag tomorrow and her parasol […] reappears phoenix like and unreachable […] perhaps the most horrific implication of this is that Winnie herself is caught in a loop of eternal repetition than organic decline. (Sofer 2003:186)

The way Winnie's body is being concealed and consumed inorganically becomes terrifyingly apparent in Act II. The issue of multiple temporalities becomes more polarised by the end of the play as the objects sit devoid of agentic motivation on the edge of the mound as Winnie is incapacitated, leading the audience to question whether the objects also break free of the loop as they become deactivated or obsolete through lack of use. Furthermore the sense of the domestic as being intrinsically linked with ideas of haunting within Beckett's work is reiterated through the sense of return not only in the existence of bodies that occupy liminal spaces but through the objects and the routines or rituals associated with them, echoing a past life that continues to forge a spectral domesticity despite or inspite of the uncertainty of a fully embodied existence in the present. This transition of the objects from things that sustain and maintain some semblance of a domestic life into memento mori as Winnie is entombed and

they line the graveside is an idea that will be explored in more detail in the transition to the final chapter.

The Female Body in the Age of Disaster

The idea of inorganic decline is palpable in the 2018 collaborative production from Sarah Frankcom and Maxine Peake that draws the female body into wider dialogues around environmental disaster that go beyond the dangers of flooding. The mound juxtaposes soil interwoven with real-world waste, in a powerful reminder of the consequences of human failures to protect the planet. The need to explore the wider consequences and causes of environmental damage are outlined by designer Naomi Dawson:

> Because we're making the play in 2018 it felt natural that we should be looking at climate change. Sarah from very early on, had an instinct of landfill sites and we started looking at plastic pollution, global warming and the plundering of the Earth's resources amongst other issues. (Dawson 2018)

Frankcom's *Happy Days* could be seen as a natural progression from Mitchell's, in which Winne has escaped the immediate danger of flooding but instead found herself in a collapsing world where she is buried up to her waist in the earth, still clutching her belongings, until she cannot do so any longer in Act II, in an attempt to grasp the last vestiges of control for as long as possible. Despite moving to an exterior setting, the use of a revolving earthen mound combined with staging the play in the round heightened the way that:

> Beckett's closed space texts combine qualities of confined interior space with the sense of a cosmological or ecological system: we might think of these texts as evoking damaged, exhausted or entropic habitations, cosmologies or bio- spheres, where the systems of heat and light have become polarised and extreme. (McMullan 2021:6)

Returning to a more traditional staging enabled discussions around climate change that extended beyond the personal and the domestic. The mound had a realistic earthy quality, but its fringes were studded with detritus, plastic waste lined its base and as it revolved, water seemed to spill out from its bottom, creeping towards the audience and encroaching upon the stage space till it was almost at their toes.

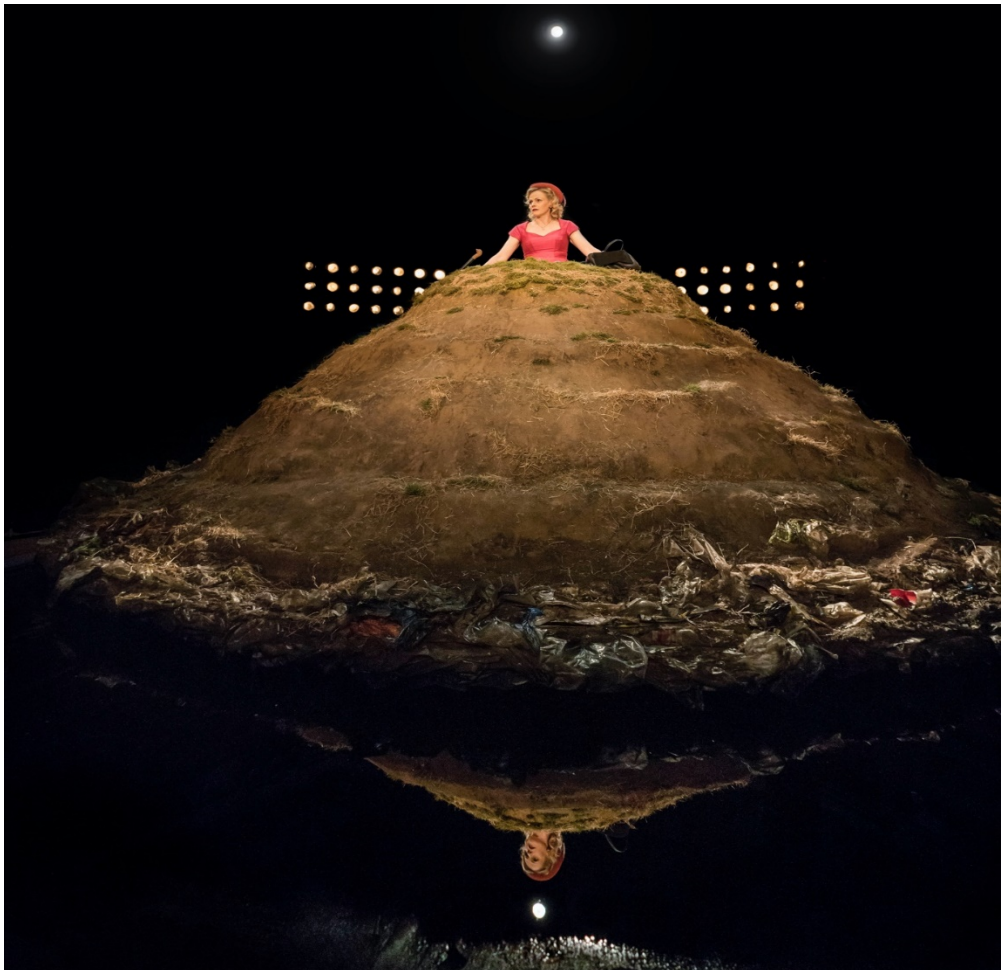

Fig 9. Happy Days, Director: Sarah Frankcom, Designer Naomi Dawson, Actor: Maxine Peake as Winnie, Manchester Royal Exchange, 2018, copyright Johan Persson

Seating the audience in the round combined with a revolving set meant that the audience were implicated in the material reality of the scenography. The decision to use actual waste and discarded plastic acted as palimpsest through which the audience were required to orient themselves through the juxtaposition of real-world detritus within a theatrical space. As Merleau-Ponty explains, 'every conceivable being is related either directly or indirectly to the perceived world, and since the perceived world is grasped only in terms of direction, we cannot dissociate being from orientated being' (Merleau-Ponty 2003:295). Understanding the way in which the gaze of the audience is always necessarily subjective means witnessing Winnie's consumption and entombment and necessitates an understanding of our roles – both collective and individual. The waste that has accumulated is not only familiar but continues to exist in landfill sites which we have been complicit in creating, providing a powerful bridge between Winnie's theatrical embedding in a landscape of waste and the audience's phenomenological reality.

By returning Winnie to the exterior, she is at the mercy of the elements in the way that Beckett intended. *Happy Days* lends itself to interpretations that consider the repercussions of climate change from different perspectives:

> One of the key stage directions is that there is a blazing light. We started looking at this in two ways: one is the idea of the overuse of electricity and the second is ozone depletion […] we're very deliberately overusing these big banks of lights in the first half, and […] Winnie […] can't ever escape the light because as she spins, they will react to her movement. There will be a moment where we'll overuse the electricity and trip the system so there'll be a dramatic shift to an emergency lighting situation (Dawson 2018).

All too often, the consequence of climate disaster is the loss of the home. Studies into spatial vulnerability note that in most cases 'disasters result in displacement' (Aryanti & Muhlis 2020:4) and that 'women experienced the temporary loss of home and neighbourhood attachments more intensively than men' (Akerkar & Fordham 2017:223) resulting in greater emotional stress. Fraiman argues that,

> Given their real and perceived vulnerability it is not surprising that homelesswomen seek and gain admission to shelters at proportionately higher rates than men do […] it follows that they are hereby subjected to a wider range of social controls. (2017:157)

However in situations of disaster or displacement because of climate crisis that finding shelter if possible can potentially place women in even more compromising and dangerous situation. The absence of domestic security potentially leaves women more vulnerable to gender-based violence (Aryanti & Muhlis 2020:4), at the same time a frequent side effect of disaster is that support services such as domestic violence and rape shelters are often forced to close. Perez notes that 'on the subject of the violence women face in disaster contexts, we know that violence against women increases in the "chaos and social breakdown that accompany natural disaster" – but, in part because of that self-same chaos […] we don't know exactly by how much' (2020:302). Winnie's situation in a production that situates her in world transformed by climate disaster resonates with studies that expose gender disparity when disaster leaves people exposed and without shelter. In *Happy Days* this is emphasized by her recollection of passing strangers. For those women who do find shelter, the precarity of the temporary or makeshift domestic space leads to a blurring of public and private space, 'activities that were previously

done privately behind closed doors become visible to strangers' (Aryanti & Muhlis 2020:5). Perez draws on the evidence presented by Gauri Van Gulik, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for Europe and Central Asia, who states that women are at greatest risk of sexual assault if they do not have separate bathrooms, a fact that is enshrined in international law but which is difficult to enforce (Perez 2020:303). Winnie's acts of self -care – at once personal and intimate – are the focus of the play's action and Dawson's design reflects this sense of intrusion. In Act II where Winnie finds herself buried up to the neck in soil and at the peak of her physical limitations, we are still privy to every breath, twitch and lip quiver through the positioning of small screens embedded into the rim of the mound, which are transmitted to the audience via much larger screens set above and around the revolve. The use of technology in Frankcom's production highlights the way social media and the internet have enabled people to view the suffering of others with an unprecedented immediacy and accessibility. However, there remains a gulf between the consumption of these images and information, and our engagement with them. The play asks us the question posed by Sontag, whether 'there is shame as well as shock in looking at the close up of a real horror. Perhaps the only people with the right to look at images of suffering of this extreme order are those who could do something to alleviate it […] the rest of us are voyeurs, whether or not we mean to be' (2003:38). The situation conceived in *Happy Days* is absurd and abstract, but both Mitchell and Frankcom lend the theatrical space a phenomenological charge that enables the scenography to straddle theatrical artifice while simultaneously interrogating the ways the female body negotiates and survives the violence of the post-disaster landscape. Presenting situations that evoke real world situations asks how we as spectators will respond particularly in the context of Willie's reaction at the end of Act II and his scramble up the mound for the gun, the result of which is left deliberately ambiguous.

The sense of abandonment created by Willie's movements in Frankcom's production is not as pronounced in Mitchell's, yet the undeniable truth is that it is Winnie's body that is really at stake here, a fact that is underlined by the earlier statistic that women and children are 14 times more likely to die than men during a disaster[20]. Neumayer and Plümper note that both behavioural and physiological differences can disproportionately disadvantage women in the context of disaster, yet what becomes most apparent during both productions is that despite

[20] Gender and disaster risk reduction – UNDP [Date accessed Dec 19th 2023]
https://www.undp.org › Gender and Environment

these potential and realised disadvantages, Winnie remains determined to thrive. The use of water brings a visceral quality to the productions. In *The Visible and The Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty explains that the embodied self is our passport into the world: '[…] he who looks must not himself be foreign to the world that he looks at' - the body is a mediator in the world of things and it is only through the contextualised perspective of the seer that 'the body as a thing among things can unite us with subjects that might otherwise be inaccessible' (1968:134). Understanding the nature of the displaced female body within the context of environmental crisis can facilitate an understanding of how this resonates with other instances where the body becomes vulnerable due to the security of the private domestic sphere being compromised. The body is our point of entry into the ecological way of thinking, a means understanding how environmental precarity is reflected in our own fragility and part of the mesh of interconnectedness that Morton describes. What makes Winnie most susceptible to danger is not that she is woman, but that there are no other women in the vicinity that she can turn to. In Perez' study into women in post-disaster environments, the presence of other women was able to offer some security, particularly during night-time toilet trips to communal bathrooms:

> A year after the 2004 Tsunami women and girls in Indian displacement camps were still walking in pairs to and from the community toilet […] to ward off harassment from men. A group of Yezidi women who ended up in Nea Kavala camp in northern Greece […] formed protection circles so they could accompany each other to the toilet. (Perez 2020:304)

What becomes most pointed in my third case study - Company SJ's production on Inis Oírr - is the loneliness of Winnie. The image of Winnie isolated and embedded in the mound surrounded by the stark natural landscape of the Aran Islands highlights the vulnerability of her body to the elements in a way that cannot be replicated inside a theatre.

The Journey to the Aran Islands: Borders, Margins and the Mesh of Interconnection

The production of *Laethanta Sona*, the first Irish language production of *Happy Days*, invites the audience into the staging long before the performance begins. The journey from London to the Aran Islands, situated off the coast of Galway on the west coast of Ireland, compels the traveller to actively engage with the changing landscape in a way that modern air travel usually defies. The journey comprised trains, planes, buses and a ferry ride that took some eight hours in total. Leaving the busy metropolis of a capital city in the early morning and ending with the

cold of the Atlantic crossing across Galway Bay facilitated a physical overview of how distant the island communities of Ireland are from what the average city dweller considers to be a familiar landscape. These communities that form in clusters around the island of Ireland each have their own character and landscape that seem to capture the modernity of Ireland as well as its history in each step and stone. What the journey brings to light is an understanding of the precarity of life and isolation on these islands, dependent as they are on their connections with the mainland, that are at the mercy of the wind and the sea. The timings of the boats are often determined by the weather, and islanders and visitors find their existence shaped by nature in a way that those on the mainland have the luxury to avoid. Currently there is a small plane service that flies regularly from Connemara airport and lands on the small airstrip on the edge of Inis Oírr, but this too is governed by the wild Atlantic weather. The ferry made the 15-minute journey with little effort, but the cold of the sea was still formidable. It was fitting that the journey to the production of *Laethanta Sona* drew the traveller into conversation with water as well as land before the arrival at Winnie's shoreline entombment in stone.

Most of the audience had to travel to reach the play, not just in a physical sense but a psychological and intellectual one too. From the moment the audience leave their home they are immersed in the wider implications of the performance, and the physical experience of participating in the journey helps to imbue a sense of the interconnectedness of things outlined by Morton. As a result, the journey to the island is an opportunity to have an embodied sense of what Morton describes as 'the mesh', and this ecological way of thinking necessitates an understanding of the erasure of border. It means 'confronting the fact that all beings are related to each other negatively and differentially, in an open system without centre or edge' or to put it another way, 'the mesh is highly paradoxical. Endosymbiosis abolishes inside- outside distinctions' (2010:39). This erasure of the border between the dialectics of inside and outside is a idea that is integral to Beckett's redefining of home and therefore our reappraisal of domesticity. The journey to the island by sea as part of the ecoscenographic consequences of the performance is also further illuminated by Neimanis' hydrofeminist approach to post human phenomenology when she explains, 'The planetary hydrocommons is not outside of us, but literally channelling and cycling through us'. If the aim or hope of a hydrofeminst approach is to 'attune ourselves differently to a world in which we are implicated' (2019:64) and thereby negotiating an ethics of embodied difference […] through an ecological, and specifically hydrological situatedness' then *Laethanta Sona* and Company SJ's production invited visitors to the island to succumb to a way of thinking that required allowing us to be susceptible to narratives outside of our comfort zone and our day-to-day circumstances. This 'big thinking'

as Morton puts it 'involves facing the meaninglessness and disorientating openness of ecological thinking. Interconnectedness isn't snug and cosy. There is intimacy, as we shall see, but not predictable warm, fuzziness'. It is no surprise then that ecological thinking comes with its own challenges, 'we're losing the ground beneath our feet at the exact same as we are figuring out just how dependent upon that ground we are' (Morton 2010:31). Furthermore the way different modes of travel were embedded in the experience of the production meant that 'the audience's reception of the production was thus linked to climate, environment and their own embodiment: it was not so much the production as the audience themselves that was site responsive' (Lonergan 2023: 26). Water in particular played a huge part in Company SJ's production that went beyond the restrictions or expectations of theatrical staging. If Mitchell and Frankcom's respective productions both explored the way in which environmental disaster and climate change draw water into spaces that are unexpected, then Company SJ actively engages the audience in a dialogue with a landscape that becomes a living scenography. Merleau-Ponty describes how allowing ourselves to see the world around with all our senses, not just reaching out to encounter our surroundings but allowing them to reach us also facilitates a truly embodied existence in the world that is inextricably linked to what Morton defines as ecological thought.

> Between the exploration and what it will teach me, between my movements and what I touch, there must exist some relationship […] some kinship, according to which they are not only, like the pseudopods of the amoeba, vague and ephemeral deformations of the corporeal space, but the initiation to and the opening on a tactile world. This can only happen if my hand while it is felt from within, is also accessible from without, itself tangible, for my other hand, for example if it takes place among the things it touches, is in a sense one of them, opens finally on a tangible being of which it is also a part. Through this crisscrossing within it of the touching and the tangible, its own movements incorporate themselves into the universe they interrogate, are recorded on the same map as it; the two systems applied upon one another, as the two halves of an orange. (Merleau-Ponty 1968:133)

This interconnectedness is essential to the development of am empathic relationship with our environment and Company SJ's production navigates a reading of the themes of women, the environment and the home from a perspective that through their work, shone a light on the interconnection between the landscape, the community, the materials and the

networks that brought them together, embedding an ecoscenographic approach into the production that Tanja Beer defines as being

> Interested in how an ecological approach may be incorporated into an aesthetic experience […] with ecological values and ethics […] one which expands the 'environment' to not just that experienced during the performance (2021: 46)

One of the most distinctive aspects of the way in which the production did this was through its engagement with water, not just as a dramatic and scenographic element of the staging but as a material agent that was treacherous and untamed, making the experience a 'multi-sensory somatic encounter' (Beer 2021: 43). The Atlantic played several roles: both as a border that had to be crossed, but also as a landscape, soundscape and backdrop to the action. While earth and stone are more commonly excavated to uncover their secrets, watery landscapes engage with the past in a different way. Even in 2003, the effects of global warming on these islands were already being felt: rising water levels and the early effects of climate change had created an irreversible situation. Dr Michael Williams of NUI'S University of Galway Geology department who has undertaken major work into rock forts and coastal erosion on the Aran Islands explained that,

> the erosion caused by such waves is greater on the Aran Islands due to a combination of their geology and their exposed position. He calculates that erosion rate at 0.4 metres per annum for the islands' southeast coastal cliffs - a rate which would be accelerated by major storm events. (Irish Times 2003)[21]

The relationship between home and landscape for a small island community negotiates an intimacy that is different to those who live in larger countries; the isolation and difficulty in accessing the mainland are determined by nature in a way that outsiders may struggle to imagine. It could be argued that being able to walk the length and breadth of one's homeland in its entirety evokes an affinity for the landscape that awakens an instinctive understanding of one's natural surroundings. Dependent on the mainland and yet assuredly distinctive and separate in character, accent and culture, the inhabitants of the Aran Islands are compelled to live in a way that is at once seemingly stifling and yet undoubtedly often lonely. As part of their residency on the island, Company SJ sought to connect with both the island and the play

[21] https://www.irishtimes.com/news/on-the-edge-of-civilisation-1.361528 [accessed 18/07/2020]

through an exhibition of photographs of women of Inis Oírr, with their accompanying stories transcribed in both Irish and English. These portraits of women across the generations told the story of a love and passion for the landscape and the community, but also of loneliness and isolation. Physical and emotional hardship were often intertwined as the vagaries of the environment were contingent on the experience of the day to day. For those that came to the island without sufficient knowledge of Irish, life could also present challenges: small communities are not necessarily easier to navigate than cities, perhaps precisely because you cannot disappear. Despite the obstacles that framed their lives, the notion of leaving did not seem to be part of anyone's plan. The women documented were open and frank about their perseverance and patience, qualities that spoke overwhelmingly to the character of Winnie. They had no doubt been shaped by the landscape but had unquestionably left their indelible mark on the stones and earth that they called home. The sense of exchange that lies at the heart of dwelling and homemaking between the living and the non-human around the production of *Laethanta Sona* is the next area of focus.

The compulsion to replicate a domestic space even in the most desperate situations has been the focus of this thesis from the outset. Until now, this concept has been explored in theatre-focused productions where the scenography is staged and the conditions artificial. Theatrical spaces may be presented as strange or fantastical but they can never be a substitute for what can be conjured when designers work in natural, ancient spaces that juxtapose the wild with the domestic. The idea of Winnie as a traveller from another time or another kind of situation is one that the visitor can relate to as they find themselves away from home. From the moment one steps foot on the island the sense of being out of place in a recognisable landscape is apparent. Morton elaborates on this idea explaining that 'The essence of the local isn't familiarity but the uncanny, the strangely familiar and the familiarly strange' (2010:50).

The image of Winnie on the island recalls Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, which, according to Judith Flanders, is the first famous work of literature to 'treat the details of domestic life as though they were as gripping as a disaster at sea or the discovery of a fabled land' (Flanders 2015:2). Crusoe's protagonist has other similarities with Winnie, which the island production brings to light. Both characters have a home that they have left behind, both are at the mercy of the elements, and both have a strong desire to maintain domesticity. They both seek to tame the strange and unfamiliar by utilising the material remnants of their old lives and attempting to replicate the behaviour of home. Flanders expands on Crusoe's predicament and reaction to his situation that echo Winnie's despite some crucial and obvious differences,

> Long passages […] dwell on the arrangements he makes to provide himself with the necessities of daily life: clothes, razor, cutlery, even writing materials […] when after two decades, another ship is wrecked on his island, he is thrilled to find, not weapons (he doesn't bother to take the muskets he comes across), or marine equipment to help him sail away, but a kettle, a pot 'to make chocolate', a fire shovel and tongs […] a man who for twenty-eight years has no home, is nevertheless awash with notions of domesticity. Time and time again Crusoe uses the word 'home'. It is how he refers to his 'little tent', and […] over the course of the novel it appears more than sixty times, recurring like a steady heartbeat. (Flanders 2015:3)

There are, however, some key distinctions such as the reluctance of Crusoe to stockpile weapons or defences in contrast to Winnie's decision to allow Brownie to nestle among her most intimate belongings. The gun sends a ripple through the contents of the bag, calling to mind the opening of Viki Feaver's poem about the introduction of a firearm into a domestic space, 'Bringing a gun into a house changes it' (Feaver 2015:n.p). Likewise, Winnie's inclusion of the gun among her possessions speaks to a violence that lingers, it is not marked by a moment of explosive or expulsive energy but exerts its influence insidiously and exhaustively upon the subject and its surroundings. Unlike Crusoe, Winnie is trapped and therefore the environment is confined to the area which can be explored by her hands or reached by her umbrella. Since there is no way for her to add to her store, home is no longer a living entity in which objects are found and added, but a static space in which nothing can come or go. As a result, even the act of replenishment in *Happy Days* has connotations of stagnancy. Ultimately, the loneliness of Crusoe can be no match for Winnie, since his is borne of isolation while hers is also of silence.

The Stones of Aran and the Ecology of the Mound

The rock formations of this region, which match that of the Burren in County Clare, are made up of sedimentary rocks described as Karst stone, mainly limestone but also sandstone, mudstone and siltstone. They are the result of a process of evolution and erosion that contain millions of years of history, and there is a poignancy in stepping foot on land that was once a part of the water and which in time will return there. Winnie's impressing of domesticity upon the mound is central to the ecological thought proposed by Morton, 'environments coevolve with organisms. The world looks the way it looks because of life forms. The environment doesn't 'exist' apart from them'. He is at pains to insist that the environment doesn't condition

organisms but is rather a reciprocal exchange since the 'belief in a special environment is a symptom of nationalism […] The ecological thought cannot abide national boundaries' (Morton 2010:51). Interconnection does not irradicate strangeness and Morton makes a point of drawing our attention to Freud's essay on *The Uncanny* as essential to our understanding of how we inhabit places both new and old. He explains 'Here is shot through with there. Our sense of place includes a sense of difference' (Morton 2010:52).

The uncanny in Company SJ's *Laethanta Sona* is fascinating to unravel in terms of the audience's immersion in the performance but even more so in the embodied experience of Winnie. For Morton the uncanny is evoked through repetition, in our behaviour and movements ~~that~~ driven by nostalgia and a longing to return to places and things that can never quite be the same; an act that can be simultaneously comforting and overwhelming. Nature and environment are constantly in flux, they prevent the landscape from being conquered as entirely knowable or certain. When we observe the objects in Winnie's bag disobeying her, we are taught that possession does not remove agency on the part of the possessed. Similarly, and less surprisingly, it becomes clear that the act of dwelling and attempts to domesticise are not precursors to reliability or the ability to tame the landscape from a psychological or physical perspective. Just as we cannot fully know ourselves from one day or one moment to another, neither can we attempt to colonise the environment and supplant its agentic power through simply being in it. The structures we impose upon the landscape are complicit in the delusion of control, but in fact our emotional experience of our surroundings has just as much of a role as the environment itself. Company SJ's production reinvigorates our understanding of Winnie's predicament by implanting her within the community of Inis Oírr. By breaching the boundaries between staging and society it encourages a reading of the play from a unique cultural perspective.

Company SJ's production on Inis Oírr gives us insight into an ecological perspective where the stone and the landscape are not simply there to dominate but are equal players in Winnie and Willie's story, an approach that lies at the crux of their ecoscenographical approach, that of 'co-designing in partnership with the more than human collective' (Beer 2021: 42). Just as Winnie appears to be trapped within the stone mound, one could argue that the stone finds itself having to adapt and conform to the human body as existence becomes interwoven with the habitation of the environment. In creating the mound on Inis Oírr, Company SJ harness the most powerful objects of the land, the stones that draw the islands out of the sea and in doing so explore the way that understanding the capability of things allows

for amore expansive and scenographic lens that implicates the landscape and environment in their history, present and future:

> The limestone's natural partings along its vertical fissures and horizontal stratifications, the oblong and the cuboid are the first fruits of the rock. These are the forms that coerce one's footsteps in this terrain, and hence have directed the evolution of the chief human stratum of the landscape, the mosaic of fields and the paths that side-step between them […] the field-patterns rhyme with the patterns of the stones in their walls. On the largest scale the rectilinear skylines and stepped flanks of Aran remember their origins in the nature of the rock. (Robinson 2008:81)

These imposing blocks of limestone that criss-cross the earth and line and protect the island are what define Winnie in this production. Before she even speaks and we hear the specificity of her island dialect, Bríd Ní Neachtain is already part of the island. The fleshy part of her rises up from a stone trunk, as though her home and tomb are part of her living body; as though she is a sea creature herself and the stone her unnatural encasement, recalling Tim Ingold's observation that 'The shell, it is said, 'just grows' – there is nothing the mollusc can or need do about it' (Ingold 2002:175). The setting of the play, on a part of the island known as *Creig an Staic*, roughly translated as the stack of rocks, against the backdrop of the Atlantic shoreline, serves to outline Winnie, raised up in her stone tower with the blue of a sky stained by the sea.

In his meditation on the *Stones of Aran*, Tim Robinson, a Yorkshireman who adopted the Aran islands as his home and then documented his walking the length and breadth of them, makes an interesting observation on stones and their shapes:

> If as an artist I wanted to find a sculptural form for my intuition of the Aran landscape, I would not think in terms of circles. Aran's circles of stone, the great inland cashels and lesser ring-forts, the ancient hunchback huts […] can be read as fearful withdrawals from these bare spaces or as egocentric stances within them, habits of thought born elsewhere and merely sojourning here, not deeply rooted in the specificity of Aran. In other landscapes the rounded might be equated with the natural and the right angle with the human contribution. Here, though, it is as if the ground itself brings forth right angles. (Robinson 2008:81)

The building of the mound for *Laethanta Sona* was a careful undertaking for Company SJ, not only from an aesthetic and interpretive aspect but in keeping with the eco-scenographic

considerations of undertaking a site-responsive piece of theatre. When applying ecological thinking to an eco-scenographic reading, it is useful to explore how eco-dramaturgy is broadly defined by its commitment to opening theatre and performance to a 'messiness and complexity […] that acknowledges the capacity for agency in the more than human […] or configuring humans at the top […] of a reductive hierarchy of being' (Woynarski, 2020:77). This reading of *Laethanta Sona* aims to offer critical engagement with Beckett's work by locating it at the intersection of phenomenology, scenography and ecology, which is attuned to the relationships between the living and non-living agents within our changing landscapes and in site-responsive performances. It examines how *Laethanta Sona* in general, and the mound in particular, are the product of ecological thinking and the employment of eco-dramaturgical methodologies that imbued the scenography with an embodied presence that sensitively reflected and responded to the histories and traditions of the island. By communicating with the landscape, their production facilitated a unique and collaborative experience between environment, community and theatre. From the outset, the intention was to ensure that the island ecology was left as undisturbed as possible, and that any disruption necessitated by construction was respectful. The stones used were those situated around the site of the mound, and their removal was noted and recorded so that each one could be replaced. The engineers who constructed the mound were made up of the islanders, and the Irish born director had spent decades living among the people and communities on Aran and in particular Inis Oírr. Just as the mounds of Mitchell and Frankcom drew the audience into debates around climate change and disaster and the gendered experiences and needs of women who are placed in these situations of precarity, so too does the stone of *Laethanta Sona*:

> Because perception is mediated through the body there is a fundamental corporeal element to experience. This is neither a matter of the thing imposing itself externally on the body or the mind imposing itself internally on the thing. The body is continually improvising its relationship with things precisely because it is not a closed mechanical system but constantly opening out itself to the world as it moves in it. (Tilley 2004:27)

Unable to move, Winnie's body is unable to open itself out onto the world and she has to negotiate her environment through the stone. This in turn facilitates conversations with both the materiality of her immediate surroundings and with the female body when it becomes enveloped by structures that seek to contain it. The use of stone in the mound, returns us to where this chapter began, with the exploration of Beckett's fascination with mounds and stones

as recurring images in his work both prose and theatre. In Ireland, the large stone slab, similar to those used in the play, have an immediate resonance with Winnie's plight. The Dolmen, of which there are more than 100 in Ireland alone, are a stone tomb or single-person burial chamber consisting of two upright standing stones, covered over with a flat stone that forms a kind of lid or table that date from the early Neolithic period. While in Ireland these tombs mostly take the form of a table shape, in the Western Caucasus close to the Black Sea and Mount Elbrus these tombs are often curved to make a circle.

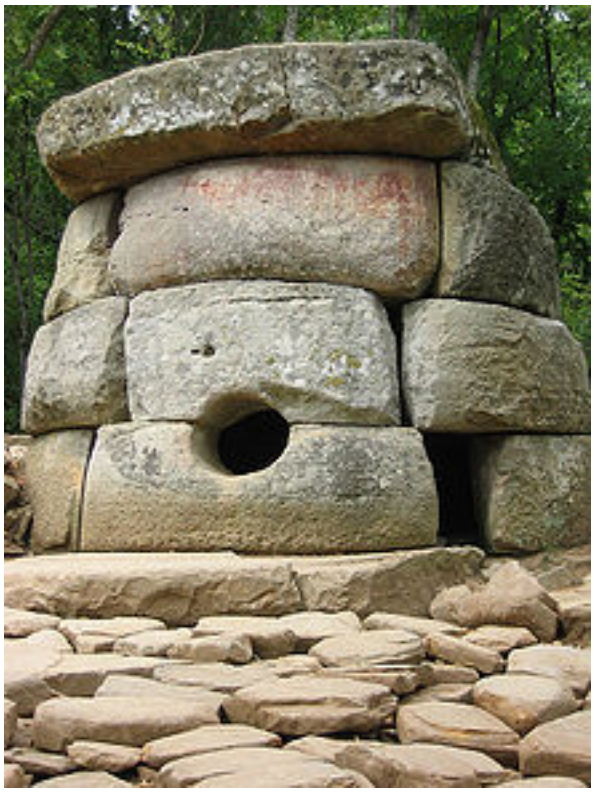

Fig 10. A dolmen in Jane Valley, Caucasian about 3000 BC, Wikipedia: Dolmens of the North Caucus

The use of the stone mound on Inis Oírr not only reminds the viewer of this ancient form of burial but also has local connotations in the context of the sunken 10th century church built at the site of St Caomhán's grave – the patron saint of the Aran Islands and a disciple of St Enda. The church has now sunk so far that only the chancel is visible without stepping into the grounds, the sands from the nearby dunes unable to support its weight while also blowing into the grounds to cover it in equal measure.

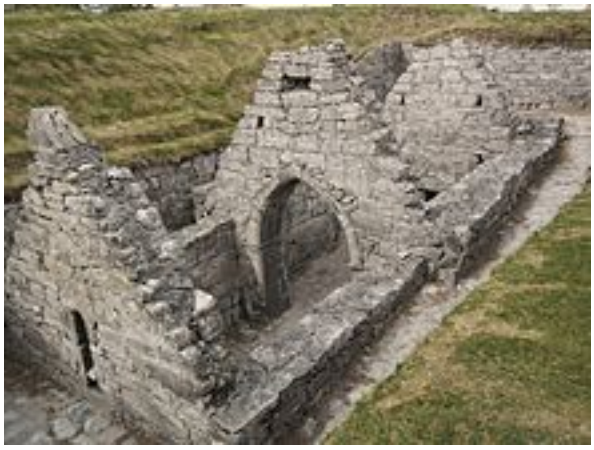

Fig 11. The ruins of Saint Caomhán's church, Inisheer, 2011, Wikipedia: Caomhán of Inisheer

The equating of stone with religious and sacred properties seems to be one which transgresses borders and cultures. In Roger Caillois's book, *The Writing of Stones,* translated by Beckett's close friend Barbara Bray, the introduction by Marguerite Yourcenar draws a connection between the earliest associations of stones with the unknown and the powerful. She refers to Jesus' warning in the Apocryphal Gospels that to lift a stone is to find Him there. The fascination with stones is not simply a religious or pagan association, stones find an expression of wonder in the hands of many writers and notably those that Beckett kept close at hand in his own library. These include Goethe who was part of the German literary and musical tradition that Beckett found to be a source of fascination and inspiration. His extensive mineral and rock collection and diligent study of stones were well known and he is attributed as saying 'stones are mute teachers; they silence the observer and the most valuable lesson we learn from them we cannot communicate'. At its root, Caillois' focus on stones considers the fate of mankind, and acknowledges the ecological precipice on which we stand. Yourcenar observes:

> Roger Caillois, like so many of us, felt terribly weary when he contemplated the restlessness of modern mankind and the world-wide upheavals it produced. Man's is an abnormal and "therefore precarious" situation. The future is dark… The intersecting paths of Chance and Necessity have presided over man's prodigious destiny; but they also suggest that the miracle might happen in reverse and return life to the impassive and moral inertia from which a lucky statistical chance once plucked it. (Caillois 1985:xviii)

The idea of stones as gate keepers, standing at what Yourcenar describes as the intersection of cultures and histories of mankind, grant them an unprecedented power and insight. They are the material embodiment of ecological destiny, containing everything about our evolution and

earliest beginnings, their colours, shapes and aspect within our landscape contain the story of our legacy:

> Stones possesses a kind of *gravitas* something ultimate and unchanging, something that will never perish or else has already done so. They attract through an intrinsic, infallible, immediate beauty, answerable to no one, necessarily perfect yet excluding the idea of perfection in order to exclude approximation, error and excess. This spontaneous beauty thus precedes and goes beyond the actual notion of beauty, of which it is at once the promise and the foundation […] This almost menacing perfection – for it rests on the absence of life, the visible stillness of death – appears in stones so variously that one might list all the endeavours and styles of human art and not find one without its parallel in mineral nature. (Caillois1985:3)

The construction of the mound on Inis Oírr designed by Ger Clancy is a testament to the raw beauty of Aran stone, and the production's accompanying video of its construction and design reflects the respect for the natural quality of the stone as well as Company SJ's commitment to the ongoing conversation between the design of the set and the surroundings. The pieces of stone were slotted onto a wooden frame, moved by hand and using only the most basic of tools to draw them into the mound. Each slab was selected for its natural shape, in a kind of jigsaw, with sides hammered or nudged and occasionally chipped for best fit. The stones were brought into an understanding with one another that gave the impression of a timeless memorial but one that would be dismantled following the production.

Fig 12. Designer Ger Clancy on the Mound for Laethanta Sona (Happy Days), Director Sarah Jane Scaife, Company SJ, Inis Oírr 2021, Copyright Cormac Coyne

Despite the progress and modernity of industrialisation and enlightenment, the concept of the power of stones as sacred objects is one that has endured in Ireland; their associations with saints, pilgrimage and as objects of enchantment and healing remain firmly within Irish tradition. The need to touch and move around such stones as part of the ritual of connection with the past is one that marks out the stone as a material reminder of pre-Christian and

Christian practices and customs that continue to be observed. In her book *Sacred Stones of Ireland*, Christine Zucchelli observes that the veneration of the stone resides in the relationship between the embodied experience of the pilgrim or visitor to these objects with touch and movement being central to the communication, albeit sometimes unconsciously. It suggests a kind of haptic muscle memory in the dialogue between man and mineral that defies science and modernity.

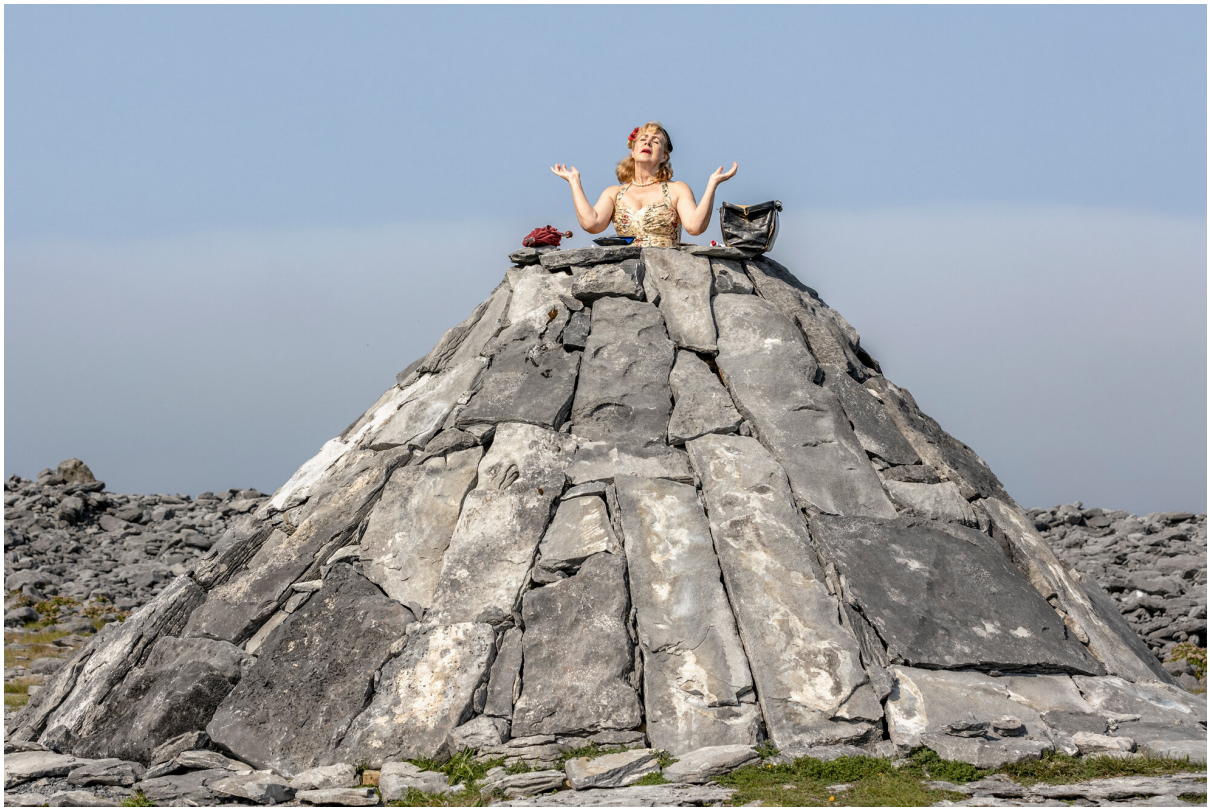

Fig 13. Laethanta Sona – Happy Days, Actor: Bríd Ní Neachtain as Winnie, Company SJ, Inis Oírr 2021. Copyright Cormac Coyne

The walk to the site of Craig an Staic lined with dry stone walls that run through the islands lead the audience through the landscape towards the coastline, where we are seated on stones identical to those that make up the mound. There is a symmetry in our movements that recalls the sacred passage of travellers to those holy magical stones of the saints and pagans. We do not see Winnie enter or leave, allowing us to suspend our disbelief and remove the theatricality of the earlier productions. The sunlight and the alarms may not have the intensity of the staged versions but this can lead to unplanned moments of breath-taking poignancy. On the day of the performance, the sky was grey and overcast, the sea churlish, there was an equilibrium in the consistency of colour between the stones, the sky and the sea. Yet when the clouds parted, with the sun's rays breaking through just before the scene in which Winnie's parasol burns up, there

seemed an unbearable pathos between the elements of theatricality and nature that cannot be relied upon and out of this unpredictability arises a kind of magic.

The recording of notable or venerable stones within the landscape might be considered the earliest kind of ecological thought. Their association with the female body is one that is reflected in the religious as well as the natural world. Christopher Tilley reflects on Merleau-Ponty's concept of embodied experience from a stone-centred perspective:

> I touch the stone and the stone touches me. To feel the stone is to feel its touch on my hands. There is a reflexive relationship between the two. I and the stone are in contact with each other through my body but this process is not exactly the same as my touching my own body because the stone is external to my body and not part of it. Touching the stone is possible because both my body and the stone are part of the same world. There is in this sense a relation of identity and continuity between the two. Yet there is also asymmetry and difference. (Tilley 2004:34)

When Winnie speaks about the mound, she cannot decide whether it is that 'the earth is very tight today […] [or] can it be I have put on flesh' (Beckett 2006:149), and when she looks down, it is not her body but the mound that she perceives. Equally, when Willie sees her or attempts to reach her, it is not her body that that stands between him and her face but the mound which he must climb to touch her. The mound, a foreign object has become inseparable from its owner and which cannot be escaped or cast aside. The idea of the body being contained or hidden within containers is one that is explored in Hunter Dukes' essay 'Beckett's Vessels and the Animation of Containers'. Dukes builds on the work of anthropologist Alfred Gell who proposes that the containment of the body as a replication of the enclosure of the self within the body, what he describes as 'fundamentally human' echoing the manner in which the 'mind is "internal" enclosed, surrounded by something (the body) that is non-mind'. It is a practice that is normally associated with the idols and icons in which 'material homunculi' become a means of 'animating the object world'. One could argue that 'by enclosing a small object […] in a hollow envelope, one can create a material representation of interiority. As Gell makes clear, widening his argument to include contemporary secular examples, the 'homunculus effect' can be achieved wherever there is concentricity and containment' (Dukes 2017:78).

In *Happy Days* and many other of Beckett's works for theatre (*Endgame*, *Play*) there is an interplay between the representation of the homunculus as the visual container of the human body as well as the more traditional protection of objects themselves. He refers to Malone's

creation of a sort of 'society' of 'little objects' that 'approximate human companions' and I would argue that this is exactly what Winnie does in *Happy Days* (Dukes 2017:79). While Malone may do this in lieu of human company, Winnie does so in the absence of such. Similarly while Malone creates the homunculi by placing his objects within the pockets of the clothes about his person, offering them protection and elevating them to 'treasures', Winnie is denied the possibility of storing her precious objects and companions about her person, so instead they are stored in her bag, an object that we have argued is a stabilising domestic force that is crucial in the maintenance and re-enactment of the self. Furthermore, even the parts of her body that are contained within the mound remain animated or at least preservative in their function of recalling the past. The parts of her body within the stone may not be able to have new experiences but they continue to serve as a memorial for the traumas in her childhood and the frustration of married life. She recalls the 'sadness after intimate sexual intercourse' just moments before she remembers the incident of Mildred and the mouse (Beckett 2006:164) both of which she attributes to Willie and her childhood friend but in the context of Mr Shower/Cooker's enquiry as to whether she herself could 'feel her legs' or whether she had 'anything on underneath' (Beckett 2006:165). To discuss Winnie's repressed memories and to understand the ecology of the mound as both as a container that manifests the remains of home and an extension of Winnie's body it is useful to take a closer look at Dukes observation that Beckett's work

> Offers a revision of Gell's system – showing that […] the borderline between the animate and the inanimate can be crossed from both sides […] Beckett collapses the distance between the human and the homunculus by enfolding them within each other […] and if that human subject can find containment and enclosure in a non-biological body, the distinction between organic life and inorganic matter begins to break down. (Dukes 2017:80)

In the manifestation of mound as home this reading suggests that the body and mound navigate an unstable and precarious ecology that makes it unique and troubling. In situating Winnie in the stone of Aran, Company SJ finds a point of negotiation between scenography and ecology that lends itself to such new ways of considering Winnie's relationship with her environment, emphasising the way the geography of the landscape can become phenomenologically charged when the boundaries between subject and object become destabilised. Just as the interior of the mound contains her and provokes real or fantastical memories of affecting childhood trauma,

Beckett presents the organic world of the emmet that are also entombed in the mound and whose situations and behaviours resonate with Winnie.

> Beckett's characters expand their bodily delimitations, and in doing so, produce a need for semi-animate objects to contain these disembodied aspects of self. Beckett's use of affective projection pre-empts Wilfred Bion's development of the psychoanalytic concept of the "container-contained" […] In Bion's schema, objects in the external world can serve as containers for expelled psychic content – thoughts and feelings that the ego cannot contain. (Dukes 2017:82)

In the context of the natural world, the stone mound is not just the receptacle of Winnie's psychic remains, but the natural home of animal and insect life. The translation of the production's full title *Beckett in the Rock: Happy Days* imbues the imagery in the text with the animation required to bring the elements to life. Halfway through Act I, Winnie is caressing the mound, patting and stroking it when she notices an ant. We are told that she 'recoils and yet her excitement at spotting 'life' on the mound is apparent from the 'shrill' scream as she calls for Willie. On closer inspection, with the use of her spectacles and magnifying glass she 'follows its progress' until it enters the mound and notices that it has a 'little white ball in its arms' which Willie informs her are eggs (Beckett 2006:149). The scene reminds us that the mound is alive not simply as a repository or container but holds a mirror up to the strangeness of the natural world, in which the seeming material solidity of the mound is in fact a complex domestic network. In his book on *The Ant World* and ant society, Derek Wragge Morley provides insights into the behaviour of female queen ants once mating is complete,

> They are not allowed back into the nest they left and seek at least temporary safety. Either before doing this, or when some temporary resting place is found, the queen completes the rites of her marriage. Standing still a moment, she gives her wings a vigorous twisting shake and off they fall. Her flying days are over […] Her disused wing muscles disintegrate and turn to fat on which in some cases she must live until her first brood mature […] In such a case she seeks permanent quarters under a stone or in a hole and seals herself in a shallow cell, bricking the walls with earth mixed with her saliva. It will be several weeks before the first eggs are laid and some fourteen weeks more before the first workers appear. During the whole of this period she must live off the resources of her own body or else eat the eggs which she frequently does, delaying the final appearance of the mature offspring. (Morley 1953:21)

The parallels between the female ant following 'marriage' and Winnie's plight is a fascinating Beckettian observation into the loneliness of women not in spite of marriage but because of it. The mound is alive with all manner of resonances, it is pregnant with Winnie's demise and yet only exists because of her, its very shape a mockery of the expectant female form. In Trevor Nunn's Riverside Studios production in July 2021, the actress playing Winnie, Lisa Dwan, was six months pregnant when she performed the work buried in the soil of the earthen mound. Her expectant belly is never visible to the audience but the knowledge of it reinvigorates our understanding of Winnie's situation in relation to gender, violence and isolation and remained in my mind when watching Brid Ní Neachtain's performance. The line, late in Act II about the 'womb' as the place 'where life used to begin' (Beckett 2006:163) foregrounds a potentially darker interpretation in the context of Winnie's island mound. The sound of the Atlantic waters, the sight of the shoreline and the murky borders of Europe reminding us that at moments of vulnerability the safety of the migrant female body is often compromised. The narrative of Winnie as a traveller from another place or time whose body is under threat simply for trying to exist is particularly poignant when considering the plight of refugee women. According to Sine Plambech (a researcher on the undocumented migration of women into Europe) for every five men that die trying to cross the sea border, six women also die and this ratio is often higher depending on the border crossing. Just as in situations of flooding and natural disaster, women are often more likely to die because they are trying to protect their children, because they are impeded by clothing, or simply because they were never given the opportunity to develop their swimming skills in the way that men were. Furthermore, women and children are often placed below deck by male family members, ostensibly for their protection but in enclosed spaces that often act as a trap.[22] However despite the potential for this interpretation in the context of the Atlantic Waters, the Winnie of *Laethanta Sona* is one who is very much of the island, marked as she is by the colours of her fabrics and her language. The island setting, that is again reinforced by the mound, serves to highlight her isolation, a fact which becomes more acute when embedded in a close-knit island community.

The Isolation of Winnie

The overwhelming image of Winnie throughout the play is a lonely one, though it is important to establish that this does not paint her as a figure of pity; her vulnerability is also her strength

[22] https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/drowning-mothers/ [Date accessed December 19 2023]

as she draws on her own bodily resources for comfort and company. The connection with her gun, the only thing granted the intimacy of a kiss, speaks to her awareness that she must rescue herself. She knows that she cannot rely on Willie to fulfil her needs or to save her. In Olivia Laing's semi-autobiographical study into the loneliness of the human condition we see several parallels between Winnie's situation in a small island community and the way Laing found herself alone despite being in the busy metropolis of New York:

> What does it feel like to be lonely? It feels like being hungry […] it feels shameful and alarming and over time these feelings radiate outwards, making the lonely person increasingly isolated, increasingly estranged. It hurts, in the way that feelings do, and it also has physical consequences that take place in visibly, inside the closed compartments of the body. (2017:12)

Laing explains that loneliness is not predicated by the absence of people and society - it is possible to feel alone even when surrounded by people or in a relationship. Perhaps that is what is most jarring about Winnie's situation. She should have the comfort of her partner, but he doesn't seem to understand what she needs, nor does he display the same sense of longing for her that she does for him. He lives just out of reach, and out of sight, he can touch her although he does not, but she cannot touch him. Laing draws on the work of psychiatrist Fromm-Reichmann who points out that the terrible curse of loneliness is its incommunicability, which can make it difficult for others to respond and which is seemingly impervious to empathy. The lonely subject creates a sense of repulsion and irritation in others that often leaves others unable to offer what is most longed for. The spectator may become unkind or compelled to turn away, almost as though they might be infected with this oppressive and claustrophobic desire for intimacy. Loneliness she tells us 'Feels like such a shameful experience, so counter to the lives we are supposed to lead' that it can 'cause others to turn and flee' (Laing 2017:25). What is even more relevant in terms of Winnie is that this state of being can cause physiological changes to occur:

> Lonely people are restless sleepers and experience a reduction in the restorative function of sleep. Loneliness drives up blood pressure, accelerates ageing, weakens the immune system and acts as a precursor to cognitive decline. According to a 2010 study, loneliness predicts increased morbidity and mortality, which is an elegant way of saying that loneliness can prove fatal. (Laing 2017:29)

Willie's inability to assuage her situation in this context becomes more than apathy and instead representative of a kind of violence borne of neglect. However, not only does he find himself unwilling or unable to touch her, but he is also unable to provide her with the last possibility of intimacy available to her - conversation:

> If you are not being touched at all, then speech is the closest contact it is possible to have with another human being. Almost all city dwellers or daily participants in a complex part song of voices, sometimes performing the aria but more often the chorus. (Laing 2017:47)

It is interesting that Laings' meditations on loneliness speak of conversation through the metaphor of song, since for Winnie song is vitally important. Perhaps it because unlike dialogue, songs are a way of hearing oneself and breaking the silence without the sadness that comes with the absence of a reciprocal exchange. At the start of the play, Winnie's opening words paint her in the light of almost saintly acceptance, 'Another heavenly day' she remarks before closing her eyes and clasping her hands together in prayer, 'For Jesus Christ sake Amen' (Beckett 2006:138). Her words at the opening of Act II as she is buried up to her neck, have a alliterative, hymnal quality, 'Hail, holy light' (Beckett 2006:160) she says, closing her eyes as though in prayer, though she is no longer able to move her hands, buried as they are in the mound and she confesses that 'I used to pray [...] but not now' (Beckett 2006:161). The scenography of Company SJ's *Laethanta Sona* and the image of Winnie, slowly enclosed by the stone calls to mind the image of the anchorites - men and women whose piety led them to inhabit a stone cell, attached to a church by a small connecting slot through which they could see the altar and receive the Eucharist. Theirs was a domesticity of strict piety and irreversible enclosure, entered into during an elaborate ceremony in which their last rites were administered, and at the conclusion of which the door to the reclusory would be walled up. Although the practice was open to both men and women, there were more than twice as many women than men throughout the Middle Ages when this was in practice. Perhaps the most compelling part of this image is the way that at the moment of enclosure, the priests would perform the last rites which would include a sung mass, symbolising the death of the anchorite as they withdrew from society and were to all intents and purposes dead to the world. Winnie's song, especially in Irish, has a lilting melancholic quality that places the hymnal quality of a funeral song that is undercut by the hopeful love song that she actually sings, it is at once both joyful and heart breaking. On Inis Oírr her voice is steady and clear despite being buffeted by the wind and the sound of the ocean. The words are painful and emblematic of their

relationship, asking for the affirmation that Willie cannot or will not give, as she tells us that 'every touch of fingers, tells me what I know, says for you, its true, its true, You love me so' (Beckett 2006:168). Even in her last words, it is Winnie that has to comfort herself, just as she does with her declarations of happiness throughout the play. A belief that happiness is something that one has to embed into everyday life, through affirmations and faith, it is not unlike the most familiar saying of the most famous of the anchorite women, Julian of Norwich 'all shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well'[23]. The notion of happiness as system of practice rather than a goal to be achieved is one that Winnie embodies from start to finish.

Conclusion

What connects Winnie in all her manifestations across the text and all of the scenographic and performative iterations is the intimacy that Winnie evokes through the opening of her bag and her reliance on her objects. Her actions in all these dramatic situations present her as a survivor; utilising the body's latent power to draw on the agency of the pedestrian rather than the exceptional. What seems clear by the end of *Happy Days* is that Winnie does not deserve our pity but rather earns our admiration. Her body is subject to hierarchal and patriarchal forces beyond her control, yet rather than rail against the prospect of injustice, Winnie sustains herself in the landscape by employing the only form of resistance that is readily available to her: the everyday[24]. Engaging repetition and its twin qualities of mundanity and reliability, she arms herself against the absurd and the inevitable, harnessing the power of objects that do not always co-operate or follow the rules, but nonetheless turning them to her advantage. The violence that occurs in the play cannot be reduced to the physical threats of the landscape and environment upon Winnie. Her body, like all marginalised bodies, cannot exist without a little violence of its own, through quiet acts of rebellion against the things that wish to silence it. She is testament to an uncharacteristic Beckettian optimism which suggests, 'that our bodies are full of power, and furthermore that their power is not despite but because of their manifest vulnerabilities' (Laing 2017:15). The objects that litter the top of the mound, marking Winnie's presence, become a kind of memento mori paying tribute to her constancy. When she cannot move or replace them they remain, remnants of a life that continued to be lived even in the most trying

[23] https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/incontext/article/julian [Date accessed December 19 2023]

[24] A concept that Julie Bates explores in detail from a political and aesthetic perspective (2019)

circumstances. When her hands no longer have the power to establish occupation of the space she inhabits, she uses the one thing left to her, her voice, singing defiantly and leaving a stain upon the silence and on the landscape.

Winnie's entrapment, her entombment that isn't quite a burial, evokes the spectral end of the thesis as it moves to explore the shadowy and darkened interiors of *Footfalls* and *Rockaby*. Willie's existence that was undercut by his silence is now replaced with absent bodies and lost voices, both the women on stage and those who speak to them from the gloom have a fragile materiality that once again seems to evoke the grave. Objects and clothing offer a ghostly embodiment of the past as the relationships that once defined these women's lives and the spaces they continue to inhabit exert a powerful hold over the mise en scene. The image of Winnie as a presence that occupies multiple worlds, straddling borders between earth and sky, life and death and ultimately alone in all of them, is expressed in ethereal form through the characters of May and W.

Chapter Four

Haunted Houses: Objects of Life and Death in *Footfalls* and *Rockaby*

At the end of *Happy Days* when Winnie is buried up to her neck, her fate appears to be quite literally sealed, as the audience imagines that either Willie will end her life using Brownie, or the mound will continue to draw her in till she is fully interred. In an imagined final act, Winnie's things might transition once more, from the belongings and objects of a past life that she used to sustain her in a new one, into memento mori or artefacts of a life once lived.

In the introduction to their journal exploring the materiality of death, Streb and Kolnberger observe that 'the seemingly plain objects of everyday life […] can create meaning even after a long time has passed […]' (2019:118). Their introduction also intersects with the ideas explored in Benkel and Meitzler's article, 'Materiality and the body: explorations at the end of life', which also investigates the role of materiality in the aftermath of death and the way spaces become phenomenologically charged with the memories of loved ones who have passed through a variety of material connections that are able to evoke memories of the dead. They point out that, '[t]he particular role materiality plays in the life of people does not decrease when life becomes non-life' (2019:231). In both these articles, the importance of making and designating spaces that can house, mark, or display material artefacts, possessions or visual tributes to those who have died not only enables the living to process and make sense of death through the material world but can also be a means of negotiating and recognising the spaces in which death has left its mark. Traditionally, the space of mourning is the graveyard or the place in which the body is interred, and engaging with graveside commemoration through pictures, personal items, or other ways of recalling the deceased give the bereaved a space in which to communicate with their grief and engage with a body that is present but no longer visible.

> Graveyards are parasocial in terms of their function as meeting points between the living and the dead […] since dead bodies are unattainable to the living, the materiality of the grave serves as a hypostatised representation of the deceased person. (Benkel and Meitzler 2019:236)

However, in the case of *Footfalls* (1975) and *Rockaby* (1980), spaces of mourning and loss that we might expect to be associated with the graveside or graveyard are tied to the confines of the

Beckettian home. Thus, the domestic spaces of the plays take on aspects of haunting as the parasocial nature of the graveyard is distorted and complicated. As a result, the clothing, objects and even the darkness, sounds and spaces in these representations of home become conduits for the invisible and the inaccessible. In *Footfalls* and *Rockaby,* the absent or the dead are hypostasised by the materiality of the everyday and these homes become haunted, indelibly marked by voices and bodies, material and immaterial that dwell in uneasy and unpredictable ways.

The final chapter of this thesis exploring the idea of home as a haunted space attests to Beckett's fascination with spectral presences in domestic spaces with two plays written five years apart that present comparable situations. In a move from friendships, families and married couples, the focus shifts to women and maternal relationships as both *Footfalls* and *Rockaby* explore themes around ageing, womanhood and grief, focusing on the protagonists as the eternal daughters (those who will not be mothers themselves) and the bonds that tie them to their mothers and the spaces they share. This chapter, written after the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, aims to interrogate *Footfalls* and *Rockaby* to explore how boundaries between life and death within a domestic setting can be compromised in multiple ways and how the staging of vestigial domesticity takes on fresh nuances as sense of spectral return becomes rooted in spaces and bodies as well as the objects. In plays that return to shadowy interiors, the last vestiges of domesticity are defined by loss and mourning as the rituals and objects of the domestic are haunted by loss and grief, for those that are gone and identities that are defined by absence. It is not just home that manifests latently through these objects and rituals but figures and bodies. In performance, the architecture of both homes are shrouded in mystery and darkness while strategic lighting and painstakingly fabricated costumes evoke liminal spaces that continue to contain those who are gone and confine those who are not, creating dramatic uncertainty around how to define the living or the dead.

Throughout the thesis, case studies of early productions have been considered alongside more detailed case studies modern performances, exploring how directors and designers have been responding to the climate in which they make their work and how the mise en scene in Beckett's plays can be reimagined or re-cast in ways that speak to the context around the production. However, in this final chapter modern case studies are not used in as much detail – with textual analysis drawing on elements of the productions to hightlight or explore ideas where fitting. Part of the reason for this shift is that, unlike the other plays, *Footfalls* and *Rockaby* do not open themselves so readily to radical scenographic reinterpretations in the way that many of Beckett's others works do and have done because the stage directions are so

precise and the imagery and design so minimal. There are notable exceptions, and one such was Company SJ's *The Women Speak* which presented these plays along with *Not I* and *Come and Go* as part of their *Beckett in the City* series. *Beckett in the City* took Beckett's work that explored marginalised bodies, and performed them as site responsive pieces as a way of reclaiming and remembering former public buildings that were the focus of institutional injustice. These productions centralised the idea of haunted space both conceptually and through the staging and would have offered valuable insights into ideas around spectrality, particularly in relation to institutions that violated the trust of vulnerable women. However, although there is a great deal of detailed scholarship[25] on these productions, attempting to phenomenologically explore the embodied experiences of a site-responsive production without being immersed in it would have presented some insurmountable obstacles that would have compromised the study – particularly one that considers the ephemeral quality of spectrality or haunting within the space.

Additionally, the result of writing a great deal of the thesis within the years of the pandemic meant that there was simply less opportunity to see these works in person. For this reason, this chapter focuses on Beckett's scenographic vision for both the plays through textual analysis but does where possible interweave elements of the work in performance into these readings: including the original Billie Whitelaw and Rose Hill performances directed by Beckett (1976) at The Royal Court and Lisa Dwan and Walter Asmus' collaboration on *Footfalls, Rockaby* and *Not I*, that I saw at the Barbican in 2015. This chapter also briefly considers the Walter Asmus production of *Footfalls* for the Beckett on Film project (2001) as well as the documentary charting the making of the Alan Schneider production of *Rockaby* in New York made by Daniel Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus (1982). In the absence of diverse performance material, these pieces offer valuable insights into the conception of the play because of the close working relationships between Beckett and both Asmus and Schneider. Furthermore, the use of film as a performative medium facilitates analysis of ideas around spectrality in the works through a medium that is intended to be experienced at a physical distance.

In the absence of detailed case studies of performances from the time of writing, this chapter will use, just as with the others, textual readings of the stage scenography alongside

[25] Trish McTighe https://research.birmingham.ac.uk/en/publications/vessel-and-nation-company-sjs-beckett-in-the-city-the-women-speak [Date accessed Dec 19th 2023].
Chloe Duane https://brill.com/view/journals/sbt/35/1/article-p78_7.xml [Date accessed Dec 19th 2023].

more minimal performance analysis of early and other productions. This chapter invites the reader to view the analysis of the plays through the socio-political lens of late 2022/early 2023, when the UK was beginning to reflect on the legacies of the pandemic. This ongoing reflection has not only brought to light the scope and gravity of the losses, but has also begun the process of understanding the consequences of grief combined with isolation, particularly for those who had been living with illness or part of an ageing population. The legacies of the pandemic played a central role in the World Health Organisation declaring loneliness a global public health concern in November 2023[26], and it is through this contextual frame that the reader is invited to view the way unseen or absent bodies continue to exert control over the spaces they once inhabited. Thinking about these plays in the context of loneliness and longing offers a way of phenomenologically interpreting all elements of the mise en scene as colluding in ways that manifest presence in order to avoid isolation. This study also seeks to challenge some notions relating to the idea of haunting or haunted houses as creating an exceptional dramatic space. It proposes that reading these works in the post pandemic context also presents haunting and spectrality as a potentially inevitable side effect of loss and loneliness when the relationships with those we live with end in unforeseen ways, and home resonates with grief as the liminal seeps into the everyday.

While much has been written about how the use of light and darkness and costumes in both plays add to the haunting atmosphere, nothing has been explicitly written on the idea of these plays as an exploration of domestic haunting. May and W's containment is explored through their visibility and an embodied presence of darkness. Beckett's use of costume in these productions facilitates discussions around the material representation of the female body and how clothing can give us insights into our relationships with the space and situations around us. Both May and W are trapped in patterns of repetition that echo the behaviour of those who have been institutionalised, pacing or rocking while unable to sleep. This sense of institutionalised behaviour encroaching upon or creeping into the domestic is an idea that was explored in *Endgame* in relation to the treatment of the elderly and disabled in care homes, where repetitive and futile patterns of behaviour, due to lack of care, became embedded in the routines of those whose agency was compromised due to ill health or age. May and W's loneliness – foregrounded in the isolated image of Winnie – conjures a spectral presence out of

[26] https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/nov/16/who-declares-loneliness-a-global-public-health-concern [date accessed December 19th 2023]
https://www.who.int/news/item/15-11-2023-who-launches-commission-to-foster-social-connection

[Date accessed December 19th 2023]

loss. The chapter contemplates how both plays explore the spaces, sounds, and visual aspects of the mise en scene before considering how the geography and ghostly interiority of the plays are reinforced through language as well as physical objects. Finally, the chapter will end with the bonds between characters presented on stage and the voices of those we hear, exploring the relationships between the women we see and the mothers who are absent.

While the previous chapters have explored how Beckett's characters sometimes utilise domestic strategies to survive and endure hostile spaces, these later plays explore what happens when domestic routines are replaced with patterns of repetition that evoke the decay and erosion of death. *Footfalls* and *Rockaby* explore the way, 'Things, space, the living and the dead are all intertwined [and how] this interrelationship is at the heart of who we are' (Streb and Kolnberger 2019:118). In both plays, the remains of what is left behind or lingers during or after death or illness is given phenomenological embodiment that brings the past into the present. The exploration of haunting and spectrality manifested in the plays draws the reader back to Anna McMullan's argument that things on stage can reincarnate the remnants of history and that these objects can be phenomenologically appraised in ways that enable them to be opened like material palimpsests. A spectral reading offers insight into an instability of presence that operates at all levels. Over these pages I intend to show how Beckett and his creative collaborators communicate ontological instability as evoked in the text through a mise en scene where instability is both materially and phenomenologically realised in all elements of the staging.

The Materiality of Darkness

This chapter argues that haunting can take nuanced and complex forms and explores the way that objects like clothing or chairs have an embodied intimacy that may be garnered from their own inhabitation and proximity to those who have gone or nearly departed. It posits that haunting and mourning are inextricably linked as the memories of those who inhabited and shaped a space are called up by those who remain through objects and behaviours that echo or recall the departed. In this way ghostly modes of existence and inhabitation are embedded in the plays through the movement, costume, lighting and sound in the design of both the sets. Since both plays are often performed together, starting with a performance analysis around the strategic use of lighting and its phenomenological impact on the audience is an appropriate way to introduce the atmosphere of both plays.

In Andrew Lennon's exploration of the interplay between light and dark in Beckett's work his insightful observations present interesting ways of thinking about the visible and the invisible in the context of domestic haunting. Lennon posits that light as a force is 'endowed with a […] pervading sense of order' (2018:56). As a result, the absence of light naturally creates uncertainty, meaning that darkness becomes associated with desires and fears that are uncivilised, primal or inarticulable. Lennon argues that '[D]arkness as part of a Beckettian aesthetic does not limit communication' (2018:56). Instead, it is able to expose what may be reticent, drawing out what might not be visible in the light.

> The disappearance or making invisible of the stage area can be described as an activation of darkness. It is not simply a negative result of the lack of light, but rather a precise withholding of illumination ; a harnessing of darkness that registers with an audience [and] confronts the spectator with an uncanny sense of nothingness. (2018:57)

This 'harnessing of darkness' is an interesting way of considering both plays in performance and Lennon notes that a deliberate and powerful command of the dark and light channels the visible and the invisible into exerting force on the audience, not just over what they can and cannot see, but over what they are compelled to see or not see. In these plays that deal with absence, 'harnessing' effectively feels like a summoning, giving an embodied phenomenological presence to a darkness that articulates not just the spectral remainders of bodies that are absent, but the feelings of grief or loneliness associated with loss. Lennon's observation of the 'affect that an excess of darkness can have on spectators' (2018:59) also speaks to the phenomenological tangibility of terror that darkness can exert in these performances of *Footfalls* and *Rockaby*. Creating an 'excess' of darkness is difficult to negotiate in most modern theatre spaces where health and safety regulations prevent staff from being able to create a performance space where no light is able to leak in or where fire exit lighting and signage can be turned off. The 2015 performance of *Footfalls and Rockaby*[27] explored in this chapter draws on personal experience of the production as an audience member. It was one of the occasions where the theatre was plunged into the kind of darkness rarely achieved. Lennon notes that in such situations, the notices given prior to performance warning patrons of what is to follow and advising them not to panic – while offering potential solutions

[27] Seen June 2015 at the Barbican as part of a trilogy including *Not I*, with Lisa Dwan, directed by Walter Asmus. This was part of a tour and was originally staged at the Royal Court in January 2014.

or establishing opportunities to leave if they do – have the potential to create the very panic they hope to avoid. First-hand experience concurs with Lennon's observation of this impact. The initial 'warnings' to the audience and the subsequent use of darkness not only enhanced and developed audience involvement by drawing the viewer into the mise en scene in unexpected ways, but were also integral to the framing and exploration of haunted domesticity in this final chapter. Lennon's description of '[t]he nothingness of this physical darkness' (2018:60) defines darkness as not simply the absence of light but also a potential manifestation of uncertainty or even fear. An 'excess' of darkness can therefore evoke something that exists on the periphery of phenomenological embodiment and material tangibility.

> [T]he audience do not own the darkness they inhabit and are immersed in; rather it seems to suggest the darkness has authority over them, through the affect it produces from the body that can be both emotional and physical. (2018:62)

James Farncombe's use of light and dark at the Barbican performances had an intensity that was almost overwhelming. The moment of darkness before the production and after the announcement created a sense of panic that was irrational. Despite being told that this was about to happen, the reality of the experience left me breathless, I could not see my hand in front of my face, could not see the friend beside me, and despite having just seen my surroundings, ones which I was familiar with as a regular visitor to the Barbican, I was confronted with a sense of utter disorientation and bewilderment. Sitting down only made me feel more vulnerable: there was no escape, the darkness felt suffocating in a way that was so palpable, it might have had its hands over my eyes and mouth. I grabbed in the direction of what I hoped was my friend's hand, following the whisper of her voice beside me, and held onto it. Though the claustrophobia lasted only for the few minutes before the curtain came up and my illogical terror was assuaged, this short-lived confusion and panic was nonetheless all-consuming and had a profound effect on the shape of the play before it even began. Plunging the audience into darkness had the effect of a pre-performance immersion, there was an intimacy that went hand in hand with the sense of isolation that evoked a profound an irrational sense of loneliness and fear. The scenographic net had been cast much wider than the space of the stage, and the architecture of the theatre was replaced with a landscape that should have been familiar but instead seemed unknown and hostile. It meant that the play began with the audience rather than May, so that when she emerged on stage the spectral light was a relief and release from the darkness, orienting and grounding the audience. In the moments between the

plays – there was no interval – the sense of disquietude pervaded once more and reminded us that we were a part of the darkness that surrounded the women. In my opinion, the masterstroke of the production was enabling the audience to have an experiential glimpse into the worlds of the characters on stage: the isolation, the heightened senses and the sense of comfort that we cling to, hearing a voice in the dark that is recognisable when everything around us is not. It was into this environment that the light, 'strongest at floor level' (Beckett 2006:399) opened the first of the plays.

Ghostly Spaces: At Home in *Footfalls*

Footfalls presents May, a woman in her 40's whose '*dishevelled grey hair*', physical appearance and '*worn grey wrap*' suggest she has been '*aged before her time*' (Beckett 2006:399). Although the play seems to fall into three sections, May's movements remain consistent throughout. Billie Whitelaw – who played May originally – observed that the tatters of the wrap 'seem[ed] to have rotted as they [clung] to her' over the years, a detail which embeds the past into the present through an embodiment of material decay (Whitelaw 1995:142). As she paces back and forth in a meticulously choreographed sequence, May is confined not only to her home but to a length of just nine steps, 'caged by this one little strip'. May responds to the 'disembodied voice of her sickly if not deceased mother' known only as V and played by Rose Hill in the original production (Whitelaw 1995:142). In the second section, while May paces, V tells us about May in her youth. In the third section, May tells stories of a girl, often interpreted as her alter ego, Amy, who escaped the confines of home. The play ends with a fourth scene, with the lights fading up to reveal 'no trace of May' (Beckett 2006:403).

As James Little points out in his work on absence and presence in *Footfalls*, the question of who was there and who or what is being represented on the stage is pertinent to framing the action in the world of the ghost story. The question of what is real or imagined is not limited to May, but is extended to the audience as the result of Beckett's deliberate efforts to foster ambiguity. He explains that in the first edition of *Footfalls*, V makes it clear that her voice exists only in May's mind, something which Beckett edited out before its Royal Court premiere in 1976.

> This gives us two versions of May's mind […] in the first […] V is a figment of her imagination; in post-performance […] the inability to distinguish reality from fantasy

> is shifted from being an aspect of the story world to being part of the interpretative process. (2021:377)

The sense of uncertainty that Beckett's work cultivates through hostile spaces, relationships, language and cyclical structures also embeds precarity through audio-visual instability. In *Footfalls* we have a situation where narrative unreliability is compounded by theatrical unpredictability. By playing on the senses of the audience as well as the characters on stage, the possibility of dramatic irony is refuted, replaced with impossibility and failure in lieu of knowledge. If a shared phenomenological reality is the lynchpin of the theatrical experience, what sets Beckett's later plays apart is the success with which the darkness of the mise en scene and the sense of fear and unknowability that it represents can seep into the audience and cultivate a sense of anxiety that refuses to be quelled.

This chapter began by exploring the way the mise en scene of *Footfalls* invites a dialogue with the spectrality of home using light and movement. May's steady pacing back and forth connotes entrapment and hints at trauma that might be associated with those who are no longer within the earthly realm but caught in a limbo, a purgatorial overtone to the repetitive and cyclical behaviour. May's movements mark out the parameters of the visible interior and the lighting draws our eye to see only the spaces they inscribe with their movements. In *The Haptic Aesthetic in Beckett's Drama,* Trish McTighe notes that,

> Beckett as sculptural artist carves out his figures without allowing them to be fully realized – this is particularly so in the later drama […] These figures, like the tattered semblance of May in *Footfalls*, seem always ready to be absorbed back into their grounds […]. (2013:3)

Even the set of *Footfalls* has an ephemeral and ghostly quality; there are no material or tangible objects that draw the boundaries and borders, just light and darkness. The play opens with the stage in darkness and then the lights '*fade up to dim on strip*' (Beckett 2006:399) while the area around it remains in darkness, the dim light drawing our eye to the narrow strip and the figure of May – whose existence is also in question. By utilising light and dark to invoke elements of the haunted house, Beckett's drama then invites the audience to observe more closely the details of the psychological haunting at the heart of the play that 'brings to life the issues of threat to family and home that come from the inside' (Riquelme 2000:601).

In her survey of everyday hauntings in modern Britain, Caron Lipman's book on *Co-Habiting with Ghosts* draws on the work of numerous writers who focus on the home and ideas of belonging to explore how Freudian concepts of unhomeliness were '[…] more than a simple sense of not belonging; it was the fundamental propensity of the familiar to turn on its owners' (Vidler qtd in Lipman 2014:12). Furthermore, as sociologist Anne Marie Fortier points out '[…] the historical link between 'home' and 'sickness', nostalgia and loss, suggests that home, in a sense has always been […] a place of 'dark secrets of fear and danger, that we can sometimes inhabit only furtively' (Lipman 2014:12). By presenting the domestic interior as a space that is bathed in darkness and concealed or inaccessible to the characters and the audience, Beckett creates a space that embeds uncertainty in something potentially more sinister. The idea of 'furtive' occupation is manifest in the presence of both May and her mother, the latter inhabiting the stage space only through sound, a material that can be as empirically slippery as darkness or light. As observed throughout this thesis, home for Beckett is never just an architectural space that can be inhabited through a purely physical negotiation, rather it is a '[…] psychic state […] it speaks to intimacy' (Bachelard 2014:91). On the one hand, intimacy seems to suggest intricate knowledge, but May and V obfuscate and unsettle, obscuring meaning not only through their narratives but also through the characterisation and presentation of May and the voice of her mother. The decision to keep most of the stage in darkness with dim lighting 'less on body, least on head' (Beckett 2006:399) creates an obvious sense of uncertainty and spookiness that speaks to the tropes of the ghost story: the focus on the feet and the floor rather than the face emphasises the spectral nature of May, her face, like most of her home, remains shrouded in mystery. Lipman argues that the key characteristic of the haunted house is a juxtaposition of close-knit intimacies set against the illusory or intangible nature of the relationships and bodies that occupy these spaces.

> […] Bodies which aren't quite there, press on, weigh upon, mark, the bodies of participants […] events are present in that they are palpably experienced, and yet they are eluding physical grasp, just out of reach or out of sight. (Lipman 2014:64)

While darkness ensures visual negotiation is at best difficult, the aural mapping of the space is made more tangible as the number of paces May makes across the strip are executed with a 'clearly audible, rhythmic tread' (Beckett 2006:399). Ensuring that the audience could hear the footsteps shows a conscious effort to play into the characteristics of the haunted house, evoking the nature of entrapment and repetition central to the notion of return that we associate

with those who have passed but are unable to leave. What makes the texture of the aural landscape in *Footfalls* even more chilling is the faint single chime that rings out, each time a little fainter at the juncture of each section or scene. Its inclusion has conflicting resonances with the classic ghost story; on the one hand bell ringing is sometimes associated with the forefending of devils or spirits to ward them off, while on the other, the sound is also frequently associated with disaster or death – the term death knell arising from the practice of signalling the passing of a soul with the sound of church bells. The chimes, May's appearance, and her tattered costume which conceals her feet, combine to imbue the fabric of the mise en scene with a supernatural quality. The fading chimes draw the audience into the world of the play, unsure of what they may or may not be hearing and undermining certainty in the process. Graham Fraser says:

> Beckett distils the gothic, borrowing the tropes of the ghost story […] and stripping them of the emotional, visceral energy that typifies Gothic literature, deploys them in his own austere, minimalist arrangements [to create] a Beckettian Gothic. (2000:783)

Although there is undoubtedly a stripping back in the Beckettian version, the emotional energy of the gothic genre is still present, albeit in a deeply internalised way. The staging presents this as a sense of control offset against the potential for disruption and disorder. We do not know what part of the house we are in, what might be nearby or whether there is any possible escape. The strip of light suggests the home itself may be exerting its dominance over the space that contains May, the light curates and defines some part of the interior that, in the audiences' desire for recognisable domestic architecture, fashions the strip into a landing or corridor, driven by our need to ground ourselves even in an illusion of specificity within a void. For Lipman, the idea that one can 'pinpoint ghostly activity with a very specific space in the home allows a level of control, a sense of being freer elsewhere' (2014:56). Beckett's decision to deny the audience access to the rest of the home, only seeks to further compound the idea that the house exercises a dominance that cannot be circumvented: 'If certain spaces of the home […] are associated with the uncanny, the suggestion is that the home acts as a *container,* a holding vessel for a variety of agencies, encounters and responses […] But as the primary container, the home is also granted a form of agency, as something animated […]' (2014:58). The notion that the house can be a container, or a vessel of agency that acts upon those within it, supports the idea of disorientation and confinement in *Footfalls,* once again playing into the idea of home as an uncertain or conflicted space in which the spectral has room to thrive. The

home in *Footfalls* recalls and in some ways mimics the depiction of the mound in *Happy Days*. Just as the mound preserved Winnie's body, freezing it at the moment of trauma, unable to make new memories but capable of recalling the past, the interior of *Footfalls* also appears to narrate the stories from a relationship that cannot move forward. It becomes difficult to ascertain how the house holds these memories and losses, whether the energies and bonds cannot be expelled or if grief drives spectral forces to return, impressing their influence upon the areas that still bear the marks of traumatic inhabitation.

Lipman argues that the liminal nature of ghosts is reflected in the liminality of the spaces they occupy on earth, which in the home tend to be 'staircases, corridors, doorways, windows […] openings and exits […] geometric weak spots' (2014:13). It is interesting to consider the way Asmus' production of *Footfalls* for the *Beckett on Film* project in 2001[28] sets the play not only within a recognisable domestic home but crucially sees May pacing along the strip of landing that forms the upstairs corridor, illuminated by what appears to be the moonlight beaming in through the window at the end of it. At points, the camera angles to survey May and the viewer is able to see the wooden railings of the upper balcony. There are two bedroom doors on view, one firmly closed and the other ajar, with an eerie lamplight emanating framing the edge of the door. May's position within the house adds another layer of vulnerability to her in the filmed version, as she stops and looks out toward the audience from the landing, the camera zooms in on her, taking in the railings until closing in on her anguished face. On the one hand, situating May in the corridor of the upstairs landing seems to speak to Lipman's argument that there are certain architectural points in the home that are 'geometric weak spots', spaces that are conduits for the spectral. May pacing the corridor seems to only deepen the ambiguity surrounding her material existence, adding to the possibility that neither May nor the disembodied voice of her mother are coming to us from this earthly realm. On the other hand, what does become evident is that the use of light in the filmed version and the clarity of a recognisable domestic space is not only detrimental to, but somewhat at odds with the potential for spectrality. What the film production serves to outline is the way the absence of light and the resulting invisibility are critical to the sense of uncertainty that underpins the possibility of haunting.

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[28] *Beckett on Film: 19 Films x 19 Directors* was a Blue Angel Film Production for RTE, Channel 4 (UK), the Irish Film Board, and Tyrone Productions. The DVD box set was released in 2005
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AeMQXNm3c5c
[Date Accessed 19 Dec 2023]

While it might be argued that, even as early on as *Godot*, Beckett explores the idea of unseen and unknown characters exerting their influence over those upon the stage, what differentiates *Footfalls* is the way these unseen forces take on a spectral quality and how they then influence the action by entangling and enmeshing themselves within the mise en scene through costume, lighting and sound. This next section seeks to explore how May's dress exerts power over her, materially communicating ideas about spectrality that separate the subject from the social bonds that might otherwise dispel the ghosts that thrive on secrecy and isolation.

Clothing, Personhood and Home

Fig 14. Footfalls, Director Samuel Beckett, Designer Jocelyn Herbert, Actor: Billie Whitelaw, Royal Court Theatre, London, 1976, Copyright Chris Davie

If we think of haunting as a way for the fragments of the past to retain their hold on the present, then one of the ways that this is given textural embodiment is through the material narrative evoked in the designs of May's dress. Celia Graham Dixon's essay on the creation of *Footfalls* observes the way Herbert's initial drawings pinpoint and capture the central questions of spectrality through the costume:

> Herbert combined black ink with water to produce different levels of opacity, thus engaging with one of the play's central questions, whether May is emerging or disappearing. When the ink is used without much water, the figure looks as if it is floating within the thick black darkness of the theatrical space that surrounds it. When more water is used, the darkness is less opaque and contains a greater sense of texture, making the figure and the strip of light appear in the context of the larger theatrical space. (2023:116)

Whitelaw explains how the original costume could not be replicated, how its construction and originality were testament to the moment of inception and collaboration between actor, designer and writer,

> It wasn't sort of made and stitched together. I mean I'm sure it was, but it, it felt like an organic thing. I felt she didn't make it. It was that she created it […] I'd walk around in it, and Joss would sort of tear a bit here, and, put it up a bit there, and I would walk around in it, and wear it for a bit.[29]

Herbert's methods of realising Beckett's vision through the conception and design of the costume as well as Whitelaw's collaboration in the creative process not only provides a fascinating insight into the way ideas about haunting and embodiment manifest through the scenography, but how the process of designing and creating the costume through movement and embodiment shapes the performance in these later works. Understanding the way the bodies of the characters and the ideas of the play are emeshed with the objects and costumes also explains the way ideas about home and belonging in all its forms are evoked through the materiality of the design. May's dress conveys a sense of timelessness articulating a body that occupies a liminal space, where disappearing and emerging are two ends of the same unbreakable cycle of spectrality that binds Beckett's characters to spaces and things that continue to draw out and evoke ideas of home as a place of entrapment and safety encapsulated by the need to return or the inability to escape.

What is more, this sense of the costume being inhabited rather than simply worn plays into several ideas that relate to the uncanny or haunted home and the role of clothing and its relationship to the body, during and after life. The word costume hints towards a performative element and certainly clothing has the power to signal and perform, but it does so not simply by impressing upon the body, but by becoming the body. In the introduction to their edited collection *Body Dressing* Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson explore the embodied nature of clothing and draw on the work of Fred Davis who argues that 'dress is more like music than speech, suggestive and ambiguous […]' (2001:3), a depiction that would resonate deeply with Beckett's emphasis on the importance of rhythm within the text and movement. Knowlson

[29] https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/billie-whitelaw-on-her-costume-for-footfalls [Date accessed May 18th 2023 – please note that as a result of the British Library Cyberattack this resource and all of the reference details pertaining to it have been inaccessible and remain so at the time of completion]

points out that for *Footfalls* as with his other plays, 'The shapes, movements and sounds mattered to Beckett as much as the words', and Whitelaw herself commented in an interview that his direction involved something of a fusion between the creative arts '[H]e was not only using me to play the notes, but I almost felt that he did have the paintbrush out and was painting […]' (Knowlson 1997:624). This image of Beckett as a painter combining and mixing the artistic forces of Herbert and Whitelaw as well as scenographically rendering the dramatic image, adds another layer to Entwistle and Wilson's observation that dress is a '[…] fleshy practice […]' (2001:4). In Herbert's design there is a something of the haunted in the expression of the fabric, the tatters of May's clothing that cling and drag about her, concealing her feet, at once a shroud and a reminder of the fleshy remains that hang about the bones while the body is still fresh in the grave.

Clothing in *Footfalls* has a multiplicity of functions within the play, allowing us to explore May's sense of personhood and identity alongside her role as a daughter but also potentially offering a textural narrative into the passing of time within the home. In the introduction to her book on the history of fashion, *Adorned in Dreams,* Elizabeth Wilson speaks in Kristevan terms about the nature of the body and function of dress,

> If the body with its open orifices is itself dangerously ambiguous, then dress, which is an extension of the body but not quite part of it, not only links that body to the social world, but also clearly separates the two. Dress is the frontier between self and the not-self. (1985:3)

In *Footfalls* the role of dress seems to be intrinsically linked to this boundary in which the frontier between inner and outer worlds appears to have broken down. The way the dress becomes one with May means that the function of the dress to act as a barrier has been compromised and the fabric is a porous border, reflecting and absorbing May's lived experience both physical and psychological as well as the effects that a hostile space exerts upon those that dwell within it. Lipman's case studies reveal that often subjects are haunted by their own past in a house and 'memory is given agency' (2014:70). In May's case this haunting manifests itself in the material reality of her physical neglect and the condition of her clothing. In 'Reflections on the Clothed Body', Kate Soper observes that clothing is innately tied to our conception of bodily integrity and self of dignity, remarking that, 'for the most part, clothing […] is about satisfaction […] the point is to dress in the manner in which we are happy for others to see us' (2001:19). But May's clothes allow the audience to intrude on something quite

intimate. In watching May, we become a little like her mother, who spies on her, while she sleeps in brief snatches, not in bed but with 'her head against the wall' as though she is ashamed of even her most basic human needs (Beckett 2006:401). There is a sense for the audience that witnessing May in her tattered clothes transgresses a social boundary; we are watching a woman who has not consented or expected to be seen by the public. We are told by V that May has not been out since 'girlhood' (Beckett 2006:40) and this lack of social contact speaks to the nature of the dress and provides evidence of the way our clothing can reflect feelings about our sense of self and esteem. If we accept that clothes have a connection to our '[…] sense of dignity […] then by the same token they can also be used to […] undermine or deny it altogether' (Soper 2001:20). May's costume evokes the fragility of those whose confinement to the domestic interior removes them from the social rules and expectations that pertain to dress and social codes. May's dress embodies the struggles of a past life and seems to ask the question:

> […] Where does the body end and the accoutrement or decoration begin? Is there indeed, a way in which garments, […] 'become' the wearer? – meaning […] that they express or assume, or even form an emanation of their personality? (Soper 2001:24)

If that is the case, then what does the dress reveal about May, how does it communicate with us and what has it been shaped by? Wilson ruminates on the nature of clothing that has been relegated to the world of the museum, which can seem almost 'haunted' as the 'living observer, moves with a sense of mounting panic, through a world of the dead' (1985:1). There are she argues, '[…] dangers in seeing what should have been sealed up in the past. We experience a sense of the uncanny when we gaze at garments that had an intimate relationship with human beings long since gone to their graves' (Ibid). There is a sense when we watch May, consumed and contained by the strip, that we are observing something in her costume that has the effect of a living relic. Her dress, unlike those that Wilson speaks of, looks as if it should have been cast off, thrown away and replaced long ago. May is only in middle age, but her clothes communicate someone or rather something older, timeless even. The fabric is not worn down by a life well lived in the bustle and negotiation of public life, but by the agentic forces that bond her to the home. In her description of the clothes at the museum, Wilson elaborates on why the costumes that are preserved in time can be fertile ground for a sinister potentiality:

> These clothes are congealed memories of the daily life of times past. Once they inhabited the noisy streets, the crowded theatres, the glittering soirées of the social scene. Now, like souls in limbo, they wait poignantly for the music to begin again. Or perhaps theirs is a silence patient with vengefulness towards the living. (1985:1)

Wilson's depiction of the costumes draws on a suspicion that the phenomenological agency afforded to these embodied materials does not evaporate the moment they are no longer needed, that the bodies that once inhabited them provoke a kind of irreversible hunger for motion, movement and company that cannot be sated even when they have been put into storage. In *Footfalls*, May's dress has not inhabited the noisy streets and glittering soirées that Wilson describes, nor does it live in a case in suspended animation, instead it is a perverse take on the depiction of these more public or social outfits. May's clothing clings to her, taking on her aspect and shape, rotting on her, with her, becoming a second home. If we are to believe that it, like May, did not start out life as it now appears, then her dress has become an extension of her body over time, embodying the loss of possibilities with a ghostly energy and vitality that threatens to overwhelm her. Wilson argues that 'Clothes without a wearer, whether on a second-hand stall, in a glass case, or merely […] strewn on the floor, can affect us unpleasantly, as if a snake had shed his skin' (1985:2), but what happens if clothes are not removed at all? As Joanne Entwistle argues, if dress is about making our bodies acceptable (2001:35) the refusal or inability to participate within a social structure where these notions prevail will no doubt have far-reaching social implications. Entwistle's argument reinforces the argument for clothing as '[…] An important link between individual identity and social belonging' (2001:35,47). Garments lend us a social readability, a way of stabilising and foregrounding our identity and social status in a way that is easily interpretable and visually accessible.

The decision to utilise costume in a different way radically affects the reading of identity and self-hood intended by Beckett, and the 2015 stage production of *Footfalls* becomes open to a potential re-evaluation of May's situation. Directed by Walter Asmus and designed by Alex Eales, this production presented Lisa Dwan in what is described by reviewer Everett Frost as 'a trim white night-dress'. Frost's observation is that the dress is 'simple enough to suggest (without being) a shroud' (Frost 2016:152). However, it could be argued that the simplicity, combined with the crisp whiteness in the light might allude to a spiritual but not spectral embodiment of purity and innocence. Indeed, Dwan's depiction of May has a complexity that is not easily quantified. Frost goes on to say that, although she is '[…] at once spectral without being ghostly […] in this production her circumstances are chosen, not

inflicted and she is defiant, sometimes even to the point of impatience' (2016:153). The notion of defiance seems embodied in the materiality of her dress that doesn't appear to reflect the interiority, or the experiences narrated in the text. The dress seems to suggest that there is a possibility that May might escape untarnished, unmarked or scarred by time, care and memory, the dress itself seems to defy its own lived experience and speak to another kind of May who disappears at the end of the play, not because she has died, or because her spectral essence is extinguished but because she has finally left the house. Thinking about the original collaborative vision for May's costume explored through Herbert's design, and Beckett's vision that it should be 'the costume of a ghost', not only resonates more powerfully with the issues of social isolation highlighted by the pandemic, but more accurately embodies and articulates her loneliness (Asmus & Wantanbe 1977:85).

Herbert's design gives voice to May's confinement, her incarceration and endless cycle of care for her mother that seems to preclude care for herself even after her mother may have gone. In this sense the dress, 'of a ghost' also becomes a conduit for grief, 'death infecting life […] something rejected from which one does not part' (Kristeva 1982:4). May's clothing seems to visibly manifest the complexity of bereavement, her inability to remove or change her clothing, allowing it to decompose on her body, speaks to the incommunicability of loss. The dress becomes charged with the phenomenological interiority of a haunted space, marked by grief and neglect and as such behaves in unexpected ways, performing at the border of several intersections. The potential for social disgust that is latent in her unwashed and unchanged clothing offers May another reason to remain inside but also acts as a reminder of her own self-doubt and uncertainty that prevents her from leaving. The dress is a visual reminder of her life with her mother, and her refusal or inability to remove it represents a kind of physical bondage that either goes beyond death or insists upon its imminence. Most importantly, it might be argued that the persistence of the dress is not simply a manifestation of loss but another way for her mother to stifle and control May without having to be physically present. The scenographic power of the dress on stage, one could argue, is that the nature of the haunting cannot be located, it remains an amorphous, ambiguous ghostliness, an interplay between what is on stage and what is not, what is implied and what cannot be known. There is a multiplicity at work that makes Beckett's depiction of the haunting recalls the image of nesting dolls or Matryoshka; the house exerting its power upon May, her dress and costume reflecting the nature of her entrapment and then the actor who plays May allowing their body and breath to be subsumed by a force that is outside of themselves. The result, as Mary Luckhurst put it, is that the actor's body becomes a kind of haunted house.

Whitelaw and First Productions: Actor as Haunted House

If the first part of this chapter focuses on the agentic forces at work within the domestic interior and the fabric clothing the actor, this section explores the way in which the body of the actor can become implicated in the dramatic realisation of the text. In bringing the work to the stage, Beckett was keen to have the title role of May played by Whitelaw, his long-time collaborator, who elaborated on their creative process:

> When we rehearsed eyeball to eyeball, he opened up in me whatever there was to open up […] I can still hear him saying 'Too much colour, Billie, too much colour'. That was his way of saying, 'Don't act'. He wanted the essence of what was in you to come out. (1997:624)

This attempt to channel the essence of what was inside the actor without performing or putting on an act is fascinating when we consider the nature of the central character. Whitelaw explains that, 'The woman, May or Amy as she's later called, has the appearance of a spectre she is looking after this invisible but audible mother, who may be real or not'. This uncertainty about the mother's existence is only deepened by the fact that when the lights go down for the last time before coming up on the stage, 'May has disappeared 'like smoke' (1996: 142). In her presentation of May, Whitelaw not only attempts to embody the ephemerality of the character but also channel the unpredictability of the space,

> […] space which has its own natural 'force' when left to itself […] if the uncanny is about hidden, unknown or private things, the 'real' nature of such places can only be revealed when no-one is looking. (Lipman 2014:59)

The play revels in the unknowability of these spaces, relationships and characters. There is nothing to cling to, the fragile materiality of the dress reflects and underpins the way the audience cannot pinpoint exactly what they have witnessed with any certainty. Mary Luckhurst draws on Alice Rayner's work on ghosts in theatre to articulate the constantly shifting borders between life and death occupied by actors,

> Rayner's formulation that the actor 'embodies and gives life to a non-living thing and essentially erases the difference between the living and the dead to produce an uncanny spectacle' suggest that performance is a birthing of death, an act of incarnation and necromancy. (2014:163)

This channelling of the unearthly or the unreal and the 'birthing of death' as Rayner puts it, is inherent in Whitelaw's encapsulation of May's essence but also in the physicality of her performance. Knowlson explains how Beckett's sculptural configurations of his characters had a precision that impacted on the way he directed Whitelaw's movements on the stage. '[M]uch time was spent on getting May's posture exactly right, as she paced up and down: a stooping figure, her hands clutching her upper arms across her body'. The intended effect was to result in 'reducing the substantiality of the figure', and by 'adjusting the position of Billie Whitelaw's hands on her upper arms', Beckett's intention was to create the image of a 'tortured soul, her hands claw-like, her face full of pain and distress' (Knowlson 1997:624,625). Portraying May as a purgatorial creature, caught between two worlds and unable to inhabit either properly had a powerful parallel with Winnie's situation and existence in *Happy Days* as well as a painful resonance for Whitelaw, who suffered a family tragedy around the time of rehearsal. These experiences added another layer onto the 'spectral allusions […] employed in the search for expression that remains inarticulable' (Luckhurst 2014:171). The death of Whitelaw's niece, found ten days after she had committed suicide 'holding onto a tree, tangled in barbed wire' (Whitelaw 1995: 142), gave an insight into Whitelaw's physical posture, informed the way in which she dropped her voice to a 'ghostly whisper' (Knowlson 1997:624), and offered a poignant insight into the mental life of May's character. Whitelaw told Beckett that the last time she had spoken to her niece Linda,

> Her voice had sounded so strangely slow and empty […] in retrospect her voice sounded as though she had already done the final dreadful act – emotionally and spiritually but not yet physically. That haunted me throughout the production. (1996:143)

This sense of understanding that haunted Whitelaw was a conduit for her embodiment of May, as she explained,

> The woman existed in that ghostly spiritual half-way house between living and not living. I've often thought that when you die, it can't be possible to exist at twenty seconds past one and be non-existent at twenty and half seconds past one. There has to be some sort of passage or transfiguration, a period when the body gets the message that it's dead: I used that in the play. (1996:143)

The focus on Whitelaw's hands, the way she clutches at herself and the resonances this had with her own niece – found with her hands still holding onto the tree – intersect with the actor trying to embody the character at this moment of uncertainty, compelled to draw upon their own phenomenological instability. They must become porous, like the haunted spaces their characters inhabit, performing at the boundary and emboldening the uncanny by integrating it into the moment of performance. Luckhurst's comments on Harriet Walter's observations on the nature of acting may give insights into Whitelaw's almost self-reflexive embodiment of May,

> 'We are reflections […] but which is more real – the light or the reflected light?' Walter's construction of the actor as the material and yet ghostly double of something intangible and ethereal the reflection of a reflection is prevalent. (2014:164)

If the ultimate goal for an actor is to embody the character so entirely that their presence on stage is less performance and more invocation, director Richard Eyre suggests that an actor's process might be considered as a kind of voluntary possession. Eyre's account of watching actors in rehearsal made him feel as though he was '[…] Experiencing the uncanny sensation that invisible speeches are temporarily inhibiting and controlling their bodies' (Luckhurst 2014:167). In her work on acting, objects and the suspension of disbelief in stagecraft, Aoife Monks's article "Human Remains" addresses this moment of transformation, offering some explanation of the apprehension that Eyre and others might feel as they witness what appears to be the work of spectral forces, 'Actors also stage the uncanny boundaries of self in their apparent ability to give up their own agency, repress their own will, in order to be inhabited by another self – voice, subject, and character' (2012:363). This sense of inhabitation and possession counterbalanced against presence and absence leads us to the final section on *Footfalls*; May's relationship with V and how the spectral manifests itself not only in the relationships or the spaces but also in the language that presents these interconnections and the narrative histories of the characters.

Ghostly Language and Spectral Motherhood

In the darkness of *Footfalls*, nothing is clear. May is the only character we see onstage, but when even her existence and our perception of who or what we are seeing is called into doubt, it becomes even more confusing and unsettling that there is another presence on stage, when '[…] May names the voice that emerges from the darkness as "Mother". There is an explicit association between woman, darkness, death and generation' (McTighe 2013:10). Beckett's decision to foreground the maternal in darkness and offer us the daughter bathed in ghostly light encourages the audience to see the complexity in the mother–daughter dynamic that is embedded in the domestic space. Bachelard's thoughts about the connection between childhood and home are pertinent here. Firstly, he argues that the house holds childhood motionless 'in its arms' and second that 'the house we were born in is physically inscribed in us' (Bachelard 2014:29,36). In the context of these ideas about home, it is interesting that the maternal becomes associated with darkness but also with the house of May's childhood from which she has never moved out of, nor ever actually left as an adult not 'having been out since girlhood' (Beckett 2006:401). Home has shaped May, and maternal omnipresence seems inescapable through V's sonic domination of the space. This is reinforced by the similarities of their voices, both 'low and slow throughout' (Beckett 2006:399)[30] which adds another dimension to the oppressive nature of their connection.

In her introduction to *Monstrous Motherhood,* Marilyn Francus presents the notion of the spectral mother. Although her study focuses on 18th Century British literature, her observations offer interesting insights into Beckett's presentation of the motherhood in *Footfalls*. Here, she discusses the manifestation of what she describes as 'spectral maternity' and the three different narrative possibilities she sees in it:

> […] narratives of maternal absence, in which there is the possibility of the mother's return […] narratives of maternal surveillance of the unsuspecting child, who does not know the mother's identity […] and […] narratives of maternal death, as the child is haunted by the dead mother. (Francus 2012:24)

[30] Asmus's rehearsal notes detail Beckett's guidance on this [published in JOBS 2, 1977, 82-95, p. 86 – accessed December 19 2023]

Footfalls seems to occupy multiple territories within this theory and the theme of surveillance certainly resonates with the textual presentation of V. It seems that May veers between the knowledge that her mother is watching and listening as she speaks to her in the opening scene. While possibly unknown to her, we discover that V watches her daughter during the night, even when May believes she has some privacy. V tells us conspiratorially, 'At nightfall she fancies she is alone. See how still she stands, how stark, with her face to the wall' (Beckett 2006:401). Lipman remarks that '[There is] an anxiety that no real privacy is possible in a haunted house' and this is only strengthened by the strip of light that prevents May from escaping the eyes of even the audience (Lipman 2014:117). The absence of privacy is a powerful means of understanding the oppressive nature of the bond between mother and daughter. V tells us that her daughter sometimes attempts to speak freely in the night, 'when she fancies no-one can hear her […] tells how it was […] Tries to tell how it was' (Beckett 2006:403). The use of the word 'tries' could be read in several ways. Perhaps it is a silent acknowledgement of a traumatic childhood by her mother, a notion that is given further credence in the shifting identities within the narratives presented within May's story of Mrs Winter and Amy where it remains ambiguous whether May is describing an episode from her own life or telling a tale of someone else's. This sense of distance, of a failure or inability to speak freely might also be read as pity or even condemnation from V. There might be a sense of mockery, or even threat, that May would dare to tell her perceived version of the truth.

The precarity of narrative 'truth' further inscribes the instability of presence into the text, fuelling the question of what is really being represented on the stage. For Beckett the resonances of his experiences of psychoanalysis at the Tavistock centre with Wilfred Bion over two years from 1934 -36 left a deep impression. They led him to attend a lecture given by Carl Jung in 1935 as a guest of Bion, and it was at the post talk discussion of the Third Tavistock Lecture that Beckett heard Jung explore the case study of a young girl who had died in childhood, whom Jung described as not being properly born. This image and those words left a deep impression on Beckett, so much so that he not only recalled the story on numerous occasions, but it also shaped his thinking across his works. When he wrote *All That Fall* in 1956, he has the character of Mrs Rooney recount the lecture as though she were present. Furtthermore, Julie Campbell argues for a reading of Winnie in *Happy Days* and Mouth in *Not I* as being undoubtedly influenced by this imagery, and, when rehearsing *Footfalls,* Whitelaw explains how she had the line written at the top of her script as a way of understanding the character of May as well as her stage presence (Whitelaw 1996:142).

The idea that May was never properly born has a variety of interpretations that filter into the bonds between May and her mother and the nature of the haunting that plays out in the text and on the stage. The notion of May as a figure who straddles two worlds is also one that is deeply resonant with Winnie, caught as she is between earth and sky. Yet, while Winnie's dress, belongings and surroundings suggest that she was not always in such a predicament, May's appearance and V's narrative capture a situation that conveys an image of fear and neglect. The voice that May names as mother tells us that May's childhood was far from typical; we discover she has not left the home since 'girlhood' and that home is 'where it all began' and where it will presumably end. It seems that May's existence is undercut by failure. According to her mother, her life has been defined just as much by what she has done as what she hasn't. Her mother confides that 'When other girls of her age were out at […] lacrosse she was already here […] At this'. The 'this' that V speaks of is the pacing, walking up and down the measured nine steps, across a space that was once 'carpeted' with a 'deep pile'. However, the pacing cannot satisfy May without the sound of her feet, without being able to hear her feet on the floor, 'no matter how faint they fall' (Beckett 2006:401). McTighe argues that,

> A strong sense of sterility prevails […] The emergence of sensory assurance and its affirmation of existence are linked with May's refusal of an external life and embrace of sterility. May's pacing forms a protective barrier, perhaps from a threatening, engulfing mother-figure, but certainly from an even more threatening 'outside'. (2013:106)

The fact that May's need for sensory assurance is embedded in the performance is expressed in Beckett's response to Whitelaw's search for understanding, when she asked, '"Am I dead" […] he thought for a second then said; "Well let's say you're not quite there"' (1996:143).

The question of presence, identity and relationships reaches a climax in the third section. May recalls a time when 'Amy' who she speaks about in the third person and whose name is an anagram of her own, used to slip out at night. The section follows her mother's description of May's incarceration within the family home and May chooses this point to introduce a story about a young girl who seems to defy her mother. Her comment that Amy is in fact 'the daughter's given name' may offer further insight into the complicated relationship between mother and daughter. The nature and content of May's recollection offers insights into the way spectrality is embedded into the narrative, action and relationships.

From the outset there is something isolating and almost incorporeal about the way May and in turn the audience/reader are narratively distanced from a story that is so intimately detailed. May's recounting becomes as effervescent as the metaphor used to describe the girl's existence, 'watch her pass before the candelabrum […] like moon through passing rack' (Beckett 2006:402) as the description embodies the form of the moment, starting and stopping, repeating and circuiting. The tale itself manifests the qualities of the classic ghost story; we are told for instance that she would 'slip out at nightfall' the phrase conjuring the image of escape by cover of darkness, indicating that this was a forbidden or secret activity. She enters the church by the 'north door […] always locked at that hour', the church by day may be a place of Godly worship, but by night 'at that hour' implies strongly that it was a time when all God-fearing parishioners would have been tucked up in bed. The church and its surrounding graveyard is not a place where one would expect a young girl to enter in the dark, alone. There is something compulsive, as though she is lured there, to walk 'up and down, up and down' the transept, 'that poor arm'. Not only does the girl's behaviour invoke the spectral with her seeming lack of control over her decisions – controlled by some unseen force – but the descriptions of movement draw on a semantics of fear and the unknown that is immersed in the language. Amy's actions are unpredictable, we hear how she might suddenly 'halt' and stand 'frozen'. Whatever is influencing her behaviour has no visible material grounding, instead she 'stand[s] stark till she could move again' because of 'some shudder of the mind' until suddenly 'vanishing' as impossibly and eerily as she arrived, without a sound (Beckett 2006:402). Mrs Winter's narrative only serves to underline the sense of unease: firstly, she asks if Amy observed anything 'strange' at Evensong. The hour of the service falls at twilight when the natural rhythms of the day are changing from day to night. She looks to Amy to confirm if she too experienced something peculiar or if it was her 'fancy'. Yet Amy cannot confirm or deny whatever it was that Mrs Winter may or may not have seen or heard 'strange or otherwise'. She tells her, in one of the few moments of absolute certainty, that 'I saw nothing, heard nothing of any kind' and she tells us 'I was not there' even though Mrs Winter believes she heard her say 'Amen' (Beckett 2006:403). The claim of visual and aural hallucinations that seem to dominate not only the action of the text but also old memories and stories only add to the sense of haunting in the play, with Mrs Winter's incredulity at Amy's claim in the past foregrounding the situation of May and V in the present.

Material uncertainty therefore infects both character and the text, questioning whose narratives we can trust or are listening to and asking where is May's mother? Is she in the next room, awaiting care? May's exchange with her mother in the first scene plays out a relationship

between carer and patient as she conveys through her questions all the rituals of care that she performs, reeling them off in a way that suggests an engrained and ongoing familiarity with caregiving,

> Would you like me to inject you again? […] Would you like me to change your position again? […] Change your drawsheet? […] Pass you the bedpan? […] The warming-pan? […] Dress your sores? […] Sponge you down? […] Moisten your poor lips? […] Pray with you? […] For you? (Beckett 2006:400)

The list of duties that May undertakes perhaps goes some way to explaining the sterility of her existence. The small, marked movements of her domain might represent the only area she has dominion over, and her mother's irritation at her repetitive and cyclical behaviours are May's only means to rebel. Her mother's needs recall those of someone who is bedridden, someone ever calling or being attended to in another room. May does not go outside but it is possible that the reason that she finds it so threatening is because her life at home is so overwhelming. Her mother had her 'late' in life, she is in middle age when she is born, just as May is now in her 'forties' and her mother is 'Eighty-nine, ninety' (Beckett 2006:400). V is guilty and repeatedly asks forgiveness but there is none forthcoming, perhaps because her decisions are not ones that May can forgive or that she simply cannot engage with her mother's desire for resolution when she herself cannot 'stop revolving it all' (Beckett 2006:400). Giving birth later in life seems to lead to complex consequences. The birth lends itself to discussion about the pathologizing of the older female body and the risks involved in childbirth. For an older mother like V, there is a potential for greater strain on the body, and carrying a child to full term is also fraught with increased possibility of medical complications both during and after the pregnancy, not least because of the lack of medical research that informs the care of these women. Perhaps this contributed to May's failure to be properly born, to have lived a sort of half-life in her youth that continued into her forties while caring for her mother, never being able to find independence. It could be argued that the possibility that May had never been properly born is matched by her mother's failure to die or even in death to achieve rest, as she continues to exert her presence without being seen, resulting in a kind of spectral half-life for them both.

In her discussion of spectral motherhood, Marilyn Francus argues that 'the dead mother may be the most potent of the spectral mothers, because she elicits desires that she cannot fulfil […] The dead mother […] has the power to haunt her child forever' (2012:179). If she is dead,

the question of how she can communicate without having physical organs is, according to Owen Davies' study into the *Social History of Ghosts,* one which has long been considered. Davies turns to Aristotle's solution that 'As ariel beings, ghosts command the movement of air and since sound was transmitted by percussion, "they assume a voice by beating on the Air, and so frame sounds, as to be understood of us in any language they shall please"' (2009:29). While Aristotle's solution has definite Beckettian resonances in the value of sound as a means of communication, McTighe presents an alternative: that May in fact 'reproduces her mother' and is quite possibly 'the creative source of the voice'. This potential reproduction of her mother's voice has a biological element; as with May's own creative desires having been subsumed by her mother's needs, even in death she continues to 'give her mother a place, contains her, but discursively, via narrative. The 'mother-voice' in turn forms a containing envelop around May' (2013:107). This cyclical and reciprocal revolution exists not just in the movement – which one might argue reflects the endless movement of May in and out of her mother's room, to and from her bedside, a movement she now replicates by way of mourning, of comfort or perhaps out of need – but also in language. There is no surprise, Davies tells us, that the dead return to haunt the interior, homes in particular, since most people will die there.

Jean Paul Riquelme's article on 'Dark Modernity' explores the way 'Beckett's style, locate[s] the darkness within language' (2000:601). This idea of an all-consuming darkness returns to the way the absence of light in *Footfalls* articulates the grief and loneliness of the bereaved as well as enacting a spectral remainder. This darkness in Beckett's late work allows us to encounter the spectre linguistically in what he describes as,

> […] A textualizing of the ghost and the threat, a linking of ghost and threat to language. In Beckett […] the counterpart and response to the threat of in language is a spectralizing of the text, whose substance is reduced to language that is virtually disembodied. (2000:602)

When V tells her daughter that she hears her from 'deep sleep' and that 'there is no sleep so deep I would not hear you there' (Beckett 2006:399), there are strong resonances with the sensory reassurance that McTighe describes in relation to May's pacing. Unable to reach her mother physically, the scenes play out the revolving and reliving of conversations and situations from the past, a time when the bodily contact of care and company bound them together. Now, one might argue, May's only means of touching her mother is through her voice, words instead of hands become the communicating organ. When close to death, even after the

subject has long since lost the ability to communicate through other means, hearing remains one of the last senses to go. The instability and confusion of the narrative reflects not only the inability to consolidate our understanding of what it really means to be alive one moment and then dead the next, it is also reflected in the multiple realities occupied by the characters in the text. The notion of spectralizing the text through disembodied language is given further weight in the reciprocity of intonation that Beckett wanted to embed in the voices of May and her mother. This 'echoing of their voices' (Asmus 1977: 86) creates a sense of aural haunting, that distorts time as well as presence. The relationship between May and her mother would have been subjected to forces that would warp their sense of time during their lives together because of their confinement to the home.

The story of these two women, mother and daughter, caught within a world of repetition and interiority until the roles are reversed and the daughter becomes the carer speaks to ideas about motherhood and female identity. Francis argues that '[…] the spectralization of motherhood implies that containment of maternal identity and agency was incomplete' (Francus 2012:194). This sense of deficiency is closely linked with ideas where female identity and sense of self is deliberately positioned within patriarchal capitalist societies as being constructed through the need and desire to care for others. Hazel MacRae's paper on 'Women and Caring' explores the reasons why the burden not only falls to women at home but also within the community and the way it is essentialised as something that is fundamentally part of the female character. Social pressure in a patriarchal society places the burden of care on women, legitimising and justifying this unfair claim by suggesting that it is implicit to womanhood[31]. However, while 'this culture demands that women care for others […] it does not acknowledge the value of caregiving tasks.' By defining women as naturally given to caring it suggests that they are perfectly placed to do what is often unpaid and voluntary labour. The reality however is that quite often 'women have no choice but to be carers' and as a result 'caring is a form of oppression' (Scheyett qtd in MacRae 1995:147). The lack of value placed on caring, implied through the pressure of expectation is reinforced through a lack of renumeration. The act of caring is in fact 'something women do for others, to keep them alive' (Graham qtd in MacRae 1995:147). Care work happens at both ends of life, it is usually the

[31] While these perspectives on the work do not claim to be suggesting that *Footfalls* offers a commentary on care that Beckett was directly addressing in the play – what is known is that Beckett himself did have experience of care, for his father, mother and his brother Frank before they died and that these days of care detailed in James Knowlson's biography *Dammed to Fame* (1997: 170,382, 402) took an incredible physical and emotional toll that affected him deeply. In reading the plays now in the current social context of care and bereavement in the aftermath of the pandemic such influences become even more resonant.

work of mothers, even at the time of writing in 2023, to shoulder the responsibility of care for infants and it often falls to the daughters or eldest woman in the family to support the ageing parent, sometimes at the same time.

This burden of care that prevents us from seeing May or V on their own terms may also offer another explanation for the textual ambiguity. MacRae argues that the work of care and its heavy demands on time along with the suppression of one's own personal needs in lieu of those of others leads to a set of circumstances in which sense of identity and sense of self is compromised. The orientation towards others and emphasis on nurture over other qualities facilitates a warped sense of identity in which locating personal agency, desire and motivation become difficult. If we consider the,

> "Good Woman" as someone who willingly places others first, it is very difficult to think and speak about oneself. These women find it awkward to communicate their self-meanings verbally since they are used to demonstrating who they are nonverbally in their actions towards others. (Lonergan qtd in MacRae 1995:153)

Not only does this burden of cyclical expectation and guilt lead to a conflation of the narrative voice in *Footfalls* being overlapped and overlaid by mother and daughter, their identities and even their names are shrouded in vagueness and uncertainty. Fraiman's exploration of the 'good woman' is also illuminative here when evaluating the sense of the spectral in relation to female identity, she observes 'in normative terms the good woman is a sound, tightly sealed container […] But once she is no longer seen as young, desirable and fertile, her worth declines rapidly until she is used up' (2017: 216). In *Footfalls* the notion of existing or returning or being compelled to stay long after change or progression is possible taints the stage and the relationships between the women. The lack of personal fulfilment, guilt and claustrophobia make a perfect breeding ground for the uncanny and the spectral but the most chilling aspect of the Beckettian haunting is that the ghosts do not just inhabit the stage, they linger in the words and in the darkness, occupying the space, and ringing in our ears, even after the protagonists have gone.

Down the Steep Stair: The Spectral Descent into *Rockaby*

The second part of this chapter moves to explore *Rockaby* through some aspects of the mise en scene including space and lighting, language and movement explored in *Footfalls*. While

Footfalls focused on the mother as a voice or sound with the only visual material in the play being May's ghostly body coming in and out of light and darkness, in *Rockaby* the mother–daughter relationship is mediated by the material object of the rocking chair. In *Rockaby*, the darkness that envelops May and obscures the interior is also present in the language and description of the architecture, as spectrality resurfaces in the depiction of the space as well as the action and relationships.

Rockaby's narrative, if it might be described as such, seems to follow a woman who, like May, is '*prematurely old'* with '*unkempt grey hair'*. But, unlike May, W's face is more clearly in focus, and we are told that she has '*huge eyes'* in a '*white, expressionless face'* (Beckett 2006:434). The play was written in English in 1980 at the request of Daniel Labeille, who produced it on behalf of Programs in the Arts, State University of New York, for a festival and symposium in commemoration of Beckett's 75th birthday. It was performed in 1981 at the State University of New York at Buffalo, with Billie Whitelaw in the role directed by Alan Schneider, the set designed by Gvozden Kopani and costume designed by Esther King. Like *Footfalls, Rockaby* is a rumination on grief and loss through a mother and daughter relationship. Unlike *Footfalls* we are told that the mother has died and see the daughter, W, left alone in the house with nothing but her thoughts. The recollections that make up the narrative are fragments about their life together replayed to the audience through a recorded voice (V) triggered by the live voice of W and the movement of her rocking chair. Uncertainty is again embedded in the narrative as it is unclear whether the voice is narrating scenes from the daughter's life or her mother's as their lives seem to overlap and become indistinguishable from one another. Neither the woman nor the voice are personalised in the text either, and their identities are only indicated with a single letter, embedding anonymity as well as ambiguity in both the plays.

Scenographically, the audiences' perception of the stage space is once again dominated by darkness. Although the text seems to offer insights into the way the spectral emerges in relation to the geographic location of the action within the house, in performance the difficulty locating the origin of V's voice feeds into material uncertainty. To the audience and to W, it appears that these words coincide or are prompted by the rocking of W's chair, potentially offering a kind of autobiographical or diary account of her last thoughts. W spends her last days or hours in the same chair as her mother, drawing attention to the spectral quality of return embedded in the relationship between the actions of the grieving daughter following in the footsteps and movements of her mother.

While *Footfalls* invokes spectral language in the description of Amy's escape, *Rockaby* also narratively embeds spectrality when describing the geography of the home. When the voice tells us how W came to be in the chair, Beckett's choice of language activates the semantic field of the haunted house by drawing us into the space of the home that, according to Bachelard[32], is most associated with fear and anxiety. The voice describes how at the 'close of long day', W, like her mother before her went 'down / down the steep stair' (Beckett 2006:400). The repetition of the word 'down' combined with the sibilance of 'steep stair', creates a sense of claustrophobia even in the language – Beckett's depiction of the slow and careful descent playing on our sense of doom. The basement is not a place we expect W to return from, and the steepness of the stair suggests a physical challenge, the descent imbued with finality, evoking imagery of the grave. Instead of the earth or God, W's downward climb into the dark will return her to the arms of her mother's rocker, to the space in which her mother sat rocking before she died, and where W presumably will re-enact her movements as she too edges towards the end of her life.

The sense of the actor as a haunted house, explored in *Footfalls,* also presents itself in *Rockaby,* mediated once more through Billie Whitelaw's performance but in more direct ways. In Daniel Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus 1982 documentary detailing Alan Schneider's making of *Rockaby,* we are invited to witness the creative conversations between director and actor in Whitelaw's home exploring what it is that Beckett wants from the character and how to embody the complexity of W in an understated performance. Whitelaw details the experience she had of her parents both passing away in quick succession and thinks about her mother in the two years before she died as something she might draw on. She tells Schneider how she wants to just put her 'mother's skin on'[33] so that she might access her way of being, that resonated with the character of W and her mother. Whitelaw explains, 'she used to just sit here in her chair, I'm not kidding, she used to sit here in this chair, she was like a statue'. She goes on to say that 'you never knew what was going on in her head' and that she used to 'pace up and down like Sam's mother' but now in retrospect she wonders if, 'perhaps things like this were going through her head'. Whitelaw muses that drawing on her personal experiences is not only useful to the performance but necessary as she observes, 'there's something in there one

[32] In chapter one – the section on *Waiting For Godot* in Sarajevo explores Bachelard's ideas around the space of the cellar in relation to Sontag's candle lit performance in the theatre.

[33]These quotes are taken from the Pennebaker and Hedgus, 'Making Samuel Beckett's "Rockaby" Documentary' (1982) [Date accessed 19th Dec 2023]
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3nr9ve3CyZU&t=19s From 10.29 -11.24

can use, otherwise death doesn't make any sense.'[34] The back and forth, the 'to and fro' (Beckett 2006: 441), is a reciprocity of movement that permeates the plays and brings one into contact with the other. Between *Footfalls* and *Rockaby* the memories for Beckett of his own mother, the movement between him and Whitelaw, moving between the plays, her way of drawing on personal memories of her niece in *Footfalls* and then her mother in *Rockaby*, suggest an implicit human need to make sense of things even if there is no resolution. Instead, there is just the endless rocking or 'revolving' of it all (Beckett 2006:403), the reaching back by the daughter to the mother just as it was once the parent that reached for her child. In *Footfalls* there are no physical objects, only sound and the darkness from which the voice emerges to mediate the mother–daughter relationship, or the memory of it. In *Rockaby* the connection between mother and daughter is negotiated through what may be the mother's dress but most tangibly through the object of the rocking chair. It is this connection between cradle and rocker and their movements that brings us first to the chair and its role within the house.

The tempo of the piece and V's voice has the texture of a dark lullaby while the title, *Rockaby,* calls to mind Bachelard's observation that 'The house is a large cradle' (2014:29) and speaks to a psychogeography of the maternal bond embedded in the spaces and objects of the domestic family home. Unlike *Footfalls*, we know that W's mother has died. The voice that narrates her thoughts tells us that she not only passed away in the home but in the very chair in which W now rocks and where she was found one 'night, dead one night, in her best black, and the rocker rocking, rocking away' (Beckett 2006:440). The rocker that continued to rock even once her mother had passed, now rocks W, it holds her and she holds the armrests, with her 'white hands'. These actions and images present something of a juxtaposition between our expectations of the living body and the wooden object; the whiteness of her hands combined with the effortless movement of the chair suggest something potentially supernatural in its powerful hold that is nonetheless benign as the '*Rounded curving inward arms [of the chair] suggest embrace*'. The chair is rocking on its own and the woman's feet never move (Beckett 2006:433) and one could argue that 'mother rocker' and her seamless movement encapsulates and embodies the spectrality of the mother–daughter bond at the heart of the play, in which the last days of her W's life appear to become indistinguishable from her mother's.

[34]These quotes are taken from the Pennebaker and Hedgus, 'Making Samuel Beckett's "Rockaby" Documentary' (1982) [Date accessed 19th Dec 2023]
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3nr9ve3CyZU&t=19s From 10.29 -11.24

The rocking chair as we know it was invented by Benjamin Franklin in the early 18th century, inspired by the first piece of rocking furniture, the cradle. Over the years it has become associated with both mothers and older people, soothing infants and the elderly alike. The chair is therefore a transitionary object, from early to later life, offering comfort at crucial points in the sitter's life. Bachelard's notion of the home as cradle seems to be distilled further in this depiction of home; life and death all centring around the object of the chair. Mother rocker not only holds W in an embrace, but there is a reciprocity in the hold that W keeps upon the arms of the chair. The need to be held, to be touched and to touch speaks to the experience of death and bereavement that also speaks to ideas that connect to Beckett's interest in the ghost story, particularly as Emilie Morin explains, his fascination with the 'process of contacting the disappeared and disappearing […] how might they be genuinely reached' (Morin 2023:16). W seems to follow in her mother's footsteps, moving through the house, scanning the exterior through every window, peeping and peering into the windows of those houses alongside her own, for some evidence that there might be 'another creature there […] another living soul, one other living soul' (Beckett 2006:439). The repetition and emphasis on 'one' stress the urgency and desperation, not necessarily for companionship but simply for the security that she is not alone. She insists that even the sight of a human face is more than she would hope to dream for, she does not make such greedy demands, rather she would be satisfied she claims, with just 'one blind up […] never mind a face', the knowledge that somewhere behind that lifted blind, another human being was going about their business would be comfort enough. W craves company, some sign that she isn't entirely alone just like her mother. Then when she fails, or she cannot bear the search any longer, her despair drives her into the basement like her mother before her. The danger of social isolation is explored in *Footfalls* through May's eventual neglect and loneliness but in *Rockaby* the consequences of such seem even more clear cut; W's mother dies in the basement, having given up on finding 'another living soul' and her daughter wants to follow close behind.

That the old rocking chair sits in the basement may tell us something more about the relationship between parent and child. As Anna McMullan comments, 'W in *Rockaby* resorts to the mother rocker when she has given up' (McMullan 2010:124). In the absence of the evidence of any living companion, W, like May, seems to turn to the spectral for comfort. The chair becomes a relic, an object that materially and maternally embodies her mother, the fact that it rocks her without her intervention suggest that there is some otherworldly agentic force at work. In her work, *Human Remains*, Aoife Monks argues that '[T]he act of communion with an object is structured as a form of possession' (2012:367). By repressing themselves and

giving themselves over to the theatrical objects, the process of acting brings about such a possession by the objects on stage that allow the body of the actor to be subsumed and transformed in the moment of theatrical realisation and within the sphere of the play world. In *Rockaby*, there appears to be an overlapping of these forces, those which allowed Whitelaw and subsequent actors to give themselves over to the rocking but additionally those within the play itself which allow the chair to move seemingly without human intervention. It seems in the context of *Rockaby* there are many ways to consider both the nature of the 'communion' she speaks about and what constitutes 'possession'. The way in which W engages with the chair is intimate and tactile. The act of sitting and being sat on opens both parties up to a vulnerability. W does not resist the rocking motion – quite the opposite – but her grip on the arms offers one interpretation of possession that Monks describes. For W, holding onto the body of the chair may also be a way of mourning her loss while absorbing the material energy that is held in the place she died. Unwilling or unable to let her go, the heirloom as Julie Bates characterises it[35], carries the story of her mother, of birth and motherhood and eventually death. In her work on Beckettian objects, Bates tentatively explores the evidence for the complex relationship between Beckett and his mother as part of the fabric of his designs and narratives that continued to permeate his work. While she is cautious never to draw parallels between his personal relationships and those within his texts, it is unsurprising that some of the themes resonate deeply with his own feelings towards his parents and his mother. Beckett did undertake duties of care towards his family before they died and James Knowlson described that Beckett continued, even in the last months of his life, to demonstrate 'feelings of love towards his mother and remorse at having, as he saw it, let her down so frequently' (Knowlson 1997:670). This sense of the 'relationship between parent and child being fraught […] on either side with guilt' (Bates 2017:72) is one which is first manifested in *Endgame* before re-emerging in *Footfalls* and then *Rockaby*. Bates argues,

> The relationship between mother and daughter is vexed, tainted by what throughout Beckett's work is suggested as the maternal sin of giving birth to a dying creature […] the conception of life as a death sentence informs the corruption and decay that characterises the physical experiences. (Bates 2017:105)

[35] See Julie Bates, *Beckett's Art of Salvage*, Chapter 2 which focuses on Heirlooms and includes the rocking chair from *Rockaby* as an example.

While this guilt is explicitly addressed in *Footfalls* through the mother's pleas for forgiveness, not only for giving birth to May but for doing so late in life, implicitly articulated through scenographic details of the movement and clothing, the culpability of potential neglect and resentment and the maternal guilt manifests in *Rockaby* in different ways through a key feature of the set, the rocking chair.

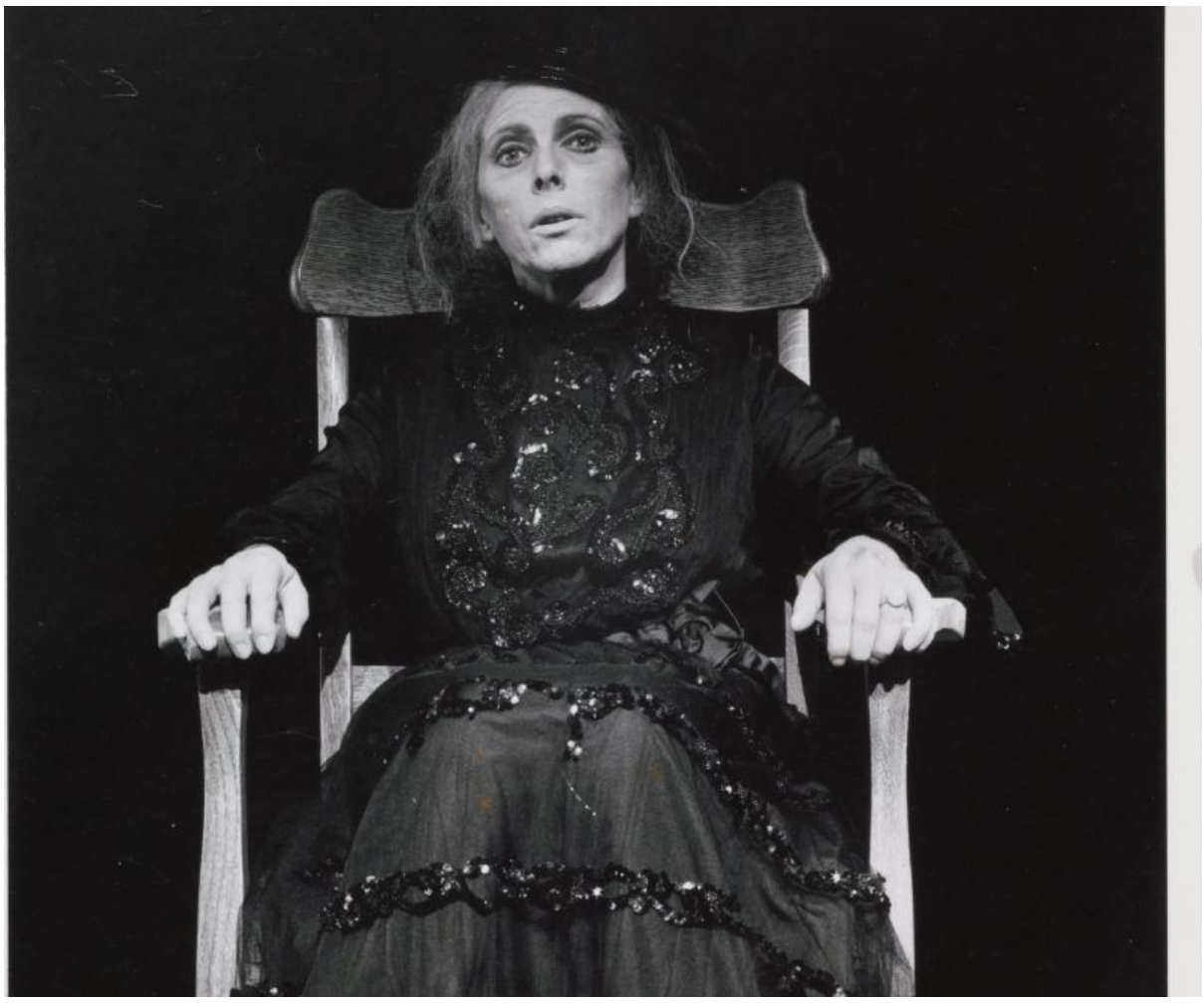

Fig 15. Rockaby, Director Alan Schneider, Costume Design Esther King, Actor: Billie Whitelaw, 1981 Buffalo State University, New York. Copyright unknown.

McMullan draws on Neumann when describing the 'Beckettian persona on stage [as] a combination of "moments of the exhibitionistic and moments of withdrawal, of turning inward'" (2010:127). In *Rockaby* this turning inward seems to evoke a return to the mother, a mother who manifests through the object of the chair,

> The qualities of the rocking chair that offer succour are evident in its design […] Tenderness […] emphasized throughout the play […] articulat [ing] relief […] rocking

> chairs offer a rigid and domineering form of comfort, one that is typical of the rather more severe maternal love. (Bates 2017:110)

In returning to the chair, W is not only attempting contact with her mother, but her mother is able to possess her once more. There is something of the séance in the way W holds on, each involuntary rock more evidence that her mother is still there, and that W is not alone. The chair becomes a relic, a portal to an embodied presence of the mother, who through the chair is able to contact and be contacted. The chair's abilities to behave in this way are facilitated by the way the space is presented on stage,

> the text interprets the space around the rocker as an apartment room, with a window facing other windows […] as the play unfolds, the space in which the woman rocks becomes the downstairs room to which she retreats, having given up on finding 'another like herself'. In fact, because the image of W doubles that of her mother when her end came, the darkness collapses the temporal distinctions between then and now and merges the body of W and that of her mother […]. (McMullan 2010:111)

This doubling of the imagery and the rocking of the chair by unseen forces seems to suggest that 'there is always a residue of maternal authority, narrative and will that cannot be erased' (Francus 2012:194). This stubbornness inherent in the mother daughter bond, that refuses to let go psychically and even physically, is also manifest in the costume. W's dress embodies a spectrality that explores a different aspect to the relationship between May and her mother. If May's dress is haunted by neglect and timeworn by a sense of duty, W's clothing summons the spectral through the material embodiment of grief.

W, like her mother, is dressed in her best black, and one might argue there is no reason not to suspect that she is in fact dressed in the clothes her mother wore as she died. The use of a recording to convey W's story gives her an added layer of complexity, the rocking and the narration of her story are triggered by W's hungry cries of 'More' (Beckett 2006:435). Narration is activated by the demand and, as she is rocked, the image seems to evoke a perverse take on a return to babyhood, W's open-mouthed calls evoking the infant's need for food. The image is distorted as W, rocked by mother is swaddled, not in the linens of a new-born, but the costume she may be buried in. While her mother died 'off her head / but harmless' (Beckett 2006:440) W becomes semi mute, vacant and infantilised. The dress, however, becomes a mouthpiece for her grief, another material embodiment of her loss that, along with the chair,

communicates the way her body and her mother's body remain joined long after birth and ultimately in death. In Judith M Simpson's essay, 'The Haunted Wardrobe' she reflects on the resonances between clothing and loss and the link between garments and grief, noting that there is considerable research that evidences the way in which '(re)use of the possessions of the dead stimulates the inner story-telling' (2017:24). Certainly, W's sense of self being so interlinked with the life of her mother and their shared lives suggests that these objects perform like relics not only as a means of reaching the dead but also in order to give voice to a story that they share and shared. What is more, 'clothing also generates immersive memory experiences that bring the dead suddenly into close proximity' (Simpson 2017:11). By dressing as her mother or wearing her clothes, W conjures her mother's presence in a way that brings her to life by utilising her own body as the conduit for the spectre. The sharing of clothing especially within the context of death recalls the complexity of the mother–daughter relationship in *Footfalls* that emerges in relation to the burden of care. The needs of the mother as well as the expectations of the daughter not only compromise agency in the present but also curtail potentiality. For W, materially embodying her dead mother as she thinks about their life together before seemingly following her to the grave speaks to the language of consumption, sublimation and domination that returns to the complexity of the spectral mother.

Evidently "[c]lothing has a dual nature, it comforts and reassures, but it also distresses and terrifies" (Stallybrass qtd in Simpson 2017:16). Re-enacting loss with the objects most closely associated with her mother is a complicated and confusing endeavour, and conjuring or contacting the dead by occupying their familiar spaces or material remainders is not without its consequences.

> To fail to find someone in a place you expect them to be is to encounter their absence as a 'real event' specifically associated with that location: the location appears haunted by the one who isn't there, their absence rendered tangible by the tension between physical absence and emotional presence. What is experienced is what Barthes elegantly describes as "the presence of absence". Objects as well as places can conjure this effect; absence is intensely present when the dead are found to be gone from the clothes that their bodies have shaped, when they are no longer among the things where their scent lingers and their traces remain. (Simpson 2017:17)

In the introduction to her work *Dressed,* a study into the philosophy of clothing, Shahida Bari takes the idea of material traces and details in other directions that have more painful rather

than sinister undertones. She draws on the work of Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida*, which he wrote just a year after the death of his mother. Bari describes the way the book is heavy with loss and the way he turned to photographs as a way of connecting with his mother. She explains that in studying an old photograph of his mother as a child Barthes identified the notion of the 'punctum' which she sums up as the:

> Detail in any given picture that penetrates, and by which we establish a relationship with the object or person represented to us. The punctum is the pinprick which that startles, the part of an image that opens it up, suddenly permitting us to see more deeply […] searching the grey and grainy photograph of his mother, Barthes finds the punctum in her unbearably small hands" and the way in which she holds them […] but there is something in the fullness of the dress […] too; a certain innocence that wounds. (2022:23)

Barthes fixation on his mother's hands, her dress, the sense of innocence in her childhood that was so painful perhaps because when her picture is taken, she can have no idea that her son would study it with such longing in the wake of her loss. Dressing and clothing the body should remind us that we are alive, that we are social beings that participate in the world, presenting and representing ourselves. But in many cultures, after death but before burial or cremation, there is a final occasion for which we are dressed. There is something uncanny in the dressing of the cold, unyielding body that is lying down as though for sleep, but dressed in readiness for one last solemn formal social engagement. The hands clasped in an innocence that recalls the childhood formality of presentation, as for the first time as adults, others choose our clothes for us as though we were infants. Bari points out that 'The clothes that our parents once wore and leave behind alert us to their interior life' (2022:24). By putting on her mother's clothes that she wore when she died, W signals to us her loss, their union in death and transcribes onto the material something unspeakable in the process of grief, which is the desperation of the bereft to conjure the dead, to believe that something of the body remains and is retained in the fabric of the items that once held them that, 'In their things we might find them again and so not be abandoned, just as we might not abandon them' (2022:25).

In the 1981 production presented in New York and also filmed for the documentary, May's 'evening gown' seems heavily formal, sequined and deliberately designed to 'glitter when rocking' (Beckett 2006:433). The length covers her whole body, her neck, arms and legs in a way that appears to hold her steady. There is something that is quite unsettling about her

costume, as Beckett's notes tell us that her dress is accompanied by a hat, 'Incongruously flimsy head-dress set askew with extravagant trimming to catch the light when rocking' (2006:433). The hat sits uncomfortably and unnaturally and there is a slight sense of the ridiculous in the original performance, something a little performative that suggests it is a costume used to channel her mother in her absence, rather than clothing that has ever been worn out to a dazzling party. Like a fabric Ouija board, the dress is W's means of contacting the dead. The way in which small details can alter the reception is presented in Dwan and Asmus' collaboration in 2015, where the hat is considerably more tasteful, Dwan a little more self-possessed, and the dress a little less gaudy and heavily sequined. Yet, while the performance and the collusion of the scenography, lighting and sound are no less affecting, there is something about Dwan's W that seems more haunting than haunted, and the critical difference seems to be in the detail of the dress that seems as though it belongs to W rather than being the garments of her dead mother.

The Eyes are the Windows of the Soul

When the voice tells us in the final section how W finally decides to pull down the blind and stop looking, to close her 'famished eyes' and sink 'right down' into the old rocker we are acutely aware of her decision as '[…] defiance mutates into resignation' (Frost 2016:154).
The role of the window in the domestic geography of *Rockaby* invites us to draw parallels around the way the window functions or malfunctions in ways that challenge our expectations of home and familial bonds in *Eleutheria,* and how these ideas re-emerge in new ways in *Rockaby.* In *Eleutheria,* Victor Krap's attempts to escape his predicament by breaking a window. However, although the window breaks it is immediately repaired by the glazier who suddenly appears for this purpose. The window fulfils its expectations, but Victor is not offered the possibility of a dramatic resolution that might result in his liberation. This notion of the home as an unfriendly space, where security becomes inseparably entwined with entrapment is one which Beckett returns to repeatedly. Here, W and her mother before her look through the windows for company rather than escape. There is an urgency counterpoised with an almost meditative patience as we are told how mother and then daughter,

> Went back in and sat
> at her window
> let up the blind and sat

quiet at her window
only window
facing other windows
other only windows
all eyes
all sides
high and low
for another
at her window
another like herself
a little like
another living soul
one other living soul
at her window
(Beckett 2006:437)

This search, that seems exhausting and meticulous, scanning the windows of the houses opposite for another person seems to reveal the loneliness at the heart of the play, that is also embedded in the relationship between mother and daughter. The comfort that they seek is achingly simple, just to know they are not alone and that there are others like them. They crave society, not to be in its midst, but just to know that it exists and to take comfort in their lack of exceptionalism. In the end, they stop searching for a face, instead hoping for any sign of human habitation. Expectations are lowered to the bare minimum and comfort is sought in the knowledge of shared lives, the lifting and lowering of the blinds becoming the only participation in the details of domestic community. The raising and closing of the blinds have a reciprocity between the other movements in the play, of W and her mother going 'to and fro' (Beckett 2006:435) and those of the chair, back and forth. These dualities suggest a rhythm of the everyday, mundane perhaps but reliable, whereas the decision to descend the steep stairs is one that does not respond to this pattern, rather there is a finality, a sense of closure that precedes the final drawing down of the blind and echoes the final sinking into the old chair.

The notion of the home as a body is also echoed here. Pulling down the blinds is a way for the home to close its eyes, foreshadowing the final cries that break from the cyclical narrative as the voice orders the eyes to shut with a violence, 'stop her eyes'. Her eyes, famished as they, are echoed by her hungry mouth and its cries for more until she curses, 'fuck

life'. One imagines that the last moments of life are as terrifying as the first, rudely dragged out of the darkness and quiet safety of the womb, one is violently expelled into the light and sounds of the world, the baby's first screams are a sign that it is alive and well. It makes sense that the knowledge of death, a return to the womb of the earth is fraught with the same rageful cry, marking the ending of life just as it began. So for W, the re-enactment of her mother's death and conjuring her presence through the activation of the same movements are part of what we might be described as self-administered last rites. W's isolation, cut off from society like May in *Footfalls* presents the audience with an awkwardness that comes with witnessing the intimacy of death. The windows are most determinedly closed, the interior of the home is the final resting place, and the chair becomes her a temporary coffin like that of her mother before her.

Conclusion

The end of *Footfalls* asks the audience to question what or who it was they watched pacing the stage. The darkness that signals what should be the end of the play is then compromised, just enough to see that the stage is empty and there is 'no trace of May' before the lights go down for the finish (Beckett 2006:403). The darkness of the interior envelops the auditorium and we wonder whether any of it was real, if anyone was really there at all, or if the play simply offers a glimpse into the moment between life and death that Whitelaw described as the passage of transfiguration.

In *Rockaby,* W does not disappear but the play ends as the chair is 'coming to rest of rock' (Beckett 2006:442) making us wonder who was rocking the chair and if its cessation means that W has been released from her earthly hold. Asmus's 2015 production uses the space between each of the plays to draw the audience into a darkness that seems to carry a material weight. The dark is like another part of the design, another object in the mise en scene except it is undefined and sprawling, it has a liquidity that was able to reach out, seeping into the space and inhabiting the world of the play as well as the world of the theatre. The excess of darkness accumulates, and manifests as a presence that's impossible to pin down or define but nonetheless one which conditions and affects the space in ways that draw attention to its existence. It might be argued that the spectral quality of the darkness amounts to a kind of haunting, creating a perpetual night time in which the interiority of the grave – that Pozzo alludes to in his final speech and which is the title of this final section – is manifested in the space of the home. If domestic rituals are a way of surviving in the world, then perhaps that is

what makes these final two plays of this thesis arguably the most desperate. Not only are there no rituals that might offer connection to the living but there are no other living bodies in the dark, no arm to reach, no hand to touch that might offer connection.

Overall Conclusions of the Thesis

The title of this thesis, 'Staging Vestigial Domesticity', set out to offer the reader both a summation of the project and its aims. It signals the radical re-thinking and re-defining of what constitutes domesticity in Beckett's work when the naturalistic spaces of home[36] familiar to middle class European or North American representational contexts have been destroyed, subverted or replaced by those that are barren or hostile, dangerous or claustrophobic. The mise en scene in *Eleutheria* illustrated from the outset that Beckett was not only deconstructing home from the inside out but, in doing so, he was demonstrating that the concept of home as a solid or safe physical object was a fallacy. Home in Beckett's theatre and in the real world is not necessarily a place of orientation or familiarity, nor is it ever simple. Phenomenological exploration of Beckett's scenography establishes that Beckett's designs and subsequent stagings do not attempt to depict anything approximating home but instead, by eschewing realism, Beckett captures and makes visible something of what home might look and feel if it were shaped by bodies displaced from the conventional architecture of home. During the research for this project, what became clear was that across these plays, no matter how absurd or untethered from any semblance of the natural world, the couples (platonic or romantic), individuals and families that inhabit these spaces are unable to find ways of surviving or existing without recourse to habits, patterns, rituals and objects that root them in everyday life. Even in exceptional circumstances and unprecedented or uncertain situations, their bodies revert to behaviours and modes of interconnection that convey the remnants or residues of past lives and ways of being, including the mundane or repetitive actions that offer some reliable means of communication with their surroundings. Sometimes these actions are futile or cruel, meaningless or actively destructive but nonetheless, forced into stasis, they continue to enact them, day after day. Whether they are in shelters, or shadowy and undefined interiors, or out on the open road or trapped in a barren and punishing landscape these actions persist –

[36] It is important to acknowledge that home in the global south can present a very different set of spaces (for example, subject to extreme climate disruptions, conflicts and displacements) that are not the dramatic contexts being explored here.

sustaining, prolonging and coming to define their lives. These rituals, ranging from the simple ones of sleeping and eating to more detailed ones like elaborate self-care, enact a vestigial domesticity, dislocated from surroundings that a reader or audience might recognise, these characters utilise the mundane as a way of enduring their existence. Performing vestiges of domesticity is a means of survival, a way for these characters to create a space of home through re-enactment of a mundane domestic life and a conceptual space of home in the most unbearable places.

This project was motivated by and written in the light of a period of socio-political upheaval and social and cultural change that was borne of a series of overlapping contexts: Brexit, the urgency of environmental crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic. Reading Beckett's plays in this social and cultural climate through a phenomenological, embodied approach prompted the need to re-evaluate his work through the lens of domestic precarity and ask how the spaces which his characters inhabit and occupy resonate not only with the contexts in which Beckett was writing but how these might intersect with readings of his work over the seven-year period of the project. This critical lens guided the choices of productions selected, focusing on those that illuminated the themes of Beckett's plays, and which developed his dramaturgical vision in nuanced ways that responded to my contextual readings of his texts. The productions chosen were ones that spoke to this fresh appraisals of the texts, performances that resonated and entered into a dialogue with Beckett's own engagement with home and the ways in which the specific contexts of the last decade highlighted above have necessitated new and urgent ways of thinking about how home is defined, where and how we find belonging and how we negotiate social and domestic precarity whether the result of political, ecological or health crisis.

The three research questions that have underpinned this thesis have guided a detailed analysis of Beckett's dramaturgy and approach to staging his plays from the perspective of (i) how expectations of home and domesticity are deconstructed and redefined; (ii) how the interactions between Beckett's embodied characters and the stage environment, including space, lighting, costume and props in the above productions and in selected more recent productions, reconceive of home, domesticity and precarity; and iii) an investigation of how those and more recent productions engage with a web of contexts that facilitate fresh readings around home and domesticity that remain highly relevant to contemporary debates around gender, isolation, ageing, illness and the environment. The rest of this conclusion sets out how these research questions have not only enabled innovative textual readings alongside scenographic analyses of selected premiere and subsequent productions of Beckett's plays but

have also helped to demonstrate how such a focus on redefining domesticity and how home can be transformed or manifest in situations of insecurity and upheaval remains an urgent contemporary issue, which Beckett's work can help us confront.

Key Findings

In chapter one, this research established two key findings about home through Beckett's dramaturgy, first that 'all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home' (Bachelard 2014:27). Secondly, that in deconstructing home and the traditional, recognisable object of the house in *Eleutheria*, Beckett's work seeks to demonstrate that 'outside and inside are both intimate—they are always ready to be reversed, to exchange their hostility. If there exists a borderline surface between such an inside and outside, this surface is painful on both sides' (Bachelard 2014: 233). This provided the rationale for moving from the collapse of the domestic interior in *Eleutheria* to the desolate exterior space of *Godot*. In *Godot*, Beckett proves that dispossession does not necessarily erase domesticity. Instead, the vestiges of domesticity that remain even after dispossession or destruction can bind characters together, drawing out and manifesting home through their self-imposed boundaries and shared patterns of ritual and repetition. Dislodged from the burden of geographical location, Beckett's homes have proved amenable to site-responsive interpretations, in which the productions' scenographic spaces effectively channel the anxieties and difficulties in the social landscape around the production. Phenomenological analyses of the stage scenography of the premiere and more recent productions enabled the thesis to engage both with contexts of crisis and the embodied experiences of vulnerability and dispossession that are just as relevant today as in the postwar devastation that Beckett lived through, thereby affirming the continuing vitality and urgency of Beckett's drama as text and in performance.

This sense of precarity is developed in chapter two which negotiates and interrogates *Endgame* in text and performance through the contextual lens of Covid-19. This study of Beckett's dramaturgy exposes how easily domesticity can be manipulated and coerced by the relationships and spaces in which everyday life takes place. This is demonstrated in the transition from *Godot* to *Endgame* that exemplifies how the rituals and routines that once sustained can very easily become acts of cruelty when bodies that are ill or ageing are confined or contained in spaces where access to care is determined by necessity and chance. Chapter two reveals how ageing, illness or disability transforms and complicates spaces that were once

familiar. Beckett's work highlights that the domestic space in which one expects to find refuge can all too easily become a trap. In the context of the pandemic, chapter two illustrates how the threat to homeland impacts on those who are most vulnerable, putting marginalised bodies under stress, when the state becomes complicit in public and private acts of neglect. Beckett's way of dispelling the illusion of a binary opposition between inside and outside, once again facilitated contextual readings of the space that resonated deeply with the situation of lockdown as home became a place of complex emotions, sickness and entrapment.

In her essay 'The Invention of Everyday Life' Rita Felski explores why the study of domestic routine and home life are sometimes not given the academic value they deserve, arguing that this area of study focuses more on 'women and the working class' who are 'more closely identified with the everyday than others' (2000:79). Chapter three's textual and contextual readings present the invocation of domesticity as a means of survival and resistance for Winnie. Reading this text in the light of the climate disaster and the judgements of the 2015 *Paris Agreement* that considered the specific needs of women in situations of domestic precarity in the light of climate change, drew textual interpretations of the play towards a reading of the mound as one that embodies material vestiges of home. Therefore chapter three selects performances of *Happy Days* that connect with gendered experiences of dispossession – a neglected area of research, that proves how Beckett's work in the hands of visionary female directors can offer valuable ways of thinking about how women in different situations may experience crisis. The exploration of domesticity and home highlights and engages with sociological and scientific studies that assert the different and specific needs of women in the aftermath of any crisis, which are often overlooked or ignored. This chapter highlights that material objects can be crucial to anchoring identity and constructing or defining home when it is temporary or unstable. What is more, this study underlines that making space for women that reflects their needs is not about asserting privilege but about forging a sense of home that offers essential and potentially lifesaving security in the midst of precarity.

Chapter four concluded this study by focusing on one of the threads that is foregrounded in the image of Victor at the end of *Eleutheria*, arguing that Beckett's dramaturgy presents home in all its iterations as a lonely place. Isolation in the Beckettian home is often because the other bodies present not only fail to offer solace but may even compound the sense of separation through their actions, but in *Footfalls* and *Rockaby* it is the lingering imprint absent bodies leave upon the space that draws attention to the loss. Merleau Ponty's observation that 'our body is not in space like things; it inhabits or haunts space' (1964:5) frames the exploration of domesticity in the context of 2023 and the World Health Organisation's declaration that

loneliness is a global concern that requires our urgent attention. Beckett's dramaturgy and engagement with domesticity establishes that, in order to define home as space that is rooted in the present instead of haunted by the past, requires active occupation. Inhabitation thrives on action and if that action doesn't engage with rituals of the everyday, then bodies become institutionalised, shaped by grief and memories and home becomes a mausoleum, a repository for past lives that are unable to move on.

This project brings performance analysis through a phenomenological and scenographic lens into dialogue with more recent sociological research around domesticity and home. This is the first time such research has been undertaken in detail engaging with Beckett's plays in performance across his 50 years of playwrighting. It is essential to re-iterate that the intention is not to explain Beckett's work through these sociological studies but what this research highlights is that contexts of precarity and displacement, ill health or loss resonate with Beckett's texts and especially with the productions that have taken place in contexts of dispossession and crisis, including but not limited to the pandemic. In this way my analysis adds to the growing body of research devoted to Beckett in performance (of which the *Staging Beckett* project and the work of Nicholas Johnson and Jonathan Heron are notable examples). It contributes valuable research to Beckett and theatre studies more broadly and to scenographic analyses of the interaction between bodies, spaces and objects on stage facilitated by a phenomenological methodology.

Finally, this study demonstrates the value of analysing the extent to which the contexts in which readers and audiences are exposed to Beckett's work impacts on the ways they interpret and respond to both texts and performances. In a twenty-first century world where the threats of nuclear war, climate disaster and other conflicts and crises abound, this underlines the continuing relevance and urgency of Beckett's work, which confronts readers and audiences with such states of precarity and dispossession.

Potential for Further Research

Focusing on Beckett's work in performance as an audience member offered valuable personal insight into the work from an embodied phenomenological perspective – however this created constraints for the project by limiting the scope largely to productions I had seen and this in turn was limited to performances in Britain and Ireland. The potential for further research into Beckett's work being made in Europe more widely would offer interesting ways of thinking

about the last decade in terms of the changing social and political landscape in broader terms. Additionally, it would be fascinating to take this study into places that approach Beckett's work from different ethnic and cultural perspectives and to observe how the scenographic detail might be interpreted through the adaptation of objects and costumes that articulate ideas about home outside of a western frame of reference.

Perhaps two of the most personally enriching experiences of Beckett's work that I was able to include were those site-responsive productions of *Godot* on the Irish – Northern Irish border and *Laethanta Sona* on Inis Oírr. Site-responsive work often thrives on the resonances that theatre can have with the people and landscape. The works explored in the study were socially invested, culturally sensitive and politically nuanced with unique approaches to staging and prioritising these exclusively would undoubtedly add valuable contributions to a study of home in Beckett's work.

My analyses of domesticity and home through a gendered lens focused on the female centred plays, led by the social contexts that framed the female experience in relation to precarity. This then guided the production choices towards dynamic female directors whose design choices and interpretations created performances that highlighted how women use objects in situations of displacement or disaster. This work could be expanded through including readings of domesticity that specifically explore the masculine connection with the everyday, observing the differences, similarities and cross overs in the way home manifests or is evoked in relation to gender across all the plays, and analysing the nuances and complexities of this kind of analysis and its findings.

Finally, in the introduction I write about the influence of artist Rachel Whiteread's sculptures on the project and how her work foregrounded my interests in thinking about how home is defined aesthetically and conceptually. It was interesting to discover the work of Brian Dillon whose writing on rooms and homes and how loss and memory affect the way we perceive spaces has been influenced by both Beckett and Whiteread. If this project were to be developed further I think there are interesting avenues of discussion between the way Beckett's scenographic aesthetics and the practice of modern artists such as Whiteread and others who contend with ideas of home or create objects that play with de-familiarisation or failure such as Mona Hatoum and Phyllida Barlow could be brought into dialogue with essayists and writers who are also thinking about objects, space and home.

Final Conclusions

This dissertation was driven by a desire to understand whether examining Beckett's scenography as a re-evaluation of home both physical and conceptual, could offer insights into how Beckett's work continues to resonate not just in relation to crisis but also how we negotiate the everyday and define our relationship to the domestic. This research, conceived and completed during a time of political and environmental turmoil and the unprecedented situation of a pandemic, reasserted the urgency and importance of the role of theatre in communicating and contributing to how we think about the everyday. In doing so, it confirmed Beckett's continued relevance to dialogues around ageing, illness, isolation, gender and the environment that contributes to scholarship that goes beyond Beckett Studies.

In the shape of home as it collapses, is re-drawn, salvaged or manifested from the last vestiges there is no cohesive or coherent narrative that is either sought or found. What is noticeable is the way darkness creeps in through imagery, language and finally design, until it consumes and overwhelms both audience and characters. Pozzo's sudden blindness seizes him to proclaim in his horror, 'that the light gleams an instant and then it is night once more' (Beckett 2006:83). His imagery of death and the image of home as a grave might be said to haunt this project and the scenography of the plays included. There are moments of light and lightness, of hope and endurance, resistance and even strength but these always succumb to the sense of isolation that pervades Beckett's theatre and this study of home. The objects and spaces that surround his characters are symptomatic of lives that are fraught with difficulty, ordinary cruelties and mundane tragedies that are the unfortunate by-product of being and staying alive. In thinking about Beckett's work as a means of articulating the relationship between his characters and their homes through performance, this project has had some overarching findings. First that home and health – both emotional and physical – are inextricably linked, as the body's needs change so do the requirements and experiences of space. Secondly the way the body adapts, and the space accommodates is integral to the way marginalised bodies find a way to survive.

In the Beckettian home, touch is the only antidote to loneliness, the only means of surviving these worlds. The image of home as an isolated space returns like a spectre to haunt all of his plays, Victor with his back to the audience, Pozzo blind and frightened, Clov about to leave Hamm for the unknown, Winnie consumed, May vanished or perhaps never there at all and finally W, alone, begging for life to end. This study concludes that Beckett does not re-imagine home, instead he finds a way to articulate the unseen and the invisible through uncertainty and fragility, I would argue that his deconstruction of home is about getting rid of hope and liberating the audience and the reader to confront something much more useful,

reality (Burkeman 2014: n.p). That reality is grounded in one particular human need above all others, the desire to touch and be touched. After all,

> [O] ur body is a being of two leaves, from one side a thing among things and otherwise what sees and touches them […] it unites these two properties within itself […] the body has double reference; it teaches that each call for the other. (Merleau-Ponty 1968:137)

What seems to be the most important requirement for home is that there are other bodies who connect and are connected to us in compassion and empathic understanding. Without 'another living soul' (Beckett 2006: 439) home becomes unbearable, domesticity unsustainable and life, if you are lucky, is extinguished, sometimes leaving 'no trace at all' (Beckett 2006:403). The alternative is Beckett's vision, a home that is made and unmade, reincarnating past lives, and bodies that continue to live through the impossible, clinging to the last vestiges of domesticity; unable to move forward, compelled to return and forced to endure.

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