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HAPPY DAYS: A MODERN WOMAN’S APPROACH TO ABSURDISM THROUGH FEMINIST THEATER THEORY

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Introduction

This thesis examines the character of Winnie in Samuel Beckett’s *Happy Days* through performance and the lens of feminist theory and critique. In the wake of the Second World War, a number of artists in Europe attempted to find meaning in what some considered a meaningless world. The war had ravaged Europe, and it was difficult to find hope across the continent. Many artists during this time were concerned with existentialist ideas. These new social constructs led dramatists to experiment with new forms, which dealt with these existentialist philosophies through a dramatic medium. These forms experimented with language, de-railed linear plotlines, and placed characters in bizarre situations. Martin Esslin, the producer-journalist turned scholar, coined the phrase “the Theatre of the Absurd” in his book of the same title. One of the major writers of this new form of drama was Samuel Beckett. Since Beckett’s plays began to be performed in the 1950’s, theater critics have typically viewed performances of Beckett’s works through the lens of existentialism, and his style prompted many to consider him an absurdist. Absurdist theories were able to frame the dramatic works for that time, but as the social constructs of Western culture, especially those concerning women, have changed, so has dramatic criticism of women. As half a century has passed since the initial writing of Beckett’s plays, it is important to consider them, especially those with strong female characters, through a modern feminist critique.

Beckett’s writing took place during the second women’s movement. The Second World War had changed people’s views on morality, and society was forced to
redefine its standards. Before the First World War, class structure in Europe was rigidly defined. People “knew their place” and the gap between the rich and the poor was almost un-crossable. The war created opportunities for the lower class to advance in social position, but once it was over, society attempted to return to its pre-War structure. This cycle happened again after the Second World War. During the war, oppressed peoples in Europe were allowed to do things that they hadn’t been able to previously, but once it was over they were expected to return to their place in society. In Europe these people, including racial and religious minorities, the working class, and women, were fed up with these constraints. Women in particular strove to gain more equality in the job market and other venues.

Beckett was in the interesting position of writing in the midst of this social revolution. In many ways, he was very familiar with the old world and traditions, where women’s place in society was subservient to her husband. But he was also looking forward to what the future could bring. His work in many ways anticipated the second women’s movement. Beckett’s early dramatic works are filled with male characters. Each of these men is attempting to answer the most basic of life’s questions: Who are we and why are we here? However, it was not until 1961 with Happy Days that he gave the stage over completely to the voice of a woman. In Waiting for Godot, Endgame, and Krapp’s Last Tape, women were not given a strong voice on the stage’s playing space. With Happy Days and the character of Winnie, Beckett gave women a voice in his work. Traditionally, Happy Days has been viewed through an existentialist lens, much in the same way that Beckett’s other works are
viewed. This study, however, attempts to re-frame Happy Days through a new set of scholarly examinations: the ideas of feminist theory and theatrical performance. Through scholarly research and performance of the piece, I looked at this important work from a new perspective. In the twenty-first century, an actress cannot approach the part with the same background as a woman playing the role in the early 1960’s. While it is important to look at plays within the historical context and tradition in which they were originally performed, this view limits the performer. If one was to only look at a piece of work historically and not interpret it using modern approaches, theater would, I believe, eventually become stale and no longer relevant to the world other than from a historical museum. Happy Days needs a new evaluation. It is time to examine it through the eyes of a modern-day woman, because that is the person who will be performing this role today.

**On Absurdism**

Absurdism was a deviation from traditional French theater but not conscience movement in itself. At the beginning of the twentieth century the avant-garde movement was regarded in the same vein as the symbolists of the late nineteenth century: their art was attempting to achieve the same results. Symbolists were reacting against the naturalist and realist forms of art and believed that the only way to represent the truth and meaning of life was to do it indirectly, instead of through exact imitation of reality. Much of the world was trying to recover after two large-scale wars. During the late 1940’s and the 1950’s, the French were interested in looking at the past for inspiration for their drama. Myths, legends, and symbols were primarily
used as subject matter. Particular emphasis was placed on the structure of language, for “the ‘poetic avant-garde’ represent[ed] a different mood; it is more lyrical, and far less violent and grotesque” than the theater of the absurd (Esslin 25). Productions tackled the mystery of dreams and desire through traditional dramatic conventions.

Paris, which has been the cradle of a number of new artistic movements, was the birthplace for new schools of thought, and the avant-garde of Paris drama “is this part of the ‘anti-literary’ movement of our time, which has found its expression in abstract painting, with its rejection of ‘literary’ elements in pictures; or in the ‘new novel’ in France, with its reliance on the description of objects and its rejection of empathy and anthropomorphism” (Esslin 26). Theater artists realized that this was an important advancement for their art form as well, and began to experiment with these forms through dramatic constructs.

Esslin choose the word “absurd” to describe these plays based on the word’s definition, which means “out of harmony with reason or propriety; incongruous, unreasonable, illogical” (Esslin 23). The work of the absurdist playwrights, including Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Harold Pinter, Edward Albee, Tom Stoppard, and David Mamet, carry these attributes. Most of these dramatists claimed they are not trying to be “absurdist.” Even Esslin, who coined the phrase, states that “the writers in question [are] individuals[s] who regard themselves as lone outsiders, cut off and isolated in his private world” (22). This phrase has, however, been accepted widely to describe plays of this type, because the authors in question “can be seen as the
reflection of what seems to be the attitude most genuinely representative of that era in style, execution, and philosophy” (Esslin 22-23).

Esslin borrowed these notions of existentialism from the ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Camus’ essay “The Myth of Sisyphus” (1942) deals with existential issues, such as a lack of a God or omnipotent presence and fixed moral standards. Throughout the essay he stages an argument around suicide to examine what he considers the absurdity of life. In short, he believes that “the absurd enlightens [himself] on this point: there is no future” (Camus 58). He delves into the idea that life has no true purpose, and even when many humans discover how mundane life is, they still choose to continue living. Esslin quotes Camus:

A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty, is a familiar world. But in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of absurdity. (Camus qtd. in Esslin 18)

With these ideas of man’s insignificant place in the world, humans, not God, determine their own existence. In the absence of the influence of a higher power, there is no longer any certainty in an afterlife, or in anything, as humans are fallible beings. This then creates a philosophy that is based more on the individual versus the collective.

Sartre on the other hand explains a more hopeful interpretation of existentialism. While Camus stresses the human’s inability to break the cycle of absurdity, Sartre asserts that humans are absurd because their free will always puts
them in complete control of their fate. In his book *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, Sartre asserts:

Man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet, in other respects is free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does. The existentialist does not believe in the power of passion. He will never agree that a sweeping passion is a ravaging torrent which fatally leads a man to certain acts and is therefore an excuse. He thinks that man is responsible for his passion (Sartre 23).

A person is therefore in complete control of his or her own destiny. There is no God, so there is no set of doctrines or moral code to follow. The only thing that one has to rely upon is his or herself, and that reliance is what creates absurdity. Life has no meaning, because “before you come alive, life is nothing; it’s up to you to give it a meaning, and value is nothing else but the meaning that you choose” (Sartre 49). Therefore, life is meaningless unless one chooses to give it meaning. The philosophies of Camus and Sartre are critical to understanding the existential elements of the absurdist works.

Another aspect of absurdism is that it attempts to create a world that accentuates the strange and bizarre. In short, it “strives to express its sense of the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought” (Esslin 24). It has a chaotic structure that creates the illusion of an irrational universe. The plots are unclear, as well as the relationship between the characters. There is ambiguity in space, time, and relationships between characters. Words and phrases are repeated so that language itself becomes inadequate and incomprehensible. Reality is skewed so that the viewer does not know the difference between fact and fiction. Plays tend to be
cyclical in that they end in the same place they started. These never-ending cycles create an illusion of despair, and remind the audience how continually hopeless life can be.

There is also a strong vaudevillian presence within absurdist drama: this creates an element of humour that otherwise might be absent, and also highlights that as desperate as life can be, there are still moments of laughter within misery. The plays are funny and tragic at the same time, and they utilize traditional clowning techniques as well as orchestrated pauses to convey their messages. Therefore, “the Theatre of the Absurd has renounced arguing about the absurdity of the human condition; it merely presents it in being” (Esslin 25).

Although absurdism is a widely defined genre, Beckett is considered by many scholars to be one of the pioneers of the form. When considering other playwrights and plays as absurdist, many scholars to this day compare the writers and works to Beckett’s canon. Therefore Beckett, although he does not consider himself to be an absurdist writer, is one of the major contributors to this style of theater. His works are numerous and his unique style is what brought absurdism to the forefront of dramatic movements of the late twentieth century.

On Beckett

Samuel Beckett was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1906 to Protestant middle-class parents. After he pursued his education in Ireland he was offered a teaching fellowship in Paris, which he accepted. There he met James Joyce and a variety of other artists. Joyce, impressed by Beckett, stated that “he thought Beckett had promise--a rare
gesture for him” (Alvarez 12). It was during the late 1940’s and into the early 1950’s that Beckett “began his lifelong association with Paris” and his fascination with the French language and linguistics in general. It was then that Beckett began writing; he published his first novel *Murphy* in 1938. After spending time in Ireland with his mother, Beckett returned to Paris when World War Two began. He volunteered for the Red Cross and was involved in the war in many ways, from helping with wounded soldiers, to joining radical political groups and trying to aide France’s war effort. He was forced to flee Paris when friends in a radical political group were arrested. Once the war ended, Beckett returned to Paris. It was during this post-war period that he wrote a number of dramatic works, including his most famous play, *Waiting for Godot* (Bair 381). After *Godot* Beckett wrote *Endgame* (1957) and *Krapp’s Last Tape* (1958). Shortly after the premier of *Krapp* he began writing *Happy Days* in October of 1960.

*Happy Days* came at an interesting time in Beckett’s career: because of the success of *Godot, Endgame*, and *Krapp*, “celebrated playwrights, [and] other dramatists who studied his plays wanted to share their ideas, and in most cases, to pay him homage” (Bair 527). His new fame also caused rifts in Beckett’s personal life. He and his partner Suzanne Deschevaux-Dumesnil were planning on getting married, but wanted to keep the ceremony under wraps. They were making their relationship official because Beckett had realized current French law would not allow Suzanne to inherit the estate or his money if he were to die. They wanted to get married in England because “as an Irish citizen whose financial affairs were concentrated in
England, he had to be married there to insure the legality of the ceremony and Suzanne’s right to inherit his estate” (Bair 530). However, since Beckett and Suzanne had been living in Paris, he had to reside in England for two weeks before the ceremony was legal, according to English law. During these few weeks, Beckett hid himself from the public eye in the Bristol Hotel and worked on his *Happy Days* manuscript.

Like his early plays, *Happy Days* is an examination of life in an absurd situation. A woman, Winnie, is buried alive in an ant hill in a scorched landscape, while her husband Willie prattles around behind the landscape. Winnie is first buried up to her bosom and then to her neck in a large hill (presumably an abandoned ant hill, as one single emmet wanders the mound). She spends her days chatting about seemingly mundane nonsense, all with the hope that Willie might just be listening to her. While Winnie endures blistering heat, increased immobility, and a strident bell that keeps her from falling asleep, “she remains to the bitterest end, implacably optimistic and talkative” (Alvarez 108). Her unfailing hope in the future is both depressing and hopeful. It is her optimism that causes so many audience members to be moved by Winnie.

In one Beckett biography, Diedre Bair asserts that as a result of Beckett’s increasing fame, Suzanne found it more difficult than usual to deal with her new husband. According to Bair:

She resented his fame and felt that he should have made a more public acknowledgement of her important role in bringing it about. She wanted to be known as the helpmate who had made his success possible. He wanted nothing at all known about himself, least of all details which he considered of no more
than domestic import. He felt he had demonstrated his gratitude to her by marrying her when both considered the ceremony a mockery. (533)

Bair believes the couple grew apart as the years passed: “They had nothing in common anymore, but neither thought of parting. Beckett began to envision their relationship as one in ineluctable bondage, and from then on, veiled references to their situation began to appear in his writing” (Bair 534). It is conceivable that much of the Happy Days plot was derived from his personal life, because it was written during the events surrounding his secret wedding.

Other biographers, including James Knowleson, assert that Beckett and Suzanne had a loving relationship. While they were having problems in their small apartment, they felt if they moved to a bigger space they would have more time to live independently of each other. Therefore, Knowlson notes “the [bigger apartment] allowed them to live parts of their lives independently-without one disturbing the other, if he or she did not want to be disturbed” (423). Knowlson also mentions in this biography that Beckett had a mistress named Barbara during this part of his life, but that Beckett still felt (even though he waited almost a quarter of a century to marry her) that he was committed to Suzanne. In this account the marriage was troubled, but the couple was working through their problems. Because of their fiercely independent personalities, both wanted and desired independent space: their union worked best when there was a good combination of time together and time apart. It is this examination of Beckett’s married life that is pertinent to Happy Days, as Beckett’s view on the institution of marriage and lifelong commitment is explored throughout the text.
As Beckett is from Ireland and his English dialect is influenced by that country, *Happy Days* has Irish undertones in plot and form. While Beckett spent a majority of his life in France, his strongest ties were to his Irish roots. He was fascinated by the old ways or the old words that the Irish used, such as emmet (an ant). The way Beckett manipulates language is particularly Irish. Beckett’s use of the language is distinctive, utilizing traditional Irish techniques of “repetitive . . . words or sentences; . . . transformations, division, contraction, shortening and lengthening of words; and the minimization of the number of different words per sentence, but also exaggeration through redundance” (Van Slooten 48). Beckett also was very attached to music in the Irish tradition. He wrote to utilize “vocal techniques and sound effects [including] the sound of vowels and consonants and the alternately winded, syncopated, and pounding rhythms” to shape his texts” (Van Slooten 48).

What is most interesting about this concept is the life and mobility that the Irish language gives to a piece like *Happy Days*, where the central character is trapped in a hill. The dialect itself requires a wide range of emotion and tonality in its expression, so that “stage directions such as ‘sad’, ‘suppliant’, ‘very excited’, ‘irritated’, ‘laughing’, ‘explosive’, ‘melancholy’, and the individual diction for different characters indicate how much importance [Beckett] attached to these matters and show how his words should be voiced” (Van Slooten 58). Because of the nature of the language in *Happy Days*, it is important to evaluate it through the Irish musicality to find the momentum of a play that contains little to no stage movement otherwise.
This “Irishness” can be seen in a London performance of *Happy Days* at the Old Vic Theater in 1975 (later transferred to the Lyttleton Theater in 1976). In this production, Dame Peggy Ashcroft played Winnie, Harry Lomax played Willie, and Peter Hall directed. Despite Ashcroft’s positive reputation, this particular production received a number of mixed reviews. One reviewer, Rosemary Pountney, believed that Ashcroft’s biggest weakness was her lack of vocal range. She believed that while Ashcroft had a great vocal capacity, Pountney loathed the Irish accent that Ashcroft attempted:

Her greatest strength as an actress, the marvellous flexibility of her voice, was flattened and deadened in an attempt to convey an Irish accent—not a strong Irish accent, but, much more difficult for a non-Irish woman, the suggestion of one. A ‘non-accent’ accent resulted, with Dame Peggy’s superb voice not merely out of tune but restricted in its range, as though straitjacketed. Thus Winnie’s fluctuations of mood...were dulled and Act 1 seemed to lack impact (Pountney).

Although Ashcroft did not do the dialect justice, Pountney addresses that Beckett had written a musical quality to his dialogue, which in many cases is what “scores” the actress through the piece. The repetitions in the script work as guidelines and create the score of the production. Pountney was impressed by understanding of the Irish nature of the piece, but not so much their enactment of it.

It is important to note that *Happy Days* was originally written in English, whereas most of Beckett’s works were previously written in French. Beckett stated that his reasons for writing in French were because it gave him a strict structure around the language. Because French was not his native language he was forced to be selective when he chose words, he chose words selectively, and did not inadvertently
embellish the language (Van Slooten 48). Although he translated all of his plays himself from French to English, there is still an element of sparseness to the language. Since Happy Days was originally in English, the style of the writing is different. Although there are pauses in the dialogue, the sentence structure flows differently than the sparse language of Godot or Endgame. Therefore, Beckett’s use of the English language in my production is paramount to understanding it through performance.

Happy Days Production History

Happy Days was performed for the first time on September 17, 1961 in New York at the Cherry Lane Theater. The production starred Ruth White as Winnie and John C. Becher as Willie; Alan Schneider directed the production. Schneider and Beckett had a long career as collaborators. Schneider directed a number of Beckett’s plays, including the American premier of Waiting for Godot, and Film, among many others. Because of prior commitments Beckett was unable to come to New York to supervise direction of this production. The two men therefore corresponded in letters to relay information, and according to Bair “Beckett's letters could easily become a textbook for Happy Days should [anyone] ever decide to publish them” (536). As with any Beckett performance, the directions given to the actors were thoroughly specific, as Bair describes:

They are long and painstaking, filled with minute directions for action and how it should correspond to speech; detailed descriptions of lighting, even to the physical properties, brand name and positing of each individual bulb; and a series of drawings in pen and ink done by Beckett to show exactly how he wanted Winnie and her mound to appear, and what the position of Willie should be at all times in relation to her. (536)
At many times throughout the process, Schneider was worried that he was not doing Beckett or his script justice, since the directions were so specific. He remained worried until the show opened to an eager audience. The reviews of the play were mixed, as they had been for many Beckett plays before, but the reviewers who liked the production were not shy in their praises.

In *The New York Times*, Howard Taubman praised the performance, especially White’s, stating that she:

> conveys a profound sense of the dark, empty spaces of Winnie's life. She uses her voice to achieve a remarkable range of nuance. Her eyes, her lips, the very lines in her face suggest mood and feeling. She fusses bravely with the black shopping bag that seems to contain all her worldly possessions. Her attempt to be invincible turns into a pitiable failure. At the end, with the silly, feathered little hat atop the head projecting out of the mound, she seems like a puny, weary Earth Mother of a mean, despairing world. (Taubman)

The performance was praised for its ability to not only inspire viewers to look at life’s deep existential and sometimes disheartening questions, but also to reveal compassion, which is rare in Beckett’s works (Taubman). Ruth White’s performance was so revered that she received a 1962 Obie Award for Distinguished Performance.

While the first few performances were received well, they were still looked at from a primarily masculine perspective. The majority of theater reviewers were male, and so the comments on the productions came from a male perspective. At this time however, a different group of artists was exploring theater from a feminist perspective. They experimented with dramatic forms to highlight the female experience, which they believed to be lacking in society. It was during the late 1950’s and early 1960’s that feminist theater began to be produced.
Feminist Theater

For many centuries the theatrical arts were dominated by men. Notable feminist scholar Sue-Ellen Case states that when the second-wave feminist movement began in the early 1960’s, “the singular term ‘feminism’ was often employed to describe a variety of political and critical realms. This term was interchangeable with the term ‘the women’s movement’” (62). The feminist movement was divided into a number of philosophies. In the theatrical world, there are two major approaches that scholars have identified as self-conscious approaches to feminist work: that of the radical or cultural feminists and that of the materialist feminists, otherwise known as socialist or Marxist feminists. Both of these groups influenced how the experiences of women were presented on stage.

The most common form of feminism in the United States and democratic European countries was what Case identifies as radical feminism. This particular form of feminism “is based on the belief that the patriarchy is the primary cause of the oppression of women...the patriarchy represents all systems of male dominance and is regarded as the root of most social problems” (Case 64). Radical feminist performers and theater practitioners have concerns with the style of realism, because of “the nature of realism as a conservative force that reproduces and reinforces dominant cultural relations” in which man is superior to woman (Dolan 84). They believe that most male playwrights write about the male experience from a male perspective, even if writing female characters, and that the male experience is directly linked to patriarchal society. According to Jill Dolan:
By rejecting both realism and the genderized posturings of the male-dominated experimental theater groups, the new feminist theater meant to create woman identified productions. This work, created by women for women, focused on woman’s experience with one another and their connections to each other through gender and sex. Identifying with each other as women was meant as an antidote to their oppression under patriarchy (85).

Radical feminists believe that realism is inherently patriarchal, so they want to create a new form of realism for the female spectator so she “can find a coherent identity in the mirror image they hold up” (Dolan 99). It was the continual oppression of the feminine gender that most radical feminists wanted to examine. One of the most significant oppressions that women felt was that of sexual oppression from a male-oriented society. For centuries, “male culture made women’s bodies into objects of male desire, converting them into sites of beauty and sexuality for men to gaze upon” (Case 66). Many women as a result were afraid to discuss intimate details about their biology or their sex lives and desires. Radical feminists wanted to challenge social norms and allow for women’s issues to rise to the surface, to reclaim women’s place in history. They wanted to portray women’s collective struggles against the “patriarchal backdrop on which women have been victimized,” to highlight the centuries of male dominance in the theater (Dolan 88).

In radical feminist theater, Brechtian and Artaudian techniques were often utilized. The Verfremdungseffekt, otherwise known as the distancing effect, is a technique Bertolt Brecht used in his epic theater to ensure that the audience would not become emotionally attached to the characters and could serve as an external political observer. In contrast, Antonin Artaud believed that the theater should contain an aspect of cruelty. He did not intend cruelty to mean causing physical pain for an actor
or audience, but cruelty in the way of making violent or disturbing actions on stage so
the audience member is forced to deal with uncomfortable topics. Brechtian
techniques are used in feminist theater to alienate the audience and Artaudian to make
them feel uncomfortable as they are faced with the breaking of cultural norms. Radical
feminist performances, however, differ from those traditions in that radical feminist
performances generally consist of a ritualistic element, which created the illusion of
timelessness. This differs from Brecht’s usual usage of historical events to surround
his plotlines. These performances also highlighted the biology of women and the
power they held as a result, whereas Brecht largely concentrated on the politics and
Artaud on the cruel intentions. While this was the intention, often “the body is
curiously lost in [performance], perhaps because truly considering the body in space
means dealing with the representational apparatus, which the feminine aesthetic is
inadequate to handle” (Dolan 97). This struggle between rejecting and embracing
realism is used as a means to advance feminist ideologies through performance.

Dolan and Case discuss one other type of feminist performance: that of the
materialist feminist. The major idea materialist feminism expounds is that all
oppression comes from societal construction, and that capitalism is the major
determinant in this construction. This can be seen through a historical labor production
as Dolan explains:

Production is the central human action played out in the market place
and, for women, in the domestic sphere. The organisation of the forces
of production and the role of wages create the situation of the worker.
In the market place, the woman worker has generally been paid lower
wages than the man and retained in a subordinate position without
upward mobility. In the domestic sphere, unpaid housework and unpaid
reproductive and child-rearing labour have been instrumental in shaping the condition of women. The nuclear family is perceived as a unit of private property, in which the wife-mother is exploited by the male as well as by the larger organisation of capitalism (Dolan 83).

Therefore, the materialist feminists believe that there should not be a distinction between genders, but that all genders should be treated with equal weight. Instead of viewing women as a gender, they are treated as a class, much like middle class, upper class, or working class. In short, the woman lives in a system that provides free labor to her husband or her employer. She provides free labor for her husband “by producing future workers as babies and by preparing the labourer for each day’s work” (Case 84). As a result, this form of feminism has been most prominent in European countries, as the class structure is more defined in those countries than in North America.

The only way that a woman can liberate herself from this structure, according to this form of feminism, is to enter the workforce. According to Simone de Beauvoir in her revolutionary text _The Second Sex_ (1949), when a woman receives employment she is liberated from her husband and can be her own member of the social structure. She then “ceases to be a parasite [and] the system based on her dependence crumbles; between her and the universe there is no longer any need for a masculine mediator” (Beauvoir 679). In patriarchal society, men have the liberty of having their occupation not determined by their gender. Women who try to deviate from this norm are subject to oppression, as “the woman who does not conform devaluates herself sexually and hence socially, since sexual values are an integral feature of [a patriarchal] society” (Beauvoir 682). Materialist feminists believe that by changing the economic structure,
the social structure will soon follow. If women are given equal opportunities in the workplace and are treated as men, they will not be sexualized and demoralized as before. Therefore, in performance, materialist feminists do not see it necessary to portray women as accurately as they would in life, because that is not the aim. The aim is to see women as a class, not as a performer of gender.

Materialist feminists believed that the theater could be used to advance their gender in society, but they felt that the radical feminists were slightly misguided. They felt that if women were still working under the constraints of a male society, they were weakening women until she could only exist as a representation on stage. Therefore, the materialist feminists wanted to discover “how to inscribe a representational space for women that will point out the gender enculturation promoted through the representational frame and that will belie the oppressions of the dominant ideology it perpetuates” (Dolan 101). The materialist feminists deviated from the idea that “patriarchy is everywhere and always the same and that all women are ‘sisters’” and instead used their theater to underscore “the role of class and history in creating the oppression of women” (Case 82). The most successful way to make their points, they believe, is by highlighting the arbitrary nature of gender and its performance in society, and to assert that all real differences between individuals are the results of class inequalities, which in turn manifest in gender inequality. They wish “to reveal the complicity of the representational apparatus in maintaining sexual difference,” and prove that it is not as important to maintain these differences on stage as it had been in works of realism (Dolan 101).
It is through the performance ideologies of radical and materialist feminism that most feminist theater of the late twentieth century can be categorized. Also, many subsequent forms of feminist theater have been widely influenced by these theories, either directly or because the performers choose explicitly to deviate from the feminist theater norm in order to make their own points on gender in society. However, even today, much of feminist theater employs techniques of distancing, alienation, highlighting differences between sexes. They are less concerned with making sure gender is represented accurately on stage in accord with realism, or talking about issues that are traditionally considered feminine, such as women’s sexuality, body, and life experiences due to gender.

Beckett and Gender (*Happy Days*)

Beckett is often criticized as being sexist. This claim comes mainly from the way the Beckett Estate, which is in control of all of Beckett’s works, deals with gender when giving out performance rights to companies. Beckett has made it very clear that only men are allowed to perform the roles for men, and women are allowed to perform the roles for women. His estate has filed a number of lawsuits on companies trying to change the gender roles in his works and has been successful in most instances (Jeffreys). Though some have gotten angry at the iron grip that the Beckett Estate seems to have on Beckett’s works, there is a logic to the demand that each gender represented in a play must be played by an actor of that gender. Beckett intentionally wrote a part for a man so a man could play it, in the same way that he wrote a part for a woman to play. He wrote very clear male and female voices. The female voice
especially that of Winnie, is inherently unique. She does not speak about herself or her troubles in the way that Vladimir and Estragon do in *Godot*. She does not speak about prostates or having an erection, she speaks about lipstick and quotes Shakespeare. Therefore, it is imperative to explore gender and choice of language in Beckett’s works, because he was so deliberate with gender in his productions.

In many ways, Beckett has represented his women stereotypically. Throughout his writing career, however, Beckett began to challenge his original notions and began to portray women more diversely. At the beginning of his career, when he was focusing on prose, most of Beckett’s women were overbearing and clearly antagonistic to men. For example, in his first novel *Murphy*, the main female character, Celia, is a prostitute that Murphy lives with. Celia makes many demands of Murphy, and is portrayed as an overbearing woman throughout. On the other hand, Beckett did move away from some established theatrical gender roles. In traditional gender roles, young women were often sexualized and are portrayed as “beautiful, chaste, and usually static” (Bryden 18). Some say that Beckett does not conform to this gender stereotype because most of his women are loud, overbearing, in grotesque circumstances, and older. For example, in *Happy Days*, Winnie is continually overbearing toward Willie, especially when giving him specific directions on how she wants things done. He cannot even go where he wants without Winnie screeching, “Do as I say, Willie, don’t lie sprawling there in this hellish sun, go back into your hole” (Beckett 25). Winnie has lost much of her vitality, and in a way is so far removed from it she is no longer bound to the stereotypes of youth. Instead, Winnie is
confined to stereotypes of age, as many older women are portrayed as meddling, controlling, and loving, just as Winnie is.

Another gender stereotype would be the care that Winnie takes in preserving her appearance. Throughout the beginning of the play, Winnie is focused on making sure she keeps up her physical appearance. The act of obsessive grooming and the placement of value in physical appearance tend to be regarded as feminine traits. At the beginning of the play Winnie is following her morning routine. She brushes her teeth, checks herself in the mirror, and begins to apply lipstick. She is also concerned about the appearance of her hair. Winnie is in the middle of a thought when she anxiously cries out, “My hair! Did I brush and comb my hair? I may have done, normally do” (Beckett 22). In a number of productions of *Happy Days*, the design takes into account the idea that in Act II Winnie is unable to move her arms any longer. Therefore she is unable to tend to her personal appearance. In the 2007 production of *Happy Days* at the Royal National Theatre in London starring Fiona Shaw, the actress had blackened teeth, mussed hair, and a dirtied face at the onset of Act II. This showed that Winnie was unable to take care of herself, and this choice is even supported in the text when Winnie mentions, “Willie, look at me. Feast your old eyes, Willie. Does anything remain? Any remains? No? I haven’t been able to look after it, you know” (Beckett 62). Willie, as a man, does not tend to his appearance in the same vein at all, and to that effect does not help Winnie keep up her looks when she is no longer able. Winnie must give him orders on how to take care of his
appearance. Therefore, Beckett places the female in the stereotypical role of taking care of her appearance, while the male is placed in the role where he does not.

Winnie is also obsessed with her declining looks. It is clear that she spends much of her time trying to impress Willie and feels that because she has lost her looks, she has lost what makes her desirable to men. She states, “Was I lovable once, Willie? Was I ever lovable? Do not misunderstand my question, I am not asking you if you loved me, we all know about that, I am asking if you found me loveable at one stage” (Beckett 31). Winnie believes that her lovability is directly attached to the past, and therefore her youth. It is generally considered typical of women, rather than men, to be obsessed with their own youth and beauty. Women are typically cast off as undesirable when they reach a certain age, whereas men have a much longer time frame before society deems them too old to be physically attractive. Winnie also remembers her beauty from before she was in the mound, stating:

and now? The face. The nose. I can see it… the tip…the nostrils…breath of life… that curve you so admired… if I stick it out…the tip…suspicion of brow…eyebrow…imagination possibly…. Cheek…no…no… even if I puff them out… no…no…damask. (Beckett 52)

She truly believes that her looks are the only reason that Willie could have ever loved her, and now that they are gone, she has no means of attraction. It is stereotypically characteristic of a woman to have these thoughts, and the preoccupation fits the gender stereotype.

Winnie is also a stereotypical woman in the way she remembers her past lovers. For example, she is very sentimental about the memories of her first ball and her first kiss. It was with “a Mr. Johnson, or Johnston, or perhaps I should say
Johnstone. Very bushy moustache, very tawny. Almost ginger! Within a toolshed, though whose I cannot conceive” (Beckett 16). According to most gender stereotypes, it is typical of women to be obsessive over past relationships. Winnie’s memory is no exception. She also remembers another lover before Willie named Charlie. It is a fleeting memory, where she contemplates the situation, stating, “Ah yes… then…now…beechen green…this…Charlie…kisses…this…all that…deep trouble for the mind” (Beckett 51). Clearly, Winnie is saddened in her memories but clings to them because she has little left that she can value as a result of her situation in the mound. Holding onto her past lovers represents Winnie’s desire to hold onto her rites of passage, including her first sexual experiences.

Beckett explores a number of other stereotypes, including the purse Winnie carries. A purse is traditionally considered a feminine object to carry and generally is filled with trinkets that women are prone to using or carrying around. For example, the bag that Winnie uses is filled with such objects as a compact mirror, a handkerchief, a bottle of medicine, lipstick, a brush and comb, and a nail file. Although it can be argued that Winnie is bound to her purse because of her lack of mobility and things to occupy her time, it can also be seen as a comment on the female gender and their stereotypical dependence on the purse or bag that they carry. Winnie has great faith in her bag, and is protective of and dependent on it, stating:

There is of course the bag. The bag. Could I enumerate its contents? No. Could I, if some kind person were to come along and ask, What all have you got in that big black bag, Winnie? Give an exhaustive answer? No. The depths in particular, who knows what treasures. What comforts. (Beckett 32)
Winnie is so attached to her bag she believes that the objects themselves carry not only meaning, but life. In the second act Winnie contemplates, “It’s things, Willie. In the bag, outside the bag. Ah yes, things have their life, that is what I always say, things have a life” (Beckett 54). This materialistic view has been attributed to women in many instances. Someone who marries a person for their money or resources is more likely to be a woman than a man (even though it is a stereotype for both genders), as women are seen as a lower class, and to escape their place in the class structure they marry into their wealth as they are not as privileged to earn it themselves.

There is, however, one stereotypically masculine object in the bag: the revolver. In many cases, the revolver is a symbol of power and dominance over others. In the past, men typically carried firearms on their person and were given guns to use in war, an arena that has only recently been occupied in a standard capacity by women. The shape of the gun itself can also be considered phallic. The gun, considered as a phallic object, can also be seen as a castration of Willie. Winnie has essential ownership over his manhood. This can be supported by one of Willie’s few lines, in which Winnie asks him what a “hog’s setae” is, to which he replies, “Castrated male swine. Reared for slaughter” (Beckett 47). Willie clearly sees himself as someone who is no longer in control of his masculinity and has fallen so far that his status is reduced to that of a pig. He is also so far gone that he is ready to be killed. He is on his deathbed, waiting to go to the slaughterhouse. This viewpoint is very alarming, and does shed a slightly negative light on women. Winnie, in many ways,
can be seen as a monster for having power over the gun and therefore Willie’s masculinity.

It is again remarkable to note that Winnie, not Willie, is the owner of the gun as it suggests that Winnie is in possession of the masculine object, and thereby the power. It is in her bag, and though she seems repulsed by the idea of a gun, she is also somewhat fascinated and consoled by its presence. When considering the gun, Winnie states, “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 is your home from this day out” (Beckett 33). It is also unclear whether or not Willie is attempting to reclaim the gun from Winnie or not. At the play’s end, when Willie comes out “dressed to kill” and comes to Winnie on the mound where the gun is resting near her, Beckett makes sure that Willie’s last lunge towards the mound is ambiguous (Beckett 61). One is unsure whether or not he is trying to reach for Winnie, or for her gun. Regardless of his motive, one thing is certain: he does not attain the gun; it remains in Winnie’s possession. It is fair to assume that if the play’s narrative would have continued, Willie would never have gotten the gun from Winnie. Therefore, though Winnie is considered stereotypical with the use of her purse to carry trinkets and her attachment to her purse, she also is the wielder of a surprisingly masculine object, and the male character is unable to have it for himself.

Another notable point is that commonly arises in Beckett plays is the lack of mobility women usually have, which suggests that women have little room for advancement in this world. Scholar Mary Bryden points out that “in these plays, stasis
has more in common with aspiration than with condemnation,” meaning that those who are not moving have aspirations that are static, not that they themselves are condemned to some sort of hell (90). Nell in Endgame lives in a trash can. The women in Play (1963) are trapped in urns. While this lack of mobility can be seen in male characters as well (Nagg in Endgame, the male in Play), the effect is different. Other men are given mobility in Beckett’s works, when women are less likely to be given movement. Hamm is able to move, as is Krapp, Vladimir, Estragon, Lucky, Pozzo, and most notably Willie. Willie is given the option of mobility, whereas Winnie is not. Winnie is actually happy with her lack of movement, stating, “What a curse, mobility!” (Beckett 46). She is aware that at one time she used to be mobile, but blissfully unaware at how much easier her life was when she was mobile. She was able to hold a parasol above her head with ease instead of with pain and discomfort. She was not the object of spectacle when others passed by. She was independent in many ways because she was not bound to the earth. She even dreams of leaving her situation, and dreams that “if I were not held--in this way--I would simply float up into the blue. And that perhaps someday the earth will yield and let me go, the pull is so great, yes, crack all round and let me out” (Beckett 33). Winnie recalls these things many times and acknowledges that mobility would be best for her. But she remains complacent about her situation and still finds happiness in her utterly dependent state with Willie, because her aspirations cause her to stay immobile. Her mobility is in direct relation to her ambitions. Since her dreams are not going anywhere, neither is Winnie.
In other ways Beckett does break standard gender stereotypes when portraying his women. In a patriarchal society the wife is supposed to be the servant to the husband. While Winnie is holding up her parasol and her arm tires, she asks his permission to put it down, stating, “bid me to put this thing down, Willie, I will obey you instantly, as I have always done, honoured, and obeyed” (Beckett 36). It seems that Winnie is a woman who is completely dependent on her husband, and in many ways she is because of her situation in the mound. However, Willie is the one who serves Winnie. Willie is the one who brings her items when she demands them, answers to her voice when she calls out to him, and essentially does whatever she demands. Winnie, in effect, has not taken the role of the stereotypical married woman. She mentions that she serves her husband and is bound to do so. Therefore she does not leave because of her duty and her vow of marriage and her situation in the hill. Willie, in the same vein, is not trapped in the hill as Winnie is. He is able to leave the harsh environment whenever he would like and essentially let fate take Winnie. He doesn’t leave, however. He takes the abusive phrases from his wife and he stays with her until presumably the end of her days.

In much the same way, sex in Beckett plays is just as forgotten and elusive to men as it is to women. Characters in Beckett plays remember that sex, at one time, existed. But now it is so far in the past that it is almost forgotten. Winnie’s only memories of sex seem to be poor, as she states “sadness after intimate sexual intercourse one is familiar with of course. You would concur with Aristotle there, Willie, I fancy” (Beckett 57). Ironically, the Aristotle quotation actually refers to men,
stating “the exhaustion consequent on the loss of even a very little of the semen is conspicuous because the body is deprived of the ultimate gain drawn from the nutriment … [so] as a general rule the result of intercourse is exhaustion and weakness rather than relief” (Alexander). It is extremely interesting that Winnie, as a woman, references such a masculine viewpoint on sexuality. However, she does seem to agree with this overtly masculine philosophy. Through her condition in the hill, Winnie’s sexuality is gradually covered up. Cooker, or Shower, as Winnie is hard at remembering, has made numerous comments about her sexuality in regards to the mound. Cooker and/or Shower is a man and his wife, that occasionally pass Winnie and Willie, and make rude comments about the state that Winnie finds herself in. Beckett was well versed in German, and used these English names as a play on words. In German, the word “schauen” means to look, and “gucken” to watch: naming his onlookers Shower and Cooker was highly suggestive. The mysterious onlooker is curious as to whether her body is still good looking, stating, “can’t have been a bad bosom…in its day. Seen worse shoulders…in my time. Does she feel her legs? . . . has she anything on underneath?” (Beckett 58). She is infuriated by the comments, yelling, “let go of me for Christ sake and drop! Drop dead!” (Beckett 58). But her condition in the mound makes it impossible to defend herself. While man and woman are both foreign to sex, it is the woman who is trapped and made a fool of, and has no way to defend herself because of the condition the playwright has placed her in. Dolan makes a point to discuss this in her work, commenting on the role that sexuality plays in performance. She believes that “if power adheres in sexuality, and cultural feminists
assume power leads to violence against women, it becomes politically and artistically necessary to attempt to disengage representation from desire,” meaning that in feminist theater practices, women have to be presented as women, not the object of male sexual desire (Dolan 61). In Beckett’s production, Winnie is literally trapped and gaped at, proving Dolan’s point that in most of the modern canon, the representation of woman on stage is synonymous with desire.

One of the scenes in *Happy Days* that concentrates most on sex is that in which Winnie discusses Mildred, commonly referenced as Milly, and the mouse. The story is quite frightening and underlines the idea that sex for women and for Winnie in particular has been terrifying and un-gratifying. In the second act, Winnie describes Mildred, a little girl who could have been Winnie as a young woman. She has been given a wax doll named Dolly. Milly sneaks out of her room to the nursery to undress Dolly, as she seemingly has been “forbidden to do so,” then suddenly out of nowhere a mouse appears and crawls up Milly’s leg (Beckett 55). She screams, and the entire household comes running to see what the matter is. It is at that moment that Winnie stops her story, and is too overcome to finish. It is clear from the language, that the story is one of Milly’s, or perhaps Winnie’s, first memories of sexuality and perhaps her own sexuality. Clearly the experience frightened her in regard to her sexual nature, because she abruptly stops her story by warning Willie that he “may close [his] eyes, then [he] must close [his] eyes- and keep them closed” (Beckett 59). While Winnie’s sexuality has shifted and her sex drive has been affected by her entrapment in the
mound, it is clear that even from a young age she was not accepting of her sexuality, or able to properly deal with it because she felt violated.

Throughout Beckett’s work, gender stereotypes are present. However, these stereotypes are accompanied by a number of gender deviations from the stereotypical norm. Therefore, when considering the work of Beckett, it is valid to assert that although Beckett conforms to gender stereotyping, he is not bound by them. Even though his work is informed by a world on the verge of the second-wave feminist movement, he is beginning to break gender stereotypes that are inherent in his earlier works of prose and even drama. Therefore, Happy Days is an appropriate and interesting play to look at from an absurdist feminist perspective.

Happy Days in Performance: A Feminist Perspective (Process)

When mounting a production there are a number of individuals involved, and they all have a certain role to play. Actors, directors, producers, and the production design team all work together to create a final performance. In the fall, I spent most of my time researching the production and writing the preliminary part of my thesis. In the production, I held two roles: that of producer and lead actress. As a producer, it was my responsibility to be in charge of the logistical elements of the production. I was responsible for coordinating the space rental, finding rehearsal spaces, making the program and fliers, and essentially all of the production aspects of the performance. Some of my duties I gave to my director and stage manager to handle, which in a typical performance would not happen; however, since I was also taking on the role as the lead actress, I had to divide my time. In that role I was expected to memorize all of
my lines, have character ideas, personalize emotional responses and relationships, and have a set of actions to achieve my objectives. This role proved to be the most time consuming, as the Beckett script was repetitive and convoluted, making it difficult to memorize. Winnie is essentially the only character who speaks (meaning there are no other actors to rely on for help with lines and following the through line of the script, or the journey of the character throughout the play), and the nature of absurdist work makes it difficult to discover objectives and relationships.

One of my first duties as producer was to assemble a production team. First, I chose a performance faculty advisor. I asked Professor Shelley Delaney because of her work with one-woman performances and her knowledge of the craft of acting. After making this choice, I was informed that Professor Delaney would not be able to help direct me in the production. I knew that as an actor I would not be able to assess my progress without the help of a director. Therefore, I asked Arielle Giselle Rogers to direct me. She graduated from Ohio University’s School of Theater with a BFA in Acting in 2011, and she is very experienced in directing and performing in one-woman shows, especially feminist works (she is the founding member of F-Word, a feminist theater performance group on Ohio University’s campus). I also needed a stage manager; someone to handle the day to day operations of rehearsal. For that I choose Jacob St. Aubin, a junior BFA stage management major because he is an impeccable organizer and very talented. I then needed a set designer to help with the construction of the hill that Winnie is buried in. I chose Ryan Myers, a senior BFA production design and technology major who specializes in set design, based on his
previous design and portfolio work. For costumes I turned to Megan Knowles, a senior BFA production design and technology major who specializes in costumes, because I had worked with her before and she has a very impressive portfolio. For the sound design I asked Aaron Butler, a graduate student in the School of Music, because of his work in other School of Theater productions in which he utilized minimalist soundscapes and experimental music. For the lighting design I asked Keri Donovan, a BFA production design and technology major who specializes in lighting design to create the effect of the fire and generally light the show. Finally, I solicited help from one other faculty member, Laura Parrotti, who was my vocal coach throughout the process. Professor Parrotti has been a vocal coach on a number of professional productions, as well as the main voice coach for the School of Theater students. Her advice on how to handle the Beckett text from a vocal standpoint was instrumental to the process.

Rehearsals for *Happy Days* began January 9, 2012. The cast consisted of me (Rachel Collins) as Winnie and Sean O’Brien as Willie. Rehearsals were coordinated through a joint effort between Jacob and me, but he facilitated the rehearsal reports, space rental, and coordination of meetings with the production team. The first week of rehearsals consisted of table work, which was run by Arielle. Table work is generally the term used for the first week of rehearsal, in which the actors go through the script beat by beat and look at the academic and theoretical aspects behind the script that would inform the performance. Sean and I read through the script while Arielle gave notes. Then the three of us would discuss the scholarly background of the play,
characters, motivation, and my take on the thesis, etc., with the group and began to come up with character ideas and how to shape the piece.

The main aspect we discussed through these workings was the idea that Winnie is a woman who is just trying to be heard. She is using every trick she has to get the man she loves attention, to no avail. We made many choices based on this discussion: Winnie’s tactics to be heard change throughout the piece; when she is not heard there are psychological effects. We also discussed why Willie chooses not to answer Winnie. We came up with the conclusion that Willie has spent his whole life feeling castrated by Winnie and has lost everything that makes him powerful. Therefore he ignores his wife in the hopes that she will one day decide to not talk.

Jacob also participated in these table discussions, giving his input as he felt necessary in regards to the motivations of the characters.

After the first week we began working on our feet with the scripts in hand, to better explore the feminist theater ideas. We set up a rehearsal space in Putnam Hall with dance mats on a table and chairs as a rehearsal hill to work with. Rehearsal props were used as well so that I could learn my lines and action in conjunction with Winnie’s objects in the bag. At those first few rehearsals scenes were taken beat by beat to further deepen the table work. A beat is one of the smallest divisions of a scene: it is essentially a small section of a scene that can be self-contained within the scene. Through these rehearsals, we were able to figure out how the props came into play in the script. We were able to work with giving each prop meaning. We gave particular attention to the gun and the music box. When we worked with the music
box, we made sure that it was specified as having great meaning to Winnie. It was a comfort and a rock, and after specifying the meaning of the music box the moment when Willie bursts into song and Winnie overflows with joy was much richer. We also spent rehearsal time specifying the relationship with the gun. We discussed many relationships for the gun but decided that power and sexuality were the most important themes to explore. Manipulating the gun as a sexual object gave it power but also diminished it as well. This choice fed into the representation of Willie as castrated: Winnie had essentially taken the power (his manhood) away from him and had the choice to do with it what she wanted. She doesn’t do anything drastic with it, but by giving the prop such weight, we changed the nature of how the performance was given weight.

Professor Delaney and I met a few times during the quarter. We stayed connected via email, she sat in on a number of rehearsals, and we also had outside meetings to discuss my progress and to hear her feedback on the performance. She took detailed notes for me and for Arielle and gave us supplementary reading materials, including a number of articles, to consider. As a faculty advisor she provided insight into the process that Arielle and I sometimes missed, and her experience with directing and performance helped the project advance quickly.

Production meetings began early on as well. I met with each member of the production team during the fall before the show to talk about the play, the feminist perspective I was exploring, and how that would translate in the design. Aspects of the theory that translated into the design were the color of the mound (brown and red as
opposed to another type of scorched color, because red is a more feminine color), the costume design with the bra intentionally showing to highlight the femininity, and the sound design to highlight the radical feminist techniques of alienation and cruelty.

Once winter quarter began we scheduled a number of production meetings. Arielle, Jacob, and I met with the designers and checked in on their process. The designers sat in on a number of rehearsals, and continual communication via email and we utilized Dropbox to make sure that the design (especially the construction of the hill) was on task.

Three weeks before the show opened, act runs and full runs of the play began. Once the act runs and full runs began to take place, Arielle began to give directorial notes for me and for Sean to take and make adjustments. In the final month we made finishing touches to the project. I began voice work with Laura Parrotti at this time. We had a number of weekly meetings in which she would coach me through certain sections of the script and give me vocal ideas (including coloring the words and changing pitch and intonation), which helped me with my pacing and energy, and kept the Beckett text engaging and fun.

We moved into the performance space of Union Arts on February 19, choosing this venue for the basement location: it was creepy and dark setting the desolate mood of the production. The production team set up their lighting and sound equipment and the scenic designer moved the hill into the space, finished making additions, and painted the hill. The costume designer brought in costumes and props and I provided the makeup. We rented chairs from the university through Jacob’s facilitation. During
the final week I created a flyer to hang around campus and a program to pass out to
the audience members. We ran the show every night, and on Sunday February 26, we
opened. Each performance went very well. There were fifty seats in the audience, and
although we never sold out we had a fairly full house each performance. The show ran
February 26, 27, and 28 to a very receptive and engaging series of audiences. The
audiences were very impressed at the specificity in choices that surrounded the design
elements, including the soundscape, the specificity of my actions around the props,
and the racy nature of the costumes. I received a number of compliments from friends,
family, and faculty members of both the School of Theater and the Honors Tutorial
College.

**Happy Days in Performance: Reflection**

The modern day performance of *Happy Days* was jointly influenced by
feminist critiques and the treatment of gender stereotypes inherent in the script; I took
theories found in a number of credible journals and books and applied them to the
gender representations throughout the script. My use of radical feminist theories was
included in my usage of highlighting the inherent sexuality in the script. As a young
woman playing Winnie I wanted to highlight the female experience, especially that of
sexuality, through performance.

When Beckett was envisioning *Happy Days* he was exploring the idea of hell
in an existential world. His vision of hell was very bleak, but he had a very interesting
idea about it. He thought that of all people on earth, the only ones that could cope with
hell were women. Beckett is quoted as stating that he “thought that the most dreadful
thing that could happen to anybody, would be not to be allowed to sleep so that just as you’re 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’s 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” (qtd in Knowlson). This is a very interesting concept to explore as a female performing feminist theater. Beckett literally believed that only a woman could cope with the most hellish situations. This quotation informed much of my performance and led me to explore ideas regarding why women who are in the worst possible situations choose to see the good in their struggle. Although everyone around them can see that they are stuck and they would be better off free, the woman sees admitting defeat as a sign of weakness and makes the conscious choice to carry on. Women will choose to stay in bad marriages or dead-end careers rather than show the world that they can free themselves from whatever metaphorical “ant-hill” is trapping them. Therefore, Beckett’s portrayal of gender in the text benefited immensely from an examination through a feminist scholarly perspective.

Throughout the performance, we used a number of techniques that were borrowed from radical feminist theater practices. One particular element that the radical feminists explore is the deviation from realism. Beckett, by nature, is a deviation from realism. Winnie is trapped physically in a mound with no explanation of how she got there. The dialogue is not linear, so the plot does not follow a linear
pattern like in a realism piece. In the script, Winnie only talks to three different individuals: herself, Willie, and God. In this production we included one other character for Winnie to share her stories with: the audience. The inclusion of the audience as a character for Winnie to speak to was a choice that was made to further highlight that this production is not to be considered in a realistic light, and therefore has an entirely new set of expectations.

Another aspect of radical feminism is to explore female sexuality, as the radical feminists believed that much of realistic theater did not explore the female experience. This particular production highlighted sex and femininity through a number of aspects. One aspect of this was the costume choice. Winnie talks about her breasts throughout the play, and it is clear in the text that she is a very sexual human. Therefore we made a conscious costume choice to make Winnie wear a low cut sundress with a clearly visible provocative bra. A number of acting choices also supported this aspect of radical feminism. Winnie does talk about her sexual past and uses her sexuality to try to get attention. Therefore, when Winnie would reference these aspects, we made bold choices to highlight this idea. When Winnie discusses her past affair with “Mr. Johnson,” she touches herself in a sexual manner: she caresses her face, arms, and breasts, and eventually succumbs to her sexual desires. This choice was made to further exploit the concepts of age and sexuality in the piece.

The most notable choice along these lines was in reference to the gun, as we interpreted the gun as a phallic image. The gun also contained all the power: it contained the power for Winnie to either kill herself or Willie. I, however, wanted to
explore the gun through the lens of a masculine versus feminine dichotomy, especially as a phallic symbol. The gun had particular importance: a character’s desire for power versus a lack of desire for power was explored through each character’s relationship with the gun. Therefore, we made the choice that Winnie had to again use her sexuality to get what she wanted from the gun. She would tease the gun with her mouth, kiss it, and run it through her fingers. These choices were made to make the audience uncomfortable, but also to explore how women use their sexuality to manipulate situations, because they believe that that is the only way for their voice to be heard.

The soundscape of our production served as a combined realization of Brechtian and Artaudian elements to deviate from realism. Aaron Butler, our sound designer, created an improvisatory jarring soundscape. Using a combination of flower pots and organ drones, he created a dissonant soundscape that ran under the entire performance. The flower pot sounds were created by taking mallets and quickly striking the pots to create different chords, and the organ drones were created by playing an organ in minor chords. This use of a musical soundscape distanced the audience from the action, while the use of non-traditional instruments was odd and in effect made the audience feel uncomfortable. The system was created in a way that Aaron could manipulate the soundscape live during each performance, using it to comment on the action. Therefore, each performance was different. The soundscape served as a reminder that the audience member was actually in a theater space and seeing a production by creating an environment that was inherently unrealistic,
utilizing Verfremdungseffekt. On the other hand, the dissonant drones were used to create a sense of cruelty for the audience to experience, an exploration of Artaud’s theater of cruelty because the nature of dissonant sound as an unsettling object makes the audience member feel uncomfortable, and they are thereby affected by the theories of cruelty.

Winnie as a character is one that I as an actor found particularly challenging technically and emotionally. Obviously, the aspect of the essentially one-woman show is daunting for any actress, but also the absurdist language and elements within the play are particularly challenging for a performer. Winnie’s unfailing happiness throughout the circumstances she is placed in is also something that I found not only intriguing when reading the play but also challenging to act. Over and over Winnie faces the impending doom of the rising hill, boredom, and Willie’s indifference to her words and actions. Through all of this, she somehow manages not only to find peace, but happiness. This extraordinary concept is what originally drew me to the script, and the continual challenges that it presented were what excited and scared me.

I believe it is necessary for a modern performer, particularly a young woman, to perform this role in the theater because it alters the perspective of the script. Undoubtedly, my age at twenty-two years is not the age that Winnie is stated in the script as being (early to mid-fifties). A woman who is older brings a whole array of life experiences to a role that I as a young woman am incapable of imagining, simply because I have not lived as long. However, one thing that I as a young woman have the advantage of is my youth. My looks are most likely to be better now than they ever
have been, and will most likely decline as I reach old age. I therefore had the advantage to exploit sections of the script to highlight the fact that I am young looking and have not lost my vitality as Winnie has. The dichotomy between the text, commenting on my worn eyes, and actual features, when I had not altered my looks, changed the way an audience would usually see this production. Winnie is somewhat obsessed with her looks and declining sexuality, and it was interesting to highlight sexuality in a manner different than what is generally performed, intending the audience to find discomfort in the disjuncture between my age and Winnie’s.

As a woman who has spent the formative years of my life at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, I have a distinctive perspective of life and how gender plays a role in life. My entire life span has occurred after a number of major strides in the women’s movements have taken place. Therefore, I find myself in a very interesting position: I exist in what many consider a post-feminist world. In the western world, women are given most of the same rights as men, even if there are still strides that need to be made in the social arena. My view on the world is much different than that of a woman who has fought for her rights. In many ways, a woman in my generation can feel entitled to certain privileges, such as a high-powered career, independence from men, and no pressure to start a family. Even though these are considered to be options for all women, today much emphasis is placed on “having it all,” i.e. a career and family. As a woman, one is expected to do both, not choose. Therefore, by having a woman who has grown up in a society that pressures women to be not only the family woman but the successful career woman
perform a role that was written for not only a woman in the 1960’s, but an older
woman in the 1960’s, the experiences of the performer were inherently different than
those of earlier performances.

Throughout the performance, I was most proud of the accomplishment of
doing a one woman Beckett play. A one-woman show is a challenge in itself; carrying
the interest of the audience and just the technicality of performing without any other
actors on stage. In addition, the performance challenges of a Beckett script made the
play exponentially more thought provoking. Beckett utilizes repetition in his language.
This makes it very challenging to memorize, because when one memorizes, they tend
to use the previous line to help them remember the next line. If the previous section is
the same in multiple places but different text follows, it makes it very hard to
memorize. I was very proud that I accomplished the technical feat of memorization for
this particular performance. Another aspect that I was proud of in the performance of
the work was the vocal and physical energy needed to perform Beckett. Since Beckett
uses vaudevillian theatre practices as inspiration, it is helpful to be a very specific
mover and speaker when performing his works. Since Winnie does not move the
entire show, it was especially important to have a diverse vocal range. As an actor that
is something that I struggle with, as Midwestern vocal patterns have little vocal variety
as far as diction and tone. In retrospect, I wish I had waited a few years before
performing this role due to this challenge.

This show has taught me a number of things about working on a play from a
feminist perspective. I knew a great deal about feminist ideologies, but before this
production, I had no idea how to articulate them through performance. The highlighting of gendered objects (props used in the show that are associated with a specific gender, such as the gun as a phallic image) and highlighting the struggles of women through performance was very helpful. In addition, looking at the struggles that women face rather than the ones that men deal with was informative. I had never thought before that most plays are performed from the male perspective, meaning that male issues are the ones that are discussed. Once I was made aware of that idea, I noticed that in many dramatic works male issues are discussed, but when female issues are explored, it makes the audience uncomfortable. I found that fascinating, and I plan to explore the discussion of female issues that are rarely explored to hopefully create a change in how people see women’s issues on stage. In time, I hope that people are just as comfortable seeing female issues dramatized as they are seeing male issues on stage. Seeing the performance through the eyes of womanhood will inform any feminist works I produce in the future.

My initial goal was to comment on age and sexuality in the piece, which is why I intentionally performed it as a young woman rather than an older one. However, it was clear that this piece could have flourished more if I were a more seasoned actor. I have a fair amount of training, but an actress that has been working for 25 years would have probably attended graduate school at this time, and had a number of professional jobs as experience. As I am just finishing up my training, and I have not had much time to put my skills to practice in a real sense, I felt lost at times throughout production, and I was not sure if the show would be up to performance
standard. Therefore, if I were to perform this play again, I would wait a number of years until I was age appropriate for the role. Then, I feel there would be a much greater understanding and depth that could be brought to the production from an acting perspective.

This production primarily used elements of radical feminist theater practices. While we explored some elements of materialist feminist theater practices through the rehearsal process, including highlighting similarities between the female and male sex, we found this to be not as successful as highlighting the differences between the sexes. Any time we attempted to explore an object that we considered to be gender neutral, such as the newspaper, we were able to find an inherently masculine or feminine quality to that object, making it difficult to highlight similarities between the sexes. Beckett wrote Winnie as such a female character that, even though the play is not confined to the limitations of realism, the performance of gender was always present. There may have been slight elements of materialist feminist theater ideology, but the radical approach was utilized more fully. This new addition to theatrical performance will hopefully pave the way for other female performers to examine the works of male playwrights, and the voices that they give their women, and to bring their views into a contemporary light.

Conclusion

Traditionally, when scholars look at a Beckett work, they view it through the lens of existential philosophy. This is a valid interpretation, as hopelessness, lack of an all-powerful deity, and the absurdity of existence all strike major thematic chords
throughout the works. However, this viewpoint can be limiting. It does not take into account a modern interpretation of the text. Existential philosophies dominated mid-twentieth century intellectual discussions, so viewing the theatrical work through just that lens is restrictive. It turns the work into a museum piece, suspended in time.

It is important as modern artists to look at texts through the lens of the time in which it was written, but to also see it through the eyes of the present day. Though many women were given opportunities that were never available to them during the First and Second World Wars, these opportunities were taken away from them as soon as the men returned from the wars. When Beckett wrote *Happy Days* in 1961, he was writing a strong female voice at a time when women were claiming rights they had gained and since lost. He was writing about a woman who was in her fifties, anchored in an old world. A woman playing Winnie when the play was first written may remember the day when women were granted the right to vote. Many of the groundbreaking civil rights laws were not even passed until years after *Happy Days* was first performed. As a modern woman looking at this role, it is impossible to see it only through that lens. A woman today, even if she is playing the role age-appropriately, would not have been alive when women received the right to vote. My experience as a young woman also changes the performance of this character. Most of my life has been spent in what many consider a post-feminist era. I was not alive when almost all of the major women’s rights laws were passed, and I have no memory of actually fighting for these rights myself. I feel the repercussions and the effects of being part of a gender group that has been discriminated against, but I have never been
an active participant in the struggle. Therefore, my performance of this role in 2012 is vastly different than a woman performing the role in 1961.

The notable difference in a modern interpretation of this role is the consideration of the female voice as written by a male writer. Since 1961, a number of feminist theater practices were created. These theater practices have informed women’s performance, and they changed how I viewed the piece as well. Exploring a female voice that was actually written by a male playwright is an important facet. When a male is writing in the feminine voice, or a female is writing in the masculine voice, the text is opened up for interpretation of gender perspective. This concept is also a relatively new one, and would not have been as common a scholarly point of discussion in 1961 as it is in 2012. Therefore, exploring themes of femininity, the female desire to be heard, and other women’s issues is a vastly different process in a modern context than it would have been in the middle of the twentieth century.

The major strides that women made when fighting towards gender equality, in a broad sense, stem from the desire to simply be heard. Women were voiceless in Western society, so they fought for the right to vote. Women were not getting paid the same wages as men and were not offered the same career opportunities, so they fought to be accepted in those male-dominated fields. In much the same way, Winnie fights to be heard. She tries, continually, to get the attention of the one person she cares most about in the world, and he could not even speak to her or listen to her when she asks. As a result, she uses the only weapon she feels that as a woman she has to gain a voice: her sexuality. Also, as a woman, Winnie feels that she has to put on a happy
face and endure every struggle that comes her way. She cannot admit defeat so she lets her troubles bury her and sings all the while. Therefore, Winnie uses her sexuality to be heard, but also accepts her fate of being buried in the mound rather than accept failure.

This thesis explored a feminist perspective of *Happy Days*, focusing specifically on the desperate desire for women to be heard in a patriarchal society, and the continual need to struggle to obtain happiness in a hopeless landscape. This end was achieved through a variety of means, and the performance set the play in a modern landscape, instead of a mid-twentieth century perspective. This created a new dramatic venue for Beckett’s ideas and brought the play to a new understanding. Women in Beckett’s works may be portrayed in a stereotypical light, but Beckett gives his women, particularly Winnie, a dynamic voice that cannot be bound by the performance of gender.
Annotated Bibliography:


This book is a comprehensive biography of Samuel Beckett, with focus on his major works, including novels, plays, and shorter works.


Aristotle’s famous essay in which he outlines what he believes to be the perfect structure for drama. He uses examples from a number of Greek Tragedies to make his point. In it, he discusses the importance of plot, structure, and character development in the creation of a play. This essay is the one of the cornerstones of text in theatrical evaluation, and most modern dramatic critique directly is influenced by this document as theater practitioners either mold to Aristotle’s form or intentionally try to break it.


This book aims to break down feminist performance in the form of an acting handbook specifically for feminist theater. Instead of breaking down acting techniques in traditional methods, this book aims to look for what is inherently feminist when it regards acting and performance. The book is divided into sections, which include: feminist directions, finding a body/voice, enter
gender, cultural sniping, past/present tense, activating the feminist script, creating texts, re-figuring lives, and performing yourselves.


This is one of the most detailed and controversial biographies of Samuel Beckett. It begins with the birth of Beckett, and continues until his death. The book is over 600 pages long, which makes it one of the most inclusive Beckett biographies in existence.


This book is a collection of essays, but most prominently the essay about the “Talking Cure” should be of help. It examines how characters in Beckett plays feel the need to talk incessantly to cope with their problems, much like Winnie.


The performance text.


This is a comprehensive study of women in Beckett’s works, starting with his early prose and ending with his dramas. It breaks apart his short stories and his plays in detail, citing the specific moments where Beckett references women and how he does so. It covers the changing views on women, beginning with
tyrannical overbearing women to more dynamic women that are similar to their male counterparts.


This book looks to find alternatives to the traditional masculine staging of theatrical works. It looks at the historical context of misogyny in the theater and the male dominated practice, and then touches on notable strides women made in the field. It includes major female pioneers in the field in acting and production, as well as touches on feminist ideologies in performance and female racial minority performance.


This book contains Camus’ famous essay describing his existential philosophy through the argument of a suicide. This book is one of the cornerstones to existential philosophy, and one of the major influences on the absurdist dramatic form.


This book is a feminist existential examination. The book begins with a historical context for women and femininity in regards to existential philosophy, and explains history from French antiquity to the modern day.
Then, the idea of woman and femininity is deconstructed, and new notions of progress are suggested from previously held notions.


This book is one of the cornerstone documents for feminist theater and the presentation of the female in performance. The idea of feminist as spectator is introduced through the dominating male tradition of theatrical participants. Feminist writers are examined, and the question of whether or not feminist writings can be included in popular canon is discussed. Feminist ideologies and the desire of the female form and body are also explored, as well as major feminist schools of thought through performance.


This book is the original sourcebook on absurdist drama. It is considered to be Esslin’s groundbreaking book that describes a number of mid-twentieth century playwrights and makes the argument that they are absurdist, or use their plays to advance the existential ideology. The book covers the background of a number of influential playwrights in the era, including Samuel Beckett, and also discusses common traits between the plays, including structure, content, and message.

This book examines the “modern woman” in performance, starting with Hedda Gabler and Nora in *A Doll’s House*, and then examines modern women playing older characters such as Shakespearian females. This is a major shift in performance ideology having women perform strong woman roles, versus women performing weak women or men performing female roles in the theater.


This book is a collection of essays about Beckett and performances of his work since his death. As Beckett was very meticulous with his stage direction when he helped to direct his works, it is quite interesting to see what theater artists have done with the work since he has died and can no longer put his hands into every aspect of the performance.


This book examines how the female gender is performed through ideas of biology, gender stereotyping, and then intentionally breaking that gender stereotype. The book introduction covers the discussed gender theories in the book, as well as post-modern feminism. The rest of the book discusses different kinds of feminist performance, including masquerading, drag, mimicry, and political activism through the performance of the feminine.

Website that contains a lawsuit against a production of a Beckett production sued by the Beckett estate. Explains how the Beckett Estate shut down the production or not complying with Beckett's explicit stage directions.


This is essentially an acting handbook for Beckett actors. A number of Beckett’s plays are deconstructed from an actor’s point of view rather than a scholar’s. There are also included a number of photographs as well as interviews with notable actors who performed in these famous roles, which will give a greater understanding of the actual performance of the piece rather than the academic information behind it.


A comprehensive biography by a close friend of Beckett’s: James Knowlson. The book follows Beckett’s life from his birth to his death, with specific focus on his years of artistic expression. His chapter on *Happy Days* and his life during that time is most pertinent for this paper in particular.


This book is contains a collection of essays that discuss Beckett on a number
of levels, but primarily on gender. A number of Beckett works are examined through the lens of sex, masculinity, gender roles, and Irish speech patterns, which are all imperative to the cohesiveness of this study. There is also an essay on the post-modern world in regard to Beckett, which gives a gender neutral viewpoint on post-modernism and Beckett. The Van Slooten essay used comes from this anthology.


This website hosts Rosemary Poutney’s review of the London performance of *Happy Days* in 1975.


This book is Sartre’s manifesto on existential philosophies.


This website hosts *The New York Times’* review of the original production of *Happy Days* in 1961.
Creative Supplementary Materials:

The following sections are the creative materials that supplement the academic portion of this thesis. These supplementary materials demonstrate the creative process that occurred to mount the production itself. The following sections include production notes that were taken by myself during the rehearsal process, the rehearsal script, the program and flier, production photos, and a DVD copy of the final dress rehearsal.

Happy Days Rehearsal Notes:

During any production, there are a number of steps that are taken to ensure that the final performance meets the highest standard attainable. Throughout the process, there are a number of run throughs of the script, and the director takes and gives notes to the actors. The following section of the thesis is dedicated to the notes that were taken by me for my character during the rehearsal process. Each set of notes taken are to help the actor process the information, and make the proper changes that are necessary. The following notes were taken primarily during the month of February, when most of the full run throughs of the show took place. The original notes were hand written in two separate notebooks, and have been retyped here to be included in the thesis materials. They are included in their original form, with misspellings and abbreviations to demonstrate how an actor’s notebook can look. Most of the notes come from the director, Arielle Giselle Rogers, while some come from my thesis advisor, Shelley Delaney, and others come from Laura Parrotti, who helped with my
vocal training for the show. The purpose of including these notes is to further illuminate the work that went into the practical part of the production, more specifically the acting work that went into the process.

Rehearsal Notes Shelley Delaney (January)

- Try to get Drew Richards
- Pick a date when you are an actor only, not actor/producer
- Women didn’t feel like they were being heard, voiceless in society
- Desperate to be heard
  - No one listens to you because you are a woman
- Women use their sexuality to be heard
- Look for the female voice (Laura Parrotti).
- Specify behavior around the gun. Look at the stakes of what it means to have a gun on stage. One can shoot oneself or Willie at any moment. Specify that decision. Really look at the stakes
- If there is a gun on stage, it has all the power.
- Issue with the pauses: right now they are taking all equal weight and time
  - There should be a different quality to the pauses, including:
    - Waiting for a response from Willie
    - Something that lands hard, and how long it takes Winnie to process that
    - Length of pauses when totally unsure of the next moment.
    - When one thought leads to another
      - Clarify, specify, elaborate.
      - When there is a change of subject
        - Stumble onto the change
        - Willfully change the subject because current topic too difficult.
- Playing with language.
  - Toy with meaningless of the language.
- When looking at the face, take an inventory of what’s left, don’t try to make it funny.
- The earth is there of course, it is eating you alive
- USE THE OPPERATIVE WORDS
- “Now is the time” should have quotes around it
- Slow down on sections with monosyllabic words
- Throw aways, like speed, are earned.
  - Slow down for simplicity, clarity, and weight.
- **Directorial Idea:**
  - Terror and shame around Milly. She needs to be absent of personal connections to keep her distance. Screams are either sitting on an impulse or stay disconnected to the action.

**Rehearsal Notes Arielle Giselle Rogers (1/30/2012)**

- Intention will help with memory.
- Put lipstick on fully
- Email Shelley
- Observe pauses
- That day, what day: things have a live but I don’t. Things will be there but I won’t. Jealously for words and objects in that they are eternal. Practice of forgetting as a coping mechanism.
- Torture with parasol.
- What good is he to her = he wants to have sex with her.
- Winnie is mad at Willie/ Men in general, even though she wants Wille’s attention.
- Using sex in a different way to be heard.
- SEND JACOB SCHEDULES

**Rehearsal Notes Arielle Giselle Rogers (2/1/2012)**

- Breathe more!
- Hail Holy Light
- I used to pray (good)
- Facial tics on face- eliminate/ simplify.
- Pauses- arms, breasts, etc.
- Sustained moments, energy also must be sustained.
- Long pause before face, long pause so I can see face while sleeping.
- Beat work:
  - Can look at shirt and count
  - Look at words being said
- More cadence
- Da-misk = correct pronunciation.
- What are $1 words? What are $2 words? What are $100 words? Etc.
- THINGS HAVE A LIFE, NOT ME.
- Knife to gouge. BUILD.
- Sadness after sex- continue the thought.
- Let go of me = sudden violence.
  - The earth!! Amplified venting and anger. Makes you so mad!
- Explosion.
- I used to say, really remember. And now?
• He’s been gone MONTHS! Not oh hay hello! It’s a tirade, hidden under the other actions.
• Sexuality escaped, still there. Use as leverage in the end.
• The song: why THIS song?

Rehearsal Notes Arielle Giselle Rogers (2/2/2012)

• Look up- remember. Happy, is up, down is sad.
• Toodshed to pods. (Close eyes).
• May I see? Question.
• DROP THE CARD.
• How hitting Willie with parasol?
• Hog’s Setae is not a long pause.
• Golden moment lasting too long.
• Really toast. What is the personalization of that toast. May is never fade?
• PAUSES.
• Review emmet section.
• Pg 9 lines
• Skipped top of 12.
• He has been gone forever!!!
• Look at page 16
• Moments of anger and suspicion.
• YOU CANNOT BELIEVE HE IS NOT RESPONDING.
• When you see him, he is coming to kill you!
• Give a hand- did Willie get you stuck because of him?
• End of that- “don’t look at me like that” (PANIC).
• What in the past 30 years brought us to this point
• Last moment needs to cost more
• Earth is PRESSING on you
• Look at the ending and seriously think about it.

Rehearsal Notes Arielle Giselle Rogers (2/6/2012)

• Act 2. Wake up transition weird. Sound should startle you awake.
• Specify who Winnie is- beginning to know talking to you
• Align shoulders better. Look into bag. Give the bag space.
• Recognize pauses (sleep forever, wish I had it)
• Blind next (enunciate).
• Woe woe is me- actress it’s real!!!
• Can’t complain- MUSN’T COMPLAIN. Amp up.
• Vocal energy! The stage is HOT
  o Struggle to thing! Between lines.
Bring RANGE. Full expression of range. BLOW IT OUT.

- Poke him with the parasol.
- Head up on Old style.
- Don’t pop lips till lipstick done.
- Oh something lasting woe is a parenthetical. To performance.
- Ensign crimson (good).
- Though whose I cannot conceive (parenthetical)
- Language- rafters. BRAG! Sex!
- Taste poetry (flesh melts, etc.)
- All (page 4). Does it all?? Is a question.
- Smile- old style (smile off).
- Hair bit- too short pauses and beginning then too long.
- To golden (WORK THE TOAST!)
- PAUSES!
- Words fail (look at like it’s a cliché.)
- Hands too casual and delicate. Hands are dancers. Beautiful presentation always.
- Doubt, here, abouts (two fingers)
- You are going willie (test him)
- Life has taught me that… too.
- Lean back (remember that there is earth behind you)
- Have I put on flesh, I trust not.
- Charm the audience. ENERGYYY!!!
- Look at Willie on LIVE EMMET
- What kind of laugh (scan)
- Last time we laughed together (that will inform how you take that moment in)
- Severest woe- and now?
  - What do I do now?
- You are a hostess at a party. Trying to keep people happy.
- Discover paradise enow. QUOTE IT.
- Relish in the fact you’re smart
- Operative words are VERBS.
- One quick dip = oh so naughty.
- Down among the last rounds (slow down.)
- Personal relationships with the gun, something humanly specific.
- Gravity speech- much more beautiful and vulnerable. SOUL. HELD. BELEIFS. Like sharing a religion or some sort of credo, and someone smacking that down.
- Pop umbrella out at audience.
- Winnie is Rebecca.
- Pg 10 reason says- make reason a character.
- Give wright to the oath.
• Aliveness in voice.
• Music box, time longer.
• Don’t squander words, berate yourself and BUILD that moment. So once hands need to have a reason for hands up. Hands that can DO SOMETHING!
• Specify voice for Shower, Cooker, Wife.
• Play with language at bottom of 11. Play with so much meaning lost
• “Feast on you” “But you can’t” The pause between the lines HAS to be there.
  o You can blame him there.
• Bell for sleep- hog’s setae. Things that didn’t resolve Hog’s setae.
• Hail Holy Light.
• May one? (ask permission) (VOCAL ENERGY)
• Use eyes to reference wilderness.
• Then, not. Conflicting ideas. Set that up vocally.
• Losing arms/ breasts- cost?
• What are the stakes? DESPERATLY calling Willie at the end of 13.
• The FACE is a discovery.
• The tongue, you admired. Up the anty, sexual.
• Discover the memory of Dolly. Really picture the doll when describing it.
• Weight of the words “wantonly cruel”
• Shower and Cooker.
• Free voice around DROP DEAD! Don’t be afraid to yell at them!
• Know each person who catches Milly.
• Violent with words.
• Break down the ending!
• Really play the hostess.
• Specific actions.
• Once more Willie (I know you are going to kill me but have the decency)
• Smile at curtain at Willie.
• When does voice crack, when does she linger on words. Using elements of Vocalization.

Rehearsal Notes Arielle Giselle Rogers (2/8/2012)

• Checking teeth- don’t upstage face
• Discover reading of hairbrush
• Marvelous gift- Willie sleepy
• Blind next- upward inflection
• Wouldn’t miss it- use prop glasses
• No pain- amend (think of pain going through)
• Prayers perhaps- migraines do go!!!
• Don’t expect parasol
• Medicine- build that consideration
• Throw was decent
• Something lasting woe (specificity)
• Put on drawers- finish routine
• Wait longer on response
• Another happy day!
• My first ball! Emphasize ball
• Almost ginger = no pause
• Lean back on sex in toolshed. Build.
• Provided one takes pains flow
• Do you know its porn?
• Think about marshmellow
• Weigh sow v. hog
• Floats up blue – gossamer
• Taking hat off same as n word
• Some happy days = sex, others devotion.
• Know actions at the end!
• Keep working on toast
• Words fail- positive choice
• Hit end consonants (did you hear that?)
• Make positive choice- tease on page 6.
• Leave alone handkerchief.
• Doubt. Abouts? Mayhaps?
• Gesturing to lay down.
• In any case
• Triful
• Do something CHANGE!!!! Nails = naked
• When saying shower cooker story, must have been a man- and wife.
• Just upper body moves. Isolate better. Crick in neck.
• Don’t internalize the different woman. HAVE ATIONS!
• What is a hog? Unfinished business.
• Happy day at the end of the act has EXCLIMATION POINTS
• Weigh sing to pray
• Wait for pauses at the end of the act.

Rehearsal Notes Arielle Giselle Rogers (2/9/2012)

• Run it once without taking the pauses
• Why does Winnie quote things?
• Look at page 7
• Look at full idea of long sentences and look at punctuation at the end.
• Don’t look down.
• Was I loveable? Too casual.
• The gun- specify it, feel the weight.
• The tiniest thing effects Winnie
• Look at the parasol moments
• Moment to moment- looking at me through what claws.
• Realizing the power to DO SOMETHIN!
• Huge moment to happen, bring the inflection up on what claws!
• Shower- cooker- simplify.
• Rewrite and cross out things that don’t tell the direct storyline, and find out the things that will piss off Willie the most!
• HAPPY DAY! All have exclamation points!
• Strong intention or feeling needs to be there behind the throw away lines.
• Arms, breasts, Willie. Order of importance. Has a build.
• Let go of me! USE EXCLIMATIONS!
• LOOK AT THE ENDING.
• All says it all, all one can do, all different speeds. Directions.
• Look at the toolshed bit.

Voice Work Notes Laura Parrotti (2/10/2012)

• Fade out on lines, internalize. Not good.
• Guest was gone- faded.
• Use consonants more. Another HEAVENLY day.
• Marvelous gift. Not different. More frustrated? Throw away?
• Hog- hit the end consonants.
• What is the alternative/ other things like it” to differentiate. Struggle, maybe press more. Laban terms with voice. More of a struggle.
• Let in more to thoughts and feelings
• When something really triggers you, need to HEAR that.
• What can I do?
• Take voice up for false, more chest resonators when drops in.
• Something of this is BEING HEARD. No voice expressions. Real need. INTENSITY.
• Reveal the deeper things.
• Take mantras far to find their rhythms.
• Falsetto!!! Low.
• GOOD LORD! GOOD GOD! Make it big.
• Invest more in the language.
• Texture, pitch, loud, soft, stretch.
• Don’t lose intention.
• HOO-OOO!! Bigger.
• Not spontaneous enough. More in the now.
• To be spontaneous on breath means different breath.
- Stretching, 6 sided box. Breath has to be awake.
- In the script she is desperate.

Tutorial Notes Shelley Delaney (2/13/2012)

- Copy absurdism in performance
- Anchored in real and unreal
- Expanding notion to entrapment
- Too real to be good
- Allow self to get out of pedestrian reality.
- Include the audience.
  - In what way are we here?
  - Greater audience than Willie
  - Winnie plays to a full house sometimes
- Porn- but then titularating.
- Vocal energy more
  - Volume. Work hard to get Willie to receive it
- Pick up cues with Willie
- Activate the space around you more. Use more of the body, clowning, fuller movements.
- Strong sense of specificity of the space.
- Gestures need to be simultaneous with the text
- Poems- stringer sense of different. Memorized in the 7th grade.
- Who speaks in the old style?
- Highs higher and the lows lower.
- Entertain him, yourself, and the audience.
- Leaving the gun out is a much more immensely profound decision. Testing myself in the deepest possible way.
- Whatever it was you used to do to get attention in life, you still do.
- Process flame. Out to audience now down.
- Internal build of act 2 not as clear.
- Last human kind.
- Tidbits from Reynolds News- connect to earlier.
- What lengths to feel things?!

Rehearsal Notes Arielle Giselle Rogers (2/13/2012)

- Looking for me, caring for me (sexy)
- Bring in the sexy
- Ergo you ARE there
- Say rhymes with pray.
- All can say, all one can- build.
• My Willie (doing center).
• Float up- look up. Atmosphere.
• The face- hits in face.
• Tongue- admired. Sexy
• Earth, sky. PAINT. With the eyes.
• Stream of conscience.
• Not yet, not quite, not mine 3 things.
• How do you tell- ignore- scold?
• The wombs- different vocal choices.
• Get excited about Dolly. Don’t let it build.
• Discover day well advanced.
• Calling shower and cooker- they are separate ideas.
• Tell the story faster.
• Dim then gone- stupid.
• Narrating- tell the story to room of two year olds.
• But I MUST say more. I can’t anymore.
• Unexpected PLEASURE.
• How did I worship you Winnie get said.
• Win- get that off of Sean better.

Rehearsal Notes Arielle Giselle Rogers 2/15/2012

• Poke above mound
• Sex rafters- simplify hands.
• Bring back physicality.
• Over porn- loving it in head, distain outward.
• 3 realms over repetition.
• Trifl. Not tri-full.
• Was I loveable? Dig at him more with We all know about that.
• Sucked up
• Amused by umbrella.
• Specify music box
• Don’t look down. Thoughts out.
• Shower and cooker? Put faces on them not just qualities.
• Help Willie in act 2 needs to drop in.
• Run- thru, assess the moments after.

Rehearsal Notes Arielle Giselle Rogers (2/16/2012)

• Taking out the revolver and kiss it before the medicine.
• Hand visor thing, stop.
• To ask, porn.
• Have more fun with, can you hear me now?
• Long sentence, look at
• Gaze with compressed lips.
• Lean back hurts, earth too tight.
• Earth is tight… emmet!
• Still too soon for song- musical #!
• Specify gun- still needs higher stakes.
• Pull
• Have fun with the umbrella. Up on up.
• Full out play.
• BID me to put this down
• Take time on vow.
• Earth old extinguisher
• Don’t smash mirror
• Do something speech needs to build.
• Shower- would dig out with his hands. Willie- higher stakes about body
• Searching for the ten dollar word
• Clarify what is being said.
• Operative words- last monologue. Chest voice.
• Worst betrayal = better actions
• Put lipstick on with left hand
• Pole
• Reason gets a voice
• Clear dim gone- have feeling
• Shower/cooker second thought last time
• Willie is weary of hole because I am weary of mine
• Know when to give and pull back audience.
• Gun better, but still needs to be more specific.

Rehearsal Notes Arielle Giselle Rogers (2/18/2012)

• Have the full energy of the line before you reach the punctuation
• Handkerchief- shove it all the way down.
• Don’t hold the gun directly on your eyeline
• Faster to realize Willie and the lipstick
• That is what I find so comforting
• Flesh melts, switching at find wonderful
• Gaze before- needs to be the same every time.
• Hamlet Skull- when quoting lines
• Speed up the dialog.
• Say trifle like truffle.
• Something something- searching
• Well I admit it is a teaser… make it more colorful
- You think the weight –needs energy throughout the line
- Make a show out of grabbing the gun
- You again needs to be a bigger accuse
- Float up speech- defend the argument
- Been caught on strange
- Do something speech- taking too many moments
- Shower/cooker- too many moments
- Strange speech- suicide note poem
- Sing? No. ask self and Willie.
- Second act- sit on the bottom of your voice more
- My Willie, needs to be lower and have chest power.
- Sunshade- lake-reeds- go to sleep!!!
- Call shower to the stand.
- Second shower delivery needs to be quicker.
- Let go and drop dead: always yell that.
- More comical screams.
- Reylonds News- spit that at him
- Are you coming to live on this side?
- Sing the last 8 count, then start song
- Final smile, needs to spread slowly and be empty. Empty eyes, empty brow.

Rehearsal Notes Arielle Giselle Rogers (2/21/2012)

- Heavenly day- heaven is in the sky.
- Second what- not working
- Woe woe – try something new
- Tease with within a toolshed.
- Orgasm with the rafters
- Say to self- operate
- My hair- upward inflection- hysteria
- One moment- them or it
- Tone- make it positive
- I beseech you- don’t stab!
- Toast- new choice- to a child.
- Compressed lips needs to be exaggerated.
- More playful with- can you hear me?
- Doubt, here- flourish.
- Emmet. Pat ground
- Curiosity- I say!- excitement
- TRIFLE!!
- Moody madness is the something something- Shakespeare!
- Paradise enow (SUPER ENUNCIATE!)
• No scary Winnie
• Gun upright, shoot into mouth
• Glasses come off as soon as they can
• Don’t rest parasol on body
• Reason says “cannot” good.
• Visible flesh
• Face out of music box
• Discover like a thrush
• Strange moment- curiosity
• What claws- 3 moments, not 7
• Big brown grips- not as important
• What I dream- lighter? Vulnerable?
• Sing/pray- really TELL self that
• Looking- admire
• Call to Willie Act 2
• My Willie is vocally right, now just et intention there
• Even if I puff them out- really ask.
• Search for Damask
• Sleep after reeds
• Inside the bag, outside the bag
• Bell hurts, don’t look.
• Narrative voice. Tell things to tiny babies.
• Optimistic, throw away the ends.
• Second Shower/Cooker Intro
• Strange scream
• Eyes wide, then look
• I worship you Winnie- mock him
• Have another go- MOCK!
• Love song, emphasize
• Last moment, FIGURE IT OUT
• Look at the script!

Rehearsal Notes Arielle Giselle Rogers (2/22/2012)

• Don’t lose ensign crimson
• Charlie is dead!
• Fold handkerchief, precise, can’t see
• Orgasm on the line
• Flesh melts- softer
• Die- go away, tinge of Guilt from Willie
• My hair- HYSTERIA!!!
• Lean backs need a flourish
• Don’t smash the emmet!
• Play/clown with the object
• Laugh
• Hit irreverent
• What all is in that bag? Funny voice
• Take off the hat, young beautiful, etc.
• Hold umbrella out more.
• All 5 garbled.
• Earth covers breasts- moment
• Open box- get to open quicker, wind box 2
• Strange speech- out
• DO SOMETHING (don’t anticipate)
• Hit diddies
• Open eyes! Groggy, close. Open
• My Willie!- drowning
• Don’t anticipate face
• Let go, really be real
• Call to Willie, patience
• Cling to the repetitions
• Allude Reynolds News
• Let Win startle you
  ○ He never says your name
• Fill self with the music before you sing
• Let the smile spread.

Rehearsal Notes Arielle Giselle Rogers (2/23/2012)

• Winnie needs an up do
• Age lines
• Blind next, needs to be to the audience
• The handkerchief needs to be a ritual
• Dropped into voice more.
• Hair tie NOT ON WRIST
• Better orgasm
• Lion eyes, lemon mouth
• My hair! On the line
• Hat- put on, put off- my word!
• Golden you called it that day, comma, when the last guest…
• Don’t smash the bug!
• Exhaustive answer?
• Don’t anticipate sucked up
• I used to perspire freely
• Glass is the mirror
• My Willie! One moment
• Voice- shower
• Drop dead- annihilate
• Changing- be mean!
• Don’t look at me like that!
• Sing song slowly to live in the moment

Final Notes Arielle Giselle Rogers (2/25/2012)

• Check the props
• No hair tie
• One clean head turn
• Charlie Hunter- not obituary
• Speak before them or it
• Remove um’s
• Give time to golden
• Compress means flatten, lion/lemon
• Put on flesh- slowly
• Specify in hands
• Rest arm on hoist
• What claws- casual
• Shower/cooker- let audience have an opinion
• Present case about shower and cooker
• Screams need to be comical. Thinking of line, separate moments.
• GOOD LUCK ON OPENING!
Happy Days Rehearsal Script:

The following images are copies of the script that I used during rehearsal. My notes, highlights and other information are on the script. The original script could not be included in the thesis materials, as the paper that was used is not of the same calibre as the thesis paper, and the margins were incorrect. Therefore, the following pages include images of the script that have been resized to fit to a page.
Expanse of scorched grass rising centre to a low mound. Gentle slopes down to front and either side of stage. Back an
abrupt fall to stage level. Maximum of simplicity and symmetry.

Blazing light.

Very pompier trompe-l'oeil backcloth to represent unbroken plain and sky receding to meet in far distance.
Imbedded up to above her waist in exact centre of mound, WINNIE. About fifty, well preserved, blonde for preference,
plump, arms and shoulders bare, low bodice, big bosom, pearl necklace. She is discovered sleeping, her arms on the
ground before her, her head on her arms. Beside her on ground to her left a capacious black bag, shopping variety, and
to her right a collapsible collapsed parasol, beak of handle emerging from sheath.

To her right and rear, lying asleep on ground hidden by mound, WILLIE.

Long pause. A bell rings piercingly, stays ten seconds, stops. She does not move. Pause. Bell more piercingly, say five
seconds. She wakes. Bell stops. She raises her head, gazes front. Long pause. She straightens up, lays her hands flat on
the ground, throws back her head and gazes at zenith. Long pause.

WINNIE: (gazing at zenith). Another heavenly day. (Pause. Head back level, eyes front, pause. She clasps hands to breast,
closes eyes. Lips move in inaudible prayer, say ten seconds. Lips still. Hands remain clasped. Low.) For Jesus Christ sake

Amen. (Pause). Begin, Winnie. (Pause). Begin your day, Winnie. (Pause. She turns to bag, rummages in it without moving
it from its place. She croons a little further back and down. Loud. ) Aa-oo-01! (Pause. Louder). ) Aa-oo-01! (Pause. Tender smile
as she turns back front, lays down bush). Poor Willie! (smile off-running out- ah well- can’t be helped- just one of those
old things- turns back front). Just can’t be cured- (rummages in bag- cannot be cured- (brings out small mirror, turns
back front)! ah yes- (Inspects teeth in mirror!)- poor dear Willie- (Grabs upper front teeth with thumb, indistinctly)- good
Lord!- (pulling back upper lip to inspect gums, do.)- good God!- (pulling back corner of mouth, mouth open, do.)- ah
just well- (other corner, do.) no worse- (abandons inspection, normal speech)- no better, no worse- (lays down mirror)- no
change- (wipes fingers on grass)- no pain- (looks for hairbrush)- hardly any- (takes up hairbrush)- great thing like that-
(examines handle of brush): nothing like it- (examines handle, reads) - pure... what? - (pause): what? - (lays down brush)-
aah yes- (turns towards bag). Poor Willie- (rummages in bag)- no zest- (rummages)- for anything- (brings our spectacles in
case)- no interest- (turns back front)- in life- (takes spectacles from case)- poor dear Willie- (lays down case)- sleep
forever- (opens spectacles)- marvelous gift- (puts on spectacles)- nothing to touch it- (looks for hairbrush)- in my opinion-
takes up hairbrush)- always said so- (examines handle of brush)- wish I had it- (examines handle, reads)-
genuine... pure... what? - (lays down brush)- blind next- (takes off spectacles)- ah well- (lays down spectacles)- seen enough-
(tears in bosom tor nanakernie) i suppose—(takes out tor aoe nanakernie)—by now—(snakes out nanakernie)—what
were those wonderful lines—(wipes one eye) woe woe is me—(wipes the other)—to see what i see—(looks for spectacles)—ah
yes—(takes up spectacles)—wouldn’t miss it—(starts polishing spectacles, breathing on lenses)—or would i?—(stops polishing,
raises face to sky, pause, head back level, resumes polishing, stops polishing, cranes back to her right and down.) hoo—
—oo! (Pause. Tender smile as she turns back front and resumes polishing. Smile off.) Marvelous gift—(stops polishing, lays
down spectacles)—wish i had it—(folds handkerchief)—ah well—(puts handkerchief back in bodice)—can’t complain—(looks for
spectacles)—no no—(takes up spectacles)—mustn’t complain—(holds up spectacles, looks through lens)—so much to be
thankful for—(looks through other lens)—no pain—(puts on spectacles)—hardly any—(looks for hairbrush)—wonderful thing
that—(takes up hairbrush)—nothing like it—(examines handle of brush)—slight headache sometimes—(examines handle,
reads)—guaranteed—genuine—pure—what?—(looks closer)—genuine pure—(takes handkerchief)—occasional mild migraine—
(starts wiping handle of brush)—it comes—(wipes)—then goes—(wiping mechanically)—prayers perhaps not for naught—(head
down, resumes wiping, stops wiping, head up, calmed, wipes eyes, folds handkerchief, puts back in bodice. Takes off
spectacles, lays them and brush down, gazes before her.) Old things. (Pause). Old eyes. (Long Pause). On, Winnie. (She
casts about her, sees parasol, considers it at length, takes it up and develops from sheath a handle of surprising length.
Holding butt of parasol in right hand, she cranes back and down to her right to hang over WILLIE.) hoo—oo! (Pause.)
Winnie. (Pause.) Wonderful gift. (She strikes down at him with beak of parasol.) Wish i had it. (She strikes again. The
parasol slips from her grasp and falls behind mound. It is immediately restored to her by WILLIE’s invisible hand.) Thank
you, dear. (She transfers parasol to left hand, turns back front and examines right palm.) Damp. (Returns parasol to right
hand, examines left palm.) Ah well, no worse. (Head up, cheerfully.) No better, no worse, no change. (Pause. Do.) No
pain. (Cranes back to look down at WILLIE, holding parasol by butt as before.) Don’t go off on me again now dear, will
you please, i may need you. (Pause.) No hurry, no hurry, just don’t curl up on me again! (Turns back front, lays down
parasol, examines palms together, wipes them on grass. Turns to bag, rummages in it, brings out revolver, holds it up,
knits it rapidly, puts it back, rummages, brings out almost empty bottle of red medicine, turns back front, looks for
spectacles, puts them on, reads label.) Loss of spirits—lack of keenness—want of appetite—infants—children—adults—six
level—tablespoonful daily. (Head up, smile.) the old style—(smile off, head down, reads)—daily before and
after—meals—instantaneous—(looks closer)—improvement. (Takes off spectacles, lays them down, holds up bottle at
arm’s length to see level, unscrews cap, swigs it off head well back, tosses cap and bottle away in WILLIE’s direction.
Sound of breaking glass.) Ah that’s better! (Turns to bag, rummages in it, brings out lipstick, turns back front, examines
lipstick.) Running out. (Looks for spectacles.) Ah well. (Puts on spectacles, looks for mirror.) Mustn’t complain. (Takes up
mirror, starts doing lips.) What is that wonderful line? (Lips.) Oh fleeting joys! (Lips.) oh something lasting woo! (Lips. She
is interrupted by disturbance from WILLIE. He is sitting up. She lowers lipstick and mirror and cranes back and down to
look at him. Pause. Top back of WILLIE’s bald head, trickling blood, rises to view above slope, comes to rest. WINNIE
pushes up her spectacles. Pause. His hand appears with handkerchief, spreads it on skull, disappears. Pause. The hand
appears with boater, club ribbon, settles it on head, rakish angle, disappears. Pause. WINNIE cranes a little further back
and down.) Slip on your draws, dear, before you get singed. (Pause.) No? (Pause.) Oh! see. (Happy expression) Oh this is going to be another happy day! (Pause. Happy expression off. She pulls down spectacles and resumes lips. WILLIE opens newspaper, hands invisible. Tops of yellow sheets appear on either side of his head. WINNIE finishes lips, inspects them in mirror held a little further away.) Ensign crimson. (WILLIE turns page. WINNIE lays down lipstick and mirror, turns toward bag. WILLIE turns page. WINNIE rummages in bag, brings out small ornate brimless hat with crumpled feather, turns back front, straightens hat, smooths feather, raises it towards head, arrests gesture as WILLIE reads.

WILLIE: His Grace and Most Reverend Rather in God Dr. Carolus Hunter dead in tub.

Pause.

WILLIE: <value> = <nu> <then>?

Pause. She raises hat towards head, arrests gesture as WILLIE reads.

WILLIE: Opening for smart youth.

Pause. She raises had towards head, arrests gesture, takes off spectacles, gazes front, hat in one hand, spectacles in other.

WILLIE: My first ball! (Long pause.) My second ball! (Long pause. Closes eyes.) My first kiss! (Pause. WILLIE turns page. WINNIE opens eyes.) A Mr. Johnson, or Johnston, or perhaps I should say, Johnstone. Very bushy moustache, very tawny. (Reverently.) Almost ginger! (Pause.) Within a toolshed, though whose I cannot conceive. We had no toolshed and he most certainly had no toolshed. (Closes eyes.) I see the piles of pots. (Pause.) The tangles of bast. (Pause.) The shadows deepening among the rafters.

Pause. She opens eyes, puts on spectacles, raises hat towards head, arrests gesture as WILLIE reads.

WILLIE: Wanted bright boy.
Pause. WINNIE puts on hat hurriedly, looks for mirror. WINNIE takes up mirror, inspects hat, lays down mirror, turns towards bag. Paper disappears. WINNIE rummages in bag, brings out magnifying-glass, turns back front.

WINNIE: (Pause.) That is what I find so wonderful, that not a day does by-smile-to speak in the old style-smile off- hardly a day, without some addition to one's knowledge, however trifling, the addition I mean, provided one takes the pains. WINNIE hand reappears with a postcard which he examines close to eyes. And if for some strange reason no further pains are possible, why just close the eyes- she does so-and wait for the day to come- opens eyes- the happy day to come when the flesh melts at so many degrees and the night of the moon has so many hundred hours. (Pause.) That is what I find so comforting when I lose heart and envy the brute beast. (Turning towards WILLIE.) Hope you are taking in- (She sees postcard, bends lower.) What is that you have there, Willie, may I see? (She reaches down with hand and WILLIE hands her card. The hairy forearm appears above slope, raised in gesture of giving, the hand open to take back and remain in this position till card is returned. WINNIE turns back front and examines card.) Heavens what are they up to? (She looks for spectacles, puts them on and examines card.) No but this is just genuine pure filthy. (Examines card.) Make any nice-minded person want to vomit! (Impatience of WILLIE's fingers. She looks for glass, takes it up and examines the card through glass. Long pause.) What does that creature in the background think he's doing? (Looks closer.) Oh no really! (Impatience of fingers. Last long look. She lays down glass, takes edge of card between right forefinger and thumb, averts head, takes nose between left forefinger and thumb. Drops card.) Take it away! WILLIE's arm disappears. His hand reappears immediately, holding card. WINNIE takes off spectacles, lays them down, gazes before her. During what follows, WILLIE continues to look card, varying angles and distance from eyes. Hog's setae. (Puzzled expression.) What exactly is a hog? (Pause. Do.) A sow of course I know, but a hog... (Puzzled expression off.) Oh well what does it matter, this is what I always say, it will come back, that is what I find so wonderful, all comes back. (Pause.) All? (Pause.) No, not all. (Smile. Smile off.) A part. (Pause.) Floats up, one day, out of the blue. (Pause.) That is what I find so wonderful. (Pause. She turns towards bag. Hand and card disappear. She makes to rummage in bag, arrests gesture. She gazes front. WILLIE's hand reappears, takes off hat, disappears with hat.) What then? Winnie! What is the alternative? Ah yes, if only I could bear to be alone, I mean prattle away with not a soul to hear. (Pause.) Not that I flatter myself you hear much, no, Winnie, God forbid. (Pause.) Days perhaps when you hear nothing. (Pause.) But days too. When you answer. (Pause.) So that I may say at all times, even when you do not answer and perhaps hear nothing. Something of this is being heard, I am not merely talking to myself, that is in the wilderness, a thing I could never bear to do for any length of time. (Pause.) This is what enables me to go on, go talking that is. (Pause.) Whereas if you were to die-smile-to speak in the old style-smile off- or go away and leave me, then what would I do, what could I do, all day long. I mean between the bell for waking and the bell for sleep? (Pause.) Simply gaze before me with compressed lips. (Long pause while she does so. No more plucking.) Not another word as long as I drew breath, nothing to break the silence of this place. (Pause.) Save possibly, now and then, every now and then, a sigh into my looking-glass. (Pause.) Or
a brief...gale of laughter. Should I happen to see the old joke again? (Pause. Smile appears broadens and seems about to culminate in a laugh when suddenly replaced by an expression of anxiety.) My hair? (Pause.) Did I brush and comb my hair? (Pause.) I may have done. (Pause.) Normally I do. (Pause.) There is so little one can do. (Pause.) One does it all. (Pause.) All one can. (Pause.) Tis only human. (Pause.) Human nature. (She begins to inspect mound, looks up.) Human weakness. (She resumes inspection of mound.) I see no comb. (Inspects.) Nor any hairbrush. (Looks up, puzzled expression. Back to bag. Rummages.) The comb is here. (Back front. Puzzled expression. Back to bag. Rummages.) The brush is here. (Back front. Puzzled expression.) Perhaps I put them back, after use. (Pause. Do.) But normally I do not put things back, after use, no, I leave them lying about and put them back all together, at the end of the day. (Suddenly careless.) Oh well, what does it matter, that is what I always say, I shall simply brush and comb them more on, purely and simply, I have the whole-... (Pause. Puzzled.) Them? (Pause.) Or it? (Pause.) Brush and comb it? (Pause.) Sounds improper somehow. (Pause. Turning a little towards WILLIE, What would you say, Willie? (Pause. Turning a little further.) What would you say, Willie, speaking of your hair, them or it? (Pause.) The hair on your head, I mean. (Pause. Turning a little further.) The hair on your head, Willie, what would you say, speaking of the hair on your head, them or it?}

Long pause.

WILLIE: It.

WINNIE: (turning back front, joyful.) Oh you are going to talk to me today, this is going to be a happy day! (Pause. Joy off.) Another happy day. (Pause.) Ah well, where was I, my hair, yes, later on I shall be thankful for it later on. (Pause.) I have my-(raises hands to hat) -yes on, my hat on. (lowers hands.) I cannot take it off now. (Pause.) To think there are times one cannot take off one's hat, not if one's life were at stake. Times one cannot put it on, times one cannot take it off. (Pause.) How often have I said, Put on your hat now, Winnie, there is nothing else for it, take off our hat now, Winnie, like a good girl, it will do you good, and did not. (Pause.) Could not. (Pause. She raises hand, frees a strand of hair from under hat, draws it towards eye, squints at it, lets it go, hand down.) Golden you called it, that day, when the last guest was gone. (hand up in gesture of raising a glass) - to your golden...may it never... (voice breaks) ...may it never... (Hand down. Head down. Pause. Low.) That day. (Pause. Do.) What day? (Pauses head up. Normal voice.) What now? (Pause.) Words fail, there are times when even they fail. (Turning a little towards WILLIE.) Is that not so, Willie? (Pause. Turning a little further.) Is that not so, Willie, that even words fail, at times? (Pause. Back front.) What is one to do then, until they come again? Brush and comb the hair, if it has not been done. (Pause.) That is what I find so wonderful, that not a day goes by-(smile) - to speak in the old style- (smile off) - without some blessing.-WILLIE collapses behind slope, his head disappears. WINNIE turns towards event.) - in disguise. (She cranes back and down.) Go back into your hole now, Willie, you've exposed yourself enough. (Pause.) Do as I say, Willie, don't lie, prowling there in,
this hellish sun, go back into your hole. (Pause.) Go on now, Willie. (WILLIE invisible starts crawling left towards hole.) That's the man. (She follows his progress with her eyes.) Not the head first, stupid, how are you going to turn? (Pause.) That's it...right round...now...back in. (Pause.) Oh I know it is not easy, dear, crawling backwards, but it is rewarding in the end. (Pause.) Not the head first I tell you! (Pause.) More to the right. (Pause.) The right, I said. (Pause.) There. (All these directions are loud. Now in her normal voice, still turned towards him.) Can you hear me? (Pause.) I beseech you, Willie, just yes or no, can you hear me, just yes or nothing?

Pause.

WILLIE: Yes.

WINNIE: (turning front, same voice.) And now?

WILLIE: (irritated.) Yes.

WINNIE: (less loud) And now?

WILLIE: (more irritated.) Yes.

WINNIE: (still less loud) And now? (a little louder) And now?

WILLIE: (violently) Yes!

WINNIE: (same voice.) Fear no more the heat of the sun. (Pause.) Did you hear that?

WILLIE: (irritated.) Yes.

WINNIE: (same voice) What? (Pause.) What?

WILLIE: (more irritated.) Fear no more.

Pause.

WINNIE: (Same voice.) No more what? (Pause.) Fear no more what?
WILLIE: (violently) Fear no more!

WINNIE: (normal voice, gabbled.) Bless you! Willie, do appreciate your goodness. I know what an effort it costs you now you may relax. I shall not trouble you again unless I am obliged to. In that I mean unless I come to the end of my own resources which is most unlikely. Just to know that in theory you can hear me even though in fact you don’t is all I need to feel you there within earshot and conceivably on the qui vive is all I need to say anything I would not wish you to hear or liable to cause you pain, not to be just babbling away on trust as it is we are not knowing and something gnawing at me. (Pause for breath.) Doubt. (Plates index and second finger on heart area, moves them about, brings them to rest.) Here. (Moves them slightly.) Abouts. (Hand away.) Oh no doubt the time will come when before I can utter a word I must make sure you heard the one that went before and then no doubt another come another time when I must learn to talk to myself a thing I could never bear to do such wilderness. (Pause.) Or gaze before me with compressed lips. (She does so.) All day long. (Gaze and lips again.) No, smile. No no. (Smile off.) There is of course the bag. (Turns towards it.) There will always be the bag. (Back from.) Yes, I suppose so. (Pause.) Even when you are gone, Willie. (She turns a little towards him.) You are going, Willie, aren’t you? (Pause.) Louder. You will be going soon, Willie, won’t you? (Pause, Louder.) Oh I know it does not follow when two are gathered together—(faltering) —in this way—(normal) —that because one sees the other the other sees the one, life has taught me that too. (Pause.) Yes, life I suppose, there is no other word. (She turns a little towards him.) Could you see me, Willie, do you think, from where you are, if you were to raise your eyes in my direction? (Turns a little further.) Lift up your eyes to me, Willie, and tell me can you see me, do that for me, I’ll lean back as far as I can. (Does so. Pause.) No? (Pause.) Well, never mind. (Turns back painfully to front.) The earth is very tight today. Can it be I have put on flesh, I trust not. (Pause. Absently, eyes lowered.) The great heat possibly. (Starts to pat and stroke ground.) All things expanding, some more than others. (Pause. Patting and stroking.) Some less. (Pause.) Oh I can well imagine what is passing through your mind, it is not enough to have to listen to the woman, now I must look at her as well. (Pause.) Do. Well it is very understandable. (Pause. Do.) Most understandable. (Pause. Stroking hand suddenly still. Lively.) Oh I say, what have we here? (Bending head to ground, incredulous.) Looks like life of some kind. Looks for spectacles, puts them on, bends closer. (Pause.) An emmet! (Recoils. Shriek.) Willie, an emmet! (Seizes magnifying glass, bends to ground again, inspects through glass.) Where’s it gone? (Inspecting.) Gh! (Follows its progress through grass.) Has like a little white ball in its arms. (Follows progress. Hand still. Pause.) It’s gone in. (Continues a moment to gaze at spot through glass, then slowly straightens up, lays down glass, takes off spectacles, and gazes before her, spectacles in hand. Finally.) Like a little white ball.

Long pause. Gesture to lay down spectacles.
WILLIE: Eggs.

WINNIE: [arresting gesture] What? 

Pause.

WILLIE: Eggs. (Pause. Gesture to lay down glasses.) Formication.

WINNIE: [arresting gesture] What? 

Pause.

WILLIE: Formication.

Pause. She lays down spectacles, gazes before her. Finally.

WINNIE: [murmur] God. (Pause. WILLIE laughs quietly. After a moment she joins in. They laugh quietly together. WILLIE stops. She laughs a moment alone. WILLIE joins in. They laugh together. She stops. WILLIE laughs a moment alone. He stops. Pause. Normal voice.) Ah well what a joy in any case to hear you laugh again, Willie, I was convinced I never would, you never would. (Pause.) I suppose some people might think us a trifle irreverent, but I doubt it. (Pause.) How can one better magnify the Almighty than by sniggering with him at his little jokes, particularly the poorer ones? (Pause.) I think you would back me up there, Willie. (Pause.) Or perhaps we were diverted by two quite separate things? (Pause.) Oh well, what does it matter, that is what I always say, so long as one... you know... what is that wonderful line... laughing wild... something... something... laughing wild amid severest wo. And now? (Long pause.) Was I lovable once, Willie? (Pause.) Was I ever lovable? (Pause.) Do not misunderstand my question. I am not asking you if you loved me, we know all about that. I am asking if you found me lovable - at one stage. (Pause.) No. (Pause.) You can't? (Pause.) Well I admit it is a teaser. And you have done more than your bit already, for the time being, just lie back now and relax, I shall not trouble you again unless I am compelled to, just to know you are there within hearing and conceivably on the semi-alert is... er... paradise now. (Pause.) The day is now well advanced. (Smile.) To speak in the old style. (Smile off.) And yet it is perhaps a little too soon for my song. (Pause.) To sing too soon is a great mistake, I find. (Turning towards bag.) There is of course the bag. (Looking at bag.) The bag. (Back front.) Could I enumerate its contents? (Pause.) No. (Pause.) Could I, if some kind person were to come along and ask, What all have you got in that big black bag Winnie? Give an exhaustive answer? (Pause.) No. (Pause.) The depths in particular, who knows what treasures. (Pause.) What comforts. (Turns to
look at bag.) Yes, there is the bag (back front). But something tells me, Do not undo the bag. Winnie, make use of it of course, let it help you along. When stuck, by all means, but cast your mind forward, something tells me, cast your mind forward, Winnie, to the time when words must fail (she closes eyes, pause, opens eyes) and do not undo the bag. (Pause. She turns to look at bag.) Perhaps just one quick dip. (She turns back front, closes eyes, throws out left arm, plunges hand in bag, and brings out revolver. Disgusted) No again? She opens eyes, brings revolver front and contemplates it. She weighs it in her palm.) You’d think the weight of this thing would bring it down among the dust rounds. But no. It doesn’t. (To revolver.) Oh I suppose it’s a comfort to know you’re there, but I’m tired of you. (Pause.) I’ll leave you out, that’s what I’ll do. (She lays revolver on ground to her right.) There, that’s your home from this day out. (Pause.) And now? (Long pause.) A gravity what it was, Willie, I fancy not. (Pause.) Yes, the feeling more and more that if I were not held—(gesture)—in this way, I would simply float up into the blue. (Pause.) And that perhaps someday the earth will yield and let me go. The pull is so great, yes, crack all round me and let me out. (Pause.) Don’t you ever have that feeling, Willie, of being sucked up? (Pause.) Don’t you have to cling to something. Willie? (Pause. She turns a little towards him.) Willie?

Pause.

WILIE: Sucked up?

WINNIE: Yes love, up into the blue, like gossamer. (Pause.) No? (Pause.) You don’t? (Pause.) Ah well, natural laws, natural laws, I suppose it’s like everything else, it all depends on the creature you happen to be. All I can say is for my part is that for me they are not what they were when I was young and…foolish and…(faltering, head down)…beautiful…possibly…lovely…in a way…to look all. (Pause. Head up.) Forgive me, Willie, sorrow keeps breaking in. (Normal voice.) Ah well what a joy in any case to know you are there, as usual, and perhaps awake, and perhaps taking all this in, some of all this, what a happy day for me…It will have been. (Pause.) I can say no more. (Pause.) For the moment. (Pause. Turns to look at bag. Back front. Smile.) No no. (Smile off. Looks at parasol.) I suppose I might. (Takes up parasol)—yes, I suppose I might…hoist this thing now. (Begins to unfurl it. Following punctuated by mechanical difficulties overcome.) One keeps putting off putting up, for fear of putting up too soon, and the day goes by—quite by without one’s having put it up at all. (Parasol now unfurled. Turned to her right she twirls it idly this way and that. She places front holding up parasol with right hand. Maximum pause.) I used to perspire freely. (Pause.) Now hardly at all. (Pause.) The heat is much greater. (Pause.) The perspiration much less. (Pause.) That is what I find so wonderful. (Pause.) The way man adapts himself. (Pause.) To changing conditions. (She transfers parasol to left hand. Long pause.) Holding up wears the arm. (Pause.) Not if one is going along. (Pause.) Only if one is at rest. (Pause.) That is a curious observation. (Pause.) I hope you heard that. Willie. I should be grieved to think you had not heard that. (She takes parasol in both hands. Long pause.) I am weary, holding it up, and I cannot put it down. (Pause.) I am worse off with it up
than with it down, and I cannot put it down. (Pause.) Reason says, Put it down, Winnie, it is not helping you, put the thing down and get on with something else. (Pause.) I cannot. (Pause.) I cannot move. (Pause.) No, something must happen, in the world, take place, some change, I cannot, if I am to move again. (Pause.) Willie. (Mildly, appeal. Pause.)

No? (Pause.) Did I put this thing down, Willie, I would not you instantly, as I have always done honourably, and obeyed. (Pause.) Please, Willie. (Mildly, for pity's sake.) Do not? (Pause.) You can't? (Pause.) Well I don't blame you, no, it would ill become me, who cannot move, to blame my Willie because he cannot speak. (Pause.) Fortunately I am in tongue again. (Maximum pause. The parasol goes on fire. Smoke, flames are visible. She sniffles, looks up, throws parasol to her right behind mounds, cranes back to watch it burning. Pause.) Ah earth you old extinguisher. (Back front.) I presume this has occurred before, though I cannot recall it. (Pause.) Can you, Willie? (Turns a little towards him.) Can you recall this having occurred before? (Pause. Cranes back to look at him.) Do you know what has occurred, Willie? (Pause.) Have you gone off on me again? (Pause.) I do not ask if you are alive to all that is going on, merely ask if you have not gone off on me again. (Pause.) Your eyes appear to be closed, but that has no particular significance, we know. (Pause.) Raise a finger, dear, will you please, if you are not quite senseless. (Pause.) Do that for me, Willie, please just the little finger, if you are still conscious. (Pause.) Joyful. Oh all live, you are a darling today, now I may continue with an easy mind. (Back front.) Yes, whatever occurred that did not occur before and yet... I wonder, yes, I confess wonder. (Pause.) With the sun blazing so much fiercer down, and hourly fiercer, is it not natural things should go on fire never known to do so, in this way I mean, spontaneous like. (Pause.) Shall I myself not melt perhaps in the end, or burn, oh I do not mean necessarily burst into flames, no, just little by little be charred to a black cinder, all this (simple gesture of arms)-visible flesh. (Pause.) On the other hand, did I ever known temperate time? (Pause.) No. (Pause.) I speak of temperate times and torrid times, they are empty words. (Pause.) I speak of what I was not caught- in this way and had my legs and had the use of my legs, and could seek out a shady place, like you, when I was tired of the sun, or a sunny place when I was tired of the shade, like you, and they are all empty words. (Pause.) It is no hotter today than yesterday, it will be no hotter tomorrow that today, how could it be, and on back into the far past, forward into the far future. (Pause.) And should one day the earth cover my breasts, then I shall never have seen my breasts, no one ever seen my breasts. (Pause.) I hope you caught something of that, Willie, I should be sorry to think you had caught nothing of all that, it is not every day I rise to such heights. (Pause.) The sunshade will be there again tomorrow, beside me on this mound, to help me through the day. (Pause. She takes up mirror.) I take up this little glass, I shiver it on a stone—does so: I throw it away—does so far behind her— it will be in the bag again tomorrow, without a scratch to help me through the day. (Long pause, head down. Finally turns, still bowed, to bag, brings out unidentifiable odds and ends, stuffs them back, fumbles deeper, brings out finally musical box, winds it up, turns it on, listens for a moment holding it in both hands, huddled over it, turns back front, straightens up and listens to tune, holding box to breast with both hands. It plays the Waltz Duet "I love you so" from The Merry Widow. Gradually happy expression, she sways to the rhythm. Music stops. Pause. Brief burst of hoarse song without words- musical box tune- from WILLIE. Increase of happy expression. She lays down box. Oh this will have been a happy day. (She claps hands.) Again, Willie, again? (Claps.) Encore, Willie, please!
(Pause. Happy expression off.) No! You won't do that for me? (Pause.) Well it is very understandable, very understandable. One cannot sing just to please someone, however much one loves them, no, song must come from the heart—that is what I always say, pour out from the innermost like a thrust. (Pause.) How often have I said, in evil hours, sing now, Winnie, sing your song, there is nothing else for it, and did not. (Pause.) Could not. (Pause.) And now? (Long pause. Low.) Strange feeling. (Pause. Do.) Strange feeling that someone is looking at me. I am clear, then dim, then gone, then dim again, then clear again, and so on, back and forth, in and out of someone's eye. (Pause. Do.) Strange? (Pause. Do.) No, here all is strange. (Pause. Normal voice.) Something says, Stop talking now, Winnie, for a minute, don't squander all your words for the say, stop talking and do something for a change, will you? She raises hands and holds them open before her eyes. Apostrophic. Do something. (She closes hands.) What claws. (She turns to bag, rummages in it, brings out finally a nail file, turns back from and begins to file nails. Files for a time in silence, then the following is punctuated by filing.) Shower. Shower. Does that name mean anything to you, Willie—evoke any reality, I mean, for you. Willie? Cooker, Willie, does Cooker ring a bell, the name cooker? (Pause. She cranes back to look at him.) Well anyway, this man—Shower—Cooker—no matter— and a woman— hand in hand in the other—bags—kind of big brown pots—standing there gaping at me—and at last this man Shower—Cooker—ends in er anyway—stake my life on that—What's he doing? he says—What's the idea? He says—stuck up to her diddies in the bleeding ground—coarse fellow—what does it mean? He says—what's it meant to mean? And so on—lot more stuff like that—usual drive—Do you hear me? He says—I do, she says—God help me—Why doesn't she 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?—And so on—usual tosh—Good! She says—have a heart for God's sake—dig her out. He says—dig her out no sense in her like that—Dig her out with what? She says—I'd dig her out with my bare hands—he says—must have been a man and—wife—(silence). Next thing they're away—hand in hand—and the bags—dim—then—gone—last human kind—to stray this way. (Finishes right hand, inspects it, lays down file, gazes front.) Strange thing, time like this, drift up into the mind. (Pause.) Strange? (Pause.) No, here all is strange. (Pause.) Thankful for it in any case. (Voice breaks.) Most thankful. (Head down. Pause. Head up. Calm. Starts putting things back in bag. This operation, interrupted by pauses as indicated, punctuates following.) It is perhaps a little too soon—to make ready—for the night—(stops tidying, head up, smile)—the old style. (Smiles off, resumes tidying)—and yet I do—make ready for the night—feeling it at hand: the bell for sleep—saying to myself—Winnie—it will not be long now, Winnie—until the bell for sleep. (Stops tidying, head up.) Sometimes I am wrong. (Smile.) But not often. (Smile off.) Sometimes all is over, for the day, all done, all said, all ready for the night and the day not over, far from over, the night not ready, far, far from ready, (Smile.) But not often. (Smile off.) Yes, the bell for sleep, when I feel it at hand, and so make ready for the night—(gesture)—in this way, sometimes I am wrong—(smile)—but not often. (Smile off. Resumes tidying.) I suppose this—might seem strange—this—what shall I say—this what I have said—yes—(she takes up revolver)—strange—(she turns to put revolver in bag)—were it not—(about to put revolver in bag she arrests gesture and turns back front)—were it not—(she lays down revolver to her right, stops tidying, head up)—that all seems strange. (Pause.) Most strange. (Pause.) Never any change. (Pause.) And more and more strange. (Pause. She bends to mound again, takes up last object, and turns to put it in bag when her
attention is drawn to disturbance from WILLIE. She cranes back to her right to see. Pause.) Weary of your hole, dear? (Pause.) Well, I can understand that. (Pause.) Not the crawler you were, poor darling. (Pause.) Not the crawler I gave my heart to. (Pause.) The hands and knees love, try the hands and knees. (Pause.) The knees! The knees! (Pause.) What a curse, mobility. (Pause.) Click in my neck admiring you. (Rubs neck.) But it's worth it, well worth it. (Turns slightly towards him.) Do you know what I dream sometimes, Willie? (Pause.) What I dream sometimes, Willie? (Pause.) That you'll come round and live this side where I could see you. (Pause. Back front.) I'd be a different woman. (Pause.) Unrecognizable. (Turning slightly towards him.) Or just now and then, come round this side just every now and then and let me feast on you. (Back front.) But you can't. I know. (Head down.) I know. (Pause. Head up.) Well anyway- (looks at hairbrush in her hand) - can't be long now- (looks at brush) - until the bell. (Top back of WILLIE's head appears above slope. WINNIE looks closer at brush.) What is a hog exactly? (Pause. Turns slightly towards WILLIE.) What exactly is a hog, Willie, do you know, I can't remember. (Pause. Turning a little further, pleading.) What is a hog, Willie please? (Pause.)

WILLIE: Castrated male swine. (Happy expression appears on WINNIE's face.) Reared for slaughter.

Happy expression increases. WILLIE opens newspaper. Hands invisible. Tops of yellow sheets appear on either side of his head. WINNIE gazes before her with happy expression.

WINNIE: Oh this is a happy day! (This will be another happy day) (Pause.) After all. (Pause.) So far.


WILLIE: Opening for smart youth.

Pause. WINNIE takes off hat, turns to put it in bag, arrests gesture, turns back front. Smile.

WINNIE: No. (Smile broader.) No no. (Smile off. Puts hat on again, gazes front, pause.) And now? (Pause.) Sing. (Pause.)

Sing your song, Winnie. (Pause.) No? (Pause.) Then pray. (Pause.) Pray your prayer, Winnie.

Pause. WILLIE turns page. Pause.

WILLIE: Wanted bright boy.

WINNIE: Pray your old prayer, Winnie.

Long pause.

Curtain.

Act II

Scene as before.

WINNIE imbedded up to neck, hat on head, eyes closed. Her head, which she can no longer turn, nor bow, nor raise, faces front motionless throughout act. Movements of eyes as indicated.

Bag and parasol as before. Revolver conspicuous to her right on the mound.

Long pause.

Bell rings loudly. She opens eyes at once. Bell stops. She gazes front. Long pause.


May one speak of time? (Pause.) Say it is a long time now, Willie, since I saw you. (Pause.) Since I heard you. (Pause.)

May one? (Pause.) One does. (Smile.) The old style! (Smile off.) There is so little one can speak of. (Pause.) One speaks of it all. (Pause.) All one can. (Pause.) I used to think... (pause)... I say I used to think that I would learn to talk alone. (Pause.)

Say that I mean to myself, the wilderness. (Smile.) But no. (Smile broader.) No no. (Smile off.) Even you are there. (Pause.) Oh no doubt you are dead, like the others, no doubt you have died, or gone away and left me, like the others, it doesn't matter, you are there. (Pause. Eyes left.)

The bag is there, the same as ever, I can see it. (Pause. Eyes right.)

Louder.) The bag is there. Willie. as good as ever, the one you gave me that day, let go to market. (Pause. Eyes front.)

That day. (Pause.) What day? (Pause.) I used to pray. (Pause.) I say I used to pray. (Pause.) Yes, I must confess I did. (Smile.) Not now. (Smile broader) No no. (Smile off. Pause.) Then... now... what difficulties here, for the mind. (Pause.) To have been always what I am- and so changed from what I was. (Pause. I am the one. I say, the one, then the other. (Pause.) Now the one, then the other. (Pause.) There is so little one can say, one says it all. (Pause.) All one can. (Pause.)

And no truth in it anywhere. (Pause.) My arms. (Pause.) My breasts. (Pause.) What arms? (Pause.) What breasts? (Pause.)

Willie. (Pause.) What Willie? (Sudden vehement affirmation.) My Willie. (Eyes right, calling.) Willie! (Pause, Louder.)
Wilkie (Pause. Eyes front.) Ah well, not to know, not to know for sure, great mercy, all I ask. (Pause. She closes eyes. Bell rings loudly. She opens eyes. Pause.) Eyes float up that seem to close in peace... to see... in peace. (Pause.) Do you think the earth has lost its atmosphere? Wilkie? (Pause.) *Do you, Wilkie? (Pause.) You have no opinion? (Pause.) Well that is like you, you never had any opinion about anything. (Pause.) It's understandable. I sometimes wonder. If the mind were to go. (Pause.) It won't of course. (Pause.) Not quite. (Pause.) Not mine. (Pause.) Not now. (Pause.) And now? (Long pause.) The face. (Pause.) The nose. (She squints down.) I can see it... (squinting down)... the tip... the nostrils... breath of life... that curve you so admired... (pouts)... a hint of lip... (pouts again)... if I puff them out... (sticks out tongue)... the tongue of course... you so admired... if I stick it out... (sticks it out again)... the tip... (eyes up)... suspicion of brow... eyebrow... imagination possibly... (Eyes left) cheek... no... (Eyes right)... no... (Distends cheeks)... even if I puff them out... (Eyes left)... a little blurred perhaps... but the bag. (Eyes front. Off hand.) The earth of course and... (Eyes right). The sunlight you gave me... that day... (Pause)... that day... the lake... the reeds. (Eyes front. Pause.) What day? (Pause.) What reeds? (Long pause.) Eyes close. Bell rings loudly. Eyes open. Pause.) That is all. (Pause.) What would I do without them, when words fail? (Pause.) Gaze before me, with compressed lips. (Long pause.) While she does so... I cannot. (Pause.) Ah yes, great mercies, great mercies. (Long pause. Low.) Sometimes I hear sounds... (Listening expression. Normal voice.) But not often. Yet, those are happy days, when there are sounds. (Pause.) I used to think... (pause)... I say I used to think they were in my head. (Smile.) But no. (Smile broader.) No no. (Smile off.) That was just logic. (Pause.) Reason. (Pause.) I have not lost my reason. (Pause.) Not yet. (Pause.) Not at all. (Pause.) Some remains. (Pause.) It's things, Wilkie. (Pause. Normal voice.) In the bag, outside the bag. (Pause.) Ah yes, things have their life, that is what I always say, things have a life. (Pause.) The bell... (Pause.) It hurts like a knife. (Pause.) A gnawer. (Pause.) One cannot ignore it. (Pause.) How often... (pause)... I say how often I have said... ignore it. Wilkie. Ignore the bell... pay no heed. Just sleep and wake. Sleep and wake. Do you please, open and close your eyes... Do you please, or in the way you find most helpful... (Pause.) Open and close your eyes, Wilkie, open and close, always that. (Pause.) But no. (Smile. Not now. (Smile broader.) No no. (Smile off. Pause.) What now? (Pause.) What now, Wilkie? (Long pause.) There is my story of course, when all else fails. (Pause.) A life. (Smile.) A long life. (Smile off.) Beginning in the womb, where life used to begin, Mildred has memories, she will have memories, of the womb, before she dies, the mother's womb. (Pause.) She is now four of five already and has recently been given a big waxen dolly. (Pause.) Fully clothes, complete outfit. (Pause.) Shoes, socks, undies, complete set, frilly frock, gloves. (Pause.) White mesh. (Pause.) A little white straw hat with a chin elastic. (Pause.) Pearly necklace. (Pause.) A little picture-book with legends in real print to go under her arm when she takes her walk. (Pause.) China blue eyes that open and shut. (Pause. Narrative.) The sun was not well up when Milly rose, descended the steep... (Pause)... slipped on her nightgown, backwards on all fours, though she had been forbidden to do so, tiptoed down the silent passage, entered the Crept under the table and began to undress Dolly. (Pause.) Scolding her... the while. (Pause.) Suddenly, a mouse... (Long pause.) Gently, Wilkie. (Long pause. Calling.) Willkie. Pause. Louder. (Pause. Mild reproach.) Sometimes find your attitude a little strange, Wilkie, all this time. It is not life,
you to be wantonly cried. (Pause.) Strange? (Pause.) No. (Smile.) Not here. (Smile broader.) Not now. (Smile off.) And yet—(Suddenly anxious) I do hope nothing is amiss. (Eyes right, loud) Is all well, dear? (Pause. Eyes front. To herself.) God grant he did not go in head foremost. (Eyes right, loud) You're not stuck, Willie? (Pause. Do.) You're not jammed, Willie? (Eyes front, distressed.) Perhaps he is crying out for help all this time and I do not hear him! (Pause.) I do of course hear cries. (Pause.) But they are in my head surely. (Pause.) Is it possible that... (Pause. With finality.) No no, my head was always full of cries. (Pause.) Faint confused cries. (Pause.) The day is now well advanced. (Smile. Smile off.) And yet it is perhaps a little soon for my song. (Pause.) To sing too soon is fatal, I always find. (Pause.) There is a problem here. (Pause.) One cannot sing...just like that, no. (Pause.) It bubbles up, for some unknown reason, the time is ill chosen, one chokes it back. (Pause.) One says, Now is the time, it is now or never, and one cannot. (Pause.) Simply cannot sing. (Pause.) Not a note. (Pause.) Another thing, Willie, while we are on this subject. (Pause.) Have you run across that Willie? (Pause.) In the course of your experience. (Pause.) Not? (Pause.) Sadness after intimate sexual intercourse one is familiar with of course. (Pause.) You would concur with Aristotle there. Willie, I fancy. (Pause.) Yes, that one knows and is prepared to face. (Pause.) But sadness after song... (Pause.) It does not last of course. (Pause.) That is what I find so wonderful. (Pause.) It wears away. (Long pause.) And now I call to the eye of the mind... Mr. Shower or Cooker. (She closes her eyes. Bell rings loudly. She opens her eyes. Pause.) Hand in hand, in the other hands bags. (Pause.) Getting on... in life. (Pause.) No longer young, not yet old. (Pause.) Standing there gaping at me. (Pause.) Can't have been a bad bosom, he says, in its day. (Pause.) Seen worse shoulders, he says, in my time. (Pause.) Does she feel her legs? He says. (Pause.) Is there any life in her legs? He says. (Pause.) Has she anything on underneath? (Pause.) Ask her yourself, she says. (Pause.) With sudden violence, let go of me for Christ sake and drop! (Pause. Do.) Drop dead! (Smile.) But no. (Smile broader.) No no. (Smile off.) I watch them recede. (Pause.) Hand in hand— and the bags. (Pause.) Dim. (Pause.) Then gone. (Pause.) Last human kind— to stray this way. (Pause.) Up to date. (Pause.) And now? (Pause.) Let me help. (Pause. Do.) Help, Willie. (Pause. Do.) Not. (Long pause. Narrative.) Suddenly a mouse. (Pause.) Suddenly a mouse ran up our little high and Mildred, dropping Dolly in her fright. Began to scream. (Winnie gives a sudden piercing scream) and screamed and screamed and screamed (Winnie screams twice). And screamed till all came running, in their night attire, papa, mamma, Bissy and... old Annie, to see what was the matter. (Pause.) What on earth could possibly be the matter. (Pause.) Too late. (Pause.) Too late. (Pause.) Willie. (Pause.) Normal voice. (Pause.) Ah well, not long now, Winnie, can't be long now, until the bell for sleep. (Pause.) Then you may close your eyes, then you must close your eyes— and keep them closed. (Pause.) Why say that again? (Pause.) I used to think... (Pause.) I say I used to think there was no difference between one fraction of a second and the next. (Pause.) I used to say... (Pause.) I say I used to say, Winnie, you are changeless, there is never any difference between one fraction of a second and the next. (Pause.) Why bring that up again? (Pause.) There is so little one can bring up at all. (Pause.) Everything within reason. (Long pause.) I can do no more. (Pause.) Say no more. (Pause.) But I must say more. (Pause.) Problem here. (Pause.) No, something must move, in the world. I can't any more. (Long pause.) I hear cries. (Pause.) Sing. (Pause.) Sing your old song, Winnie.
Long pause. Suddenly alert expression. Eyes switch right. WILLIE's head appears to her right round corner of mound. He is on all fours, dressed to kill- top hat, morning coat, striped trousers, etc., white gloves in hand. Very long bushy white Battle of Britain moustache. He halts, gazes front, smooths moustache. He emerges completely from behind mound, turns to his left, halts, looks up at WINNIE. He advances on all fours towards center, halts, turns head front, gazes front, strokes moustache, straightens tie, adjusts hat, advances a little further, halts, takes off hat and looks up at WINNIE. He is now not far from center and within her field of vision. Unable to sustain effort of looking up he sinks head to ground.

WINNIE: (Mondaire) Well this is an unexpected pleasure! (Pause.) Reminds me of the day you came whining for my hand. (Pause.) Worship you Winnie, be mine. (He looks up. She goes off into a giggle.) What a get up, you do look a sight! (Giggles.) Where are the flowers? (Pause.) Last smile today. (WILLIE sinks head.) Where were you all this time? (Pause.) What were you doing all this time? (Pause.) Changing? (Pause.) Did you not hear me screaming for you? (Pause.) Did you get stuck in your hole? (Pause.) She looks up. That's right, Willie, look at me. (Pause.) Feast your old eyes, Willie. (Pause.) Does anything remain? (Pause.) Any remains? (Pause.) No? (Pause.) I haven't been able to look after it, you know. (He sinks his head.) You are still recognizable in a way. (Pause.) Are you thinking of coming to live this side for now... for a bit maybe? (Pause.) Not now, Winnie. (Pause.) Just a brief call. (Pause.) Have you gone deaf, Willie? (Pause.) Hum. (Pause.) Oh I know you were never one to suffer worship you Winnie be mine and then nothing from that day forth only tidbits from Reynolds' News. (Eyes from.) Oh well, what matter, that's what I always say, it will have been a happy day, after all, another happy day. (Pause.) Not long now, Winnie. (Pause.) I hear cries. (Pause.) Do you ever hear cries, Willie? (Pause.) No? (Eyes back on WILLIE.) Winnie. (Pause.) Look at me again, Willie. (Pause.) Once more. (He looks up. Happily.) Ah! (Pause. Shocked.) What ails you, Willie, I never saw such an expression. (He drops hat and gloves and starts to crawl up mound towards her.) He halts, clinging to mound with one hand, reaching up with the other. Pause. Do I know you're next, Willie... or is it something else? (Pause.) Do you want to touch my face... again? (Pause.) Is it a kiss you're after, Willie... or is it something else? (Pause.) There was a time when I could have given you a hand. (Pause.) And then a time before that, again when I did give you a hand. (Pause.) You were always in dire need of a hand. (Pause.) He slithers back to foot of mound and lies with face to ground. He rises to hands and knees, raises his face towards her. (Pause.) Have another go, Willie, I'll cheer you on. (Pause.) Don't look at me like that! (Pause. Low.) Have you gone off your head, Willie? (Pause. Do.) Out of your poor old wits, Willie?

Pause.

WILLIE: (Just audible.) Win.

Pause. WINNIE's eyes front. Happy expression appears, grows.
WINNIE: Winnie! (Pause.) Oh, this is a happy day, this will be another happy day! (Pause.) After all, (Pause.) So far—

Pause. She hums tentatively beginning of song, then sings softly, musical-box tune.

Though I say not
What I may not
Let you hear,
Yet the swaying
Dance is saying,
Love me dear
Every touch of fingers
Tells me what I know,
Says for you,
It’s true, it’s true,
You love me so!

Pause. Happy expression off. She closes her eyes. Bell rings loudly. She opens her eyes. She smiles, gazing front. She turns her eyes, smiling, to WILLIE, still on his hands and knees, looking up at her. Smile off. They look at each other. Long pause.

Curtain.

wedding or funeral
Fairy happened in Remin.
Happy Days Program and Event Flier:

Below are images from the *Happy Days* program, which was passed out to audience members who attended the performance. The last image is the flier that was hung around the theater building on campus, advertising the show. Both the program and the event flier were created by myself.

Without the support of a number of individuals, this production would not have been possible. Thank you to everyone who was involved in helping this thesis production become a reality.

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Dramaturgical Note

Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), one of the most influential playwrights of the twentieth century, utilized a dramatic medium that experimented with language, de-railed linear plotlines, and placed characters in bizarre situations to accentuate the absurdity of the human condition. *Happy Days* was a particularly unique absurdist work. Previously, Beckett had explored existential ideas primarily through the male perspective, but with the creation of Winnie, he began to look at the fertility of life through the eyes of a woman.

When Beckett was envisioning this work, he "thought that the most dreadful thing that could happen to anybody would be not to be allowed to sleep so that just as you're dropping off there'd be a 'dong' and you'd have to keep awake, you're seeing into the ground, like, and it's all full of ants... and the sun is shining endlessly day and night and there is no tree... there's no shade, nothing, and that bell makes you up all the time and all you've got is a little pair of things to see you through life. And I thought who would cope with that and go down singing, only a woman." [1]

This thesis aims to explore a feminist perspective of *Happy Days*, focusing specifically on the desperate desire for women to be heard in a patriarchal society, and the continuing need to struggle to obtain happiness in a hopeless landscape. I hope you enjoy.

Rachel Collins

Cast:

Winnie.................................................Radical Collins
Willie..................................................Sean O'Beirne

Production Staff:

Director............................................Arlette Gaselle Rogers
Stage Manager.................................Jacob St. Aubin
Set Designer.......................................Ryan Myers
Costume Designer..............................Megan Knowles
Lighting Designer...............................Keri Donovan
Sound Designer.................................Ashlee Butler
Prop Master........................................Megan Knowles
Interim Stage Manager......................Chloe Modenstamm

Happy Days

By Samuel Beckett

An Honors Tutorial College Thesis Production

February 26th, 27th and 28th
Union Arts
8 pm
Happy Days Production Photos:

The following are production images, taken at the final dress rehearsal on February 25, 2012.