

Synopsis

Within this writing I will be investigating the subjectivity of interiority in relation to the domestic space. Depicting how interiority is exercised through the physicality of the home and the interior's influence upon consciousness. I intend firstly to depict the term 'interiority' in relation to the interior and self. Secondly, I will explore an *Auto-ethnographic study* which aims to provide insight into the deeply personal nature of one's interiority. This level of self-questioning will serve as a window into my own soul, providing insight into how interiority can be researched and depicted. I then aim to analyse *The Value of Objects and Emptiness* in manifesting interiority, questioning the research methods and techniques of key anthropologists and academic's texts, such as: *The Comfort of Things* by Daniel Miller, *In Praise of Shadows* by Junichrō Tanizaki and *The Poetics of Space* by Gaston Bachelard, integrating external sources to support or argue with the line of thinking. To finally conclude, on how interiority manifests through the domestic space, and what techniques and methodologies successfully illustrate *The Aura of The Domestic Space*.

Ethical Statement

This writing contains an auto-ethnographic study which contains sensitive information regarding certain family members. The individual was consulted before the interview commenced and has approved of the research which is documented and articulated below.

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Introduction

The domestic interior embodies an intimacy which can be felt unannounced, as public landscapes are left behind the lock of a door. There is a sense of instant identity upon entrance to the home, an interrelationship between self and the material culture which constitutes the space. For decades anthropologists, social scientists, artists and designers have argued how interiors should be perceived, researched and depicted. Vlad Ionescu discusses his approach within the essay: *The Interior as Interiority*,

“The interior as interiority proposes a specific approach: instead of conceiving interior design strictly as the disposition of objects in space, the interior becomes a *figure* of interiority. The decorum of our lived space, its furniture, walls and roof, is significant because it is a representation of our subjectivity: how we live is a sign of how we think, feel and imagine the world.”¹

Through observing the phenomenology between interior and inhabitant, the interior can be perceived more consciously. In relation to my own practice, questioning the metaphysics of spaces is fundamental in emerging perceptive interiors which place society and humanities psychology at the forefront of each proposal. In order to delineate the profundity of interiority, within the subject of Interior Design, it felt necessary to anchor this writing to the most intimate of spaces, the dwelling. The material culture of the domestic space holds a possessive quality like no other interior, where the subjectivity of the space is in relation to the individual who occupies it.

To further define the term interiority: it is to be considered as both conscious and subconscious, one's own collected thoughts, memories, experiences and daydreams, composed together, to sculpt what is known as the inner self. The domestic sphere is where such interiority can be most potent, as Gaston Bachelard agrees in *The Poetics of Space*, “I should say: the house shelters day-dreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace.”² It is arguable

¹ Ionescu Vlad, (2018) *The Interior as Interiority*:
(https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324041425_The_interior_as_interiority) p. 4

² Bachelard Gaston, *The Poetics of Space*, p.28

that the domestic space becomes the visual aura of a person, where interiority can be exercised and expressed, this can only be seen, of course, if the individual has agency over the space. As Juhani Pallasmaa discusses in *Identity, Intimacy and Domicile: Notes on Phenomenology of Home* “The home is the space we make our own, giving the dwelling its psyche and soul in addition to its formal and quantifiable qualities.”³ To unravel such a broad and complex ideology, it is essential to examine how greatly it differs from person to person in its visual expression. Take for example the collector and minimalist. The collector expels interiority outwardly, in an unconcealed fashion, whereas the minimalist has the capacity to carry interiority within them in an entirely contrary manner.

My intention within this writing is to question: how is interiority translated into the domestic space? Is interiority immanent throughout the material world? When does interiority start and end? What methodologies successfully unravel this complex relationship between interior and self? To answer these questions, I intend firstly to delve into an auto-ethnographic study. This research method will provide information, which is subjective and introspective, a qualitative approach, particularly valuable to the topic of interiority. Due to the introspective nature and level of self-questioning, the study reads similarly to a critical journal. This aims to provide insight into the deeply personal nature of one’s interiority. Through reference to key texts, I then plan to examine *The Value of Objects and Emptiness* in manifesting interiority; looking at methodologies used by anthropologists and academics, in writings such as *The Comfort of Things* by Daniel Miller, *In Praise of Shadows* by Junichirō Tanizaki and *The Poetics of Space* by Gaston Bachelard. I intend to clarify each source, its aims and its context, integrating external sources where necessary to support or argue with the line of thinking. To conclude, how interiority manifests through the domestic space, and what research methods successfully encapsulate the topic.

³ Pallasmaa Juhani, *Identity, Intimacy and Domicile; Notes on the Phenomenology of Home* <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.475.7009&rep=rep1&type=pdf> (No page number)

Auto-Ethnographic Study

As a child, my sensitivity to space was provoked when my family moved home from Yorkshire to Orkney. The landscapes surrounding me, felt like separate paradoxes, however, my objects journeyed alongside me. Through my life my relationship with the domestic space has felt increasingly intimate. The bedroom was a crucial sanctuary throughout my childhood, a space I felt was dependable, providing an anchor. It was within the bedroom I could store memories, desires, and daydreams, I could paint the narrative of the space, and position myself within. Amanda Vickery vividly illustrates the demand for private space within her book *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England*.

“The desire for a demarcated area that one could control developed during the early modern period, and by the eighteenth century was firmly entrenched. If economic circumstances meant that there was not even a room one could call one’s own, a lockable box where one could keep a collection of special things and harbour dreams and memories was sought.⁴ All classes of society, even the very poor, have great premium on retaining a separate and independent state of habitation even into very old age.”⁵

It can be argued that this need to collect and store objects originates from the narratives the individual ties to them. In relation to myself, the objects which compose my bedroom, all have emotiveness embedded within them, to a stranger they may appear foreign, but in relation to myself, they reflect my inner worlds. As a child my objects provided familiarity of who I was internally. The transition to Orkney, induced alopecia; everything once familiar to me was stripped away, I began to negotiate new landscapes with a new external identity. Regardless of external matter, as I stepped into my bedroom, I was entering a reflection of myself where objects were my companions and healers.

⁴ Vickery Amanda, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England*, p. 24

⁵ Vickery Amanda, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England*, p. 7

I found myself increasingly being drawn to objects which I felt provided a 'solution' to my experiences. I collected crystals in hope their healing properties, would manifest onto my own identity. As a child I often processed my hair loss by stroking my head with crystals, hoping they would aid my hair to grow back. These crystals are still scattered around my room today, embedded with memories. They are the one collection of objects that will remain in my domestic space continually, and even now, as I shift between locations, they travel with me. Before analysing my relationship to the domestic space, I had not recognised how heavily they influenced my practice. In August 2020, I created digitally printed textiles, sold as hair silks, to help empower women experiencing hair loss. [Fig 1,2,3] Perhaps my inner child was hoping I could share the power of these crystals with the world.

A second object which has remained prominent within my domestic setting is the bed. Throughout my childhood and into my teenage years my mother was tied to the domestic space due to illness. She was often bed-ridden, and the illness lingered throughout the home. I recollect as a child the view of my bed, initiated distress associating it with the place my mother was in pain. This relationship to the bed has remained prominent in my psyche, causing me to feel uncomfortable situated within it throughout the day. This complex association a basic object can provoke is highly valuable in relation to interiority and the domestic sphere, as it demonstrates the highly individualistic relationship that can evolve between self and interior.

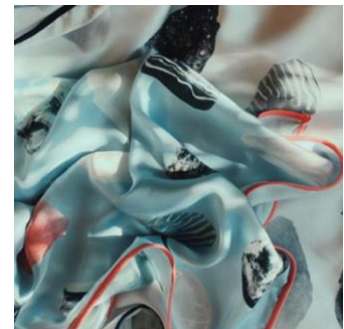
To compensate for the discomfort, I was drawn to brightly coloured objects. I watched my father paint the house in vibrant oranges and blues and the home became full of pets, he would bring flowers home when he returned from work, they



**Fig 1: Forsyth Mollie, *Crystal Digital Print*, (2020.)
Personal Image**



**Fig 2: Forsyth Mollie, *Crystal Scarf Self Portrait*, (2020)
Personal Image**



**Fig 3: Forsyth Mollie, *Crystal Textile*, (2020)
Personal Image**

became a symbol of life throughout the home. Throughout these years it appeared my parents were distilling as much life into the home as possible, perhaps to provide a form of pain relief. This emotional reaction could clearly be seen through the physicality of the domestic space evolving, it provided an output for experiences, feeding optimism to contradict pain and mental distress. As the years passed, fear patterns resurfaced as I relocated from Orkney to Glasgow for university, as emotions arose my domestic space flourished with bright objects, crystals and flowers.



Fig 4: Forsyth Mollie, Bedroom (2021) Personal Image

This reaction mirrored the techniques I had adapted and absorbed as a child, the domestic space yet again, situated and anchored me amongst foreign landscapes. I recognised bright objects allowed joy to be manifested amongst the uncertain. To this day, I purchase flowers each week, just like my father did, gently placing them beside my bed. [Fig. 4] An object claimed to be a monotonous decorative subject, can in fact embody much more than meets the eye.

Alone at Night by Livia Falcaru [Fig. 5] strongly illustrates the grounding nature of the domestic space. Where personal objects can act as companions. Falcaru makes use of vivid colours and objects which overlook the persona, causing an anchoring of self to be described. There is great privilege in stating that the home can provide a form of sanctuary as, for many, desired spaces are not even conceivable. This auto-ethnographic study provides insight into the potency of objects in reflecting my own interiority. However, it can be argued that the elements of the domestic space effect how these objects are contained. The outside world is constructed in such a way that I often feel I am performing, amongst streets, bars and restaurants the male gaze is embedded. Yet as I enter the stairwell into my flat, I gradually shed these pressures, the spotlight is shifted and I am now backstage, slowly wandering back into myself. These thresholds into the domestic setting, provide a gateway into self.



Fig 5: Falcaru Livia, *Alone at Night* dimensions unknown 2016
<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/507217976781365991/>

Upon entrance to the interior, I am instantly removed from spaces where I may be objectified, causing a deeper-rooted connection to the interior and one's interiority.

After undertaking an auto-ethnographic study, it felt necessary to research my sister's relationship to the domestic space, due to her growing up in an almost identical environment to me, I was intrigued to see how differently we may project our own interiorities into the domestic sphere. Before starting the interview, I asked her to quickly sketch the most important aspect of the domestic space. [Fig. 6] She located the drawing within her bedroom and presented a window, a bed and herself. The drawing surprised me; it was so far from the beautifully animated, vibrant home we had grown up in. Through her teenage years she also developed an auto-immune illness, the chronic fatigue caused her to be bed bound like my mother, as I analysed the drawing she stated:

“When you feel so ill within your body you need a window to look outside of, to allow perspective and connection to the world outside of yourself. Objects are a bonus, but for me I'd rather have an empty room with a beautiful view.”

To her it is evident the domestic space enabled an escapism away from her lived reality, where the fundamentals of the interior enabled her to become entirely lost in thought. She further described how sitting within her bed felt almost spiritual, as she could watch the world go by and manifest her life beyond illness. Her drawing vividly connects to Edward Hopper's painting *Morning Sun* [Fig. 7]

where human isolation is conceptually portrayed through a desolate interior, the painting is bleak, conveying an abrupt sense of solitude, where there is a dissociation from self and the domestic setting. The window enables deeper connections to the outside world, an escapism from one's current climate, provoking the question does interiority speak just as vividly through emptiness as it does objects?

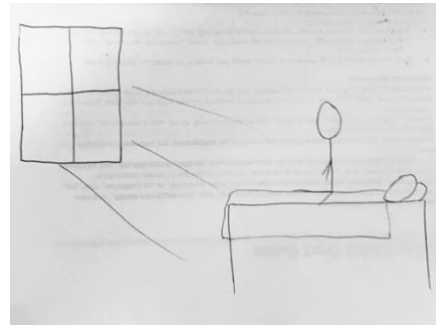


Fig 6: Forsyth Ellen, Domestic Sketch, (2021) Personal Image



Fig 7: Hopper Edward, 'Morning Sun', oil canvas, dimensions 101 x 98cm, for 'Window Paintings' 1952, <https://www.wikiart.org/en/edward-hopper/morning-sun>

The Value of Objects and Emptiness

The Comfort of Things by Daniel Miller, illustrates the relationship between person and object. Miller and his co-researcher Fiona Parrott, a PhD student who also specialised in anthropology, formed a seventeen-month investigation where they selected a random street in suburban South London and entered over thirty individuals' domestic homes. Miller's approach is illustrative, an engrossing collection of thirty portraits which have been painted through literary means. Feeding the opportunity to wander in and out of chapters as you would gaze through paintings in a gallery. This approach is continued through each chapter, where Miller's prime focus appears to be less on the people themselves but is in fact on the objects which characterise a household. From the sparse emptiness of a flat, to overwhelming clutter, from Christmas decorations to compact discs and rubber ducks. He uses each object as a tool, the piece to a missing puzzle, to make sense of the individual's identity and relationships. He uses the ownership of the home to get closer to the occupant's psychology, Alison Ravetz with Richard Turkington state in their text, *The Place of Home: The English Domestic Environment 1914-2000* "The house is a structure, a home – especially one that is owned – tends to be a place that reflects back onto its owners, reinforcing aspects of pride and identity."⁶

Before writing *The Comfort of Things* Miller was a prolific writer in anthropology and had already intensely studied humans' relationships to things. Like many anthropologists his work consisted of large quantities of ethnographic research. His *Prologue* to *The Comfort of Things* is essential in understanding that his research couldn't be further from a traditional ethnographic approach, he states, "This book is an experiment designed to find people without resource to such categories"⁷ He puts great emphasis on the point that there are no social brackets within his research, no community to be found on the street, and only twenty three percent consisted of born Londoners, "I call these chapters portraits because I employ an approach that may have become somewhat passé in mainstream anthropology, a form of holism."⁸

⁶ Ravetz Alison with Turkington Richard, *The Place of Home: The English Domestic Environment 1914-2000* p. 205

⁷ Miller Daniel, *The Comfort of Things* p.4

⁸ Miller Daniel, *The Comfort of Things* p.5

Miller fails to mention however those who fall outside of the bracket of owning a home, or those who don't have the privilege to choose the objects which construct it.

It can be argued that Miller jumps too quickly from object to person without considering the fundamentals of the domestic space, causing his conclusions to be only related to the objects themselves. He states, "Material Culture matters because objects create subjects much more than the other way around"⁹ This technique of putting material culture at the forefront before psychology, does however, signify just how interlinked humanities relationships are with objects, causing the reader to question, is the object the person or is the person the object? The two opening portraits hold the greatest significance in describing the value of objects and emptiness in relation to interiority. Miller eloquently creates a juxtaposition of chapters. This stark contrast puts greater emphasis on the interior and the individual's relationship with it.

The first portrait opens into George's flat, "George's flat was disorientating not because of anything that was in it, but precisely because it contained nothing at all."¹⁰ Miller describes the flat as being eerily empty. He explains that minimalism within the home can still be comforting; even amongst blank white walls there is always at least one small object - a symbol connecting the inhabitant to a life well lived. George's flat was not stylishly quiet from such ornaments, his flat demonstrated someone who's life had been entirely neglected, his character was formed by a domination of authority in his relationships, developing a paralysis of identity and dependency upon others to exist, resulting in neglect of the home. "The flat was empty, completely empty, because its occupant had no independent capacity to place something decorative or ornamental within it."¹¹ There are several portraits that discuss neglect, loss and death. But George is the only portrait which fails to process such trauma by projecting into an object, Miller and Parrott found this

⁹ Miller Daniel, *The Comfort of Things* p.287

¹⁰ Miller Daniel, *The Comfort of Things*, p.8

¹¹ Miller Daniel, *The Comfort of Things*, p.13

visit the most distressing, as unlike every other portrait, George could not seek refuge in his pain through the comfort of things.

In reference to Edward Hopper [Fig 8] there are visual connections to George's flat, where the domestic space consists of only essential furnishings. From looking at Hopper's paintings it is evident that a similar bleakness has been conceptualised in relation to a lack of

possessions, as Miller states, "There is a violence to such emptiness"¹² Hopper's paintings conceptualise a vision of the sheer discomfort which can erupt from one's own existence.



Fig 8: Hopper Edward, 'Summer In The City', oil canvas, dimensions 76 x 51cm, for 'Window Paintings,' 1950, <https://www.wikiart.org/en/edward-hopper/summer-in-the-city-1950>

In contrast to *Empty*, several chapters are enriched with objects which bring pure connectivity: *Portrait 4: Starry Green Plastic Ducks* allows Simon to comfortably express his sexuality towards his partner and himself. *Portrait 13: McDonalds Truly Happy Meals* enables Marina to put her traumatic upbringing behind her and focus on the family she has created. Miller suggests that these objects are at the centre of people's hearts and homes. The most prominent chapter to confirm Miller's thinking of, "usually the closer our relationships are with objects, the closer are relationships are with people."¹³ is *Portrait 2 Full*. He concludes the chapter stating,

"From this family one learns the artisanal form of love, care and devotion, performed with subtle Grace, creativity and imagination that the ways persons become objects of care and objects become subjects of relationships blend imperceptibly with each other in the overall fullness and artistry of these lives."¹⁴

Not only is Miller portraying the necessity of objects in forming such perceptive connections but his mention of these acts being family traditions suggest the objects themselves hold deep rooted memories that will be passed through generations.

¹² Miller Daniel, *The Comfort of Things*, p.8

¹³ Miller Daniel, *The Comfort of Things*, p.1

¹⁴ Miller Daniel, *The Comfort of Things*, p.31

Imogen Racz agrees, “Objects that relate to the lives of the inhabitants or are inherited help to anchor memories of events and people.”¹⁵

The *Everything is Alive* podcast by Radiotapia also provokes thought on objects in relation to interiority. This is cleverly articulated through the personification of objects, where an interview unfolds through the object being given a voice. This causes the object to be considered without the presence of the possessor. The objects discuss their perception of existing amongst human beings. These interviews separate the human values projected onto objects, providing valuable information into how they are practically used and treated. By the object being separated from the possessor it simplifies its form, causing the listener to recognise the weight of consciousness which is projected onto such simple and monotonous objects.

Sherry Turkle’s text, *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With* also conveys the strength of interiority exercised through objects. Turkle’s writing heavily resonates with *The Comfort of Things*. Like Miller’s text, it comprises over thirty short chapters depicting how objects shape self. The layout of the books run somewhat in parallel. It is evident that Turkle’s thinking around objects and self, is similar to Miller’s as she states in her *Introduction: The Things That Matter*,

“The notion of evocative objects brings together these two less familiar ideas, underscoring the inseparability of thought and feeling in our relationship to things. We think with the objects we love; we love with the objects we think with.”¹⁶

Turkle pinpoints the intertwining relationships that form between object and individual, where object becomes identity and identity becomes object. A complex behaviour which both writers choose to put great emphasis on. Like Miller, Turkle demonstrates the profound sentiment individuals project into the simplest of objects – an apple, a laptop, a pair of ballet slippers – where consciousness can hold a physical presence. Both writers applaud the presence of objects within the home, emphasising their power to anchor identity and self, however the objects analysed

¹⁵ Racz Imogen, *Art and the Home : Comfort, Alienation and the Everyday*, p.11

¹⁶ Turkle Sherry, *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With*, p.5

are present through choice of possession, which raises the question: What happens to identity when objects are distilled into the home without freedom of choice?

A historical example of this is the presentation of the domestic setting within Western culture post World War I and World War II. Then women were confined to the domestic space to provide a political solution to the return of soldiers, to enable the return of male workers in the recovery of economy. This resulted in public and domestic space being increasingly gendered, where the public was dominated by the masculine and the domestic was associated with the feminine. Women were continually surrounded by objects which forced an ideal identity upon them. Betty Friedan wrote within the *Feminine Mystique*, “In 1960, the problem that has no name burst like a boil through the image of the happy American housewife.”¹⁷ These objects which signified their duties as a woman dominated the entire landscape of the home, as can be seen from Martha Rosler’s performance in *Semiotics of the Kitchen*. She stands in a typical kitchen of the 1960’s listing through the objects which confine her A-Z. The sharp tone and abrupt gestures which erupt from her, demonstrate the direct effect of such objects on women’s interiority within the domestic space, as Friedan states,

“It is not possible to preserve one’s identity by adjusting for any length of time to a frame of reference that is in itself destructive to it. It is very hard indeed for a human being to sustain such an “inner” split—conforming outwardly to one reality, while trying to maintain inwardly the values it denies.”¹⁸

In contrast to Miller’s writing this vividly demonstrates the bleak effect of objects upon the psyche. Where objects can be embedded with political constructs which condition one’s interiority. Both Miller and Turkle suggest that: the more objects, the more anchored and solidified the individual’s identity is, that their presence can often be liberating for the individual. However, considering women within the domestic space, it is clear there is a bias within both Miller and Turkle’s research which feeds a limited perspective on the value of objects in relation to interiority.

¹⁷ Friedan Betty, *The Feminine Mystique*, p.27

¹⁸ Friedan Betty, *The Feminine Mystique* p.362

Interiority is entirely subjective to the individual, where it differs greatly in its expression, for someone who outwardly expresses their interiority this can easily be seen through the domestic space. However, for someone who has little interest in the interior or outwardly anchoring themselves, their interiority is more 'held' inside of them and can be carried through a range of landscapes, this is where Miller's writing is constricted. Despite the diversity within the book of both people and objects. The text is fed from one perspective, therefore, there is only access to his perception of each home, causing the comprehensibility of the source to be questionable. *Empty* is the only chapter which depicts the value of emptiness in relation to interiority, although highly valuable, it limits the readers perception of emptiness, associating it to desolateness and mental distress. This has been constructed to build on his argument *The Comfort of Things* however it is a limited resource in relation to interiority, as emptiness can provoke space for perspective and transformation, as Pamela Salen debates in her essay *Piecing Together the Empty Interior*

"The term "empty" can denote absence, loneliness, and a sense of loss—for example, "empty nest" syndrome and depression—or it is representative of clarity and freedom as in traditional Japanese culture that views emptiness not as nothingness but rather as the potential and the flexibility to become anything."¹⁹

An author who enchants an esoteric theory on emptiness is Junichrō Tanizaki, in one of his lean yet, extraordinarily powerful books, *In Praise of Shadows*. Although written in 1933, the book is timeless; its teachings appear more relevant even a century later. Tanizaki was a supreme Japanese novelist, essayist and playwright, who wrote *In Praise of Shadows* with the aim of connecting to a wide audience. The book examines Japanese aesthetics through the foundations of tradition. Tanizaki provides insight into his own interiority, where his spirit lies amongst delicate happenings which are so often overlooked – such as the gentle rise of steam from a bowl of soup, the sound of rain trickling down a building's facade into the stems of leaves, and candlelight which dispels shadows into the corners of rooms. Tanizaki writes with great spirit, where he continually *Praises* the darkness and emptiness of the interior, perceiving it as one entirety, declaring interiority within walls, floors, lights and shadows, he quotes:

¹⁹ Salen Pamela, *Piecing Together The Empty Interior*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/joid.12111>, p.9

“An empty space is marked off with plain wood and plain walls, so that the light drawn into it forms dim shadows within emptiness. There is nothing more. And yet, when we gaze into the darkness that gathers behind the crossbeam, around the flower vase, beneath the shelves, though we know perfectly well it is mere shadow, we are overcome with the feeling that in this small corner of the atmosphere there reigns complete and utter silence; that here in the darkness immutable tranquillity holds sway.”²⁰

Tanizaki reveals how absence can be just as key as presence. Through considering the interior as whole, his perspective regards the domestic space in phenomenology, where the mind orchestrates with more than just object, but also the entire mental shell of the interior. This phenomenological thinking declares interiority as richly through emptiness as it does objects, providing a more comprehensive perspective into the aura of the domestic space. The science of Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, is described by Gregory Minissale in *Framing Consciousness in Art*

“An intersubjective world, where the connection between consciousness and the real world is layered and interdependent. For him, the external world is reconfigured in our minds through memory and reflection, so that the consciousness and the outer world frame each other.”²¹

This highlights the ipseity in connection to the domestic space, that one’s interiority cannot be defined by another, it is an entirely individualistic process of the brain’s perception. For example, if an individual is to perceive the interiority of another’s home, they will partly project their own interiority onto the space around them. This conveys how for some, emptiness is inhospitable and for others it is mental bliss, it is dependent on one’s own relationship to the subject of the space. In relation to emptiness this strongly indicates how an equal amount of interiority can be present as a cluttered room, however interiority is not exercised and outputted physically, it is accessed through the consciousness of the individual.

²⁰ Tanizaki Junichrō, *In Praise of Shadows*, p.44

²¹ Minissale Gregory, *Framing Consciousness in Art: Transcultural Perspectives*, p.66

An artist who invites the viewer to question their relationship to emptiness is Rachel Whiteread. Within her sculptures the interior is inverted. *Ghost* [Fig. 9] is a plaster cast of a room in a domestic setting, it presents as an exterior, however, when examined, it is the negative space of an interior. Silhouettes of a window, fireplace, and door are embedded, entirely impassable. This positions the viewer both inside and outside of the room, a deliberate approach which creates an outward perspective, *Ghost* explores themes associated with a dissipated home, a memory of lost space, where the room is conceptually pervaded, sculpting not only an inverted view of the physical interior, but also a transpersonal piece of work which provokes the viewers internal echoes in relation to the domestic sphere, evoking a sense of one's interiority.



Fig 9: Whiteread Rachel, *Ghost*, plaster on steel frame, dimensions 269 x 355cm, 1990, <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.131285.html>

Whiteread and Tanizaki provide great insight into the spirit of emptiness. Affirming its presence is just as rich as objects, it is key to note within Tanizaki's writing there is a true sense of holism in relation to objects and the surrounding interior. A key example is his discussion of the toilet, where he relishes in the cultural polarities between such object, he states, "The Japanese toilet truly is a place of spiritual repose"²² He continues by discussing the journey through the garden to the toilet, where he is at ease with nature even in the depths of the night. Japanese culture embodies the word 'Hado' defining the flow of vibrational energy, The DailyOm states;

"Walking through a Japanese garden, one truly feels the life force energy that is known as Hado. Hado isn't just present in Japan, but it is a concept that has existed in Japan for centuries. Hado is present in all things, animate and inanimate. It resides everywhere, even in the air and in people"²³

It could be considered that the term 'Hado' defines the sensation of one's interiority vibrating through physical matter, suggesting the prominence of interiority beyond

²² Tanizaki Junichrō, *In Praise of Shadows*, p.7

²³ The DailyOM (2021) *Hado*: <https://www.dailyom.com/cgi-bin/display/printerfriendly.cgi?articleid=65523>

the domestic sphere, that it is immanent throughout the material world. Tanizaki's writing defines this further, "No words can describe that sensation as one sits in the dim light, basking in the faint glow reflected from the shoji, lost in meditation or gazing out at the garden"²⁴ Through his poetic tone he paints a vision of how metaphysically the toilet feels like a celestial throne, where instead of the focus being on the function of the object only, there is an awareness for how the interior orchestrates the object, he considers the interior as an entirety, providing a more equitable perspective. Gaston Bachelard, a French philosopher, emphasises the importance of this, within his text *The Poetics of Space*.

"The house, quite obviously, is a privileged entity for a phenomenological study of the intimate values of inside space, provided, of course, that we take it in both its unity and its complexity, and endeavour to integrate all the special values in one fundamental value."²⁵

Like Tanizaki, Bachelard considers the interior beyond just objects, he undertakes a phenomenological examination into the meaning of interiors. Bachelard opens his writing within a domestic setting, depicting, draws, dressers, corners, to the finest detail of a doorknob. He refers to the 'poetic image' as a 'phenomenology of the soul' an expression of the imagination and consciousness. Bachelard claims in his introduction that his writing aims to reach beyond those with an architectural or interior design background, stretching to poets, creators, philosophers, anthropologists, psychiatrists. Bachelard depicts how the home is a universe of itself, where interiority reaches its epitome, due to its subjectivity. The dwelling holds an interrelationship with the soul, where both reflect the other, he touches on how this is unifying but also complex.

"Every corner in a house, every angle in a room, every inch of excluded space in which we like to hide, or withdraw into ourselves, is a symbol of solitude for the imagination; that is to say, it is the germ of a room, or of a house."²⁶

²⁴ Tanizaki Junichrō, *In Praise of Shadows*, p.7

²⁵ Bachelard Gaston, *The Poetics of Space*, p.25

²⁶ Bachelard Gaston, *The Poetics of Space*, p.155

Bachelard implies through his writing that interiority circulates and breathes through the totality of the home. It is more than emptiness and objects; it is rather omnipresent throughout. These overlooked components of the interior, house a manifestation of the soul, where consciousness is embedded in forgotten stains on carpets and bricks which have remained still for decades. He believes this is the consciousness which does not require thought or knowledge, it is authentic, an entire reflection of the human soul. This explains why such interiority is so difficult to define or pin down as it is the spirit of the individual, defined from the depths of the subconscious.

The Poetics of Space declares interiority to be abundant throughout internal and external landscapes, through objects and emptiness. All are to be considered equal in value, each inform, orchestrate or influence the other. Within the chapter, *The Dialects of Outside and Inside* Bachelard's thinking is most prevalent in his metaphysical depiction of the door.

"For the door is an entire cosmos of the Half-open. In fact, it is one of its primal images, the very origin of a daydream that accumulates desires and temptations: the temptation to open up the ultimate depths of being, and the desire to conquer all reticent beings. The door schematizes two strong possibilities, which sharply classify two types of daydream. At times, it is closed, bolted, padlocked. At others, it is open, that is to say, wide open."²⁷

His depiction clarifies the equal significance of emptiness and objects in expressing interiority. Both are dependent on the other, without the door the sentiment of emptiness cannot express, and without emptiness the door has no connection to the landscape which lies on the other side of its hinge. The daydream is in harmony with both. In contrast to Miller and Turkle's writing, Tanizaki and Bachelard sense the aura of the domestic space in its totality, where it is more than just objects and emptiness, it is an entire synthesis of physical and non-physical matter. Miller and Turkle's writings emphasise that interiority is fixed and anchored by objects which compose the dwelling. However, Tanizaki and Bachelard see beyond just objects and consider all which orchestrates them. They emphasise that the interior is in harmonious vibration with the individual, and that interiority diffuses between the positive and negative space of the domestic setting.

²⁷ Bachelard, Gaston, *The Poetics of Space*, p.237

Conclusion

To conclude, interiority is immanent throughout the material world, and most detectable through the intimacies of the domestic interior. Through analysing academics desires to pinpoint where it begins and ends, writings can re-configure one's interiority. Miller and Turkle's texts provide compelling examples into how interiority can be reflected through objects. However, to declare autonomy over another's interiority, proposes an approach which is assumptive. It is evident that true interiority can only be accessed authentically, through auto-ethnographic writing, where a window is provided into another's soul. Even through literary means, interiority is difficult to anchor as it rather 'felt' through one's perception. This is where art and film can provide a visual conceptualisation of interiority which mirrors the ethos of one's consciousness. The writings of Tanizaki and Bachelard successfully adapt a holism, considering not only the interior in phenomenology but also interiority itself, both separate entities which they suggest stretch far beyond just objects and emptiness. The domestic setting arguably houses interiority like no other space, yet to consider interiority as a subject, it expands beyond just the domestic interior, it is embedded within all physical landscapes

. Tanizaki and Bachelard raise questions on other interior and exterior landscapes, how interiority can be intensely spirituous throughout the physical terrain, but is essentially anchored by the essence of the domestic, as it is where we learn to be most intimate with our inner worlds. Bachelard states, "All really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home"²⁸ Take the hotel room for example, is such interiority present as it may be in the home? Does the bed provoke similar comfort, behaviours and dreams? Can public parks feel like one's own garden? Where wilderness is contained for pleasure and outdoor expression. Does the restaurant activate intimacy and discussion like it may at one's own dining table? Do grocers and supermarkets interconnect with the interiority of one's own kitchen cupboard? These questions provoke thought on the constructs of public interiors, considering where the essence of them may derive from. It also provokes the designer to consider their own interiority and that in order to design for others, research methods should not be assumptive. The findings of this writing encourage researchers,

²⁸ Bachelard Gaston, *The Poetics of Space*, p.27

scientists and designers to work sensitively in relation to the individual, perhaps for the designer it provokes thought towards using empathy more within design, but most importantly it provokes the importance of listening when researching the interiority of the individual. As from the findings of this writing, such questions can only be answered by the individual. Therefore, it is crucial to clarify the subjectivity of interiority in its expression, and that the answer is entirely dependable on the individual's privileges, lived experiences, and consciousness as to where and how interiority is anchored. Interiority is entirely individualistic and should be considered in its synthesis, and convolution, in researching both the interior and the individual who occupies it.

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