"The culmination of Romantic agony":

Internal Posture in Samuel Beckett's *Murphy*, *Waiting for Godot*, and the narratives in *Stories and Texts for Nothing*

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Abstract

Even though the idea of a constant quality in the oeuvre of an author is recurrent in several literary theories and analyses of Samuel Beckett's work in particular, Jérôme Meizoz' concept of internal posture has not yet been extensively applied in literary studies. This master thesis aims to explicitly address this concept by applying it to three case studies taken from Beckett's corpus of writing, namely *Murphy* (1938), *Waiting for Godot* (1952), and the narratives in *Stories and Texts for Nothing* (1955). In order to reveal how internal posture is constructed in these three texts, this research analyses paratextuality, major themes, and style separately for each case study. Comparing and contrasting these findings shows that Beckett's internal posture embodies intellectuality (especially philosophy) through a continuous addressing of the distinction between physicality and mental freedom, existential pessimism, the meaninglessness of life, and the subsequent estrangement. These themes and sentiments are fortified by a style that includes both tragedy and comedy. The absurdity and meaninglessness are interpreted in a more pessimistic light in the latter two case studies than in *Murphy*, which reflects the difference between Beckett's earlier and later writing. Meizoz' formulation of internal posture does not provide the desired guidance in terms of method or additional terminology, however, which is why this research resorts to a combination of close-reading and literature review. The research conducted in this master thesis might not reveal new insights for the separate case studies but attempts something innovative by aiming to reveal a constant quality across texts in an oeuvre addressed as internal posture.

Key Words: Samuel Beckett, *Murphy*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Stories for Nothing*, internal posture, authorship, intellectuality, absurdist, existential pessimism.

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Introduction

Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) was a highly prominent figure in the literary world of the second half of the twentieth century. He is known for his wanderings through Europe and eventual settling down in Paris during the Second World War. Whereas Beckett initially translated his English works into French, it soon became the other way around as well. These extraordinary characteristics seem to be reflected in the thematic continuity of his works, foregrounding exile and language. The eccentricity of his character in combination with the avant-garde quality of his work has caused Beckett to spark much interest not only in his oeuvre but also in his persona. It therefore does not come as a surprise that much of his oeuvre and life have been researched, which has resulted in many publications concerning Beckett. What stands out is that scholars tend to address his writing as a whole in their introductory comments, suggesting that his corpus of writing shares a thematic coherence for which Beckett's authorship functions as the unifying factor. In "The Imaginary Museum of Samuel Beckett" (2002) Raymond Federman considers "the unhappy, depressing, morbid condition of the Beckettian creatures," summarised as "sociological misérabilisme," as well as "the artistry, and especially the beautiful geometry of his work" (154) a constant throughout Beckett's oeuvre. In their introduction in *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett* (2004) Ackerley and Gontarski speak of "the Beckett country" (x) and "[t]he Beckett landscape" (xiv) where "models, codes, myths, words themselves float free, having lost touch with or broken from their origins, foundations, and points of reference" (xv). It is thus suggested that Beckett has created his own world or universe in which he provides the general basis of his entire oeuvre. Especially interesting is the phrase "the culmination of Romantic agony" (ix), which Ackerley and Gontarski use to summarise Beckett's writing. In her introduction in *Beckett: Waiting for Godot: A Casebook* (1987), Ruby Cohn attempts to capture this tendency for summarising:

> Through half a century Samuel Beckett has produced a body of work that some critics reduce to a single theme. . . . Among those proposed are: the search for self; the absurdity of man in the world; the dedication to artistic failure; the erosive force of time; the bankruptcy of the Western cultural tradition; the encroachment of nothingness on being; the treacherous slippage of language; the wavering eye on a hovering object. (11)

This interesting tendency for generalising statements, despite the explicit mentioning of internal posture, functions as the starting point of this master thesis.

It is Jérôme Meizoz' concept of posture as formulated in "Modern Posterities of Posture. Jean-Jacques Rousseau" (2010) that can prove helpful in identifying such a constant quality in the oeuvre of an author. An author's posture functions *externally*, the public (self-) representation of an author, and *internally,* a reflection and confirmation of the former in the author's writing, respectively. External posture is first and foremost a sociological phenomenon, and has often been applied to the persona of Beckett in some way or form by scholars such as James Knowlson and Jennifer M. Jeffers. Internal posture, which has not yet been extensively investigated in the world of literary studies, is a less familiar concept in this respect. This master thesis aims to apply Meizoz' internal posture to the oeuvre of Samuel Beckett, which is represented by three case studies–*Murphy* (1938), *Waiting for Godot* (1952), and the narratives from *Stories and Texts for Nothing* (1955)–due to the limited scope and timeframe of this research. This thesis does not only fill a gap in research into Beckett's writings by applying a new method but also helps in reflecting on the concept of internal posture for practical use by answering the following research question: How is internal posture constructed in Samuel Beckett's *Murphy*, *Waiting for Godot*, and the narratives in *Stories and Texts for Nothing*, and how does this construction differ in his earlier and later writing? The first steps are to further establish the outline and justification of this research and create a theoretical framework, as is done in this introductory chapter. This is followed by three chapters each answering the subquestion how Beckett's internal posture is constructed in one of the three case study. This master thesis concludes with a final chapter that combines the findings from these three chapters, draws one general conclusion, reflects on the theoretical framework and method, and provides recommendations for further research.

Literature review

James Knowlson is a recurring name when it comes to writing on Samuel Beckett. His biography of Beckett titled *Damned to Fame*, which was first published in 1996, is a well-known work that was created with the help of the author himself as well as his close family members. The book features highly personal information, ranging from his troublesome relationship with his mother to sexual relationships with women (or the lack thereof). In addition, several chapters have been dedicated to providing context for some of his major works such as *Murphy*, *Waiting for Godot*, *How It Is*, and *Happy Days*. It is striking that Knowlson, even when describing his early youth in the first number of chapters, continually refers to the type of author Beckett would later become and would intrigue many. Of his days at Portora Royal School, Knowlson writes that "[t]here was some degree of agreement among his contemporaries that he could be moody, withdrawn, and introspective. Clearly, he already had something strangely reserved, enigmatic, even aloof about him" (56). He refers to something he calls "instinctive individualism" (61) a few pages further on. Such passages seem to suggest that the biography was very much written on the basis of the authorship Beckett had by that time firmly established.

Ironically, the preface reveals how Beckett himself tried to prevent Knowlson from writing the book, simply because he thought his personal life to be irrelevant to his writing: "He always hoped that it would be his work rather than his life that was placed under the microscope" (19). It was the fact that Knowlson was very familiar with his works that eventually convinced Beckett to allow himself to cooperate on an inevitable new biography. Knowlson challenged the idea of an absolute separation between life and writing by pointing out the obvious links between his personal experience and returning themes and scenery to Beckett, who simply responded that the images were "obsessional" (20). It is also suggested that Beckett's incorporating of his experiences took on a more abstract and less direct form after the Second World War, implying that he was never able to fully write himself out of his texts. Even though Beckett died shortly after agreeing to this, Knowlson was able to access much information through personal relations of the author (19-21).

Besides this biography, Knowlson has collaborated with photographer John Haynes in creating *Images of Beckett* (2003). The title indicates that the book aims at capturing a certain aspect of Beckett's persona, but focuses less on personal life experiences rather than self-presentation. Haynes' portraits of Beckett and his photographs of his plays (many of them unseen until that moment) are accompanied by three essays by Knowlson: one functions as a personal memoir, one deals with the influence of Beckett's favourite art on his theatrical productions, and one characterises Beckett as a director of his own plays. The first immediately presents Beckett as a writer lauded with appreciation and literary prizes, but who also chose solitude over fame. It is even stated that "[h]e loathed all forms of self-exposure or self-promotion" (1), implicating the image of an author who lives for his art. Even though Beckett was also known to have a large number of friends and acquaintances, it is the image of blocking incoming calls and avoiding any appointments for long stretches of time that sticks (3-5). The portraits of Beckett, which are only included in the first essay by Knowlson, share some striking similarities. The majority of them captures Beckett in front of a black background; they are centred around his head, which often seems to be an detached or independent from his body because of him wearing all black clothing. Such images express and stress the idea of the author as a solitary and genius figure.

Damned to Fame (1996) and *Images of Beckett* (2003) explicitly express interest in Beckett's persona and greatly contribute to the image of his authorship, even after his death. Even though these works touch upon the subject of self-representation, it is not substantial enough to speak of posture. Jérôme Meizoz defines the concept of posture as the conscious taking up of a position in the cultural field, which occurs both externally and internally. External posture then refers to the persona of the author outside of the text, which Meizoz claims is heavily reflected in the author's work (i.e. internal posture). Meizoz' concept, which is more elaborately discussed in the theoretical framework, thus suggests somewhat of a constant quality across an oeuvre in terms of style, theme, protagonists, and setting. Ackerley and Gontarski's introduction in *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett* (2004) seems to hint at this. The work explains a selection of key phrases in Beckett's oeuvre and provides contextual information for many of his works, ranging from poetry to theatre. Ackerley and Gontarski comment on the literary tradition Beckett drew from, based on discontinuity, stating that despite these influences his oeuvre "retains a remarkable if surprising coherence, his works forming part of a continuous series, if not a pattern" (x). They go on by describing "the Beckett landscape" (xiv), explaining that this book provides insight into this world and everything in it.

Examples of works that address general themes across Beckett's oeuvre are Jennifer M. Jeffers' *Beckett's Masculinity* (2009) and Paul Stewart's *Sex and Aesthetics in Samuel Beckett's Work* (2011). Both books are part of the series *New Interpretations of Beckett in the Twenty-first Century*, edited by Jeffers, which promotes criticism that presents new perspectives on Beckett and his works. Stewart explains in his introduction that sexuality, often linked to death, is a recurrent theme in Beckett's prose writing and plays; he suggests that Beckett's dealing with sexuality and aesthetics is heavily indebted to his familiarity with Augustine and Schopenhauer. The statement that "[i]t might be tempting to pattern Beckett's life and art on Schopenhauer's philosophy" (7) suggests there is at least somewhat of a continuous relationship between Beckett's personal beliefs and the quality of his writing. Jeffer's introduction in *Beckett's Masculinity* emphasises that it is no longer realistic to view masculinity as the universal norm of human beings since there are several types of masculinity, and enforces that this has been taken for granted in criticism on Beckett (1-2). The book "is an attempt to render visible Beckett's own subjective masculine identity through examining the norms of his era and milieu, and his response to them in order to give a material context to his oeuvre" (2). Again, Beckett's personal experience is connected to his writing through a defined theme and is in fact characterised as "the core issue throughout [his] career" (7).

Research question

The research question of this master thesis is as follows: How is internal posture constructed in Samuel Beckett's *Murphy*, *Waiting for Godot*, and the narratives in *Stories and Texts for Nothing*, and how does this construction differ in his earlier and later writing? Jérôme Meizoz' theorisation of the concept posture suggests that it cannot only be applied to the figure of the author outside of his texts (i.e. external), but that a successful posture is heavily reflected in the works of the author (i.e. internal). This would mean that there is a constant quality to Beckett's oeuvre in terms of style, theme, protagonists, and setting. It is expected that close-reading of the primary texts selected for this research and analysing paratextuality in those texts will reveal this quality. Due to the limited scope of this master thesis, it is important to make a careful selection of case studies (which is explained in the following paragraph) and cut out several aspects that could in some way be connected to the topic of this research. The aspect of language (i.e. writing in French as an Irishman), for one, is excluded from this research for the simple reason that such a complicated (sub)topic would be too overwhelming for the extent of the research practised in this master thesis. Even though external and internal posture are inextricably related, this research focuses on internal posture only. Dealing with posture as a whole would mean analysing Beckett's (self-)representation as an author as well, which is unsuitable a task for this particular research.

The works that function as case studies in this master thesis have been carefully selected in order to be representative for the aim of this research. *Murphy* is Beckett's first novel and is said to represent the period of writing at the beginning of his career, but is also believed to function as "the matrix of his later works, anticipating many of their concerns" (Ackerley and Gontarski 387). This text therefore seems to be a good starting point for investigating internal posture. *Waiting for Godot* is possibly Beckett's best-known work and is considered his masterpiece by many. Since Meizoz himself does not explicitly apply posture to theatre and *Waiting for Godot* is such a prominent work in Beckett's oeuvre, it is a valuable contribution to this research. Short stories "The Expelled", "The Calmative", and "The End"–all written in 1946–were first published as a unity together with *Texted pour rien* by Minuit in 1955. These *Stories for Nothing* (not including the prose texts accompanying the narratives) display an obvious coherence in terms of protagonists and theme, which seems to confirm the idea of internal posture. These final texts therefore are the right choice for this research in terms of short fiction. This selection of works represents the wide range of Beckett's writing through the inclusion of three main genres from his oeuvre that are equally important. In addition, this selection covers a considerable time span between the first and latter two texts. Rather than investigating whether the construction of internal posture differs across genres, it is the comparison between earlier and later writing that receives emphasis in this research. Differences between the three case studies may emerge due to the fact that these works were written in roughly two different phases in Beckett's career.

Method

In order to satisfactorily answer the research question of this thesis, the first step is to create a theoretical framework. As mentioned earlier, Meizoz' article "Modern Posterities of Posture. Jean-Jacques Rousseau" (2010) forms the basis for understanding the key concept in this thesis, namely (internal) posture. His theory is supported by Pierre Bourdieu's cultural field. It is useful to use Andrew Bennet's *The Author* (2005), which provides valuable insights into the development of the concept of authorship. The following three chapters, each dealing with one of the case studies, all follow a similar pattern. The subquestions of these chapters are similar as well, questioning how internal posture is constructed in *Murphy, Waiting for Godot*, and the short stories in *Stories and Texts for Nothing*, respectively. This construction is aimed to be revealed through an analysis of paratextuality (i.e. front and back covers, blurbs, and introductions), major themes, and style. These chapters make use of close-reading of the primary texts as well as insights derived from a variety of secondary sources in order to reach an overall conclusion concerning internal posture. Examples of important secondary sources are Federman's *Journey to Chaos: Samuel Beckett's Early Fiction* (1965), Perloff's "'In Love with Hiding': Samuel Beckett's War" (2005), and Ackerley and Gontarski's *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett: A Reader's Guide to his Works, Life, and Thought* (2004). Rather than singling out a particular theme (e.g. sexuality, masculinity, philosophy) and applying it to one, several, or even all of his works, this research thus aims at revealing the construction of internal posture by dealing with three texts, written in two different stages of his career. The conclusions drawn from separately studying each case study are compared and contrasted, and eventually combined into the general conclusion of this master thesis, which is meant to result in answering the research question.

Theoretical framework

This section deals with the relevant concepts and insights derived from the following theoretical works: Andrew Bennet's *The Author* (2005), Pierre Bourdieu's *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993), and most importantly Jérôme Meizoz' "Modern Posterities of Posture. Jean-Jacques Rousseau" (2010).

1 *The conceptualisation of authorship*

Andrew Bennett's *The Author* (2005) is an introductory text concerning authorship within the context of literary studies. Since posture very much builds on the concept of authorship, it is valuable to take the insights and links between key texts dealing with authorship that Bennett presents into account in order to further increase the understanding of posture. This section discussing *The Author* (2005) thus functions as a foundation for the remainder of the theoretical framework, which culminates in the section dealing with Meizoz' posture. The value of including this work is confirmed by the general idea that literary criticism can in fact be equated with authorship theory. This sentiment is also presented in Bennett's introduction, which begins by looking into the perceived authorship of Shakespeare, particularly in terms of Peter Madden's *Shakespeare in Love* (1998). Bennett explains how the emphasis on Shakespeare's individual geniality as an author in the Hollywood movie is in fact an anachronism since it embodies the twentieth-century perception of Shakespeare (1-2). This example leads up to Bennett pinpointing the main aim of his work, namely describing "the distance between 'nobody' and 'the author'; between naming and anonymity; between the presence and absence or life and death of the author" (2). He goes on to invoke Wordsworth and Coleridge's famous questions, being "what is a poet?" and "what is poetry?", respectively. The conclusion is that debates about authorship and its relevance to the literary text essentially revolve around a discussion of human subjectivity (8).

Bennett states that Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, whose key essays are discussed next, claim "that the idea of the literary work as fundamentally, indeed exclusively, structured around the expression of an author" (55) reached its peak during the period of Romanticism. This period captures a paradoxical attitude towards the author, however:

> [T]he idea of the author as originator and genius, as fully intentional, fully sentient source of the literary text, as authority for and limitation on the 'proliferating' meanings of the text, has particular importance for a culture that also, at the same time, begins to extol the virtues of a 'disinterested' aesthetic, of impersonality. (55-6)

Many developments in the eighteenth century in terms of defining literature and authorship have greatly contributed to a more general sense of self, bringing individuality to the forefront. The Romantic notion of authorship is known to stress the creativity and originality of the genius individuals. Consequently, the author is perceived as an outsider, at the same time embodying and rising above the ideal form of humanity; writers are the (spiritual) leaders of society in the sense that they always seem to be one step ahead through their avant-garde work. Though, their originality–the key quality to their prestige–is inspired by outside forces: there is no particular reason why an author receives this kind of inspiration, reducing the process of writing to an outburst of unconscious geniality. The author then becomes a means rather than a source, favouring impersonality over the individual. This is what Bennett describes as the paradoxical Romantic basis for the modern concept of authorship (55-66).

It is the well-known exchange between Barthes' "The Death of the Author" (1967) and Foucault's "What is an Author?" (1969) that has been crucial in dealing with modern authorship in criticism. Bennett stresses that Barthes aims at revealing the "radical disappearance" (13) of the author and undermining the traditional distinction between so-called high and low culture by proclaiming the author dead. Bennett characterises Barthes attempt at dismantling the position of the author as a revolution against "the power-structures embedded within . . . conventional accounts of authorship, textuality and the literary institution" (14). This is sometimes associated with a sense of theology, perceiving authorship as the all-encompassing entity controlling the text. Barthes rejects this notion because it would limit the possible range of interpretations by "the subjectivity, the mind, the consciousness, the intentions, the psychology and the life of the individual author" (14-5). In short, Barthes' aim is to replace authorial consciousness with extreme textuality. The text is then defined as a product of intertextuality, breaking free from the limited interpretations restricted by authorial intention. The destination, or the reader, is thus favoured over the origin, or the author, of a text. In other words, the death of the author leads to the birth of the reader (13-9).

Even though Foucault does not explicitly refer to Barthes, his essay "What is an Author?" is a response to "The Death of the Author" in every sense. Bennetts explains that whereas Barthes discards the author in total, Foucault is more concerned with why the author is such a prominent figure in literary criticism. Foucault does agree with Barthes, however, that leaving out "who is speaking" would be ideal while at this point the question is still crucial. He suggests that the writing subject does not simply disappear but is involved in the continuous process of disappearing into the space the author himself creates in his writing. As in Barthes, the aim is to move "beyond the conception of writing as the expression of a certain subjectivity, the expression of an individual who is outside of or who precedes the text" (21). It seems impossible to fully discard the idea of an omnipresent source, however, implying that the author is still considered the origin of a text. Foucault introduces the author-function, which entails that the name of the author functions as the unifying factor of an oeuvre rather than as a reference to a historical individual (19-26). The name of the author thus "mark[s] off the edges of the text, revealing, or at least characterizing its mode of being" (Foucault 211). This remark is essential for the theoretical framework of this master thesis because it points at some constant quality to the work of an author, which seems to confirm the similar claims Meizoz makes about internal posture. Foucault describes this as "a relationship of homogeneity, filiation, authentication of some texts by the use of others, reciprocal explication, or concomitant utilization" (211). Following Foucault's reasoning it is the author as a concept rather than an individual that influences his or her writing, and should consequently be expected to cause a general quality to emerge across an oeuvre.

The Romantic notion of authorship is a paradox in itself, but the modern literary theorists who challenge this notion also present ambiguous stances. In an attempt to remove the author from the process of looking at literature, the author has gained an even more prominent role in literary criticism today. Bennett remarks the following: "The twentieth century was indeed the era of literary confession, of the literary memoir, of self-exposure and revelation, not only in the so-called 'confessional' poets . . . , but also in the pervasive sense that an author somehow expresses something of herself in her writing" (70). The figure of the author is thus not easily captured, but at the same time the texts in an author's oeuvre are all expected to capture some of the essence of his or her authorship.

2 *The cultural field*

Pierre Bourdieu's *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) is a leading theoretical work concerning the literary world, which includes three essays: "The Economic World Reversed," "The Production of Belief," and "The Market of Symbolic Goods." Many of the concepts and insights derived from formulating these concepts have proven to be very valuable and have consequently laid the foundation for much literary theory. This is also the case for Meizoz' concept of posture, which is why this theoretical framework includes a section presenting the most important and relevant aspects of Bourdieu's *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993). One of Bourdieu's starting points is the distinction between subjectivism and objectivism, which he believes are both incapable of representing society and its agents in a truthful manner. Subjectivism produces an ideology of the creator because it merely focuses on the perception of the individual. Objectivism, on the other hand, undermines the individual because it denies his or her influence on the framework in which agents operate, only acknowledging the framework in itself. Bourdieu wants this false dichotomy to be rejected because it would impose too many limitations; only then can the "objectivity of the subjective" (4), which is the ideal form, be revealed.

In Bourdieu's theory, subjectivism is replaced by the concept of habitus, which refers to a set of dispositions belonging to an agent in the field. The concept of the field, in turn, provides an alternative to objectivism. Habitus and field are two inextricably related concepts, which Bourdieu explains by stating that dispositions are "[o]bjectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, [and therefore] they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor" (5). Whereas subjectivism only takes the influence of the individual into account, habitus thus illustrates that agents unconsciously internalise the dispositions that have been formed by the framework in which the agents engage themselves. In other words, the objective has naturally become an internal aspect of the subjective. *Sense practique*, which follows from the development of the dispositions influenced from early childhood on, is a phrase Bourdieu uses to refer to agents' natural inclination to successfully deal with situations in a way the structure prefers. Since the dispositions necessary for this adaptation have been internalised, agents do not experience this inclination as a conscious obedience to rules. It is thus not the structure in itself but the internalised dispositions displayed by the agents as individuals that guarantee the continuity of the framework.

Essential in understanding Bourdieu's concept of the field is the insight that the analysis should no longer revolve around the individual. The relation between positions and position-takings is what makes up the structure of the field. According to Bourdieu, "[t]he science of the literary field is a form of *analysis situs* which establishes that each position . . . is subjectively defined by the system of distinctive properties" (30). All positions in the field are mutually dependent without any regard for recpirocal hierarchy; position-takings in turn define the structure of the field (29-30). During the process of position-taking, habitus comes into play with two concepts, namely strategy and trajectory. The first entails that the agent practises his or her position in the field through their dispositions (i.e. habitus), which again is an unconscious process. The latter presents the chronological order of the positions that an agent has occupied within the field; subsequently, trajectory reflects the role of the agent's dispositions in fulfilling these positions and how other agents appreciated that assigned role at that particular moment in time (60). The concept of the field is an alternative for objectivism in the sense that it does not present a rigid structure that functions independently from its agents. Bourdieu formulates that there are several autonomous field–economic, educational, political, and cultural–that together make up a society. All of these fields can be distinguished from each other since each one functions in a different manner because of specific rules, structures and desired "rewards." These fields do overlap, however, eventually leading to mutual exclusion. Out of fear for the traditional philosophies, concepts, and laws to be diminished, the agents representing their specific field create a distinct identity for themselves in order to protect their heritage and reject outside influences. Especially the cultural field, which is the context in which this master thesis operates, has strongly distanced itself from the other fields. Bourdieu in fact presents the cultural field as a reversed economy, referring to "the negative relationship . . . between symbolic profit and economic profit" (48) it establishes. The cultural field thus views symbolic rather than economic capital (as in a regular economy) as the most desired reward. The opposition between these two different rewards provides the foundation for the opposing types of authorship discussed in the following paragraph.

In the cultural field, every agent's aim is to gain as much symbolic power as possible. Symbolic power includes two types of capital, namely symbolic and cultural. Cultural capital is defined as "empathy towards, appreciation for or competence in deciphering cultural relations and cultural artefacts" (7). In other words, this type of capital allows a thorough understanding of a work of art by the agent through the possession of knowledge and/or a code. The definition of symbolic capital shows some overlap with these qualities but mainly revolves around artistic prestige and consecration of the agent. Essential in successfully fulfilling this position in the cultural field is the rejection of economic capital. It is impossible for autonomous fields within one society to fully exclude one another; the regular economy is thus bound to interfere with other fields. This is why the idea that symbolic capital would be corrupted by economic capital (which should therefore be avoided) is crucial for the identity of the cultural field. In order to preserve the values of the cultural field, agents are praised for possessing symbolic capital and scolded for possessing economic capital (50-51). These two kinds of rewards are even considered to be mutually exclusive. Since economic influences are inevitable, the cultural field essentially distinguishes between two types of agents: they are either artistically or economically successful. It can thus be concluded that there are two opposing types of authorship in the literary world. One is associated with symbolic and cultural capital, is expected to reject the mechanics of the economy, and his or her work is published in restricted production; the opposing stance is characterised by economic capital and self-interest as well as large-scale production. These two types of authorship lie at the basis of (self-)representation of authors as described in Meizoz' "Modern Posterities of Posture. Jean-Jacques Rousseau" (2010), which is discussed in the following section.

3 *Posture*

In his case study on Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "proletarian posterity," Meizoz not only applies his concept posture but also thoroughly explains it. He begins his essay by stating that even though authors have interpreted their roles as authors in several different ways, these types of authorship can all be traced back to a limited range of possibilities: "the committed writer, the *poete maudit*, the buffoon, the anti-establishment figure, or the working-class author, are just so many 'presentations of self' (to take Erving Goffman's term) derived from a tradition" (81). The mentioned tradition seems to refer to the dichotomy between authors from either the "high" or "low" district in the cultural field as formulated by Bourdieu. Meizoz illustrates how authors that participated in the proletarian literature of France in the 1930s continually evoked Rousseau and consequently turned him into the great instigator of their movement. This is a construction in itself, but the foundation for this construction had been laid by Rousseau himself through the creation of his posture. He used his working-class background and suffered hardships as the main asset of his writing, which eventually led to the image of the author speaking up against the established authorities and power relations (81-3).

The second part of Meizoz' essay revolves around how posture is defined and how it can be used. This concept, already touched upon by Bourdieu but defined by Viala, is defined as taking up a position in the literary field. Its use is explained in the light of the mechanics of the literary world as taken from *The Field of Cultural Production*:

> The logic of a literary strategy, then, is brought out through establishing a connection between the trajectory of an author and the various postures manifested in it – or continuity within the same posture, which is possible, and which, by the way, doubtlessly becomes the writer's specific 'hallmark', this quality to distinguish himself which can be attributed to the most notorious. (Viala qtd. in Meizoz 83)

While Viala considers posture to be a part of ethos, which can be described as the more general behaviour of an author, Meizoz suggests that literary criticism should use posture as a term that includes ethos (83-4). This becomes clear from the five remarks Meizoz makes to define the concept of posture. First of all, it is emphasised that an author's posture only carries meaning in relation to his or her position in the literary field. Only when the position of the author is determined can the effect or value of posture in relation to that position be decided. Thus, "the author presents as well as expresses himself equipped with his persona or posture" (84). Second, posture is not merely created by the author but rather is formed by the literary world in general. The author's self-presentation is influenced by literary agents such as publishers, critics, and biographers; in addition, the material representation of the author's work contributes to a sense of posture, too (84). Third, the concept of posture consists of two aspects, namely behaviour (non-verbal) and discourse (verbal). The former includes, among other things, public appearances, interviews, and style of clothing. The latter refers to how the author presents himself through textual means. Fourth, posture can be used to allow sociological insights into the field of literary studies and to describe the relation between "behaviour and textual effects in the literary field" (85). The idea that posture constructed by both the persona (external) and the text (internal) is Meizoz' most valuable insight for this research since this master thesis focuses on Beckett's internal posture in three works. Finally, the literary field as presented with a memory that captures several recurring variations of authorial self-representation. In other words, certain postures seem to be recycled, such as the "writer-citizen" and the "unhappy genius" derived from Romanticism (85).

Even though it is applied to a rather specific historical period in literary history, Stephen Greenblatt has developed a similar concept in his *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (2005). It thus seems that Meizoz does not stand alone in his assumptions concerning (internal) posture. Greenblatt claims that the concept of posture, or self-fashioning as he calls it, dates back as early as sixteenth-century England, framing his work by mentioning authors More and Shakespeare in the title of his research. Shakespeare, probably the most exemplary figure in western literature, of course is an interesting case study when it comes to the (self-)representation of authorship, as becomes clear in Bennett's introduction as well. Greenblatt explains how, even though a sense of self and the creation of identity had been a prominent theme in the classical period, Christianity discouraged people to shape themselves. This view was only seriously challenged by the end of the sixteenth century, allowing self-fashioning to develop further (2). Greenblatt defines self-fashioning as the process of creating "a distinctive personality, a characteristic address to the world, a consistent mode of perceiving and behaving" (2). It is emphasised that when it comes to self-fashioning the distinction between literary and social personas are blurred. This is accounted for by the idea that humans are intertwined with their culture and are themselves "cultural artifacts" (3). Within such cultural systems, literature then functions as "a manifestation of the concrete behavior of its particular author, as itself the expression of the codes by which behavior is shaped, and as a reflection upon those codes" (4). This multilayered definition goes against the assumptions that art is separated from social life or that literature is simply the representation of ideology. Greenblatt does stress, however, that the text remains the main focus of his research (3-5), which is also the case for Meizoz' internal posture and thus the method of this master thesis.

Justification

Samuel Beckett's oeuvre and persona provide an enormous range of possible research topics. Even though some of the publications discussed in the literature review touch upon the subject of (internal) posture, there has not yet been conducted research explicitly addressing the concept of internal posture in Beckett's work. This is the gap this master thesis aims at beginning to fill. This research takes an original approach to Samuel Beckett's works in the sense that it overtly applies a relatively "new" concept, Meizoz' internal posture, to Beckett's body of work. This approach might allow new insights into the mutual relation between the different types of texts in Beckett's oeuvre. In addition, it is the application of internal posture in itself that can prove to be a valuable contribution to literary studies in general. This master thesis namely not only reflects on internal posture in three texts by Samuel Beckett but also reflects on the concept in more general terms. To some extent, Meizoz' concept is tested for its practical use and applicability. It is expected that this master thesis allows a critical reflection on how well-developed and valuable Meizoz' internal posture is for literary studies. This outline of this research thus suggests that it is worthwhile because of the two different aspects it addresses.

This introductory chapter has provided the basis for the remainder of this master thesis by providing the outline and theoretical framework of this research. The following three chapters each deal with one of the case studies, analysing how internal posture is constructed through paratextuality, thematic coherence, and style. These chapters build on the literature review, research question, method, and theoretical framework formulated in this chapter of the research.

1 *Murphy* (1938)

Murphy (1938) is Beckett's first full-length and most traditional novel originally written in English. James Knowlson dedicates a chapter to contextual information concerning this work in his biography *Damned to Fame* (1996), describing how Beckett wrote the greater part of the work in London and consequently incorporated much of his knowledge of and experiences in that city in *Murphy* (194-5). At one point Beckett moved back to his mother in Cooldrinagh; he was seriously ill during this period of his life, which made him very much dependent on the woman whom he had a rather complicated relationship with. All in all, it was a troublesome writing process, including several writer's blocks and panic attacks (207-11). Despite all of his hard work, sales were low and reviews few and only slightly positive. Only when Beckett had made a name for himself with *Waiting for Godot* did Grove Press experience a high level of demand (Ackerley and Gontarski 387).

Many authors who have written on Beckett's *Murphy* emphasise the fact that this work is the starting point of his characteristic style and narrative techniques, and that it introduces the major themes that are recurrent in his oeuvre. In his chapter "Murphy's Search for an Asylum" from *Journey to Chaos* (1965), Raymond Federman claims that "[i]t is essentially in *Murphy* that the important Beckettian themes find their initial expression and unity" (57). In *The Long Sonata of the Dead: A Study of Samuel Beckett* (1969), Michael Robinson very much defines *Murphy*'s style in terms of its relation to both Beckett's preceding and following fiction. He observes that "[w]ith *Murphy* Beckett leaves the grotesque confusion of incapacity that is the real world for the fearful, tragic inner-world of his mature works" (99). *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett* (2004) defines this novel as a philosophical comedy, making it "the apogee of [his] first decade of writing, the first text he did not consistently reject" (Ackerley and Gontarski 387).

Federman makes this crucial statement concerning Beckett's oeuvre: "The ultimate goal of Beckett's entire literary production is to create a fictional being that can exist completely detached from the physical reality of the body, a creature that can function outside human knowledge as a consciousness inventing its own fictitious surroundings" (76). This has proven to be the major theme in *Murphy* in terms of internal posture (and is further investigated in the following chapters as well). In addition, this chapter discusses the relevant paratextual elements of the work, provides an analysis of its characters, and comments on its style in order to answer the following subquestion: How does the interpretation of the aforementioned elements reveal a construction of internal posture in Beckett's *Murphy*?

1.1 *Paratextuality*

Knowlson claims that Beckett might have thought that his protagonist Murphy was too identifiable with himself. In his response to the question why the novel does not end with Murphy's death, Beckett explained that dealing briefly with his death and quickly moving onto other characters is better suited to his treatment of him throughout the work. He does not want Murphy to stand out too much. In this Knowlson reads a fear of being "too close" to his own character (203-4). It is not merely Beckett himself who draws a parallel between the two. The blurb of the Jupiter Books/Calder and Boyars paperback edition of the book published in 1969 says the following: "A very Irish novel both in its background and conception, it draws heavily on the author's experiences in Dublin and London as a young man, especially on his time spent as a male nurse in a mental hospital" (qtd. in Knowlson 198). It strongly suggests autobiographical experiences while this has never been confirmed. It must somehow have been worthwhile to make it seem as if Beckett's personal identity is strongly connected to that of his protagonist.

Many editions of Beckett's *Murphy* emphasise the superior importance of the mind over that of the body. Grove Press first published *Murphy* in 1957, its cover depicting Murphy's rocking chair. The edition used for this master thesis, published by Grove Press in 2011, has a bald man with chess pieces placed on his head surrounded by a black background on the cover. This imagery emphasises the importance of the mind but also suggests its superiority. The back cover of this edition features two reviews by *The New York Times* and *Library Journal*, respectively. Both quotations praise the unique style of Beckett's novel, which is also the case in the blurb. It presents *Murphy* as a highly philosophical work but also acknowledges its humoristic quality, capturing the ambiguity of the work. The cover of an earlier Grove Press edition, which was published in 1957 after the release of *Waiting for Godot*, shows a drawing of Murphy's rocking chair. This chair is the symbol of his desperate attempts to reach a state of complete mental freedom, which is the philosophical theme of this piece of writing. In other words, the novel is presented in a manner that points at an internal posture to which intellectuality and mental isolation are central.

1.2 *Quest for mental isolation*

This section analyses the major themes in relation to the thematic content and coherence of the novel that attribute to the construction of Beckett's internal posture. The first aspect to be interpreted is the relation between the protagonist and the other characters, who solely drive the plot by their all-consuming demands from Murphy. Second, it is the distinction between the body and the mind, especially the desired independence and isolation of the mind, that seems to be the central theme of the work. This subsection heavily draws on philosophy, again related to a sense of intellectuality. In addition, the desire for mental alienation leads to the themes of sanctuary and eventually death. An analysis of the novel through close-reading and a review of secondary literature concerning these elements aims to reveal how Beckett's internal posture is constructed content-wise in *Murphy*.

1.2.1 *One-dimensional characterisation*

The plot of Beckett's first English novel revolves around its protagonist who is chased by the other characters in the book. All of them want something from Murphy, resulting in a surreal and comical quest. His lover Celia wants to start their life together, which is why she urges Murphy to find a job; Mr. Neary needs evidence that Murphy is doing badly or even has died in order for his love for Miss Counihan to be returned; when Wylie and Miss Counihan become involved, Cooper–formerly employed by Neary–is now in search of Murphy commissioned by Wylie. They are consumed by what they need from Murphy and are occupied by nothing else. The characters in fact function as puppets, as is noted by several scholars. The highly realistic and detailed descriptions of London are strongly opposed to the superficiality of the character descriptions (Knowlson 195).

In "Going Mad Systematically in Beckett's *Murphy*" (1986) Thomas A. Warger compares and contrasts the several characters of the novel in terms of their mutual relations, arguing that they are externalised "personifications of the mental states to which [Murphy] might aspire" (13). The mental and inner world is thus expressed in a physical sense through the social circle of which Murphy is–more or less–a part. He describes a diagram with two axes, namely those representing the extremes of "lucidity and desire," respectively. This, in turn, creates four possible mental states that are each embodied by a certain character: Celia is both lucid and desiring, Mr. Neary is desiring but not lucid, Mr. Kelly is lucid but not desiring, and Mr. Endon is neither (13-4). Celia, thus characterised by Warger as both lucid and desiring, is very clear in what she wants and how to achieve it:

> Celia was conscious of two equally important reasons for insisting as she did. The first was her desire to make a man of Murphy! . . . The second was her aversion to resuming her own work, as would certainly be necessary if Murphy did not find a job before her savings, scraped together during the blockade, were exhausted. (40)

She insists on Murphy finding a job in order to create the life she envisions for them. Such a union is impossible, however, since Murphy does not fit this mould. Warger claims that Murphy's mental state can only be deduced by comparing him to one of the mentioned characters, i.e. their mental characterisation according to the diagram. This reveals that he cannot be placed anywhere along the axes since he does not (entirely) associate himself with any of the other characters (16-7). In fact, "[h]is only desire is not to be lucid" (18), which is impossible in the closed system that is the described diagram. Consequently, Murphy rejects the idea of occupying himself with practical issues such as working. He believes that "[t]here were metaphysical considerations, in whose gloom it appeared that the night had come in which no Murphy could work" (13), and that "there was no possibility of his finding in himself any reason for work taking one form rather than another" (14). In fact, he is not even sure he wants to spend his life with Celia, being unable to truly desire her. Murphy is thus very much the odd one out and unable to connect with another human being on a meaningful level, which leads to the following section in which a sense of (mental) isolation is central.

1.2.2 *Isolation of the mind*

With regard to Beckett's personal struggles, Knowlson emphasises Murphy's tendency to turn to "self-immersion, solitude, and inner peace" (203). As discussed in the previous section, Murphy is unable to let his lover Celia go but at the same time does not want be involved in a(ny) relationship. When they are about to live together and their "new life" is about to start, he thinks the following: "Murphy was inclined to think that the new life, if it came at all, came later, and then to one of them only" (39). It seems as if he is unable to socialise and therefore willingly tries to reject any social contact. One example of this is when Murphy tries to prevent Celia from visiting him at his apartment and comes up with the excuse that he is expecting a friend. Celia simply responds that she doesn't "believe in your funny old chap" (5), clearly illustrating the difference between the two. In fact, Murphy only cares for his interests in chess and astrology. Living an isolated life seems to be what Murphy wants, which is financed by his Dutch uncle's fortune. He is characterised by the narrator as a solipsist at one point, meaning that he only believes in the reality of his mind.

In order to find peace, Murphy's greatest wish is to separate his body from his mind, making the latter to function as an independent and closed-off system. He firmly believes that there is only truth in a mind that is free from external (i.e. bodily) triggers. The novel very much conveys that the body is the origin of limitation and chaos while the mind, when entirely independent of the body, brings nothing but freedom and peace (Federman 64).

Robinson explains how this idea is grounded in Descartes' philosophy, which is one of the main recurring themes throughout Beckett's oeuvre. Murphy is even defined as "the first of what is to be a succession of suffering Cartesians" (86). Cartesianism entails the belief that the mind is completely separate from the body, and is in fact the source of the reality that we experience as "intelligible." There is room for interaction between body and mind, however. This inexplicable interaction is the one major intrinsic difficulty of Cartesian philosophy, namely its dualism. Robinson, and several other scholars for that matter, confirms Federman's interpretation by providing a similar analysis. He formulates the trouble Murphy experiences with this aspect of Cartesianism as follows: "The two 'parts' appear to be counter-principles, and the action of the mind on the body and vice-versa is a complication which both Murphy and Descartes find impossible to explain. If the mind is body-tight and the body mind-tight how can mental concept and physical experience be related?" (88) In other words, it seems impossible to consider the mind a separate entity while body and mind are mutually dependent in terms of their existence. This complication is reflected in Beckett's *Murphy* since it depicts the protagonist's inevitable failure in his endeavour to reach full independence for his mind. It can therefore be concluded that Beckett's protagonist does not simply follow Descartes' views without critically reviewing them.

The first passage of the book, in which Murphy is introduced, vividly depicts his attempt at his ultimate ideal, i.e. the separation of body and mind:

> He sat naked in his rocking-chair of undressed teak, guaranteed not to crack, warp, shrink, corrode, or creak at night. It was his own, it never left him. . . . Seven scarves held him in position. Two fastened his shins to the rockers, one his thighs to the seat, two his breast and belly to the back, one his wrists to the strut behind. Only the most local movements were possible. Sweat poured off him, tightened the thongs. The breath was not perceptible. (1)

He literally suppresses his body, of which the rocking-chair is the symbol. Whereas it is thought that the body normally imposes limitations on the mind, Murphy attempts to "deactivate" the body in order to free his mind. When Celia chases him, he goes to touch his chair for solace, telling himself that "[s]oon his body would be quiet, soon he would be free" (6). Murphy thus very much identifies with his mind and views his body as something he has to conquer; he even refers to his mind as "the self that he tried to love" (5), suggesting that his body represents the self he hates. That his mind is Murphy's number one priority becomes clear in chapter six, in which the narrator "justifies" his mind's self-perception. First the distinction between actual and virtual is introduced, the former meaning it has been experienced both physically and mentally, while the latter refers to something only experienced mentally. The mental experience is then described as entirely separated from the bodily, and is divided into three stages, namely the light, the half-light, and the dark. In the first the physical experience is reversed, turning the "physical fiasco [into] a howling success" (67). The second stage does not entail any parallels and revolves around contemplation and peace. The final, dark stage is characterised by fragmenting all forms into one "new becoming" (68), creating nothing but commotion. The first two stages allow Murphy to be free, while the latter would allow Murphy to be part of an all-encompassing state of freedom. No matter the trouble, complications, and ambiguous feelings Murphy experiences in his quest for utter mental freedom, he is unable to let go of his philosophy, seemingly having irrevocably split himself into two parts. He finds a way to appease himself, though:

> Murphy was content to accept this partial congruence of the world of his mind with the world of his body as due to some such process of supernatural determination. The problem was of little interest. Any solution would do that did not clash with the feeling, growing stronger as Murphy grew older, that his mind was a closed system, subject to no principle of change but its own, self-sufficient and impermeable to the vicissitudes of the body. (66)

This reaction to the discrepancy between body and mind shows that Murphy accepts any "solution" that allows him to keep believing that his mind is a separate and fully independent identity. The idea of "supernatural determination" is reminiscent of the Occasionalist philosophy, aiming to solve the problem of the Cartesian dualism. Occasionalists claim that the relationship between the mental and the physical, supposedly independent from each other according to Cartesian belief, is made possible by divine intervention. Since the lack of God is evident for Beckett's protagonist, this role is taken up by what Murphy refers to as the "Supreme Caress" (Robinson 89-90).

Beckett's protagonist is aware that his body still interferes with the wishes of his mind, even though he "noted with satisfaction that . . . his bodily need ran more and more with his mental" (67). Murphy is unable to reach this desired state of ultimate freedom, however, making his endeavour(s) unsuccessful. It seems impossible for him to make his mind function as a closed-off system, as is its ideal state. Federman claims that Murphy is doomed to fail in his quest because he continues to submit to the demands of his body concerning food, comfort, money, and social contact. These are accompanied by several rituals, too, emphasising how important they are for him (86-7). The most striking example of this is his obsession with his biscuits:

> They were the same as always, a Ginger, an Osborne, a Digestive, a Petit Beurre and one anonymous. He always ate the first-named last, because he liked it the best, and the anonymous first, because he thought it very likely the least palatable. The order in which he ate the remaining three was indifferent to him and varied irregularly from day to day. (57)

The routine that is presented as crucial for something so futile, especially in the eyes of someone who aims at rejecting everything having to do with bodily desire, reveals how Murphy cannot release himself from these pleasures. This is also reflected in his complex relationship with Celia, who he does not love entirely but still somehow desires. Murphy himself recognises this as "his deplorable susceptibility to Celia, ginger, and so on" (108). The philosophical distinction between body and mind can thus be said to be the most prominent motivation of this work, suggesting that it contributes to a construction of Beckett's internal posture through this novel.

1.2.3 *Sanctuary and death*

Murphy does not feel at home in the physical world, and is somewhat of a wanderer. He does eventually find shelter, though, when he applies for a job at the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat. Ticklepenny, a gay nurse who is scared that he might lose his sanity working at the mental ward, convinces Murphy to take his place. Rather than taking up the job to finally start his life with Celia and providing for her so she can abandon her work as a prostitute, he leaves her altogether, not ever thinking about her again. It seems as if Murphy has finally found his place, since he calls the society of the mental ward a brotherhood and defines the patients as his kindred spirits. He fits in perfectly in this environment since the values of the physical world and that of the mental are reversed in the conditions of the patients, even though this is not acknowledged by the other caretakers:

> The function of treatment was to bridge the gulf, translate the sufferer from his own pernicious little private dungheap to the glorious world of discrete particles, where it would be his inestimable prerogative once again to wonder, love, hate, desire, rejoice and howl in a reasonable balanced manner, and comfort himself with the society of others in the same predicament. All this was duly revolting to Murphy . . . . (107)

Ironically, Murphy finds peace of mind in a place that is full of people who would be perceived as suffering from mental unrest by any other. A place of exile is thus perceived as a sanctuary from Murphy's perspective. In his article "Samuel Beckett: The Flight from Self"

(1973), Cornwell explains how this sense of belonging is what gives Murphy the final push to complete his withdrawal from the physical world. He also states that the three novels following *Murphy*–*Molloy* (1951), *Malone Dies* (1951), and *The Unnamable* (1953)–depict a retreat from the first stage of the mind into the final, darkest stage (42-3). That Murphy has indeed retreated from his former life becomes clear when he is unable to picture any of his former relatives, friends, and acquaintances: "He tried again with his father, his mother, Celia, Wylie, Neary, Cooper, Miss Dew, Miss Carridge, Nelly, the sheep, the chandlers, even Bom and Co., even Bim, even Ticklepenny and Miss Counihan, even Mr. Quigley. . . . In vain in all cases. He could not get a picture in his mind of any creature he had met, animal or human" (150-1). This sense of alienation scares him so much that he decides to flee the asylum.

It is right after the passage previously discussed that Murphy finds his rather abrupt death through a gas explosion. The short description that is provided suggests somewhat of a release because of the total destruction of his body: "Soon his body would be quiet, soon he would be free. The gas went on in the w.c., excellent gas, superfine chaos. Soon his body was quiet" (151). Federman interprets this as Murphy himself being reduced to chaos, too. The reason for "[t]he obscene disposal of his body" (92) by Beckett is that his protagonist eventually rejects the state of being he claimed to want to achieve. Since he already experienced part of this ultimate sense of freedom in relation to the physical world, it is impossible to let him live. Again, the protagonists in Beckett's later, French novels are able to create themselves without losing their sanity or dying. Whereas characters such as Molloy and Malone are able to separate body from mind successfully, Murphy is prevented from achieving this goal by his bodily desires and consequently killed (92-3). The protagonist's abrupt death reveals the importance of the philosophical stance (and its failure) for the construction of internal posture.

1.3 *Style*

Samuel Beckett is known for his absurdist fiction; even though *Murphy* is one of his most accessible novels in comparison to his later ones, this work is no exception. Cornwell suggests that the (philosophical) content of Beckett's different works is closely related to style: "The various stages of the retreat, and the results of it, are best seen in *Murphy*, *Three Novels*, *Stories and Texts for Nothing*, and *How It Is*. In them one finds a progressive flight from self-identity–from Murphy, Molloy, Moran, Malone to a series of "Unnamables"–and a progressive shift in tone from humor to desperation" (41). Even though *Murphy* is philosophical in its scope, the novel is thus unable to reach that highly intellectual level of the closed-off mind. Consequently, its content allows this particular novel to be a highly comical text, characterised by its antirealism. As mentioned earlier, it is in fact only the descriptions of the physical surroundings of (mainly) London that are realistic. These form a stark contrast with the plot, characters, small digressions, and inclusion of philosophy in relation to the former two aspects (Federman 64-5).

The plot in *Murphy* is extremely limited for a full-length novel. The book revolves around a protagonist who is pressured by his girlfriend to find a job, eventually finds one in a mental ward but promptly leaves her because he "simply" wants to reject the physical world in order to achieve true happiness. When he decides to return to his lover and let go of his philosophical fantasy, he is killed in a gas explosion. It is the combination of philosophical and elevated content with everyday struggles encountered in ordinary people's lives that provokes the absurdist sentiment. Chapter six, which stands out the most because of its essay-esque quality, is introduced with the following ironic remark by the narrator: "It is most unfortunate, but the point of this story has been reached where a justification of the expression Murphy's mind has to be attempted" (65). This suggests that it seems entirely out of place to attach so much value to such concepts in this particular context.

There is somewhat of a secondary plot at work in *Murphy*, though. Almost all of the characters aside of the protagonist are involved in a quest for Murphy, albeit for very different reasons:

> Murphy then is actually being needed by five people outside himself. By Celia, because she loves him. By Neary, because he thinks of him as the Friend at last. By Miss Counihan, because she wants a surgeon. By Cooper, because he is being employed to that end. By Wylie, because he is reconciled to doing Miss Counihan the honour, in the not too distant future, of becoming her husband. (121)

These secondary characters are superficial in the sense that they are entirely defined by what they need from Murphy, seeking what Federman refers to as a "counterpart" in him (65). They work together in order to locate Murphy, getting entangled in internal tensions and fights as well, again adding to the comical quality of the text. Neary, Wylie, and Miss Counihan get wrapped up in a rather extravagant argument towards the end of the novel, for instance. The fact that Murphy dies before any of them is able to find him merely adds to the superficiality of their personalities. Despite the strife among the secondary characters, they all go to identify Murphy's body together packed in one car. It is Miss Counihan who eventually defines the group as "his very dear friends" (155), of course completely missing the mark. This statement is succeeded by a rather estranging series of passages further establishing the absurdist quality of the plot and the characters. In addition, the novel is filled with many comical intermissions throughout. One example is the way Murphy manages to get the job at Magdalen Mental Mercyseat. Ticklepenny is able to convince his superior to hire Murphy simply because they were involved in a romantic relationship and he threatened to leave altogether otherwise. Another example is Murphy's outburst at being served the wrong tea in his favourite saloon. All in all, it seems fair to qualify *Murphy* as both a philosophical and comical text and conclude that this adds to the general sentiment of the novel and thus plays a role in constructing internal posture.

In conclusion, this chapter has reviewed internal posture in Samuel Beckett's *Murphy* by analysing paratextuality in two editions, multiple major themes, and style. The most important theme is that of the tense relationship between body and mind, and the desired autonomy of the latter. The theme of the mind is closely connected to the idea of (mental) sanctuary and in the end death. It is the tension between this highly philosophical content and the absurdist plot and characters as well as the interference of the narrator that create its comical quality, which is considered characteristic of Beckett's early work. Internal posture in *Murphy* can be said to enclose philosophy and intellectuality as well as comedy. The next chapter moves on to a later phase in Beckett's writing and investigates internal posture in one of his best-known works, *Waiting for Godot*.

2 *Waiting for Godot* (1952)

The original, French version of what is most likely Beckett's best-known work, *En attendant Godot*, was first published by Minuit in 1952 and performed one year later in 1953 (Ackerley and Gontarski 171-2). *Waiting for Godot* was eventually translated into English by Beckett himself and consequently published by Grove Press in 1954. Only in English does the play carry the subtitle "a tragicomedy in two acts." The English version of the play was performed for the first time in the New Arts Theatre in London in 1955. It was first performed in the United States, quite unsuccessfully, under the direction of Alan Schneider in the Coconut Grove Playhouse in Miami (Ackerley and Gontarski 620-1).

Waiting for Godot is often characterised as a play that revolutionised Western theatre and functions as a turning point in this sense. Its minimalistic setting and estranging dialogue convey certain thematic issues that painfully capture the Zeitgeist of the 1940s and 1950s like nothing performed before. Despite its prominent position in Western cultural history today, the play made a slow and shaky start in France, which was reflected by varying reviews (Ackerley and Gontarski 172). In the long run, however, *Waiting for Godot* turned out to be the work that single-handedly sparked an immensely successful career for Beckett, not only in terms of fame but also in terms of financial gain. Beckett became well-known as a French writer; his works were considered to embody Paris in the sense that it reminded his readership of critics of the city's "intellectual openness, fervor, intensity of debate, and cultural tolerance and freedom" (Knowlson 355) of before. *Waiting for Godot* led to much more attention for his other works such as *The Unnameables* (1953), and caused him to be seriously considered for literary prizes while this had not been the case before (Knowlson 354-5).

This chapter builds on the insights of the previous chapter concerned with Beckett's *Murphy* (1938). Even though these two works are part of a different genre (i.e. fiction and theatre) and there is a time gap of approximately a decade between writing the first and the latter, it is widely acknowledged that the two works are very much connected. Beckett himself said the following about the thematic link: "If you want to find the origins of *En attendant Godot*, look at *Murphy*" (qtd. in Duckworth 81). The topics that are addressed in this chapter are paratextuality, the concept of waiting and time, meaninglessness, postwar isolation, the intrusion of the body, and style. These themes are investigated in order to further construct Beckett's internal posture, answering the following subquestion: How do paratextuality, major themes, and style in *Waiting for Godot* contribute to the construction of Beckett's internal posture? This chapter makes use of the English text, and its method is based on close-reading, excluding any considerations concerning theatrical performances.

2.1 *Paratextuality*

This master thesis makes use of a Grove Press edition for *Waiting for Godot* published in 2011, which is part of the same series as the edition for *Murphy* that is used in the previous chapter. This edition is essentially a modernised version of the one published by Grove Press in 1994. The cover shows a black background and an empty stage with a man, seen from behind, looking at a full moon. Besides the title and subtitle of the play as well as the author's name, there is one brief comment by Clive Barnes, a prominent theatre critic for *The New York Times* in the 1960s and 1970s, printed on the cover. It characterises the play as "[o]ne of the true masterpieces of the century," emphasising the universal quality of the play (as is further discussed in the following sections) in terms of its time frame. The back of this edition also points at this particular sentiment with its blurb and other reviews from *The Times* and *The New York Times*. These once again claim that *Waiting for Godot* is a crucial play for the innovation in theatre in the second half of the twentieth century in its thematic content and form. The absurdist quality of the work is linked to the complex concepts of hope and human relations. All in all, it seems that this edition aims to convey the intellectuality of the play as well as its ability to capture the time period in which it was written and consequently its universal humanitarian appeal.

The first English edition of *Waiting for Godot* by Grove Press was published in 1954. This particular cover has a different look, but at the same time conveys a similar sentiment. The lay-out is again dominated by the colour black; the image portrays the shadows of the two protagonists of the play while walking towards the dead tree. This, too, points at a sense of estrangement. The subtitle of the play is most prominently featured on this cover. Faber and Faber has also published two different editions of the play. The first one, which was released in 1952, displays a minimalistic drawing of a leafless tree and a hand with leaves on each finger on the cover. In 2006 the publishing house released a more modern and darker version, of which the cover shows a man wearing a mask reading a book next to the dead tree, all placed against a black background. None of the editions mentioned in this paragraph feature any additional comments on the front of the book. It seems that many of the published editions of the play emphasise the philosophical and intellectual content of the text as well as its prominent position in Western cultural history, creating an elevated internal posture.

2.2 *Meaninglessness*

The second section of this chapter concerning *Waiting for Godot* focuses on the important themes that attribute to Beckett's internal posture. One of the most prominent aspects of the play is the concept of waiting. Further on this section returns to the theme elaborately addressed in the previous chapter, namely the complex relationship between the mind and the body. In addition, this topic is put into context by providing a reading that includes insights linking the content of the play to the Second World War. What brings these themes together is the idea of meaninglessness that is dominant throughout the text, hence the title of this section. It is the philosophical outlook of the play, investigated below, that enforces the idea of intellectuality that is present throughout Beckett's oeuvre and thus contributes significantly to the construction of internal posture.

2.2.1 *Waiting, time, and wandering*

Beckett's best-known play revolves around the act of waiting, most importantly waiting for someone who will never come. The lives of Vladimir and Estragon are entirely set up around the person of Godot, who is supposed to redeem and thus free them. Until Godot arrives they are bound to the place in which they wait for him, in a sense stopping time for them. The point is, however, that Godot never comes. Robinson refers to the moment in which Didi and Gogo are trapped a "hallucinated reality" (246). Towards the end of the play Vladimir acknowledges that his and Estragon's waiting for Godot is useless because they are once again confronted with the fact that he is not coming. Consequently, it can be questioned whether what the two are doing should even be considered waiting, undermining their personal reality (260). Since the waiting is the only thing that gives meaning to the passing of time, the actual tragedy is not that they are stood up by Godot time and time again but that they are aware of the meaninglessness of the "waiting" (248).

It is the combination of form (i.e. absurdist) and content (i.e. useless waiting) that has led *Waiting for Godot* to be interpreted in the light of existentialism. The two protagonists recognising their own meaningless position is enforced by their engaging in trivial dialogue and behaviour simply to pass the time until they are released by the moment that (they know) will never come (246-7). Examples of this are further discussed in section 2.3 concerning style. *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett* (2004) pinpoints existentialism as one of the key concepts in understanding Beckett and his oeuvre, especially in relation to *Waiting for Godot*. The concept is defined as the idea that "[t]he primary fact of the human being is not some abstract notion of intrinsic properties, but the experience of finding oneself alone in a godless cosmos" (185). This means that there is no inherent logic or purpose to the world, acknowledging the meaninglessness and absurdity of human life. In the case of Beckett's best-known play, existentialism is linked to Sartre's *pour-soi*. This term refers to a sense of consciousness in humans that leads to freedom, which is in itself a burden because it is inescapable due to conscience. Since the characters in the play seemingly do not comply with any theatrical conventions whatsoever, they embody the existential essence of self-invention and autonomy. A reflection of this is that dialogues and actions are often incomprehensible, adding to the general meaninglessness and lack of logic conveyed by the play. These concepts are not only crucial to the play itself but also to internal posture constructed through the play.

Robinson also addresses the topic of the progression of time. The fact that act one and two are almost identical apart from some minor adjustments emphasises that nothing changes for the two characters. This is placed against the tree, which is leafless in the first half of the play but has suddenly grown leaves after the break. What this suggests is that there is a discrepancy between the tramps' perception of time and the objective proceeding of time (247). It thus seems that Vladimir and Estragon find themselves in some kind of infinite loop, making how fast or slowly time proceeds irrelevant somehow. Especially Estragon seems to be free from any consideration for time since he no longer recognises the difference between day and night, and continually rejects any form of memory (251). The effect is a lack or possibly even a rejection of chronology (States 105). In other words, "[t]he waiting reduces everything in time to the same level of significance-or insignificance" (Robinson 249). In short, the lives of the two tramps are absolutely meaningless since the sole purpose of the action around which their lives revolve, i.e. waiting, remains absent. This in turn greatly influences the perception of the proceeding of time, reducing it to an experienced infinity.

Despite the rather neutral context in this play that essentially revolves around the dynamics between the two main characters, Vladimir and Estragon are recognised as two Irish characters by the majority of critics. In his article "Strangers in the House: Reconfiguring the Borders of National and Cultural Identities in Contemporary Irish Theatre" (2001), Brian Singleton discusses how the house symbolises identification with the nation in terms of Irish theatrical history. He states that "[t]he 'house' in 20th-century Irish theatre has come to represent all manner of anxiety and desire in an unstable economic, political and social climate" (293). The house is thus a place of sanctuary for the family, and in turn creates a sense of belonging to the "Irish family." Singleton uses several plays taken from the Irish literary revival, including Yeats' *Cathleen Ní Houlihan* (1902), in order to illustrate this symbolic value of the house as a national home. In this particular play, for instance, the opposition between the familiarity of the home and the stranger intruding is pervasive (293-5). It is Irish national trauma causing a diaspora that has prevented many Irishmen from finding such a home. In addition, this article addresses the theme of exile. While Estragon and Vladimir are waiting around without a real purpose, they are at the same time wanderers. They dwell in the streets and sleep in ditches. They have no reason to stay where they are except for their useless waiting, and in fact discuss fleeing to an idyllic environment such as the Pyrenees. It thus seems they do not have a home to hold on or return to, possibly conveying a typically Irish concern. On the other hand, the two tramps are incapable of leaving the place of waiting even though they explicitly announce to each other that they are about to:

> VLADIMIR: Well? Shall we go?
> ESTRAGON: Yes, let's go.
> [*They do not move.*] (85)

It thus seems that they simply hold on to the one thing they know, however useless or meaningless that may be. This pessimistic sentiment is crucial to the construction of Beckett's internal posture in this play.

The concepts of waiting, the passing of time, and wandering are often interpreted as a representation of the universal condition of meaninglessness in humanity. Knowlson links the concept of waiting with Beckett's experiences of the war with the following comment, though: "The war years had revealed the concrete reality of waiting" (344). Marjorie Perloff's "'In Love with Hiding': Samuel Beckett's War" (2005) argues that Beckett's oeuvre does not simply point at "man's alienation" (77), as is often suggested in the general reading of *Waiting for Godot*. She believes that it is valuable to investigate the role of war in Beckett's play explicitly, rather than accepting his refusal to name the events of the wartime (77). It is the "emphasis on natural and bodily functions" (79) that points in this direction, according to Perloff. These topics are addressed in the analyses provided in the following subsections. It is this duality, i.e. universal and specific at the same time, of Beckett's writing that is important for the construction of internal posture.

2.2.2 *Mind versus body and war*

The body and its functions is a topic that is very much addressed in *Waiting for Godot*, even though this seems to clash with the more philosophical and universal reading as provided in the previous subsection. There is an emphasis on the physical appearances and conditions of Vladimir and Estragon. Vladimir's first lines already suggest a sense of failure and fatigue:

"All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle" (1). It is immediately established that Estragon is frequently beaten up by groups of people, but whether this is "the same lot" (2) every time remains unclear. He continually suffers from different kinds of physical complaints and sleeps in ditches, altogether leaving the impression of a worn-down man. Even though Vladimir tends to present himself as the more sensible one at several instances, the fact that Estragon is his one and only friend of course puts them in the same category. These representations not only display an emphasis on physicality, but also their uneasy relationship with their own bodies and their functions.

Perloff considers Beckett's emphatic inclusion of the body in his play (and many other works for that matter) to be reminiscent of the Holocaust. She believes it represents "the failure of the Enlightenment ethos" (79) as revealed during the war, which entails that it had become impossible to deny the physical reality and even horrors inherent in humanity (79-80). Thus, the body once again disturbs an all-mental existence, as has previously been discussed is the case in *Murphy*. Paul Stewart, who has written *Sex and Aesthetics in Samuel Beckett's Work* (2011), begins his introduction with a remarkable dialogue from *Waiting for Godot* that enforces both the incapability and desire for physical expression:

> VLADIMIR: (. . .) What do we do now?
> ESTRAGON: Wait.
> VLADIMIR: Yes, but while waiting.
> ESTRAGON: What about hanging ourselves?
> VLADIMIR: Hmm. It'd give us an erection.
> ESTRAGON: [*highly excited*] An erection! (9)

Unlike Murphy, who wishes to separate his body from his mind in order to free the latter from a repugnant physical reality, Vladimir and Estragon are not repulsed by their own physicality. Rather, they seem to perceive it as a sign they are still live human beings (1-2). Thus, "Didi's and Gogo's excitement over an erection may be a ruined remnant of 'normal' sexuality, but the fact that it is entertained at the point of death speaks to the tenacity of that remnant" (1-2).

Federman claims that madness is the preferred state for Beckett's characters, though. This is explicitly referred to in *Waiting for Godot* through Estragon's statement that "[w]e are all born mad" and that "[s]ome remain so" (71), suggesting that insanity is necessary in order to live life. This type of mental state would allow for the two tramps to reject rationality and also forget the existence of their memories (46). As has been discussed in the paragraphs concerning the proceeding of time, Estragon very much embodies this mental state by displaying a lack of memory and rationality in terms of basic insights. This can once again be linked to the painful memories produced by the events during the Second World War, as is addressed in the following subsection.

2.2.3 *Post-war desolation and exclusion*

In her book *Beckett's Masculinity* (2009) Jennifer M. Jeffers investigates the issue of gender in Beckett's oeuvre by looking at, among others, major works such as *Murphy*, *Watt*, and *Endgame*. Her introduction clarifies that she feels that Beckett's writing should be re-evaluated because the influence of feminism and gender studies have undermined the idea of masculinity as universal. It has also become necessary to acknowledge that there are multiple masculinities rather than one fixed masculinity (1-2). In one of her chapters Jeffers discusses the role of Western patriarchal hegemony in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*. She claims that the first play conveys "the impossibility of a *return* of the masculine authoritative tradition" (96), which is considered the direct consequence of the war.

As has been noted in the previous subsection, Vladimir and Estragon are wanderers; they are the outcasts in the patriarchal system they are part of. They are the unsuccessful tramps and thieves subject to the authorative figure of Godot. He represents the system that has been undermined by the war but used to continue successfully because of the complacency of the middle class, in turn represented by the two protagonists. They very much emphasise that they willingly accept Godot as their master and have thus willingly given up their rights. This emphasises the idea of autonomy and freedom as present in existentialism. The irony is, however, that they accept the authority of another (which is never really exerted since Godot is never physically present) while still being incapable of fully taking part in his system (Jeffers 97-8). They fear him anyhow, not daring to leave the tree without Godot's consent because "[h]e'd punish us" (83). Their failure is represented by their emasculated appearance, proving Perloff's point about the importance of the body. Gender and the incapability to comply to gender-related expectations thus represent more general insights that contribute to the construction of internal posture.

The play presents its audience with two separate types of people, namely those successfully taking part in patriarchy and those who fall by the wayside. Robinson argues that Pozzo and Lucky (and possibly Godot) represent the "normal" world from which the two tramps are excluded (253). They are so fixated on Godot that they are incapable of recognising Pozzo as any other than the man they are waiting for, suggesting (social) alienation and exclusion:

> VLADIMIR: Godot?
>
> ESTRAGON: Yes.
>
> POZZO: I present myself: Pozzo.
>
> VLADIMIR: [*to Estragon*] Not at all!
>
> ESTRAGON: He said Godot.
>
> VLADIMIR: Not at all!
>
> ESTRAGON: [*timidly, to Pozzo*] You're not Mr. Godot, Sir?
>
> POZZO: [*terrifying voice*] I am Pozzo! [*Silence.*] Pozzo! [*Silence.*] Does that name mean anything to you? [*Silence.*] I say does that name mean anything to you?
>
> [*Vladimir and Estragon look at each other questioningly.*] (14)

Towards the end of the first act Vladimir states that "nobody ever recognises us" (39), further enforcing their isolation. In addition, Robinson considers the relationship between Pozzo and Lucky to be similar to the one between Godot and the two tramps; Lucky, Vladimir, and Estragon embody the inferior class in relation to the patriarchal landlords (Jeffers 98). There is one major difference, though: Lucky does reap the benefits of Western masculinity by being included in the system while Vladimir and Estragon are entirely rejected by their superior and thus made invisible.

Lucky's speech is one of the highly remarkable moments in the play and is also one of the more direct references to the Second World War. Jeffers suggests that "[his] words suggest an analogous holocaust" (107), evoking images that can be interpreted as reminiscent of the war: "First produced only a few years after the end of World War II, Lucky's 'the skull the skull the skull the skull' would have called to mind the then emerging photographs of the death camps, discovered mass burials, and the war, generally speaking" (107). To conclude, "[t]he darkness of Beckett's inner world" (95) becomes more and more prominent in his works written after the Second World War in Jeffers' reading. The type of masculinity Beckett represents in his writing seemed irrelevant before the war, but its existence is no longer denied from the writing in this period onwards. Despite any explicit mentioning, it is possible to detect indirect references to the horrors of that historical episode. The war is thus considered a tipping point in his oeuvre, leaving Beckett's readership with "darker" texts. This pessimism becomes an inherent aspect of internal posture in Beckett's post-war texts, which is confirmed by the analysis of style in the following section.

2.3 *Style*

What is remarkable about *Waiting for Godot* is that it consists of two almost identical acts. The subtitle of the play, "a tragicomedy in two acts," can be considered to foreshadow this important characteristic. The aspect of symmetry is often touched upon in analyses of the play, including both the similar acts as well as the similar couples of characters. In her introduction to *Beckett: Waiting for Godot: A Casebook* (1987), Ruby Cohn summarises the pattern as follows:

> Two friends meet by a tree at twilight to wait for Godot. A burdened menial and his master arrive, dally a while, and then leave. When the friends are alone again, a messenger arrives to inform them that Godot will come not today but tomorrow. The moon rises as the boy departs. Although the friends agree to go, they have not gone when the curtain falls. (17)

Thus the plot is not only very limited, it is also performed twice. The minor differences between the two acts lie in details such as the leaves on the tree, Pozzo's blindness, and Lucky's deafness the second time they appear. Robinson interprets these minor adjustments as signs that Vladimir and Estragon have lost any awareness of the passing of time (see section 2.2.1). The fact remains that the symmetry of the play in combination with the lack of plot creates a sense of meaninglessness in the actions of the two protagonists as well as in those of the audience. Federman refers to this as "apparent repetitious meaninglessness" (169). He compares *Waiting for Godot* to *Mercier and Camier* (1970) and concludes of the latter work that "[n]othing has happened, nothing has changed, nothing has been resolved, and the two companions face the same futile situation" (169). Naturally, this can easily be applied to the play under discussion in this chapter.

The absurdist quality of the play comes from its main purpose, which is nothing more than to make the useless waiting more bearable. Vladimir and Estragon recognise the hopelessness of their situation and consequently engage in absurd dialogues and behaviours simply to pass the time, which is already explicitly acknowledged in the beginning of the play. This attitude seems to form a parallel with the experience of the audience: the only option for both audience and cast is to wait the play out.

> VLADIMIR: Ah yes, the two thieves. Do you remember the story?
> ESTRAGON: No.
> VLADIMIR: Shall I tell it to you?
> ESTRAGON: No.

> VLADIMIR: It'll pass the time. [*Pause.*] Two thieves, crucified at the same time as our Saviour. One– (4)

This extract at the same time illustrates the absurdism that is present throughout the play. The text is very much characterised by misunderstanding, between Vladimir and Estragon as well as between them and other characters. Federman even argues that the conversations become less and less coherent as the play progresses (170). One of such conversations towards the end of the play takes place when (one of) Godot's young messenger(s) comes to tell Vladimir and Estragon that he will not come this evening. Out of the blue Vladimir asks the boy whether Mr Godot has a beard, and consequently what colour it is. When the boy responds that it is probably white, Vladimir exclaims "Christ have mercy on us!" (82). An example of absurdist behaviour that seems to be defy all logic in relation to the context of the play is the well-known bowler scene in act two. When the two tramps find Lucky's hat, which must have been left behind after their meeting in the previous act, they suddenly begin to pass on Lucky's as well as their own two hats to each other. This goes on for a considerable amount of time, ending in "*Estragon hand[ing] Vladimir's hat back to Vladimir who takes it and hands it back to Estragon who takes it and hands it back to Estragon who takes and hands it back to Vladimir who takes it and throws it down*" (62).

It can be concluded that *Waiting for Godot* is a rather comical text at first glance, but it should also be acknowledged that the comical quality of the play due to its absurdist style is a means to disguise the meaninglessness and emptiness of human life and touches upon existentialism. This once again ties in with the influence of the Second World War on Beckett's writing, making this work less light-hearted and more pessimistic than his earlier writing, including *Murphy*. *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett* (2004) even considers existential pessimism to embody the thematic coherence in this leading work, and emphasises that the play includes features of the comedy as well as the tragedy, which is of course suggested by the term tragicomedy in the subtitle. It is stated that the play mimics an individual's life in the sense that it is essentially a tragedy on a larger scale but is a comedy when looked at in more detail (Ackerley and Gontarski 624), which reveals a sentiment that very much attributes to internal posture.

In conclusion, the topics and themes discussed in the different (sub)sections making up this chapter concerning Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* seem to stress the intellectual and philosophical quality of the work. First, many of the covers feature a black background which suggests a sense of (mental) alienation in the figures portrayed, if any. The second section essentially revolves around meaninglessness as the universal human condition. The concepts of waiting and time are crucial in this play and even lead to possibly existentialist interpretations. Again, the content of the work is considered to be highly philosophical. The distinction between body and mind, as has been extensively investigated in the previous chapter, returns. It is the more specific context of the Second World War that points at isolation and alienation in the play. Similar to the protagonist in *Murphy*–albeit in a less light-hearted fashion–Vladimir and Estragon are outcasts because they are unable to participate in the social system provided. Finally, it is the style of the text, comical and pessimistic at the same time, that further establishes the lack of meaning in the play and consequently conveys the existential message concerning humanity in general. In sum, Samuel Beckett's internal posture in *Waiting for Godot* can be defined as an inclination for intellectual isolation, pessimistic philosophical insights concerning the human condition, and a style that captures meaninglessness through absurdist comedy. The following chapter analyses the final case study of this research, the short stories in *Stories and Texts for Nothing*, in a similar fashion.

3 *Stories for Nothing* (1955)

In 1967 the three connected short stories central to this chapter–"The End," "The Expelled," and "The Calmative"–were published as a unity (in English) for the first time in *No's Knife: Collected Shorter Prose 1945-1966*. Grove Press later published *Stories and Texts for Nothing* (1967), which was a direct translation of the original French *Nouvelles et Textes Pour Rien* (1955). Despite the somewhat scattered dates of publication, all stories were written in 1946. Knowlson takes Beckett's sequence of short prose fiction, including *First Love* (1970), as a post-war turning point in his writing. Beckett no longer believed that personal experience is essential to the writing of his works; his texts from this point on represent the idea that experience is simply a means for rather than the essence of writing (336). This does not stop Knowlson from tracing numerous references in *Stories and Texts for Nothing, Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *First Love* back to Beckett's personal life throughout his chapter, however.

Knowlson also identifies the Second World War as a turning point in Beckett's writing in terms of language. The first part of "The End," initially published in *Les Temps modernes* by Simone de Beauvoir in 1946, was originally written in English; however, Beckett decided to make a change and start writing in French about halfway in the story. The story is also considered to be the start of the "frenzy of writing" in French that Beckett embarked on during that period, producing multiple novels, plays, articles, and poetry (324-5). Knowlson explains that English had become too much of a burden for Beckett because his work "bristled with erudite and literary allusions" (324) due to the use of his mother tongue. The turn to French has even been interpreted as an escape from the influence of James Joyce. In addition, French allowed Beckett to take a step back and create more simplistic work. The language opened up the opportunity "to concentrate on a more direct expression of the search for 'being' and on an exploration of ignorance, impotence, and indigence" (324). These topics are very much applicable to the protagonists of *Stories for Nothing*.

"The End," originally "Suite" and later "La Fin," was followed by the publication of "The Expelled" (originally "L'Expulsé") in *Fontaine* that same year. The trilogy was completed with "Le Calmant" (i.e. "The Calmative") and consequently published as such in *Nouvelles et Textes Pour Rien* (1955) (Ricks vii). Critics consider the *Stories for Nothing,* as the unity of the three short stories is referred to in this master thesis from this points onwards, to be coherent in terms of the addressed themes and style. In addition, they are said to represent a sense of degradation: "the stories portray three successive stages in the downfall of a human being" (Ricks viii). This interpretation of course requires the stories to be analysed in a certain order, which is originally derived from *Nouvelles et Textes Pour Rien* (1955) and has been continued throughout the publications that followed in French as well as in English. This order of succession is adhered to in this particular chapter, when relevant, too: "The Expelled" is followed by "The Calmative" and finally "The End."

This chapter builds on the insights derived from the two previous chapters dealing with *Murphy* and *Waiting for Godot*, respectively. The latter work was written during the same period in Beckett's career as *Stories for Nothing*, and can therefore be expected to address similar topics. The unified publication of *Stories for Nothing* was later than that of Beckett's well-known play, though. As in the previous chapter, it should be mentioned that *Murphy* is further removed from the short stories due to its time of publication. The thematic content of *Stories for Nothing* is investigated by addressing the following themes: the passing of time, memory, exile, physicality, and mental alienation. This substantive section is preceded by a section analysing paratextuality and succeeded by a section concerning style. This chapter aims to answer the following subquestion: How do paratextuality, thematic content, and style in *Stories for Nothing* further construct internal posture? The edition used is a publication by Faber and Faber titled *The Expelled / The Calmative / The End with First Love* (2009), including a preface by Christopher Ricks.

3.1 *Paratextuality*

The investigation of paratextuality is relatively more difficult in this particular chapter for two reasons. First, *Stories for Nothing* consist of three short stories, which causes differences in publication compared to more extensive and individual works such as *Murphy* and *Waiting for Godot*. The narratives are published in combination with *Texts for Nothing* (i.e. the non-fictional prose texts from the all-encompassing publication), but are also included in publications of collected short fiction by Beckett. Second, such publications are much rarer and less widespread than other, more well-known pieces of writing by Beckett. Considering the publications that are available for investigation, it becomes clear that the design of these editions are invaluable when it comes to internal posture. Most of the covers present nothing but a graphic design incorporating the name of the author and the respective title, which could at most be interpreted as a representation of abstraction. This is also the case in the Faber and Faber edition used for this research. This publication does include a preface, but most of the information provided in this paratext is factual rather than interpretative. The preface does touch upon the progressive degradation that is revealed when the stories are read in a particular order, as is included in the analysis of the major themes below. The back cover also stresses the unity of the four stories and their unique quality, representing "a new phase of Beckett's genius." The original Grove Press edition of *Stories and Texts for Nothing* published in 1967 does not reveal much when it comes to internal posture either. The only possible source of information is the back cover, which does provide some interesting remarks. The blurb stresses the relation of *Stories for Nothing* with the remainder of his oeuvre by continually drawing parallels with other works: "Here, as in all his work, Beckett relentlessly strips away all but the essential to arrive at a core truth. His prose reveals the same mastery that marks his work from *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* to *Molloy* and *Malone Dies*." This "stripping away" can be linked back to the abstract cover designs previously mentioned, but do not provide any substantial evidence for the construction of internal posture. The back cover additionally features two reviews that once again point at the uniqueness of Beckett's writing, which rises above that of any of his contemporaries. One minor conclusion that can be drawn from analysing these editions is that *Stories for Nothing* are often perceived as representative of Beckett's style and content of writing, but the remarks do not necessarily pinpoint what that essence actually is.

3.2 *Alienated wanderers*

In his short mentioning of *Stories for Nothing* in his book *Samuel Beckett,* Sinéad Mooney identifies the metaphors of birth and expulsion as a unifying factor in the stories. They very much convey a sense of estrangement that is reflected in the instability of the protagonists' narratives. Again, it is degradation that comes to the forefront (24-5). The blurb of the Faber and Faber edition in turn emphasises a "triumph" over the hardships presented, which could be interpreted to refer to the rejection of memory and ensuing alienation. These allow for something that could be considered survival, but seems to be nothing more than making the endless passing of time bearable. The distinction between body and mind emerges once again, too. These themes are investigated to explore in depth Beckett's recurring alienated wanderers in *Stories for Nothing* as well as in the texts studied in the previous chapters, thus seemingly representing a fundamental aspect of his internal posture.

3.2.1 *Passing time and memory*

In his article "The Beckettian Mimesis of Time" (2011), Eric P. Levy argues that the concept of time is dealt with differently throughout the various texts in Beckett's oeuvre. Time is mostly used to express experience rather than something that independently exists prior to that experience (89-90). He finds that time is "a conclusion *drawn* from experience" (90). In this light Levy defines a crucial contradiction: time and consequently change seem to be absent in many of Beckett's texts as nothing (significant) happens, while at the same time there is nothing but time. This raises the question whether time is an independent entity or a construction through the taking place of events, i.e. substantive or relationist as Levy refers to it, which cannot be answered with one conclusive answer (91-2). Since both philosophies are traceable in his oeuvre, "time is the measure not of change . . . but of constancy" (92). The protagonists in *Stories for Nothing* seem to be aware of this condition, which is reflected by their wish to tell stories in order to pass the time. "The Calmative" begins with the protagonist expressing concerns about the decay of his ageing body from which he desperately needs distraction: "So I'll tell myself a story, I'll try and tell myself another story, to try and calm myself" (19). The narration thus functions as a means rather than a purpose in itself. This is addressed again when the protagonist meets an unfamiliar man seated next to him and the latter attempts the extract the protagonist's life story from him, seemingly trying to make conversation. The final lines of "The End" convey that the protagonist might have told any other story when he is reminded of "the story I might have told" (57), reducing the entire preceding narrative to an interchangeable option. "The Expelled" ends in a rather similar yet more explicit way: "I don't know why I told this story. I could just as well have told another. Perhaps some other time I'll be able to tell another" (16). This stressing of its futility suggests that they are simply passing the time, which is reminiscent of the way time is dealt with in *Waiting for Godot*.

What problematises these instances of metatextuality, though, is the continual acknowledgement that the narrators are incapable of constructing logical or truthful narratives. In Levy's reading, the complexity of time also poses difficulty in understanding the relationship between present and past. In some texts, e.g. *Endgame*, the past is considered to precede the present moment and thus gives meaning to the now. *Texts for Nothing*, for instance, dismisses the influence or even the existence of the past by a total lack of memory. The past then becomes a state in which memories are terminated. This "dispensation" is addressed in "The Expelled" when painful memories are described as having to be drowned out by overthinking them (95-6): "Memories are killing. . . . That is to say, you must think of them for a while, a good while, every day several times a day, until they sink in the mud" (3). The characters in fact display a lack of memory throughout the stories they are relating, undermining the truthfulness of their narratives. They are filled with intermissions such as "those are the only words I remember" in "The Expelled" (13), "I don't know how long I stayed there" 46) in "The End", and "I say this evening as if it were always the same evening, but are there two evenings?" (25) in "The Calmative." The protagonist in the latter story does not even remember his own age. Levy concludes that it is thus not remembering but forgetting that is crucial because this allows the present to momentarily release itself from the burden that time imposes (99). This is what the rejection of a past time frame by the protagonist in "The Calmative" seems to suggest, too: "I speak as though it all happened yesterday. Yesterday indeed is recent, but not enough. For what I tell this evening is passing this evening, at this passing hour" (20).

Additionally, Levy has written an article titled "The Beckettian Absolute Universal" (2003), in which he formulates that many of Beckett's texts convey an endless continuation. It is impossible to end or conclude things, "in the dual sense of termination and comprehension" (660). The protagonist in "The Calmative" seems to suggest something in this line of thinking when he reflects on his own narrative: "And I have reached this point (in my story) without anything having changed, for if anything had changed I think I'd know, the fact remains I have reached it, and that's something, and with nothing changed, and that's something too. It's no excuse for rushing matters" (30). There are thus no developments to create any sense of plot, producing a narrative that merely exists rather than moves towards a conclusion. This does not only become apparent on a metatextual level. The beginning of "The End" clearly introduces the idea that a return to a former shelter is out of the question and that the only option is "to go on" (39). The protagonist in "The Calmative" also seems to have no choice but to continue: "I thought I could go no further, but no sooner had the impetus reached my legs than on I went, believe it or not, at a very fair pace" (27). For all three protagonists this sentiment results in a state of endless wandering. Levy argues that this lack of conclusions or endings is very much reflected by estrangement present in both narrator and the ones he is interacting with; the failure to recognise what is perceived by sight functions in a similar manner (660-1). The theme of alienation is further discussed in the following sections. In terms of internal posture, the manner in which time and memory are represented reveals the negative connotations attached to life in general; pessimism is the recurring sentiment.

3.2.2 *Exile and the body*

All three stories begin with their protagonists being rejected from their (former) places of residence involuntarily, evoking the image of a (re)birth (Mooney 24). *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett* (2004) expresses a similar sentiment when comparing the themes of rejection and abandonment with the traumatic experience of being born (Ackerley and Gontarski 188).The protagonist in "The Expelled" is literally thrown out of what can be assumed his family home as is suggested by the stairs that are such a prominent memory in his recollection of his childhood. It becomes clear that he is "ejected" (5) for good when he returns once more: "I looked up at the third and last floor and saw my window outrageously open. A thorough cleansing was in full swing. In a few hours they would close the window, draw the curtains and spray the whole place with disinfectant" (5-6). The situation is extra wry since he "would have gladly died in that house" (6). Even though it is unclear how the narrator of "The Calmative" has ended up in an existence of wandering, but it is made clear from the start that he (no longer) has a stable home: "I have changed refuge so often, in the course of my rout, that now I can't tell between dens and ruins" (19). "The End" tells the story of a man who is released from, or more accurately forced out of, "a charitable institution" (39) and sent on his way. The furniture in the room is taken apart, literally dismantling his former home. That everything is done to prevent a possible return by the protagonist is further emphasised by the order to "[n]ever come back here whatever you do, you would not be let in" (39). These irreversible rejections leave the protagonists in search of a home or simply shelter, inevitably causing them to aimlessly wander on the streets since all attempts to take refuge fail. The protagonist in "The End" is forced to live on the open road time and time again: he is turned away from his beloved basement by the foreign man who turns out to be the actual owner, and the cow living near the caveman's cabin literally drags him out, for instance. In "The Calmative" the narrator explains how he tried to seek shelter in a church or cathedral, as was common in the Middle Ages. After climbing a staircase and ending up in a projection gallery, he is confronted with other people and is eventually scared away by "a face that made me recoil" (26).

The lives of the outcasts seem to be inextricably bound up with physical discomfort and decay, presenting the body as a burden. Marjorie Perloff attributes much importance to the emphasis on physicality in Beckett's writing. She argues that war as represented by the horrors that the body imposes is not only a prominent theme in *Waiting for Godot*, as addressed in the previous chapter, but also in *Stories for Nothing* (77). Perloff characterises the physical reality of many of Beckett's protagonists as rather desperate. They

> experience themselves as ugly, aging, smelly, toothless, incontinent, impotent or incapable of enjoying sex; they are homeless, friendless, and loveless. . . . Eating is a matter of sustenance rather than pleasure. Urinating is a hardship, defecating a worse one. Feet are likely to be swollen, hair lice-infested, clothing torn and filthy. Sleep is intermittent and disturbed and takes place, not in bed, but in cowsheds, caves, ditches, and on park benches. (79)

This description is very much applicable to the characters central in *Stories for Nothing*, whose suffering is very much represented through the decay of their body due to their mental isolation (which is elaborately investigated in the following subsection). The protagonist in "The Expelled" provides a very detailed description of his incontinency and incapability of dealing with it during his childhood, which he believes to have resulted in becoming "in love with hiding and the prone position" (7). It is also mentioned how he suffers from pustules and is therefore disagreeable company for others. The protagonist in "The End" finds himself in a similar position since (he believes) his appearance is very unattractive, which makes him hesitant to remove his hat. The narrator of "The Calmative" talks about how he indulges in his "distant refuge" (20). Only when he leaves this safe place does it become clear how extreme his lack of stamina truly is, which is attributed to his old age. At first glance he also seems to be entirely oblivious to the concept of male sexuality while conversing with a passer-by:

> Are thighs much in your thoughts, he said, arses, cunts and environs? I didn't follow. No more erections naturally, he said. Erections? I said. The penis, he said, you know what the penis is, there, between your legs. Ah that! I said. It thickens, lengthens, stiffens and rises, he said, does it not? I assented, though they were not the terms I would have used. (30)

Towards the end of the story a rather strange transaction occurs between another stranger and the protagonist, namely when the latter is asked to kiss another man on the brow in exchange for a phial he did not want to obtain in the first place. "The End" by far displays the most advanced stage of physical decay, which ties in with the pattern of deterioration that is recognised when the stories are interpreted in a certain order. His bodily discomfort starts out mildly with an estrangement from his own physicality and especially sexuality: "They didn't seem to make much interest in my private parts which to tell the truth were nothing to write home about, I didn't take much interest in them myself" (38). However, his wandering life on the streets causes his bodily condition to deteriorate quickly. The protagonist assumes the role of beggar and at one point explicitly describes how simply scratching his body provides him with more pleasure than masturbation, again conveying a rejection of sexuality. He goes on that "[i]t was in the arse I had the most pleasure, I stuck in my forefinger up to the knuckle. Later, if I had to shit, the pain was atrocious. But I hardly shat any more" (51). His physical condition, notably what can best be described as his incontinence, becomes worse and worse. The phrase that most painfully and ultimately captures the condition of his body is "this living corpse" (52). These passages very much illustrate Perloff's point about the confrontational quality of the physical realities Beckett presents to his readership. In terms of internal posture, it is the continual involuntary confrontation with the physicality of the outside world that comes to the forefront. The failing attempts to escape this physicality through hiding in secluded places of shelter convey the inescapability of this confrontation and the consequent unsuccessful integration. This insight is further analysed in opposition to the tendency for mental alienation, discussed in the following subsection.

3.2.3 *Mental isolation*

The protagonists in *Stories for Nothing* are also outcasts on a mental level. First, they are often unable to recognise their surroundings and therefore are lost in a world they believe is not or no longer known to them. This eventually leads up to an extreme form of rejecting the physical world and embracing a fully mental existence. "The Expelled" ends with the protagonist relating that he does not know where he is; he continues to explain that what is most crucial to him is moving along with the rising and setting of the sun, suggesting that he finds comfort in indefinite surroundings. The narrator in "The Calmative" states that "I only know the city of my childhood" (19) while indicating that he has definitely visited other cities, "but unbelieving" (19). It can thus be concluded that only his hometown is truly committed to his memory. Other places spark some feelings of familiarity, yet always carrying a negative connotation:

> But suddenly I was descending a wide street, vaguely familiar, but in which I could never have set foot, in my lifetime. But soon realizing I was going downhill I turned about and set off in the other direction. For I was afraid if I went downhill of returning to the sea where I had sworn never to return. When I say I turned about I mean I wheeled round in a wide semicircle without slowing down, for I was afraid if I stopped of not being able to start again, yes, I was afraid of that too. (27)

None of the possible places to retire to are suitable, threatening rather, in the eyes of the protagonist. It seems that this continual wandering or fleeing represents an attempt to escape from the physicality the narrator has unwillingly been confronted with since the rejection from his former home. Once again, the final story is most explicit in its dealing with the theme under discussion. "The End" entirely revolves around the protagonist's quest for a setting in which he can allow his mind to be free from any outside physical influence on his mental being. He describes this as being "under cover . . . , in an empty place" (41). His most successful attempt occurs when he temporarily lives in the basement of a foreign woman. This secluded area is not entirely soundproof, though, resulting in the protagonist suffering when confronted with signs of the outside life (e.g. the noise produced by the newspaper boys). When he leaves the basement and starts living on the streets, it seems that purposely blocking out the outside world is his only means to survive. This results in a mental state that disables the senses: "One day I witnessed a strange scene. Normally I didn't see a great deal. I didn't hear a great deal either. I didn't pay attention. Strictly speaking I wasn't there. Strictly speaking I believe I've never been anywhere. But that day I must have come back" (51). This passage suggests a total rejection of physical reality, which is made possible by a retreat into the mind.

Second, the protagonists do not possess the necessary social skills in order to connect with other people on a meaningful level. Perloff identifies this as an issue for many of Beckett's main characters: "They meet and have contact with others but these others remain largely unknown, despite shows of friendship and intimacy" (79). This is represented in the least extreme form by the protagonist in "The Expelled." He succeeds in creating some kind of bond with his cab driver, who gives shape to the social aspect of the protagonist's life for the greater part of the story. He is even invited to the cab driver's home, but it is obvious that he feels a sense of unease at such situations, especially in relation to his wife: "She was manifestly ill at ease, alone with me. I could understand her, I don't stand on ceremony on these occasions" (14). The consequence is that he only agrees to stay in their home when he is allowed to sleep in their stable, which he flees anyway in the end. Most of the time the protagonists are only partly aware that they are surrounded by other human beings. While in the city, the narrator of "The Calmative" "remarked a number of shapes, male and female, strange shapes" (27). He thus merely perceives "shapes" rather than others like himself who he can identify with. When it does come to one-to-one encounters that require conversation, it suddenly becomes clear that he is unable to verbally reach out to the other in a fruitful way:

> I resolved to speak to him. So I marshalled the words and opened my mouth, thinking I would hear them. But all I heard was a kind of rattle, unintelligible even to me who knew what was intended. But it was nothing, mere speechlessness due to long silence, as in the wood that darkens the mouth of hell, do you remember, I only just. (24)

This incapability for external communication stands in contrast with the eloquence of his inner monologue, e.g. the comparison at the end of the previous passage, again emphasising the richness of his independent consciousness. When he does speak to the boy, he feels that he says all the wrong things. A more disturbing instance of mental isolation is when the protagonist in "The End" thinks he sees his son after being evicted from the basement: "One day I caught sight of my son. . . . I was almost sure it was he. I turned around to gaze after him. He went bustling along on his duck feet, bowing and scraping and flourishing his hat left and right. The insufferable son of a bitch" (45). It is of course the uncertainty with which he identifies his own blood that is striking. The fact that his supposed son walks along without any mutual recognition suggests that this man could simply be a person onto whom the memory of an actual son is projected. The insult at the end of his observation points at the fact that either way, the protagonist only cares for *his* rather than *the* truth.

The fact that the protagonists are unable to recognise their physical environments has been linked to the influence of the Second World War on Beckett's writing. It is often interpreted as reminiscent of returning to a previous home after the destructions of war. The disruptive experiences evoke a sense of alienation, causing previously untouched places that functioned as sanctuaries to become "simultaneously familiar and strange" (Ackerley and Gontarski 172). The physical world, provoking trauma in the form of war, thus becomes an unsafe environment, which clarifies the preference for mental isolation. It is the interaction between physical decay and this mental alienation, making it impossible to successfully function within any given society, that ultimately leads to their solitary and seemingly meaningless existence. The idea that life is forced upon humans and brings nothing but hardships one should try to dissociate oneself from further constructs existential pessimism as a key concept for Beckett's internal posture.

3.3 *Style*

The blurb of the Faber and Faber edition brings the duality of Beckett's style to the forefront, which has been identified as a major characteristic of his writing in the previous chapter concerning *Waiting for Godot*, to the forefront: "At once tragedy and comedy, these masterpieces of economy and poverty inaugurated a new phase of Beckett's genius, while he continued to pursue things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme." The absurdist quality of many passages in *Stories for Nothing*, e.g. one man kissing another strange man on the brow in "The Calmative" or the beggar living in a deserted boat in "The End," provide the narratives with much humour. Especially the visualisation of appearances or situations provide the texts with their comical quality. This comical quality is countered, however, by the intensely tragic condition of the protagonists. It is the contrast between the humorous instances and the hardships that allow for these comical intermissions that points at the poignant larger picture of their lives. That is the essence of Beckett's (later) writing, namely the inherent paradox of life. This is reminiscent of the comments concerning existentialism in *Waiting for Godot* in

The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett (2004), which state "that the life of every individual is really a tragedy, but in detail it has the character of a comedy" (Ackerley and Gontarski 624). In addition, the quotation at the beginning of this paragraph also emphasises the break in Beckett's style between pre- and post-war writings with the phrase "new phase." This points at the change of tone in Beckett's work since his experiences with the Second World War, as has been identified by many scholars. The destructive nature of this episode in Western history can thus be interpreted as the catalyst for existential pessimism in Beckett's works. Whereas physical decay is a representation of these experiences, mental isolation can be considered a coping mechanism necessary because of the experienced horrors.

Due to the first-person perspective, the sense of mental alienation does not only become apparent in the content of the narratives (see section 3.2.3) but also in their form. The innovative narrative techniques that Beckett uses in *Stories for Nothing* evoke estrangement in the narrators as well as in the readers since both are unaware of what is merely subjective and what is not. The protagonist in "The Expelled" is introduced as having the capability to retreat into his "reverie" (4), which allows for a world that is "most dreamlike" (4). He is brought back, however, by outside disturbances, at which point he remarks that "the spell was broken" (4). The lack of memory that is emphasised throughout the narrative raises doubts about the truthfulness of the story and suggests that he might fill in the gaps with his tendency for imagination, even though this happens to a much more significant extent in the consequent story. The opening of "The Calmative" immediately throws the reader into much confusion through the use of the narrative technique stream of consciousness. It is made impossible to gain a footing for the remainder of the story, for the narrator himself is presented as entirely disoriented:

> I don't know when I died. It always seemed to me I died old, about ninety years old, and what years, and that my body bore it out, from head to foot. . . . Or is it possible that in this story I have come back to life, after my death? No, it's not like me to come back to life, after my death. . . . I'm no longer with these assassins, in this bed of terror, but in my distant refuge, my hands twined together, my head bowed, weak, breathless, calm, free, and older than I'll have ever been, if my calculations are correct. I'll tell my story in the past none the less, as though it were a myth, or an old fable . . . . (19-20)

The fact that there is no coherent plot–besides the consistent idea of a fall, physical or not–adds to this sentiment. The different episodes that make up the story are absurdist in themselves but moreover are not mutually related. Questions about the narrator, alive or dead, or the objectivity of the story, factual or a dream, remain unanswered. This might lead readers to think that "The Calmative" is the record of a hallucination rather than an actual narrative. Such assumptions seem to be confirmed by the out-of-the-blue statement that "we are needless to say in a skull" (27-8), suggesting that the story is nothing more than a figment of imagination. "The End" provides the reader with intermissions such as "Was it a song in my head or did it merely come from without?" (43) that raises doubt about the objectivity of the story, too. Especially the final scene, in which the sea overflows the banks and entirely surrounds him, is more likely to be the representation of a mental sensation rather than an actual event. The conclusion is that "distinctions between what occurs and what is imagined become impossible to determine" (Ackerley and Gontarski 172). *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett* (2004) sees this as the starting point of a style that is characteristic of Beckett's oeuvre, specifically because it returns in several of his best-known works, namely *Molloy* (1951), *Malone Dies* (1951), and *The Unnameable* (1953), which are collectively known as "the trilogy" or *Three Novels* (Ackerley and Gontarski 172-3). Rick's introduction confirms this sentiment by stating that the "witty, unpredictable, and desperately poignant" (xiii) character of these stories is in fact representative of Beckett's oeuvre.

In conclusion, the construction of Samuel Beckett's internal posture in *Stories for Nothing* can be summarised by a sense of duality both in content and style. The short stories barely contribute to internal posture in terms of paratextuality besides their being representative for Beckett's oeuvre in its entirety. The themes of time, memory, mental isolation, exile, and physicality reveal a philosophical outlook related to existential pessimism and a distinction between the burden of the body and the freedom of the mind, as seen in the previous chapters. What has not yet been encountered, however, is the confrontational representation of physical decay. This is interpreted as a reflection of wartime experiences, which in turn causes the mental isolation and consequent confusion to be interpreted as an escape from these experiences. Philosophy concerning the human condition as well as the processing of the Second World War are thus crucial for an understanding of these interrelated texts. The style presented in these pieces of fiction at the same time includes tragedy and comedy, resulting in the absurdist quality Beckett's writing is known for: it is humour that brings the inevitable pessimism to the forefront. The lack of plot or consistent narrators further provokes a sense of estrangement and points at the idea that life is something to escape from by passing the time with nonsensical things, which in this case means telling a story that is in itself irrelevant.

Conclusion

This master thesis has aimed to reveal how internal posture is constructed in a selection of works by Samuel Beckett. Due to the limited scope and timeframe of this master thesis, this research has investigated three case studies that have been argued to be representative of his oeuvre in its entirety (i.e. varying in genre and time of writing) in order to answer the following research question: How is internal posture constructed in Samuel Beckett's *Murphy*, *Waiting for Godot*, and the narratives in *Stories and Texts for Nothing*, and how does this construction differ in his earlier and later writing? The method adopted for this research is a combination of close-reading of the primary texts including paratextuality and a review of secondary literature. The theoretical framework of this master thesis essentially revolves around Jérôme Meizoz' conceptualisation of posture but is supported by Andrew Bennett's discussion of the emergence of authorship and Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the cultural field, which have provided valuable contextual information. The case studies have been investigated in chronological order of publication and with a disregard for differences in genre.

The investigation of internal posture in *Murphy* reveals an emphasis on intellectuality and philosophy, which is reflected by the complex relation between physicality and mental freedom lying at the basis of the work. The lack of character development in the minor characters suggests that they represent the alienation Murphy experiences throughout his quest for independence of the mind. The highly philosophical scope of the novel is continually interrupted by absurdist intermissions, very much adding to the comical quality of the text. The subsequent chapters of this thesis include several similar themes. The distinction between body and mind as well as a sense of (mental) isolation returns in both *Waiting for Godot* and *Stories for Nothing*. Despite the considerable overlap in thematic unity across the case studies, Beckett's earlier writing–represented by *Murphy*–can be distinguished from his later writing–represented by *Waiting for Godot* and *Stories for Nothing*, respectively. In this sense, *Waiting for Godot* can be interpreted as a transition work in terms of the existential pessimism dominating Beckett's later works, which several scholars have attributed to his experiences of the Second World War. Murphy is not yet fully committed to the separation of body and mind, resulting in a more accessible novel. In *Waiting for Godot*, the body becomes more of a burden, which is a fully developed sentiment in *Stories for Nothing*. The absurdity and meaninglessness of life are interpreted in a more pessimistic light in the latter two case studies than in *Murphy*. This pessimism is mainly addressed through the concept of time. As a consequence the latter two works provoke much more extreme estrangement than *Murphy*, which makes it difficult to distinguish between objectivity and subjectivity, especially in *Stories for Nothing*. The absurdist style, in sum a combination of comedy and tragedy, is present in all three case studies but becomes more poignant as the existential pessimism becomes more prominent. The general assumptions that *Murphy* and *Waiting for Godot* are closely related in terms of thematic content and that the narratives in *Stories and Texts for Nothing* are representative of Samuel Beckett's whole corpus of writing thus seem to be confirmed by the findings of this research concerning the construction of internal posture.

Since there are no explicit references to authorship or an I-perspective that can be traced back to Samuel Beckett as an author, the investigation of internal posture has been carried out through close-reading, which has shown that there is in fact a constant quality to the works discussed in this research. Beckett's authorship is represented by intellectuality (especially philosophy) through a continuous addressing of the distinction between physicality and mental freedom, existential pessimism, the meaninglessness of life, and the subsequent estrangement. These themes and sentiments are fortified by a style that includes both tragedy and comedy. All in all, this seems to be reminiscent of what Ackerley and Gontarski call "the culmination of Romantic agony" (ix), as addressed in the introduction. These findings are derived from an analysis of major recurring themes and style rather than paratextuality. The theoretical framework suggests that paratextuality is an inherent part of a primary text and should thus be included in research into internal posture. In terms of this master thesis, the findings derived from this aspect of the research are limited. The sections analysing multiple editions of the works under investigation mostly draw from the information on the covers. Many of the publications discussed do not provide prefaces or introductions but simply present the reader with the text. Paratextuality could not be excluded beforehand, however, which is why it is included in this master thesis in spite of its minor contribution to the overall conclusion(s).

Generally speaking, Meizoz' formulation of internal posture in "Modern Posterities of Posture. Jean-Jacques Rousseau" (2010) was too limited to offer substantial guidance on how to put the concept to practical use. His overall discussion of posture is mainly concerned with external posture, which is consequently much better defined and easier to apply. Internal posture seems to be somewhat of an afterthought to a concept that is first and foremost sociological in scope in order to include the literary aspect in posture research. The theoretical framework of this master thesis has thus not given the desired guidance in terms of method or additional terminology, which is why this research has resorted to a combination of close-reading and literature review. The relatively new concept of internal posture, which has not yet been extensively researched, has thus been investigated through a highly conventional rather than an innovative method in literary studies. The research conducted in this master thesis might not have revealed new insights for the separate case studies but has attempted something new by aiming to reveal a constant quality across texts in an oeuvre addressed as internal posture.

Due to the narrow scope and time range set for this master thesis, the research question formulated for this particular research is rather limited. It has only been possible to address a small selection of texts from Beckett's oeuvre within the limits of this research. Even though the three case studies have provided results in the light of the defined framework, more research is needed to further confirm the findings derived from investigating these three particular works. Other literary scholars could investigate additional works by Beckett in a similar fashion, but they could also improve the case studies investigated in this master thesis with a more elaborate approach. Another option is to apply the method adopted in this research to the work of other authors, revealing whether internal posture works in a similar fashion across different oeuvres. Otherwise, it is the concept of internal posture in itself that could greatly benefit from a more elaborate definition and corresponding method and additional terminology. Since internal posture has not yet been extensively investigated in literary studies, there are many options to further explore this concept and lead to a better understanding of it in the modern literary world. Scholars could thus contribute to literary studies by further theorising Meizoz' concept. Only then can the suggestions for further research in the this section prove to be truly valuable for literary studies.

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