Existentialism and Inauthenticity in the Theater of Beckett, Ionesco, Andgenet.

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EXISTENTIALISM AND INAUTHENTICITY IN THE THEATER OF BECKETT, IONESCO, AND GENET

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in The Department of Foreign Languages

by
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B.A., Furman University, 1958

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ABSTRACT

Mid-twentieth century avant-garde French theater has posed serious comprehension problems for literary critics conditioned to the causality of "realistic" literature. For lack of a more precise term, critics have classified the avant-garde theater as the "theater of the absurd," and in many instances have manipulated their terminology in order to camouflage a superficial interpretation. The purpose of the present study is to examine Existential philosophy and Existential psychoanalysis as a means of interpreting Samuel Beckett's En attendant Godot, Fin de partie, and La Dernière bande; Ionesco's Bérenger plays: Tueur sans gages, Rhinocéros, Le Roi se meurt, and Le Piéton de l'air; and Jean Genêt's Les Bonnes, Haute Surveillance, Le Balcon, and Les Nègres. Martin Heidegger's theories of existence based upon his concept of Dasein were found to be the expression of Existentialism most relevant to the plays under consideration. In order to analyze the character structures of these plays, detailed consideration is given to the nature of Dasein (1) as a being with the possibility of authentic and inauthentic relating to reality, (2) as a temporal being in possession of a past, a present, and a future, (3) as a free and responsible being who creates his essence as he moves from Nothing to Nothing, (4) as a being who suffers the anguish of finitude, and (5) as a being who gives meaning to...
the world. In order to intensify the understanding of the character structures under consideration use is made of the contemporary theories of Existential psychoanalysis as related to sadism, masochism, authoritarianism, destructiveness, and psychological flight.

This study of the characters of Beckett, Ionesco, and Genét through the medium of Existentialism reveals that their existence is typified by inauthenticity as manifested in their psychic dependence upon one another, their lack of identity, their meaningless prattle, their automaton conformity, their attempt to escape from the reality of their own freedom in order to be directed by an exterior being, such as another or the nebulous "they," their rejection of part of their three-fold temporality so that they live in a fragmented past, present, or future. Each of the dramatists studied uses a particular theatrical technique in representing the inauthenticity of his characters: Beckett uses the clown-character caught in the slow agony of ennui; Ionesco, the guignol whose inner void is juxtaposed against the "over-presence" of things; Genét, the persona, the mask of appearance, that replaces reality. In contrast to the general tonality of inauthenticity that is expressed by the theater of the avant-garde, two characters stand out because of their attempts to relate authentically to reality. They are Ionesco's Bérenger and Genét's Yeux-Vert. In Tueur sans gages and Rhinocéros, Bérenger struggles to accept his freedom and responsibility, even at the price of personal sacrifice;
in _Le Roi se meurt_, he confronts the reality of his movement toward
dead and non-being; in _Le Piéton de l'air_, he experiences the
euphoria of being in harmony with reality and the anguish of envisioning his ultimate Nothingness. Yeux-Vert's authenticity comes
into existence as he ceases his efforts to "undo" the murder he
has committed and painfully comes not only to accept, but to will
what he is.

This study concludes (1) that the theater of the avant-garde,
in general, is an attempt to reconnect man with reality by reflecting
the inauthentic patterns of relating that prevail in our society,
(2) that it is an effort to dethrone "sacred" values which, when
assimilated unconsciously, limit one's powers for creative thinking,
(3) that it is an expression of the fundamental, unifying nature
of man whose being exceeds that revealed by his social Self.
INTRODUCTION

Twentieth century man, like men of all times, questions his own reality. He questions if there is a being definable as himself; and if so, what is the nature of that being and what is its relation to exterior reality. Descartes' "Je pense, donc je suis" was a major development in this line of inquiry; but yesterday's Cartesian certainties have yielded to today's existential relativities.

Modern man, having seen elements of irrationality and absurdity in himself and in the universe, no longer conceives of himself as part of a great, ordered hierarchy of cause and effect. But such seeing is frightening, and man is tempted to reject his insights and to retreat into the less disquieting world of self-deception.

The basic premise of this dissertation is that it is the nature of man to flee from being to non-being, to escape from knowing into not knowing, to reject reality and to embrace illusion and self-deception. Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, and Jean Genêt have made this trait of man the central theme of their theater. To one who has not penetrated this level of human psychology their theater appears at best illogical, if not totally nonsensical. Because these writers have led the way in giving literary expression to man's flight from reality, they have been declared avant-garde; yet the awareness of man's inclination to renounce his being is not so new to certain other intellectual disciplines, namely those of philosophy
and psychology. Hence it is the purpose of this study to present
the basic theories of existence as developed by existential philos-
ophy and psychology, and to relate these new insights into the
nature of Being to the theater of Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco,
and Jean Genêt.

Existential philosophy is related to all thought that has pre-
ceded it, either by way of contrast and consequent rejection of certain
ideas or in acceptance and consequent amplification of other ideas.
It is not within the scope of this investigation to trace the matur-
ation of existential thought nor to present it as modified by
various existential philosophers. Only those aspects of existential
philosophy which have manifested themselves in the theater of Beckett,
Ionesco, and Genêt are discussed. The discoveries of modern psychol-
ogy are treated similarly; that is, there will be no attempt to
trace the evolution of psychological theories unless they are directly
applicable to the understanding of the characters in the plays under
consideration.
CHAPTER I
DASEIN AS AUTHENTIC AND INAUTHENTIC

The basic tenet of Western philosophy from the time of the Greeks has been that Truth lies beyond the world of man and things, that it is absolute and unchanging, and that the purpose of man's life is the intellectual pursuit of that Truth. In spite of sporadically recurring assertions that man finds the meaning of life within himself and that Truth is not some abstract absolute that can be discovered, but a state of Being that is lived, the mainstream of Western philosophy has continued basically unchanged to this day. However, from the time of Nietzsche's dramatic declaration of the death of God (which encompassed any entity outside of himself to which man looked for the meaning of life), more and more thinkers have turned aside from their philosophical heritage and have reconsidered in totality the meaning of Existence.

One such thinker was Martin Heidegger (1889- ), whose concept of Dasein became the basic element of Existential philosophy which has, in turn, become one of the leading currents in Western thought. Existentialism has had its effect on many intellectual disciplines—-theology, psychology, sociology, linguistics, education, art, and literature, not to mention the influence that it has had on the lives of many individuals.
In spite of the seemingly endless ramifications of Existential philosophy, this study concerns itself only with the presence of the philosophy of Dasein in the theater of Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, and Jean Genét, in the form of direct Existential ideas and in the form of Existential Psychology as it applies to the portrayal of character.

Since Heidegger's philosophy of Dasein has been so influential on the philosophy underlying the avant-garde theater and since it has revolutionized Freudian theories of psychology, which are likewise key elements in this theater, we shall first examine in detail the concept of Dasein.

DASEIN:

The term Dasein has to do with man's relating, his standing-in, his essence, in a world of things. Man occupies space, just like any other material object, but this spatial nature is not the essential characteristic of man's relation to things and to others. Heidegger maintains that the basis of this relationship lies in the phenomenon of human care (Besorgen).

Two possible ways of relating are open to man: Heidegger calls these authentic and inauthentic existence. Authentic standing-in occurs when Dasein's relationship to things is derived from the total structure of what he really is. Inauthentic standing-in occurs when Dasein's concern for the daily necessities of life leads him to ignore his full potentialities. The finite nature of man, whose
understanding of his potentialities is always somewhat limited, makes it impossible for Dasein always to stand-in authentically. In fact, inauthentic standing-in is as basic to Dasein as is authentic standing-in.

Heidegger develops his ideas concerning authentic existence in terms of "the discovery of self as already in the world (Befindlichkeit), understanding (Verstehen), and discourse (Rede)."\(^1\)

Inauthentic existence has its identifying characteristics also: "ambiguity (Zweideutigkeit), curiosity (Neugier), and prattle (Gerade)."\(^2\)

Consequently the avant-garde playwrights, realizing that the general tonality of man's way of relating to the world is that of inauthentic existence, have made ambiguity, curiosity, and prattle central themes of their plays.

AUTHENTIC EXISTENCE AND DISCOURSE...INAUTHENTIC EXISTENCE AND PRATTLE:

Man's life is dominated by concern for the necessities of survival. In order to move about with as little friction as possible in society, man relinquishes looking frankly and openly at the "things-that-are",\(^3\) at others, and at himself, and instead adopts the attitude of "They say..." as justification for his actions.

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\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) Ibid., p. 12.
To the degree that Dasein looks outside himself for answers, his existence is inauthentic. Heidegger speaks of this condition of the "everyday Dasein" as his Verfallensein: "This not-being-itself functions as a positive possibility of Dasein, resulting from the Dasein's concerned involvement in the world." Dasein can become so involved in obtaining "things" and in orienting his existence in terms of what "they" say that he loses sight of what he really is and comes to think of himself as the roles he plays. Dasein can become so enmeshed in the "theyness" of the world that its catchwords and pat-formulas can no longer be distinguished from the discourse of original thinking. "The self that loses itself inauthentically, by freely committing itself to an essentially blind projection into the whirlpool of often meaningless daily activity, substitutes for the personal affirmations of an 'I', who knows the profound secrets of its own Being, the 'they say that... of the crowd's rumor." 

Tradition and usage tend to empty words of any real meaning. In the world of "they" words lose their sense and value. But the inauthentic Dasein is unaware of this. In other words, Dasein can lose his ability to distinguish between original thought and its expression and the platitudes that have been unconsciously assimilated. Although he is an automaton formed by the "they", inauthentic Dasein conceives of himself as an independent, thinking being.

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4 Ibid., pp. 24-25.
5 Ibid., p. 35.
Beckett, Ionesco, and Genêt have found in inauthentic verbalizing, mere prattle, a means of revealing the emptiness and falsity of inauthentic existence. Thus the meaningless jargon that abounds in their plays, humorous as it may be, is also a looking glass behind which lies inauthenticity.

In direct contrast to the prattle of inauthentic existence is the discourse of authentic standing-in. Authentic existence, according to Heidegger, is poetic and creative in nature:

Poetry, as he conceives it, is respectful of things, respectful of the meanings created by past generations as expression of correct possibilities of these epochs, while remaining conscious of its own responsibility as creator of new meaning in casting original light on the things-tha­t-are. The fruit of authentic existence is the creative, revealing, renewing language forged for the poetic expression of discourse.6

The discourse of Ionesco's character Berenger, who appears in four major plays and manages to stand-in authentically more than any other character, appears poetic in contrast to the empty jargon of the inauthentic beings who surround him. Genêt's Yeux-Verts, who becomes authentic as he comes to accept what he is (a murderer) and the fate that results from his crime (death), is also poetic. Heidegger realized that authentic existence demands sacrifice: "The authentic existent, who has discovered the miracle of his presence to the things-that-are, is ready to sacrifice all to the service of the creative renewing powers of his own poetic nature."7

6 Ibid., pp. 23-24.
7 Ibid., p. 25.
Understanding, according to Heidegger, means originate thinking which brings new meaning into existence. Only the authentic existent is capable of originate thinking. Inauthentic existence is characterized by curiosity. The inauthentic existent is limited to mere calculation, "which discovers nothing new but instead feeds on what others have already provided in the way of meaning, dividing and recombining old ideas until their staleness becomes the very odour of death." Calculation works upon a whole that is already given and proceeds to reduce the whole to its parts, which in turn are manipulated at will. The characters of avant-garde theater, with a few exceptions, constantly attempt to figure out, to rehash, to organize; but all of their efforts lead to nothing more than superficial calculation. Their inauthenticity makes real understanding impossible.

Authentic Dasein discovers himself, and knows what he is. Inauthentic Dasein is trapped by his own ambiguity; he sees himself but dimly and often not at all, being unable to perceive the roles he plays. The characters of avant-garde plays, who struggle to escape the nausea of their inauthenticity ask themselves over and over again: "Who am I? Do I exist?" As they ask these questions,

they verge on authentic standing-in and they begin to experience the anguish that accompanies such openness, but the cumulative inauthenticity of their lives makes it impossible for them to discover themselves. They flee the unknown possibility confronting them and seek security in the world of "they," satisfying their intellectual curiosity with rationalization and filling their lives with meaningless action and prattle.

Authentic Dasein is aware of what he is and accepts himself as he is. Because he is in harmony with himself, authentic Dasein can freely confront his conscience. The conscience of which Heidegger speaks is not to be confused with the super-ego ("They say that...") of inauthentic existence; it is rather "a still and resolute address of the authentic Dasein to himself. This call is the voice of care (Sorge)." 9

Inauthentic Dasein, unable to tolerate looking inward for self-discovery, satisfies his questions concerning his existence by looking outward into the world of "they." Science, with its ready answers can be easily manipulated by the inauthentic Dasein to calm his anxieties. Samuel Beckett presents a caricature of this defense mechanism in Molloy. (1955) Referring to the bundles of newspaper wrapped around his protagonist for protection against the cold, Beckett writes:

The Times Literary Supplement was admirably adapted to this purpose, of a never failing toughness and impermeability. Even farts made no impression on it. I

9Ibid., p. 35.
can't help it, gas escapes from my fundament on the least pretext, it's hard not to mention it now and then, however great my distaste. One day I counted them. Three hundred and fifteen farts in nineteen hours, or an average of over sixteen farts an hour. After all it's not excessive. Four farts every fifteen minutes. It's unbelievable. Damn it, I hardly fart at all, I should never have mentioned it. Extraordinary how mathematics help you to know yourself.¹⁰

ANGISH, THE THRESHOLD TO SELF-DISCOVERY:

It appears illogical that, having the choice of standing-in authentically, man would so often choose inauthentic relating; but in order to be real, to be authentic, man must suffer, and this is unbearable for most persons. Heidegger considers anguish (Angst) the threshold to authentic self-discovery,¹¹ and he goes to great lengths to make us understand this experience:

Only Dasein can experience anguish. Even an animal, by contrast, shares with man the possibility of encountering fear. Fear differs from anguish in that it is always experienced in reference to a concrete something...In the case of anguish, on the other hand, it is not violence, or destruction, or any danger from a particular source that conquers me. Rather, I begin to feel that I am losing my grip on my world. I begin to call into question the reality of my being and my place in the world; they both seem to slip through my fingers. The solidity and "giveness" of the things that are present before me suddenly dissolve as I doubt the possibility of there being anything at all.¹²

¹¹Langan, op. cit., p. 29.
¹²Ibid.
One of the best examples of this experience in all of avant-garde literature is found in Beckett's novel *Watt*:

Looking at a pot, for example, or thinking of a pot, at one of Mr. Knott's pots, it was in vain that Watt said, Pot, pot. Well, perhaps not quite in vain but very nearly. For it was not a pot, the more he looked, the more he reflected, the more he felt sure of that, that it was not a pot at all. It resembled a pot, it was almost a pot, but it was not a pot of which one could say, Pot, pot, and be comforted...the pot remained a pot, Watt felt sure of that, for everyone but Watt. For Watt alone it was not a pot, any more.¹³

Paul Tillich uses the term *anxiety* to describe the same experience that Heidegger denotes as *Angst*:

The first assertion about the nature of anxiety is this: anxiety is the state in which a being is aware of its possible nonbeing. The same statement, in a shorter form, would read: anxiety is the existential awareness of nonbeing. "Existential" in this sentence means that it is not the abstract knowledge of nonbeing which produces anxiety but the awareness that nonbeing is a part of one's own being...Anxiety is finitude, experienced as one's own finitude. This is the natural anxiety of man as man.¹⁴

Tillich goes on to say:

Nonbeing is omnipresent and produces anxiety even where an immediate threat of death is absent. It stands behind the experience that we are driven, together with everything else, from the past toward the future without a moment of time which does not vanish immediately.¹⁵

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¹⁵Ibid., p. 45.
Inauthentic existence is basically an escape from stark reality.

One gropes for security in varied ways: activity, role-playing, isolation, conquest, success, acceptance, all of which are a means of self-deception. Nevertheless, Dasein

...can suddenly, when least expected, be forced to throw the whole quest of the average man into serious doubt. It is then, as all dissolves into the nothingness that awaits at its base to engulf the flimsy structures of a fabricated life, that Dasein is forced to question radically where he is from, and where he is going.\(^\text{16}\)

Among the most easily observable signs of anxiety are helplessness, loss of direction, inability to react, lack of purpose. As Tillich explains it: "The reason for this sometimes striking behavior is the lack of an object on which the subject (in the state of anxiety) can concentrate. The only object is the threat itself, but not the source of the threat, because the source of the threat is 'nothingness'."\(^\text{17}\) Helplessness before an undefined threat is a recurrent characteristic of the characters of avant-garde theater--Beckett's tramps are helpless in their waiting for Godot--that unknown reality that frightens them; Hamm and Clov in *Fin de partie*, though longing to end their ennui, hesitate before the unknown element of death. Ionesco's Bérenger, in *Tueur sans gages*, becomes powerless when confronted by the killer who refuses to make himself known, and in *Rhinocéros* before the inexplicable metamorphosis of men into rhinoceroses. Genêt's characters prefer illusion to reality,
for in their make-believe worlds all is known and unfolds according to their desires, and thus they are protected from their fear of the unknown.

DASEIN AS BEING-TOWARD-DEATH:

The future holds all of the possibilities of potential Being for the individual Dasein, but the ultimate event of the future is death. Consequently, Heidegger refers to Dasein as Being-toward-death (Sein-zum-Tode):18

The factual Dasein exists born, and is dying already as born, in the sense of "thrown" as "Being-toward-death." In the full "now" of authentic existence, all projections are made in view of my radical throwness, with death before me as the ultimate conditioning possibility, so that existence becomes a self-extension from birth to death lived in the dense moment of caring projection. Because the Dasein knows the course it is taking and resolutely wills it, the historical motion is not a passive undergoing such as the material living thing experiences, but an active "letting itself happen," the free shouldering of a destiny.19

Man alone of all creatures knows that he will die. Knowledge of his finitude is the source of man's greatest anguish. It is from the painful awareness of his finite nature that Dasein often flees; but by denying the reality of his future, he condemns himself to inauthenticity:

Consider how I must grasp my death for it to become the reality that can introduce me to the whole structure of my existence and, consequently, open the possibility of authentic projection. It does not suffice to see

18Langan, op. cit., p. 32.
19Ibid., p. 57.
someone else die, nor even to take cognizance, more or less vividly, that I am going to die someday. This kind of realization is incapable of rendering any special meaning to the present moment. It is only when I come to realize that my every moment and my every act share the same fate, all destined to the same all-dissolving end, all capable of being swept up and fixed in the complete picture of a terminated existence, that the reality of my finite destiny reveals the meaning of the moment. 20

Samuel Beckett's characters throughout his novel and his plays deteriorate both physically and mentally before our eyes, acting out the reality of which Heidegger speaks. The "all-dissolving end" to which Heidegger refers is the theme of Ionesco's play Le Roi se meurt. The king, having avoided all of his life the realization of his ultimate fate, is at last forced to face it. His Being-toward-death is enacted before our eyes as he begins to limp, to stagger, and to fall, until he finally dies. As the king dies, all that was part of his existence begins to crumble away. The walls crack, the cattle die, the water dries up, the subjects disappear, even the queens abandon him. He is alone with his finitude.

DASEIN'S FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY:

Dasein's acceptance, in full awareness, of his ultimate end is the most freeing experience of his existence:

The realization that I am Being-destined-to-death tends to put all external influences on the same level, freeing my own self-extension from any bondage, permitting me to reengage myself in the details of the present freely and nobly, with the realization

20 Ibid., pp. 32-33.
that it is up to me to afford things a place in the course I choose to carve out between now and that inevitable future event. 21

Full acceptance of his finitude frees man, but inherent in freedom is responsibility. Sartre lays great emphasis on man's responsibility: "Ainsi, la première démarche de l'existentialisme est de mettre tout homme en possession de ce qu'il est et de faire reposer sur lui la responsabilité totale de son existence." 22

Thus, according to Heidegger and the Existentialists, man is totally responsible for all of his worldly acts. The burden of responsibility is so great that one is tempted to deny that responsibility—to place it on others, circumstances, or fate. While, in reality, others may be involved, the final responsibility always and inevitably lies with the individual.

Si une voix s'adresse à moi, c'est toujours moi qui déciderai que cette voix est la voix de l'ange; si je considère que tel acte est bon, c'est moi qui choisirai de dire que cet acte est bon plutôt que mauvais...

Lorsque, par exemple, un chef militaire prend la responsabilité d'une attaque et envoie un certain nombre d'hommes à la mort, il choisit de le faire, et au fond il choisit seul. 23

Unfortunately, few men are able to bear the weight of their responsibility, and the general pattern of behavior is that of placing the responsibility outside of oneself in the world of "they." Man's chief defenses against admitting his responsibility are fate, determinism, circumstances:

21 Ibid., p. 33.


23 Ibid., pp. 31-32.
Ce que les gens sentent obscurement et qui leur fait horreur, c'est que le lâche que nous présentons est coupable d'être lâche. Ce que les gens veulent, c'est qu'on naissie lâche ou héros. Ce que dit l'existentialiste, c'est que le lâche se fait lâche, que le héros, se fait héros; il y a toujours une possibilité pour le lâche de ne plus être lâche, et pour le héros de cesser d'être un héros. Ce qui compte, c'est l'engagement total, et ce n'est pas un cas particulier, une action particulière qui vous engagent totalement.

Edouard, in *Tueur sans gages*, carries around all of the killer's weapons in his serviette. When these objects are discovered in his possession, he insists that he did not know what was in his briefcase, that it was not his fault, that he was not responsible. His pattern of behavior is typical of most characters in the avant-garde theater.

Man is also tempted to avoid responsibility by not acting, by not deciding. This is the defense mechanism used by all of the characters of *Tueur sans gages*, except Bérenger, who is "engagé" in capturing the killer. Sartre emphatically reminds us that it is impossible for man not to decide: "Le choix est possible dans un sens, mais ce qui n'est pas possible, c'est de ne pas choisir. Je peux toujours choisir, mais je dois savoir que si je ne choisis pas, je choisis encore."\(^\text{25}\)

Because it is the nature of man to be responsible, one can escape responsibility only by constructing an unreal world, a world built on self-deception, where the self is lost in a frantic whirl

\(^{24}\text{Ibid., pp. 60-62.}\)

\(^{25}\text{Ibid., p. 73.}\)
of meaningless activity. Existentialism speaks of man as condemned to be free: "condemned" because he did not create himself; and yet once created, he is free and thus responsible. Authentic Dasein suffers intensely from the awareness of this dual nature—that of a created being whose beginning and end are beyond his control, but who moves in complete freedom and consequent responsibility between these terminal poles.

DASEIN AND TEMPORALITY:

Authentic and inauthentic existence take place in time and space; but the former embraces the fullness of time, when past, present, and future join in the ever-present Now. Dasein "discovers that the 'where-from' and the 'where-to' present constantly recurring dimensions rooted in the 'where-now' of the self-unfolding Dasein."26

Heidegger frequently speaks of Dasein's having been "thrown" into the world. By this, he means that man is not responsible for his birth. Sartre expresses this concept as existence preceding essence:

Qu'est-ce que signifie ici que l'existence précède l'essence? Cela signifie que l'homme existe d'abord, se rencontre, surgit dans le monde, et qu'il se définit après. L'homme, tel que le concoit l'existentialiste, s'il n'est pas définissable, c'est qu'il n'est d'abord rien. Il ne sera qu'ensuite, et il sera tel qu'il se

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26 Langan, op. cit., p. 30.
Existential philosophers like Heidegger and Sartre disagree with the Aristotelian concept of man as a pre-defined being.

The Dasein is not an *essentia*, a fixed structure corresponding to an idea expressable in several intelligible notes, like the "animal having logos" of Aristotle. This kind of crude designation, derived from an "objective" consideration of the human being as a kind of *Vorhandensein*, reveals nothing of the nature of its liberty, of its true reality as foundation for Being; in fact, it reveals nothing about the true meaning of that *logos*, and indeed dissimulates the true historical nature of Dasein's revelation of Being. Because the nature of Dasein is existential, it can only be grasped as possibility, i. e., in the concrete unfolding of its dynamic nature in the movement of time.28

Thus, Dasein moves from Nothing towards a future whose inevitable conclusion is death and consequent Nothingness. In order for authentic standing-in to occur, Dasein must live fully present in the now, yet ever aware of the understanding of the past and the unfulfilled potential of the future. Inauthentic existence occurs when Dasein cuts himself off from either his past or his future, living in a fragmented series of "nows." Self-discovery can take place only when Dasein stands fully present with the past, the now, and the future. At present, one pays the debt of limitations inherited from the past. In order to partake of authentic existence, man must struggle to overcome his past limitations. Each time man fails to make the effort to be authentic, the pattern

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27 Sartre, op. cit., pp. 21-22.
28 Langan, op. cit., p. 63.
of inauthenticity becomes more deeply engrained, so that it is possible to become like Beckett's characters, Hamm and Krapp, who are devoid of all feeling except self-pity and totally incapable of freeing themselves from the mold they have cast for themselves.

In order to be authentic, Dasein must constantly struggle to maintain an openness to the things—that are in spite of the inauthentic existence of others and the limitations of his own past inauthenticity. In La Peste, Camus describes this tension between authenticity and inauthenticity in Tarrou's words:

Je sais de science certaine (oui, Rieux, je sais tout de la vie, vous le voyez bien) que chacun la porte en soi, la peste, parce que personne, non, personne au monde n'en est indemne. Et qu'il faut se surveiller sans arrêt pour ne pas être amené, dans une minute de distraction, à respirer dans la figure d'un autre et à lui coller l'infection. Ce qui est naturel, c'est le microbe. Le reste, la santé, l'intégrité, la pureté, si vous voulez, c'est un effet de la volonté et d'une volonté qui ne doit jamais s'arrêter. L'honnête homme, celui qui n'infecte presque personne, c'est celui qui a le moins de distractions possible. Et il en faut de la volonté et de la tension pour ne jamais être distrait! Oui, Rieux, c'est bien fatigant d'être un pestiféré. Mais c'est encore plus fatigant de ne pas vouloir l'être. C'est pour cela que tout le monde se montre fatigué, puisque tout le monde, aujourd'hui, se trouve un peu pestiféré. Mais c'est pour cela que quelques-uns, qui veulent cesser de l'être, commencent une extrémité de fatigue dont rien ne les délivrera plus que la mort.29

Heidegger refers to la volonté as resolution: "the fidelity of existence to its own self."30


30 Langan, op. cit., p. 65.
The experience of care (Sorge) reveals the Dasein's structure...as the resolution that projects itself forward in the horizon-opening act of existence. It is precisely because the Dasein cares that he is different from the tree or the rock; for caring signals a freedom that permits the existent to disentangle himself from a passive, total involvement in the here and now...Because it can know its potentialities, it can anticipate them and be present to them now, which makes Dasein's future in some sense already now, just as his now is always already to some extent being lived in the future. Because it is my grasp and direction of these possibilities that determines my becoming, this futurity becomes the basis of the Dasein's whole self-development.31

Man is finite, that, man is a temporal being. Inauthentic Dasein, unable to accept the full ramifications of his temporal nature, conceives of time as something to be used to order his manifold activities and to manipulate his possessions. Time to him means no more than a compilation of seconds into minutes and into hours. Inauthentic Dasein is concerned with keeping things on schedule, with knowing exactly what time it is:

The "future" in a conception of time that is concerned with a commerce with things is dominated by the "now" which characterizes possession of concrete Seienden; to the man in the market place the future is a state of possession of things now that is anticipated because it is not yet. In such a conception, the now itself becomes a discrete moment, manipulable, even priceable, for "time is money." Such temporality, conceived as a flow of self-important moments, based on the possession of things, is blind to the inner transparency and intentional interpenetration of the extases of authentic temporal existence. Because the authentic Dasein projects in view of his genuine possibilities, his "now" is never isolated for consideration from the future. Nor is his future ever separated from present responsibility...A future that grows out of a respected past and whose

31 Ibid., p. 42.
importance is felt even now is authentic because of the continuity of existence it fosters.\textsuperscript{32}

Authentic Dasein knows himself in terms of his past, his present, and his future.

Ionesco's \textit{La Cantatrice Chauve} seeks to reveal the lack of fundamentality of an inauthentic concept of time. In response to the seventeen chimes of the grandfather's clock, Mrs. Smith remarks, "Tiens, il est neuf heures."\textsuperscript{33} Periodically during the play the clock chimes capriciously—seven times, three times, five times.

In \textit{En attendant Godot}, the two possibilities of relating to time are evident. Pozzo's inauthenticity is evident in his anxiety over time. He frequently consults his watch and makes such statements as: "Mais il est temps que je vous quittte, si je ne veux pas me mettre en retard."\textsuperscript{34} But Pozzo is not really going anywhere nor doing anything except hiding his waiting behind a facade of meaningless activity and prattle. In contrast, Vladimir and Estragon are totally unconcerned about time. They do not even know what day it is. All they know is that they are waiting, that time is passing, but its passing is not measured in fragmented "nows," but is seen in change: in the budding of the tree, the finding of new boots, and in their changing physiology.

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., pp. 42-43.


As time moves forward, the inauthenticity of Beckett's characters is reflected in their physical and mental deterioration. They become less than they were. Their decline is directly related not only to the passing of time but also to their failure to assume their role as responsible beings. Repeated refusals to be authentic result in the loss of human capacities.

Dasein's concept of his temporality determines whether his standing-in will be authentic or inauthentic, and consequently influences his understanding, self-discovery, and discourse.

Because one's past is given, one's existence is "tuned" by what has come before. Heidegger uses the word Stimmung, rather than a word suggesting determination, to underscore the freedom in human development. The assimilation of the past by the authentic Dasein in no way resembles a missile following a predetermined course, but is rather like the recapitulation in a sonata, where the earlier material becomes a field of possibilities for new development rather than a track demanding rigid adherence:

When I turn to the past as though it were a passive "object" waiting to reveal its secrets to me, I am overlooking the fact that the past reveals itself to me in terms of human possibility, and that it is my projections, i.e., what I count possible, that determines what I shall objectively "see" or overlook. If I fail to take account of the influence of these projections, that does not mean that they do not exist; rather, their role simply becomes more dangerous, since they can operate without my ever suspecting that they are there...Consequently, the Dasein that does not shoulder the burden of his destiny, either because he ignores the past or because he ignores his responsibility toward the future, becomes
the tool of fate and blind arbitrariness, both of which are only aspects of his own inauthenticity.\textsuperscript{35}

As we shall see in detail later, all the self-deceived or inauthentic characters of the avant-garde theater have failed to accept the reality of their temporal nature where past, present and future merge in the eternal now. Krapp lives in the past, playing and replaying his tapes; Pozzo is concerned only with the present, which makes possible the possession of objects (footstool, picnic basket, watch, whip, slave, and the like); Hamm answers Clov's question: "Tu crois à la vie future?" by saying, "La mienne l'a toujours été."\textsuperscript{36} The Negroes and the Maids manipulate the present moment in order to abjure their past, seeking to become other than what they really are; in a world of mirrors and imagination, the characters of \textit{Le Balcon} seek to create for themselves a future that is totally unrelated to their past or present. Man's failure to recognize himself as a temporal being where past, present, and future merge is a basic theme of avant-garde theater and will be discussed more fully in subsequent chapters.

Inauthentic temporality, characterized by curiosity, prattle, and ambiguity, results according to Langan:

\begin{quote}
\ldots from an overinvolvement in what is going on at the moment. The kind of surfeited plunging of superficial intelligence into the flow of daily events—"curiosity" as Heidegger terms it—seeks neither origins nor destinies and assiduously avoids disquieting questions about ultimate\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{35}Langan, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 58-59.

meanings, beginnings, and ends; it seeks only advantage for now, sensation for the instant. The daily prattle of the market place is the commentary on the events rasped by curiosity. These become frozen into those sayings of the anonymous "they say that..." which everyday Dasein comes to accept as a basis for his inauthentic projections. 37

The speech of La Mère Pipe, political candidate in Tueur sans gages, epitomizes the prattle to which Heidegger refers:

La Mère Pipe: Votez pour nous! Votez pour nous...Peuple, tu es mystifié. Tu seras démystifié...J'ai élevé pour vous tout un troupeau de démystificateurs. Ils vous démystifieront. Mais il faut mystifier pour démystifier. Il nous fait une mystification nouvelle. Je vous promets de tout changer...Nous allons désaliéner l'humanité!...Pour désaliéner l'humanité il faut aliéner chaque homme en particulier...et vous aurez la soupe populaire!...Nous n'allons plus persécuter, mais nous punirons et nous ferons justice. Nous ne coloniserons pas les peuples, nous les occuperons pour les libérer. Nous n'exploiterons pas les hommes, nous les ferons produire. Le travail obligatoire s'appellera travail volontaire. La guerre s'appellera la paix et tout sera changé, grâce à moi et à mes oies...

Voix de la Foule: Vive les oies de la mère Pipe! Vive la soupe populaire. 38

Because of the requirements of survival it is natural for man to concern himself with the necessities of daily life; it is natural that he be caught up in a series of "nows," until anguish jars him free from his habit so that he can experience authentic existence. Martin Buber affirms this by saying: "And in all the seriousness of truth, hear this; without It man cannot live. But he who lives with It alone is not a man." 39

37 Langan, op. cit., p. 48.
In authentic temporality, the future is conceived of as projection (Vorlaufge); in inauthentic temporality the future is a mere "waiting for" (Gewortigen)\(^40\)--this latter being the theme of Beckett's most famous play, *En Attendant Godot*. Authentic Dasein recognizes that time conceived of as a temporal measuring device is convenient in ordering activities but that it is not fundamental:

...mundane time, like the daily existence of which it is a part is not fundamental, but depends on the ontological structure of Dasein as Sorge for its very possibility. As long as the authentic Dasein recognizes this, and thereby goes beyond the life of concern to the life of care, he can remain authentic while necessarily continuing to have something to do with the time and the instruments of daily affairs. But the trouble is that, to really plunge into "the time of concerned affairs," a specific forgetting is required; we are required to forget ourselves.\(^41\)

In becoming overly concerned about things outside of himself, man loses awareness of his own identity; his nature is ambiguous; his roles, many. Unconsciously he manipulates his roles, choosing one or another because it is more functional at the moment. In the caring experience, however, man confronts the reality of the situation totally aware of what he is--past, present, and future. The theme of lack of identity (the forgetting of what one is) appears and reappears throughout the avant-garde theater in the form of Bobby Watsons, Negroes wearing white masks, schizophrenic maids, men becoming rhinoceroses, and so on:

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\(^{40}\) *Langan, op. cit.*, p. 50.

...we must realize that no Dasein is ever purely authentic in every respect all of the time. Because we are "thrown, fallen into the world" we cannot avoid some involvement in the concerns of daily life, and these are inevitably going to involve us in that mundane time where a forgetting of self takes hold of us. But because this is a constant, and even an overwhelming tendency, it does not mean that domination by concern to the point that the essential direction of my life is set by such concerns, need be inevitable.\(^{42}\)

The possibility of authenticity remains even in the most inauthentic lives. Brief moments of authenticity occur throughout the theater of the avant-garde. In \textit{En Attendant Godot}, the Pozzo of Act II is more "real" than is the Pozzo of Act I; in \textit{Fin de Partie}, Hamm, one of the most inauthentic characters of the entire avant-garde theater, says, at one point: "Je n'ai jamais été là... Absent, toujours."\(^{43}\) At this moment of psychic perception, Hamm is more real, more human, more authentic than ever before.

\textbf{TRADITIONAL METAPHYSICS AND DASEIN:}

Traditional metaphysics sought the Being of the things-that-are and the ground of their intelligibility, in another \textit{Seiende}, a super-thing existing in a world beyond the senses. Heidegger, as interpreted by Langan, maintains that this being is:

...no thing, no substance, no creativity on the part of an ideal absolute, but the Dasein-founded possibility that there be a world in which things "can be" and "can be discovered." If this possibility lies in \textit{Man} it is precisely because he is capable of being more than "thing," more

\(^{42}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 54.}\)
\(^{43}\text{Beckett, \textit{Fin de Partie}, p. 98.}\)
than "substance," without being merely "present" as a tree or a house is "present." This freedom of Dasein which Heidegger wants us to discover is freedom to be not just another thing present, but to be the presence of all things present.44

The essential difficulty of traditional metaphysics is that of an "inadequate, unfounded conception of truth, which manifests itself in the notion, apparently common since Aristotle's time, of truth as a 'conformity of intellect and thing'."45 Heidegger differentiates between two kinds of truth: the truth of the discovery of objective things (Vorhanden), and the truth of self-discovery (erschliessen). This basic distinction reveals the inadequacy of the conformity theory of truth. Any understanding of metaphysics necessitates "that I first understand fundamentally the vor-ontologisch possibilities of there being through me, any knowing in the first place."46 According to Heidegger, truth is the essence of the existent; it is more than, as has been traditionally said, a "property of expression."47 There is no eternal truth, existing in itself, waiting to be discovered by man's intellect. Truth is continually being created and its possibilities are limitless. Heidegger rejects completely the concept of truth as a kind of "'bridging the gap' of an imaginary metaphysical crevice"48 between man and the objects which he perceives. Instead of the

44Langen, op. cit., pp. 91-92.
46Ibid., p. 88
47Ibid.
48Ibid.
object Heidegger speaks of the direct presence of the thing, known
in and for itself—not as an object of one's knowledge to be used
or manipulated, but as "thing known and transcended." 49

DASEIN'S FOUNDING A WORLD:

The encountering and transcending of the things-that-are by
Dasein is referred to as founding a world. Harvey Cox in his book
The Secular City makes reference to the same concept in his inter-
pretation of the Genesis story:

...an authentically biblical doctrine of God not only
survives the view that man is the source of cultural mean-
ings, but actually supports and encourages such a view.
To substantiate this claim, we turn to the ancient Yahwist
account of creation, dating from 950 BC and found now
in Genesis 2:4-24...Yahweh brings all the creatures to
man 'to see what he would call them'...The passage indi-
cates that man has a crucial part to play in the creation
of the world. The world is not really finished, not really
'the world' until its components are 'named.' For the
Hebrew, naming did not mean simply attaching an arbitrary
label. It meant conferring on something its meaning and
significance...The act of naming here is an original and
creative one. Man does not 'form' the animals, but he
does give them their names. Yet naming and forming must
not be too widely separated. As God begins his activity
in Genesis 1, the earth is described as 'without form'
and 'void.' God's creative activity includes forming,
separating, and naming. Then, after He creates man, He
enlists him in this creating activity. Thus the world
does not come to man already finished and ordered. It
comes in part confused and formless and receives its sig-
ificance from man. Since man names the animals, the
meaning they have comes from the fact that they are in-
corporated into his life. Their significance arises
from their being a part of his projects and purposes. 50

49 Ibid.

50 Harvey Cox, The Secular City (New York: MacMillan Company,
1965), pp. 73-74.
Thus the individual Dasein founds a world by giving meaning to the things-that-are. In Tillich's words, "In all existential knowledge, both subject and object are transformed by the very act of knowing. Existential knowledge is based on an encounter in which a new meaning is created and recognized."\textsuperscript{51} Authentic Dasein attempts to consider openly his total being and the total being of the things-that-are; from this open confrontation meaning is created. Inauthentic Dasein, because of his ambiguous nature, can rarely, if ever, see reality as unity; therefore he founds his world on partial understanding, on a fragmented awareness of reality. Consequently, the meanings that he gives, though very real to him, are usually distorted.

The act of founding a world is a reciprocal act: "for to know things we must be with things which we discover and do not create, and we must know things before we can even become aware of ourselves."\textsuperscript{52} Paul Tillich reaffirms this last statement, saying: "Man's being includes his relation to meanings. He is human only by understanding and shaping reality, both his world and himself, according to meanings and values."\textsuperscript{53}

Heidegger has described Dasein as a \textit{Wendung} in the \textit{Not}, a wandering in need.\textsuperscript{54} Moving from Nothing (throw-ness) to Nothing

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{51} Tillich, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 50.
\item \textsuperscript{52} Langan, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 89.
\item \textsuperscript{53} Tillich, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 50.
\item \textsuperscript{54} Langan, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 100.
\end{itemize}
(death), man creates his essence. He comes to Be. Without things
(Seienden) he could not exist or come to any self-discovery; because
of his finite nature he is constantly in need. In view of their
indebtedness to Heidegger, most works of the avant-garde portray
man as a being who moves in need from Nothing to Nothing.

Man's finite freedom as the basis of truth is a freedom to
let things be as they are; but, likewise, it is also a freedom
not to let things be as they are. Man is free to accept or reject
reality. Founding an authentic world involves care (Sorge) and
anguish (Angst), which enable man to see reality as a united whole.
As Heidegger states it: "I see for the first time clearly, that the
Seienden als Ganzen could not 'be' without my Dasein, and at the
same time I realize that the apparent solidity of that 'world'
of things offers no lasting thing upon which I can depend as a pro-
jection from the dissolution of the world in death."55 Thus man
is a uniting force. He is the founder of the world, but he is self-
deceived if he thinks that the world can offer any escape from
finitude. Ionesco's king in Le Roi se meurt has founded a world:
his kingdom. As he dies it falls apart, bit by bit.

Christian theology, based on the concept of absolute trans-
cendence, maintains that man's purpose lies outside man in divine
truth and goodness. Heidegger, in contrast, declares (1) that
man's end lies not beyond but in himself and (2) "that the nature
of this end is such as to render Dasein himself the fundamental

55Ibid., p. 93.
source of the light of significance which endows the Seienden with Being. These two concepts are based on entirely different conceptions of Dasein's relation to time. Although Christian theology unfolds within a temporal horizon, it directs itself towards an end which transcends time. In contrast, finite Dasein extends himself towards a future certain to end in death. "Fulfillment for Dasein lies not in transcending time, but in possessing its full reality." Heidegger's philosophy is neither atheistic nor theistic: "This philosophy distinguishes itself neither for nor against the Dasein of God. It remains ensconced in indifference."
CHAPTER II

AN EXISTENTIAL PSYCHOANALYSIS OF SELF-DECEPTION

The prevailing concept of man since Descartes' "Je pense; donc je suis" posed the question of identity in terms of the individual, has been that of a rational being whose actions were determined largely by self-interest and will. Recognition was also given to man's emotional nature, so that he was generally regarded as a thinking and feeling being, whose dual nature was often the cause of unpredictable reactions. Almost no systematic study was made of the unconscious part of man until Sigmund Freud began his research on and analysis of the irrational forces that determine parts of human behavior. Although Freud was a profound and creative thinker and an admirable scientist, he was, nevertheless, unable to see beyond certain thought patterns typical of his era. His entire orientation was basically a mechanistic-materialistic one. Scientists of the second half of the nineteenth century, in general, conceived of the universe in terms of mechanics which determined the shape of reality as we know it. Freud accepted the traditional belief in a basic dichotomy between man and society, as well as the traditional doctrine of the evil in human nature. He conceived of man as basically antisocial, driven by biological and instinctual forces which society must control. The relation of the individual
to society in Freud's theory is essentially static. The individual appears fully equipped with certain biological drives. In order to satisfy them, the individual relates himself to others, who are potential "objects" capable of satisfying his strivings. Other individuals are a means to an end, never an end in themselves. Culture to Freud had an underlying negative role—that of suppressing and inhibiting man's basic drives.

In analyzing the Self, Freud conceived of three separate, yet related entities: the super-ego, the ego, and the id. The development of the super-ego is fundamentally a process of identification. As one adopts the moral sanctions and culture patterns of the "they," one develops a super-ego. The more dependent one is on the "they" for approval, the greater will be the super-ego. The super-ego dominates the ego and imposes upon it severe moral sanctions. Whenever the super-ego is at odds with the ego, one feels intense pangs of guilt.

The ego is the seat of reason and serves to control the blind impulses of the id. Nevertheless, the ego, Freud says, is weak and must draw its energy from the id itself. The ego can objectify and study itself, and is capable of "standing off" and surveying itself: "Thus the ego can be 'split', at least temporarily, when it assumes a self-observing or self-critical function."¹

The id is the most obscure and inaccessible part of the personality, for it lies below the level of conscious awareness. In New Introductory Letters, Freud describes the id as a "cauldron of seething excitement." The libido and the destructive instincts lie within the id. The id is irrational and impulsive. Contradictory impulses reside within it, side by side. It is not affected by moral values, nor is it conscious of the passage of time: "The conative impulses of the id are therefore uninfluenced by time and are virtually 'immortal'."3

Although most contemporary psychologists recognize their indebtedness to Freud's research, they have in many ways modified or rejected his theories—particularly those dealing with the strict division of the personality into super-ego, ego, and id, and those dealing with the libido and destructive instincts. Much of the re-evaluation of Freudian theories can be directly attributed to a re-interpretation of man as Dasein—a creature that comes to be, as opposed to Freud's static view of man as a pre-formed composite of biological drives. Contemporary psychologists do not view society in a purely mechanical role of frustrating man's biological drives, but as a positive framework in which man's personality develops. Just as Heidegger saw Dasein's relation to the world as two-fold—(1) Dasein's need for the things-that-are as a means to self-discovery and (2) Dasein's ability to give meaning to the

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2 Ibid., p. 37.
3 Ibid., p. 38.
things-that-are, so do modern psychologists see the dual relationship between the Self and exterior reality. The Self relates to the world as an active subject which can give as well as receive, can change as as be changed, and can transform while being transformed. 4

Heidegger's analysis of authentic existence as one lived in full awareness of one's past, present, and future has also played a prominent role in modifying Freudian psychology. In opposing Freud's view that man is principally determined by his past, especially by his repressed past, C. G. Jung writes:

A person is only half understood when one knows how everything in him came about. Only a dead man can be explained in terms of the past; a living one must be otherwise explained. Life is not made up of yesterdays only, nor is it understood nor explained by reducing today to yesterday. Life has also a tomorrow, and today is only understood if we are able to add the indications of tomorrow to our knowledge of what was yesterday. 5

Otto Rank has described the coming-to-be of the self in the following terms:

The whole consequence of evolution from blind impulse through conscious will to self-conscious knowledge, seems still somehow to correspond to a continued result of births, rebirths and new birth, which reach from the birth of the child from the mother, beyond the birth of the individual from the mass, to the birth of the creative work from the individual and finally to the birth of knowledge from the work...At all events we find in all these phenomena, even at the highest spiritual peak, the

4 Ibid., p. 178.

5 Ibid., p. 144.
struggle and pain of birth, the separation out of the universal, with the pleasure and bliss of procreation, the creation of an individual cosmos, whether it be now physically our own child, creatively our own work, or spiritually our own self. 6

The development of the self is conveniently described as going through several basic stages. The first stage of total dependence is passed when the individual consciously wills (Heidegger's Resoluteness) to do or not to do what he formerly was compelled to do in order to survive. It is the natural process of life for man to move from a stage of total dependence to independence. Biological separation from the mother is the beginning of individual human existence, yet the child remains dependent on the mother for a considerable period of time. As Erich Fromm points out, the child's leaning on authority has an entirely different meaning than his dependence on authority later on:

The parents, or whoever the authority may be, are not yet regarded as being a fundamentally separate entity; they are part of the child's universe, and this universe is still part of the child; submission to them, therefore, has a different quality from the kind of submission that exists once two individuals have really become separate. 7

As H. S. Sullivan points out: "Gradually the infant learns to make some discrimination between himself and the rest of the world... he no longer reaches out to touch the moon." 8

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6Ibid., pp. 177-178.


8Kullahy, op. cit., p. 287.
However, the time comes when the primary ties linking the child to his mother are no longer necessary for physical survival and must be broken. If the emotional development of the child is harmonious with his physical development, he begins the process of individuation—experiencing the growth of both physical and emotional independence. He relinquishes the primary ties connecting him to family, class, nation, race, and religion, and comes to be an individual. Such an individual is at one with himself and the world; his personality is integrated in such a way that he is fully conscious of his separateness yet is secure in his own being.

Few men reach this final stage in which the self is harmoniously integrated, so that separateness is understood as freedom. If man cannot find security within himself, he will be unable to tolerate his separateness and will attempt to establish secondary ties connecting himself to some exterior authority. C. G. Jung has pointed out that most men go their graves as children:

...the mass of men live within the bounds of tradition, which provides convenient substitutes, such as organized religions, for their unconscious submission to the parental psyche. Unconsciously they identify themselves with the tribe, society, the church, the nation. "The mechanism of convention keeps people unconscious, and then, like wild game, they can follow their customary runways without the necessity of conscious choice."...They identify themselves with the collective psyche—thus drowning themselves in the vast sea of the collective mind and soul and sacrificing their individuality. For the most part, they live "instinctively"...There is no coming to individual consciousness, says Jung, without pain. "The critical survey of himself and his fate, permits a man to recognize his individuality,
but this knowledge does not come to him easily. It is gained only through the severest shocks."  

A look at the historical events of our century alone makes it clear that most men are unable to accept themselves as individuals, capable of deciding for themselves and responsible for their decisions. The "isms" that characterize our age give testimony to our need to belong, to be re-affirmed by some exterior authority. Unable to believe that he can be free and yet not alone; critical, yet not overcome by doubt; independent, yet an integral part of his society, man is tempted to be absorbed by the crowd. He ceases being himself and adopts the kind of personality offered him by his cultural patterns. He becomes like everyone else, and his most outstanding feature is his insignificance. He is incapable of original or creative thought and critical evaluation; therefore he is highly manipulatable and easily controlled. No longer an individual, he becomes a collection of roles which he skillfully plays for the approval of the "they," his social group. His ambiguity prevents his seeing that he is role-playing. He is convinced that he is "he." In reality he is nothing more than what he thinks others expect him to be, and his true identity is lost to the roles he plays. Thus he sets up new ties linking him to others. These are not primary ties, however. They are the result of emotional immaturity. As Fromm points out:

...modern man is in a position where much of what "he" thinks and says are the things that everybody else

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Ibid., pp. 152-153.
thinks and says; ... he has not acquired the ability to think originally—that is for himself—which alone gives meaning to his claim that nobody can interfere with the expression of his thoughts. Again, we are proud that in his conduct of life man has become free from external authorities, which tell him what to do and what not to do. We neglect the role of the anonymous authorities like public opinion and "common sense" which are so powerful because of our profound readiness to conform to the expectations everybody has about ourselves and our equally profound fear of being different.10

Whenever one submits himself to an exterior authority, the result of the submission is always insecurity and ambiguity. The "they" is never constant, and the inauthentic existent attempting to orient his life in terms of the nebulous, ever-shifting "they" is never at one with himself, for he is never able to identify himself. Rather, he is like a broken mirror, reflecting many shapes—all distorted. He is essentially no more than a reflection of others' expectations of him. He develops roles and manipulates them in order to win the approval of the "they." Jung calls this pseudo-self the persona:

The persona is a certain kind of image one has of oneself and presents to the world as the essential personality. Persona, of course, originally referred to the mask worn by an actor to signify his role. The persona... is a role that one plays in life; it is not authentic since it does not portray what one essentially is. Hence, it is not really individual, unique to the person; it is a substitute for individuality.11

However, for the role-player his image has the "value of Reality."12 In other words, the phantasies of the neurotic have

10 Fromm, op. cit., p. 125.
12 Ibid., p. 235.
physical reality. Not only does the neurotic see himself as the images that others reflect back to him, he also projects images onto others, so that he does not see them as they really are, but only in terms of the distorted images that he has of them. His images may distort his concepts of individuals and groups alike, so that he is incapable of seeing individual members of a group or race as human beings: "Instead, the tendency is to amalgamate the individual into a group, apply a label and see the individual and the group not realistically, but as shaped by one's own repressed feelings into a fantastic caricature, like the creations of a dream." Innate in the loss of self-identity is the unawareness of what is happening. The more inauthentic one becomes, the less one is able to see his own inauthenticity.

The denial of individuality is a gradual process, usually begun in childhood. One is taught to smile, to be nice, to conceal one's emotions, to conform to the expectations of society, to accept one's religious and cultural patterns, to avoid facing unpleasant realities such as suffering and death.

It is possible for an individual to function efficiently in society by accepting its general cultural patterns without altering his basic personality. Such adaptation is referred to as

\[13\] Ibid., p. 55.

"static adaptation"15 and means the adoption of a new habit while the basic character structure remains unchanged. Such a person can enjoy a spontaneous relationship to man and nature—a relationship that connects the individual to his world without violating his individuality.

It is also possible for man to conform so completely to the dictates of his culture that he loses sight of his own identity. Such adaptation is "dynamic"16 and affects the total personality. Every neurosis is an example of a dynamic adaptation.

Once the primary bonds which provide security for the individual have been broken and the individual faces the reality of his separateness, two courses of behavior (Heidegger’s authentic and inauthentic standing-in) are open to him: He can accept his freedom and can, thereby, relate himself positively to the world in a genuine expression of what he is. Or he can seek an escape from the reality of his freedom and can attempt to replace the primary ties by secondary ones, hoping to eliminate his separateness. Physical individuation, unaccompanied by emotional maturity, leads to unbearable feelings of aloneness—of isolation—of vulnerability, and in response to the anxiety aroused by such feelings, man seeks refuge in defense mechanisms.

16Ibid.
NEUROTIC DEFENSE MECHANISMS:

Karan Horney has pointed out that, although there are many neuroses, each manifesting significantly different features, there is, nevertheless, a common behavioral trait in all neuroses—"a certain rigidity in reaction and a discrepancy between potentialities and accomplishments." The normal person tends to react according to the requirements of the situation confronting him. The neurotic, however, comes to the situation with a highly pre-determined set of reflexes which largely control the range and the form of his response. He is literally not free to respond except within the confines set by his neurosis. As Erich Fromm has pointed out, freedom can be used in the positive sense of "freedom to" and also in the negative sense of "freedom from"—namely freedom from determined behavior patterns: "In other words, human existence and freedom are from the beginning inseparable." In repeatedly choosing not to relate realistically to his freedom the neurotic sets up a circle of inauthentic relating from which escape becomes more and more difficult as the habitual responses become more and more rigid.

Any experience which appears threatening causes anxiety (Angst). If the person is unwilling to confront the situation and his anxiety realistically (authentically), he will, without being aware of it,

17Mullahy, op. cit., p. 209.
18Fromm, op. cit., p. 48.
indulge in behavior calculated to nullify the experience or its significance.

SADISM AND MASOCHISM:

The person who is unwilling to tolerate separateness is tempted to give up his independence by fusing himself to someone or something outside of himself. This fusion can take the form of domination (sadism) or submission (masochism); in either case, the person has given up his real identity for a role.

The essential feature of sadism is the desire on the part of one person to rule over others. This domination may take the form of inflicting pain on another, but not necessarily so:

All the different forms of sadism which we can observe go back to one essential impulse, namely, to have complete mastery over another person, to make of him a helpless object of our will, to become the absolute ruler over him, to become his God, to do with him as one pleases. To humiliate him, to enslave him, are means to this end and the most radical aim is to make him suffer, since there is no greater power over another person than that of inflicting pain on him, to force him to undergo suffering without his being able to defend himself.\(^{19}\)

Although the sadistic person appears to be a powerful, self-assured individual, he is, nevertheless, dependent upon the object which he dominates, for without the dominated object, he is nothing. His sense of security, of well-being, is totally dependent on his relationship with the dominated one: "...in a psychological sense, the lust for power is not rooted in strength but in weakness.

\(^{19}\)Ibid., pp. 178-179.
It is the expression of the inability of the individual self to stand alone and live."\(^{20}\)

Fromm describes three types of sadism:

One is to make others dependent on oneself and to have absolute and unrestricted power over them, so as to make of them nothing but instruments, "clay in the potter's hand." Another consists of the impulse not only to rule over others in this absolute fashion, but to exploit them, to use them, to steal from them, to disembowel them, and so to speak, to incorporate anything eatable in them. This desire can refer to material things as well as immaterial ones, such as the emotional or intellectual qualities a person has to offer. A third kind of sadistic tendency is the wish to make others suffer or to see them suffer. This suffering can be physical, but more often it is mental suffering. It is the aim to hurt actively, to humiliate, to embarrass others, or to see them in embarrassing and humiliating situations.\(^{21}\)

It is possible for sadistic tendencies to be covered up by rationalization such as concern for the well-being of the other: "I know what is best for you; therefore, you must obey me."

Although masochism is the opposite of sadism in its external manifestations, it is the result of the same fear—separateness. The different forms of masochism have the same goal—to get rid of the individual self—to relieve oneself of the burden of freedom. By submerging oneself in a bigger something, whether that something be another person, a group, a nation, a religion, one achieves a feeling of security, of belonging:

The masochistic person, whether his master is an authority outside of himself or whether he has  

\(^{20}\)Ibid., p. 184.  
^{21}\)Ibid., p. 165.
internalized the master as conscience or a psychic compulsion, is saved from making decisions, saved from the final responsibility for the fate of his self, and thereby saved from the doubt of what decision to make. He is also saved from the doubt of what the meaning of his life is or who "he" is. 22

Just as sadistic tendencies can be rationalized, so can masochistic traits. They often parade under the guise of love, affection, respect, loyalty. But also evident in the masochistic person are manifestations of feelings of inferiority, impotence, worthlessness. Rarely, if ever, is he able to assert himself or even to know what he wants. His feeling of certainty and identity depends upon the reaction of the master. To be rejected means anihilation. Even punishment of the severest kind is better than rejection.

Destructiveness and hostility are always present in both the sadistic and the masochistic persons. In sadism the hostility is usually conscious and is acted out on the one to be humiliated; in masochism the hostility is usually so repressed that it remains unconscious and is expressed indirectly.

Fromm uses the term symbiosis to describe the common aim of both sadism and masochism:

Symbiosis, in this psychological sense, means the union of one individual self with another self (or with any other power outside of the own self) in such a way as to make each lose the integrity of its own self and to make them completely dependent on each other. The sadistic person needs his object just as much as the

22 Ibid., pp. 177-178.
masochistic needs his. Only instead of seeking
security by being swallowed, he gains it by swal-
lowing somebody else.23

AUTHORITARIAN CHARACTER:

Most psychologists make a distinction between the sadist or
masochist character when referring to the neurotic and the authori-
tarian character when referring to the normal person. The authori-
tarian character possesses the basic trait common to both sadism
and masochism—fear of aloneness—but is in a much milder form.

Fromm describes the authoritarian character as the kind of person:

...whose whole life is in a subtle way related to some
power outside of themselves. There is nothing they do,
feel, or think which is not somehow related to this
power. They expect protection from "him," wish to be
taken care of by "him," make "him" also responsible for
whatever may be the outcome of their own actions. Often
the fact of his dependence is something the person is
not aware of at all. Even if there is a dim awareness
of some dependency, the person or power on whom he is
dependent often remains nebulous. There is no definite
image linked up with that power. Its essential quality
is to represent a certain function, namely to protect,
help, and develop the individual, to be with him and
never leave him alone...24

Samuel Beckett's En Attendant Godot offers an excellent example
of the authoritarian character in Vladimir and Estragon's relation
to Godot, of the masochistic character—Lucky, and the sadistic
caracter—Pozzo.

23 Ibid., p. 180.
24 Ibid., pp. 196-197.
Authority does not have to be a concrete something, such as a person or an institution. It can be far more vague and elusive, such as public opinion, common sense (Heidegger's "they"). Authority can also be internalized in the form of duty or conscience.

Belief in fate, or determinism, is basic to the authoritarian character. If the shape of one's life is determined by forces beyond his control, his only possible hope for happiness lies in submission to these forces. The concept of original sin that determines the fate of future generations weighs heavily on the authoritarian character. For the authoritarian character weakness is a sign of inferiority. Therefore, if the authority in which he believes shows signs of weakening, his love quickly turns to contempt.

The authoritarian character puts great value on the past at the expense of the present moment and the future: "What has been, will eternally be" is his philosophy. Rarely does he want the status quo to change. Because he looks to the past for guidance, creation and originality are virtually impossible for him.

The authoritarian character structure can take many shapes, such as desire for prestige—one needs to be admired, for affection—one needs to be loved, for potency—one needs to be reassured that he is powerful, for acceptance—one needs to feel that he belong, for success—one needs to feel that he is worthwhile. In all of these cases, the thing desired—prestige, affection, potency, acceptance, success—is achieved only if the authority responds in
DESTRUCTIVE CHARACTER:

Although destructiveness is an integral part of the sadistic and masochistic character, it is not identical. Whereas the sadist wants to dominate its object and the masochist to be dominated by its object, the destructive character wants to destroy its object. The destructive character, like the sadist and the masochist, feels extremely isolated and vulnerable. Whenever he feels that something is a threat to him, he seeks to destroy it. Fromm has expressed the rationalization of the destructive character in this way: "I can escape the feeling of my own powerlessness in comparison with the world outside of myself by destroying it. To be sure, if I succeed in removing it, I remain alone and isolated, but mine is a splendid isolation in which I cannot be crushed by the overwhelming power of the objects outside of myself."

Destructive impulses within a person always find an object. If circumstances do not allow the externalization of the destructive passions, they can be internalized—that is, directed at oneself so that either physical illness or suicide results. Genet's maids take turns masquerading as their mistress whom they hate and wish to destroy. Unable to kill her in reality, they destroy

\[25\text{Ibid., p. 202.}\]
themselves, one drinking the poisoned tea intended for Madame, the other allowing herself to be condemned for murder.

Destructive tendencies tend to be found in those whose life possibilities have been thwarted: "The more the drive toward life is thwarted, the stronger is the drive toward destruction; the more life is realized, the less is the strength of destructiveness. Destructiveness is the outcome of unlived life." Both Genet's Negroes and his Maids and the revolutionaries of Le Balcon illustrate the destructive character. In each case their destructiveness is the product of exploitation—to a certain degree imagined but to a great degree, real; their intense hostility is directed at others and at themselves as well.

It has been pointed out that hostility is a common feature of sadistic, masochistic, authoritarian, and destructive character structures. Everyone experiences hostility at times; however, emotionally mature individuals are characterized by minimal internal tension and consequently minimal hostility. Emotionally immature persons, on the contrary, suffer from painful inner division and consequently experience intense hostility, which they direct either at themselves or at others. The normal individual is capable of using his hostility in a positive, productive manner, such as fighting social ills, working to improve living conditions in his community, or engaging himself in political activities. The neurotic may or may not act out his hostilities; however, even when acted

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26 Ibid., p. 207.
out, they usually appear in an indirect and often disguised form—for example, one may appear to be very angry with another when in reality he is angry with himself but cannot tolerate accepting his angry feelings: "Essentially he suffers from a private neurosis, in which the underlying hostility, while it may affect intimates and other individuals, is repressed and associated with self-induced punishment."\(^{27}\)

Hostility is a learned response to a set of stimuli. As Saul points out: "Hostility cannot be passed off as something we inherit and hence can do nothing about. The fact is that hostility is a disease of the personality, transmittable from person to person and group to group, by contact from parents to children, from generation to generation."\(^{28}\) Demagogues and politicians recognize this and often use the hostility of the mass in order to control them. In other words, by arousing the hostilities of the people and directing these hostilities toward some concrete object—individual, group, race, nation, or whatever—they thereby can manipulate the mass. Most hostile people are unaware of the real cause of their hostility, therefore they can be made to believe that almost anything is responsible: "In fact, the less reality there is to offer correction, the easier it is to manipulate the images and direct the hostility."\(^{29}\) A superb example of this kind of manipulation

\(^{27}\)Saul, op. cit., p. 100.

\(^{28}\)Ibid., p. 27.

\(^{29}\)Ibid., p. 54.
is found in the speech of La Mère Oie in Ionesco's *Tueur sans gages*.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL FLIGHT:**

Although hostility is usually associated with fighting—the acting out of hostile feelings—hostility can assume another form—fleeing. Physicians inform us that while fighting and fleeing appear to be two entirely different activities, the inward, physiological preparations for the two are basically identical. Whether a creature decides to fight or to flee depends on the exterior circumstances plus "his own inner needs, perception, and judgment."\(^{30}\)

There are various kinds of psychological flight, all derived from the individual's inability to tolerate reality as it is. The excessive use of intoxicants and drugs is the most obvious example of this defense mechanism. Quite often the person who seeks security in psychological flight will combine various patterns of behavior. Beckett's Krapp, for example, uses both alcoholism and withdrawal. Withdrawal can consist of mere physical separation from the rest of the world. By withdrawing completely, the world loses its threat and one can inflate oneself psychologically to such an extent that the real world seems small in comparison. One can make oneself the "center" of a world of one's own creation. Such is the withdrawal of Krapp (*La dernière bande*) and Hamm (*Fin de partie*). Or withdrawal can take a far more severe form— that of complete psychological

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withdrawal as occurs in catatonia and schizophrenia (Les Bonnes).
In extreme cases, withdrawal tendencies can even lead to suicide--
the ultimate withdrawal (Les Bonnes).

Another form of psychological flight is regression to earlier,
usually childhood patterns of behavior. Beckett constructs Nagg
and Nell, in Fin de partie, according to this pattern. Their living
in garbage cans—small, close-in warm, secure areas—is like a return
to the womb where all needs are met.

Automaton conformity is, likewise, a form of psychological
flight in which one adopts entirely the personality, actions, and
beliefs offered him by his culture. The automaton conformist seeks
to hide himself in the crowd, to lose all features that make him
different. Ionesco enacts this phenomenon in Rhinocéros.

CONCLUSION:

It has become increasingly evident to those who contemplate
the nature of man and the status of our present-day culture that
man's intellectual development greatly exceeds his emotional maturity.
As Erich Fromm says, "Man's brain lives in the twentieth century;
the heart of most men lives still in the Stone Age."31 Twentieth-
century man is exposed to a vast accumulation of knowledge and an
ever-expanding technology which are necessitating rapid change and
a constant re-evaluation of values and mores. Many thinkers are
questioning man's ability to relate realistically to his own creation.

31 Fromm, op. cit., p. xiv.
Jung expresses concern in these words: "We have built a monumental world round about us, and have slaved for it with unequalled energy. But it is so imposing only because we have spent upon the outside all that is imposing in our natures—and what we find when we look within must necessarily be as it is—shabby and insufficient."\(^3^2\)

There is a need for modern man to learn to look within himself. It is within himself that he will find the meaning of life and the security necessary to accept reality. But our outward orientation has been deeply engrained—so deeply engrained that we are often unable to see our inauthenticity. However, it is possible for us to see our defense mechanisms, our flights from reality, in the behavioral patterns of others. Therefore Beckett, Ionesco, Genêt, and other avant-garde playwrights have sought to present the reality of inauthentic existence to us in such a way that we may gain insight into our own escape from reality.

\(^3^2\)Mullahy, op. cit., p. 161.
In his novels and in his plays, Samuel Beckett attempts to reveal a reality far deeper than the realism of the world of objects. Knowing that the things—that—are are taken into man's world and given meaning there, Beckett uses exterior reality, but only to reveal and relate to inner reality. He uses objects—settings and props—as an expression of the emptiness, the isolation, the deterioration, and the inauthenticity of his characters.

Even death assumes an increased depth of reality, for Beckett is concerned not only with physical death, but with psychic death. Having refused repeatedly to be human—that is, free responsible beings—Beckett's characters have almost completely lost awareness of their humanity. Unable to stand alone, they are bound together in mutually dependent pairs: Estragon and Vladimir, Pozzo and Lucky (En attendant Godot); Hamm and Clov, Nagg and Nell (Fin de partie); Krapp and his tape recorder (La Dernière bande); Mr. and Mrs. Rooney (Tous ceux qui tombent); Winnie and Willie (Oh les beaux jours). They detest one another, but prefer the agony of the other to the agony of aloneness.

Their occasional question, "Do I exist?" is the closest that most of them come to authentic existence. And in all truthfulness,
because of their inability to stand alone as separate, independent beings—as individuals—one must answer their existential question, "Do I exist?" by "Barely."

Unaware that the reality that concerns Beckett lies below the surface of things and beyond the ordered world of cause and effect, many people are unable to comprehend his works. Josephine Jacobsen and William R. Mueller have very aptly analyzed the reasons underlying this lack of comprehension:

It is our conviction that one of the primary reasons for Beckett's obscurity to most readers is his epistemology, his sense of the relationship between the individual consciousness and the whole world of space and time. Most persons assume that their consciousness is a reasonably accurate perceiver of an essentially ordered world and an essentially predictable one, one in which events conform to strict causal laws. Beckett is in revolt against what he envisages as a scientific position which, up to the early decades of the twentieth century at least, led man to assume that he was moving closer and closer to a knowledge of the world of space and time, that certain causes in the physical world lead to certain effects, and that though certain causal relationships may be unknown to us, they do nevertheless exist.¹

Beckett is in revolt against what is traditionally considered "realistic" literature in which the author assumes an omniscient and omnipotent position in order to control the chronology and the causality of his work. As one reads Beckett, one senses that writing is an existential experience for him, that literature is Beckett's means of self-discovery, that he is discovering himself in his own creativity. He alludes to this fact in his essay Proust, when he describes a work of art as being "neither created nor

chosen, but discovered, uncovered, excavated, pre-existing within
the artist, a law of his nature."²

In Proust, Beckett also reveals indirectly his own literary
philosophy: "Allusion has been made to his contempt for the lit-
erature that 'describes,' for the realists and naturalists worship-
ning the offal of experience, prostrate before the epidermis and
the swift epilepsy, and content to transcribe the surface, the fa-
cade, behind which the Idea is prisoner."³

Beckett describes Proust's literary style as one of impressionism,
which he defines as "his non-logical statement of phenomena in the
order and exactitude of their perception, before they have been
distorted into intelligibility in order to be forced into a chain
of cause and effect."⁴

Like Proust, Beckett is aware that, in spite of his ideals,
the literary artist must make concessions to the demands of the
literary convention. As Beckett expresses it: "As a writer he
is not altogether at liberty to detach effect from cause."⁵

According to Beckett, impressionism is a more authentic way
of expressing reality than is realism, since the impressionistic
creator:

³Ibid.
⁴Ibid., p. 66.
⁵Ibid., p. A.
...has been able to break through the more conventional (and distorting) way of viewing the world that lies outside of the individual consciousness. He "knows" that there is really no causality and that the imagined concept of causality, forced upon the world, wrenches it from its true nature in order to make it intelligible to the consciousness, an intelligibility based on an erroneous vision, though bringing with it a sense of security. The impressionist...is not so intimidated by custom as to see what he knows he should see, an ordered world; instead he sees the world through his own clear and unprejudiced eyes and goes on in words or colors to tell what he does see. Such is a description of the artistic vision, defined by Schopenhauer as "the contemplation of the world independently of the principle of reason."

In all of his works, Beckett reminds us that man can relate to time in two ways: First, he can conceive of it in terms of mere calculation—a temporal measuring system so that man can conveniently classify things as to past, present, and future; or, second, he can conceive of Time as the essential substance of life, for man (Dasein) comes to be (creates his essence) in the realm of Time far more than in the realm of Space. Therefore, in Beckett's three major stage plays, *En attendant Godot*, *Fin de partie*, and *La dernière bande*, Space does no more than reflect what Time and man have created. The fact that Estragon and Vladimir are waiting—a temporal experience—is more important than where they are waiting. The journey of Pozzo and Lucky is never defined in terms of where they are coming from or where they are going (in spite of Pozzo's unreliable explanation that he taking Lucky to be sold at the "marché de Saint-Sauveur."

Their journey is a means of filling

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up the empty hours and days. It is a temporal experience and represents the inauthentic existent's meaningless and purposeless wandering through life. In the case of both Hamm and Krapp, their spatial orientation is the direct result of what they have become. They have isolated themselves from the world of reality, creating their own private world of inauthenticity. Their inauthenticity comes about in terms of Time first, then is expressed in terms of Space. Hamm's spatial world consists of a small room, unfurnished except for his wheelchair, a picture turned towards the wall, two garbage cans, and a small step ladder that makes it possible for Clov to look out from time to time through the two small windows high up on the wall. In reality, Hamm's spatial world is even more reduced than the setting implies, for he is blind. It has been suggested that Hamm's "world" symbolizes the human skull and that the two windows represent the eyes. Whether Beckett intended such as interpretation or not, the fact remains that Hamm's "world" and his perception of reality are distorted, like the mind and perception of a neurotic. Krapp's spatial experience is limited to a poorly lighted room containing a table, a tape recorder, and a door leading to the often heard, but never seen, wine bottle.

In his radio play, *Tous ceux qui tombent*, Mrs. Rooney drags herself forward painfully to the railroad station. Her struggle against Time, which appears to be moving much too fast for her worn-out body, is far more important than are any of the spatial details of the play.
In the opening pages of his essay *Proust*, Beckett quotes Proust's statement about Time:

"But were I granted time to accomplish my work, I would not fail to stamp it with the seal of that Time, now so forcibly present to my mind, and in it I would describe men, even at the risk of giving them the appearance of monstrous beings, as occupying in Time a much greater place than that so sparingly conceded to them in Space, a place indeed extended beyond measure, because, like giants plunged in the years, they touch at once those periods of their lives—separated by so many days—so far apart in Time."\(^8\)

In no uncertain terms, Beckett states his awareness of man as a temporal being whose past is not only with him in the present but is actually helping shape his present and whose future is also with him in the present in his finitude—his being-toward-death:

Yesterday is not a milestone that has been passed, but a day-stone on the beaten track of the years, and irremediably part of us, within us, heavy and dangerous. We are not merely more weary because of yesterday, we are other, no longer what we were before the calamity of yesterday...The aspirations of yesterday were valid for yesterday's ego, not for today's. We are disappointed at the nullity of what we are pleased to call attainment. But what is attainment? The identification of the subject with the object of his desire. The subject has died—and perhaps many times—on the way.\(^9\)

The world that Beckett creates for his characters has been described as "an eternity of stagnation,"\(^10\) for theirs is a world

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\(^9\)Ibid., p. 3.

of habit, of relatively fixed behavioral patterns. Estragon and Vladimir go on waiting, putting on hats, taking off shoes, and eating carrots and turnips. Pozzo and Lucky proceed with their journey, stopping occasionally so that Pozzo can eat his chicken, smoke his pipe, look at his watch, and sit on his campstool. Hamm maintains his position at the center of his room, occasionally summoning Clov with his whistle, spasmodically lifting the lids of the garbage cans in order to torment Nagg and Nell, and repeatedly demanding his sedative. Krapp eats banana after banana, plays and replays his tapes, and, when he can not stand what he hears, seeks refuge in his wine bottle. "Life is a habit," says Beckett:

Or rather life is a succession of habits, since the individual is a succession of individuals; the world being a projection of the individual's consciousness (an objectivation of the individual's will, Schopenhauer would say), the pact must be continually renewed, the letter of safe-conduct brought up to date. The creation of the world did not take place once and for all time, but takes place every day. The periods of transition that separate consecutive adaptations (because by no expedient of macabre transubstantiation can the grave-sheets serve as swaddling-clothes) represent the perilous zones in the life of the individual, dangerous, precarious, painful, mysterious, and fertile, when for a moment the boredom of living is replaced by the suffering of being.¹¹

And what is the suffering of being to which Beckett refers? He defines it as "the free play of every faculty."¹² Thus habit is a functional device that man uses to limit his perceptions. Beckett

¹²Ibid., p. 9.
uses physical blindness to represent man's deliberate efforts to screen out the reality of the things—that-are. Three of his major characters are blind—Pozzo, Hamm, and Mr. Rooney—and another, Krapp, is described as very nearsighted.

Being fully present in an encounter with all of one's facilities is the source of both enchantment and pain. Describing this experience of authenticity, Beckett writes:

"Enchantments of reality" has the air of a paradox. But when the object is perceived as particular and unique and not merely the member of a family, when it appears independent of any general notion and detached from the sanity of a cause, isolated and inexplicable in the light of ignorance, then and then only may it be a source of enchantment. Unfortunately Habit has laid its veto on this form of perception, its action being precisely to hide the essence—the Idea—of the object in the haze of conception—preconception.13

These moments of enchantment are exceedingly rare in Beckett's theater, but they do occur, such as Vladimir's realization that the formerly bare tree now has leaves, and Krapp's pleasure at catching the dog's small, hard ball in his hand and holding it for an instant. Commenting on the rare enchantment of the moment, Krapp says: "Je la sentirai, dans ma main, jusqu'au jour de ma mort."14

The general tonality of the lives of Beckett's characters is that of extreme boredom. Seeking security in habit and routine,

13 Ibid., p. 11.
they create for themselves an existence of incredible banality, so that the occurrence of any unexpected event—such as Estragon's finding new boots, or Clov's discovering a flea—becomes the outstanding event of the day. Ironically, their fleeing from the "suffering of being" to the safety of habit has not eliminated their pain. But theirs is the dull pain of boredom that is innate in inauthentic existence. Concerning suffering and boredom, Beckett says: "The pendulum oscillates between these two terms; Suffering—that opens a window on the real and is the main condition of artistic experience, and...Boredom that must be considered as the most tolerable because the most durable of human evils."15

Beckett repeatedly reminds us that man is alone. In Proust he writes: "We are alone. We cannot know and we cannot be known."16 And to his own statement he adds a quotation from Proust: "Man is the creature that cannot come forth from himself, who knows others only in himself, and who, if he asserts the contrary, lies."17 Yet his characters never exist as individuals; they are always one of a pair, each one seeking his identity in the other. As Estragon phrases it: "On trouve toujours quelque chose, hein, Didi, pour nous donner l'impression d'exister?"18 In moments of insight they see their inauthenticity and long to break away, to assert their

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15 Beckett, Proust, p. 16.
16 Ibid., p. 49.
17 Ibid.
18 Beckett, En attendant Godot, pp. 116-117.
individuality, but their fear of anonymity renders them impotent to break the ties that bind them to one another. When all of their tricks for passing time fail, and Estragon and Vladimir find the boredom of their unfulfilled lives almost overwhelming, they talk of escape—from each other and from Godot: "Partons."19 "Je m'en vais."20 "Alors on y va."21 "Allons-y."22 But they never move. They even contemplate suicide—the ultimate escape—but the idea that the branch might break with the first one, leaving the other alive and alone, is intolerable.

Beckett writes of the human condition as he sees it (and it is tragic), but he does so through the comic genre. As Jacobsen and Mueller have pointed out: "Beckett's vision of man is bifocal, simultaneously tragic and comic, though predominantly the latter... we become acquainted with the quintessence of the Beckett mode, with the strangely comic spirit that is his mark—above all, with the laugh that is not a laugh."23 In order to portray this duality, Beckett uses the clown motif, for the clown's pointed face, his down-and-out condition and his incapacity have always represented the superimposing of the comic upon the tragic. In discussing Beckett's use of the clown figure, Hugh Kenner says: "He (the clown)

19 Ibid., pp. 44 and 45.
20 Ibid., p. 45.
21 Ibid., pp. 91 and 163.
22 Ibid.
23 Jacobsen and Mueller, op. cit., p. 79.
does not *imitate* the acrobat; it is plain that he could not; he
offers us, directly, his personal incapacity, an intricate art
form."  

Beckett's stage directions give precise details concerning
the physical make-up, the clothes, and the actions of the clown-
characters. Both Hamm and Clov are described as having a "teint
très rouge."  

Krapp's face is described as a "visage blanc, nez
violacé."  

Estragon and Vladimir portray the traditional "bum clowns"
with their bowler hats and shoes that do not fit. In all of the
stage plays, the mechanical, repetitious actions are typical vaude-
ville techniques. Frightened by the unexpected arrival of Pozzo and
Lucky, Estragon reacts in the following manner:

(Estragon lâche la carotte. Ils se figent, puis se
précipitent vers la coulisse. Estragon s'arrête à
mi-chemin, retourne sur ses pas, ramasse la carotte,
la fourre dans sa poche, s'élançe vers Vladimir qui
l'attend, s'arrête à nouveau, retourne sur ses pas,
ramasse sa chaussure, puis court rejoindre Vladimir.
Enlacés, la tête dans les épaules, se détournant de
la menace, ils attendent.  

In the opening scene of *Fin de Partie* Clov is immediately recog-
nized as a clown-character as he acts out the following stage direc-
tions:

Il va se mettre sous la fenêtre à gauche. Démarche
raide et vacillante. Il regarde la fenêtre à gauche,
la tête rejetée en arrière. Il tourne la tête, regarde

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24 Kenner, op. cit., pp. 33-34.
la fenêtre à droite. Il va se mettre sous la fenêtre à droite, la tête rejetée en arrière. Il tourne la tête et regarde la fenêtre à gauche. Il sort, revient aussitôt avec un escabeau, l'installe sous la fenêtre à gauche, monte dessus, tire le rideau. Il descend de l'escabeau, fait six pas vers la fenêtre à droite, retourne prendre l'escabeau, l'installe sous la fenêtre à droite, monte dessus, tire le rideau. Il descend de l'escabeau, fait trois pas vers la fenêtre à gauche, retourne prendre l'escabeau, l'installe sous la fenêtre à gauche, monte dessus, regarde par la fenêtre. Rire bref. Il descend de l'escabeau, fait un pas vers la fenêtre à droite, retourne prendre l'escabeau, l'installe sous la fenêtre à droite, monte dessus, regarde par la fenêtre. Rire bref...

Krapp's opening scene likewise establishes his identity as a clown-character:

...Il se baisse, fait jouer la serrure du premier tiroir, regarde dedans, y promène la main, en sort une babine, l'examine de tout près, la remet, referme le tiroir à clef, fait jouer la serrure du second tiroir, regarde dedans, y promène la main, en sort une grosse banane, l'examine de tout près, referme le tiroir à clef, remet les clefs dans sa poche. Il se retourne, s'avance jusqu'au bord de la scène, s'arrête, caresse la banane, l'épluche, laisse tomber la peau à ses pieds, met le bout de la banane dans sa bouche et demeure immobile, regardant dans le vide devant lui. Finalement il croque le bout de la banane, se détourne et se met à aller et venir au bord de la scène...Il marche sur la peau, glisse, manque de tomber, se rattrappe, se penche, regarde la peau et finalement la pousse du pied...

Beckett uses the clown figure not only as a means of juxtaposing the comic on the tragic but also to assure esthetic distance between his clown and his audience. As William York Tindall expresses it:

29Beckett, La Dernière bande, pp. 9-10.
Clowns please because they conceal what they reveal. An absurd exterior assures distance; yet the clown's incompetence, frustration, and loneliness are what we hide beneath a respectable exterior. At once others and ourselves, clowns give us the pleasure of being involved without seeming to be or being entirely aware of being.30

Beckett has incorporated mobility and immobility—important tricks to the clown—as a vital part of his theater. In dealing with the condition of motion and its lack, Beckett, as usual, is not satisfied with surface reality; rather, he sets up an interplay of mobility and immobility on various levels—external actions, psychic change, and movement toward death. The characters' repetitious and ineffective action, and the journeying of Pozzo and Lucky, and Mr. and Mrs. Rooney are examples of external motion. External immobility is seen in the waiting of Estragon and Vladimir, in the vegetative existence of Winnie and Willie, and in the physical withdrawal from the world by Hamm and Krapp. But mobility and immobility are also evident at the psychic level. In the case of all other characters, there is evidence of psychic change—ever so slight, but nevertheless significant—in the direction of authenticity. At the end of Fin de partie, Clov is at last able to leave Hamm, who, in his turn, finally realizes that he is alone and that he must go on towards death alone. Pozzo of Act II has a deepened awareness of his temporal nature, so that time is no longer conceived of as a mere measuring device. Both his

psychic change and his movement toward death are seen in his attempt to answer Vladimir's question concerning the moment at which Lucky became dumb:

Vous n'avez pas fini de m'empoisonner avec vos histoires de temps? C'est insensé! Quand! Quand!
Un jour, ça ne vous suffit pas, un jour pareil aux autres, il est devenu muet, un jour je suis devenu aveugle, un jour nous deviendrons sourds, un jour nous sommes nés, un jour nous mourrons, le même jour, le même instant, ça ne vous suffit pas? 31

In essence Beckett is saying that Time moves in a straight line toward death, that whether the void between birth and death be filled with mobility or immobility, the ultimate result remains the same.

Beckett's characters spend endless hours in futile attempts to order their existence. An orderly existence (no matter how false) reassures one that one does indeed exist and is in control. Clov expresses the secret longing of all of Beckett's characters:

Clov: J'aime l'ordre. C'est mon rêve. Un monde où tout serait silencieux et immobile et chaque chose à sa place dernière, sous la dernière poussière.

Hamm: Mais qu'est ce que tu fabriques?
Clov: J'essaie de fabriquer un peu d'ordre. 32

The desire for order and the security that comes with it (even at the price of death, to which Clov alludes) has shaped the existence of each of Beckett's characters. The greatest need for order, and consequently the greatest deformation, has taken place

32 Beckett, Fin de partie, pp. 78-79.
in Hamm, Clov and Krapp, who have withdrawn from the world in order to set up an existence which they can control completely. Hamm repeatedly demands that Clov push his wheelchair to the exact center of their "world:"

Hamm: Je suis bien au centre?
Clov: Je vais mesurer.
Hamm: À peu près! À peu près!
Clov: Là.
Hamm: Je suis à peu près au centre?
Clov: Il me semble.
Hamm: Il te semble! Mets-moi bien au centre! 33

The stage directions for La Dernière bande inform us that Krapp's position in his "world" is identical to that of Hamm—"au centre." 34 The only world that one can be the center of is a world of one's own creation—a world removed from reality—that is to say, from life.

Other Beckett characters exhibit this same propensity for order. Pozzo uses role-playing as a means of control. His principal role is that of Lucky's sadistic master, but he plays other parts too, such as that of the orator. Although the roles differ, each has the same purpose—that of controlling the situation. When asked to explain why Lucky does not put down the suitcases he is carrying, Pozzo prepares to answer:

33 Beckett, Fin de partie, p. 42.
34 Beckett, La Dernière bande, p. 7.
C'est parfait. Tout le monde y est? Tout le monde me regarde? (Il regarde Lucky, tire sur la corde. Lucky lève la tête.) Regarde-moi, porc! (Lucky le regarde.) Parfait. (Il met la pipe dans sa poche, se râcle la gorge, crache, ressort le vaporisateur, se revaporise la gorge, remet le vaporisateur dans sa poche.) Je suis prêt. Tout le monde m'écoute? (Il regarde Lucky, tire sur la corde.) Avance! (Lucky avance.) Là! (Lucky s'arrête.) Tout le monde est prêt? (Il les regarde tous les trois. Lucky en dernier, tire sur la corde.) Alors quoi? (Lucky lève la tête.) Je n'aime pas parler dans le vide. Bon. Voyons. (Il réfléchit.)

Estragon and Vladimir's mechanical manipulation of the few objects they possess—hats, shoes, carrots, turnips—is another manifestation of ordering:

(Estragon prend le chapeau de Vladimir. Vladimir ajuste des deux mains le chapeau de Lucky. Estragon met le chapeau de Vladimir à la place du sien qu'il tend à Vladimir. Vladimir prend le chapeau d'Estragon. Estragon ajuste des deux mains le chapeau de Vladimir. Vladimir met le chapeau d'Estragon à la place de celui de Lucky qu'il tend à Estragon. Estragon prend le chapeau de Lucky. Vladimir ajuste des deux mains le chapeau d'Estragon. Estragon met le chapeau de Lucky à la place de celui de Vladimir qu'il tend à Vladimir. Vladimir prend le chapeau d'Estragon. Estragon ajuste des deux mains le chapeau de Lucky. Vladimir met son chapeau à la place de celui d'Estragon qu'il tend à Estragon. Estragon prend son chapeau. Vladimir ajuste son chapeau des deux mains. Estragon met son chapeau à la place de celui de Lucky qu'il tend à Vladimir. Vladimir prend le chapeau de Lucky. Estragon ajuste son chapeau des deux mains. Vladimir met le chapeau de Lucky à la place du sien qu'il tend à Estragon. Estragon prend le chapeau de Vladimir. Vladimir ajuste des deux mains le chapeau de Lucky. Estragon tend le chapeau de Vladimir à Vladimir qui le prend et le tend à Estragon qui le prend et le tend à Vladimir qui le prend et le jette. Tout cela dans un mouvement vif.)

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36Ibid., pp. 121-122.
Beckett's characters also find counting to be a very effective means of ordering:

Monsieur Rooney: J'ai monté et descendu ces marches cinq mille fois et je ne sais pas encore combien il y en a. Quand je crois qu'il y en a six il y en a quatre ou cinq ou sept ou huit, et quand je me rappelle qu'il y en a cinq il y en a trois ou quatre ou six ou sept, et quand finalement je me rend compte qu'il y en a sept il y en a cinq ou six ou huit ou neuf. Parfois je me demande si on ne vient pas les changer pendant la nuit. (Un temps. Agacé.) Eh bien? Il y en a combien aujourd'hui, d'après toi?

Madame Rooney: Ne me demande pas de compter, Dan, pas maintenant.

Monsieur Rooney: Pas compter! Un des rares plaisirs de la vie!37

The central theme of all of Beckett's works is the quest for identity. As Jacobsen and Mueller express it, "Virtually the whole of the Beckett canon is the spiritual or intellectual—certainly the internal as distinguished from the external—autobiography of one man. This man, a mid-twentieth-century Everyman, wears many masks, and he would seem to try them on, one after the other, in an attempt to identify himself."38 Having tired of their game with the hats, Estragon and Vladimir turn to role-playing. Vladimir, who remembers all of the details of their encounter with Pozzo and Lucky (Estragon has forgotten that he ever met them), attempts to tell Estragon how to play Pozzo. Before the "scene" is over, Estragon revolts at the falsity of imitating someone whom he does


38Jacobsen and Mueller, op. cit., p. 113.
not even remember and leaves. Vladimir, alone on the stage, runs frantically about looking for his friend; and Estragon's distressed air when he re-enters reveals his own panic at having been alone for a moment:

Vladimir: Tu ne veux pas jouer?
Estragon: Jouer à quoi?
Vladimir: On pourrait jouer à Pozzo et Lucky.
Estragon: Connais pas.
Vladimir: Moi je ferai Lucky, toi tu feras Pozzo. (Il prend l'attitude de Lucky, ployant sous le poids de ses bagages. Estragon le regarde avec stupefaction.) Vas-y.
Estragon: Qu'est-ce que je dois faire?
Vladimir: Engueule-moi!
Estragon: Salaud.
Vladimir: Plus fort!
Estragon: Fumier! Crapule!

(Vladimir avance, recule, toujours ployé.)

Vladimir: Dis-moi de penser.
Estragon: Comment?
Vladimir: Dis, pense, cochon!
Estragon: Pense, cochon!
Vladimir: Je ne peux pas!
Estragon: Assez!

Vladimir: Danse, porc! (Il se tord sur place. Estragon sort précipitamment.) Je ne peux pas! (Il lève la tête, voit qu'Estragon n'est plus là, pousse un cri déchirant.) Gogo! (Silence. Il se met à arpenter la scène presque en courant. Estragon rentre précipitamment, ensouflé,
Thus their game has failed miserably. It has not helped them establish their identity, nor has it relieved the extreme boredom of their existence.

Describing Beckett's "Everyman," Jacobsen and Mueller write:

Though he contains all the world within himself and is thus in a sense at one with all men, at one where all men seem to merge indistinguishably into one man, he is at the same time cut off from all his fellows, bound in a lonely prison house from which he seldom escapes. And even when he does, in his brief forays into the house of another man for a frantic word or a frenzied embrace, he finds no satisfying or enduring union, only a word which he might have spoken to himself or a passing sexual excitement which he might have self-induced. Thrust back on himself, he remains alone and lonely.

Not being an integrated, whole self, but rather a collection of roles, the Beckett protagonist is always looking at himself as if at a stranger. He is so detached from himself that he seldom really feels his feelings. Consequently, he must resort to telling himself about his feelings, as does Clov in Fin de partie:

Je me dis--quelquefois, Clov, il faut que tu arrives à souffrir mieux que ça, si tu veux qu'on se lasse de te punir--un jour. Je me dis--quelquefois, Clov, il faut que tu sois là mieux que ça, si tu veux qu'on te laisse partir--un jour. Mais je me sens trop vieux, et trop loin, pour pouvoir former de nouvelles habitudes.

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40 Jacobsen and Mueller, op. cit., pp. 119-120.
41 Beckett, Fin de partie, p. 108.
He is self-divided to the point that he often finds it necessary to tell himself or have someone else tell him what he is doing at the moment.

Monsieur Rooney: Je ne sais plus dans quel sens je suis tourné.

Madame Rooney: Tu t'es détourné. Tu es courbé sur le fosse.\textsuperscript{42}

Beckett uses his artistic medium—language—in several distinct ways. In order to represent the difficulty of communication, Beckett reduces language to the starkest economy in the give-and-take between Estragon and Vladimir:

Vladimir: Je n'entends rien.

Estragon (mâche, avale): Je demande si on est lié.

Vladimir: Lié?

Estragon: Lié.

Vladimir: Comment lié?

Estragon: Pieds et poings.

Vladimir: Mais à qui? Par qui?

Estragon: À ton bonhomme.

Vladimir: A Godot? Lié à Godot? Quelle idée! Jamais de la vie! (un temps.) Pas encore.\textsuperscript{43}

Although not as severely reduced, conversation between Hamm and Clov is characterized by economy and fragmentation:

Hamm: Quel temps fait-il?

Clov: Le même que d'habitude.

Hamm.: Regarde la terre.

\textsuperscript{42} Beckett, \textit{Tous ceux qui tombent}, p. 69.

\textsuperscript{43} Beckett, \textit{En attendant Godot}, p. 32.
Clov: Je l'ai regardée.

Hamm: A la lunette?

Clov: Pas besoin de lunette.

Hamm: Regarde-la à la lunette.

Clov: Je vais chercher la lunette.44

In contrast with this extreme economy of language is the verbosity of Pozzo, Hamm, and Krapp, whose rehearsed monologues are not intended for communication, but are inauthentic attempts to establish identity through role-playing. Such is the case when Hamm forces Nagg to listen to his story:

...Allons, c'est l'heure, où en étais-je? (Un temps. Ton de narrateur.) L'homme s'approcha lentement, en se trainant sur le ventre. D'une pâleur et d'une maigreur admirable il paraissait sur le point de—(Un temps. Ton normal.) Non, ça je l'ai fait. (Un temps. Ton de narrateur.) Un long silence se fit entendre. (Ton normal.) Joli ça. (Ton de narrateur.) Je bourrai tranquillement ma pipe—en magnésite, l'allumai avec une...mettons une suédoise, en tirai quelques bouffées. Aah! (Un temps.) Il faisait ce jour-là, je m'en souviens, un froid extra-ordinairement vif, zéro au thermomètre...45

The script of the story goes on and rivals in length some of Krapp's equally inauthentic speeches, which he records from notes jotted down on the back of an envelope.

In the case of Lucky, Beckett uses language to represent still another human condition—that of absolute emptiness and lack of being, a state which occurs when one gives up everything that one is to another. Pozzo informs us that Lucky was once a great thinker and that he (Pozzo) learned everything he knows

44Beckett, Fin de partie, pp. 43-44.
from Lucky. But that was the Lucky of long ago, before he enslaved himself. When Estragon and Vladimir encounter Lucky, he has degenerated to an automaton, who can recite his "thoughts" in a vaguely coherent fashion, provided that he has his hat on. At Pozzo's command, "Pense," Lucky begins to address Estragon and Vladimir who listen attentively:

As Lucky continues his incoherent recitation, Vladimir and Estragon begin to fidget, and Pozzo writhes and groans in agony. Finally the three of them can no longer tolerate listening to Lucky's meaningless monologue. In spite of their efforts to silence him, Lucky continues to shout his text, until they are able to remove his hat—at which point he collapses.

Beckett's characters are very much aware of the fact that the language they have at their disposal has been voided of any real meaning and that if communication is to take place it must do so in spite of the emptiness of their words:

Monsieur Rooney: Tu sais, Maddy, on dirait quelquefois que tu le bats avec une langue morte.

Madame Rooney: C'est vrai, Dan, je ne sais que trop bien ce que tu veux dire, j'ai souvent cette impression, c'est indiscutablement pénible.

Monsieur Rooney: J'avoue que moi-même je l'ai par moments. Quand il m'arrive de surprendre ce que je suis en train de dire.

But words can still be fun and plays-on-words abound in Beckett's works:

Monsieur Rooney (ton de narrateur): D'autre part, me disais-je, il y a les horreurs de la vie chez soi—brossage, frottage, balayage, grottage, cirage, suçage, polissage, raclage, lavage, séchage, arrosage, brossage, rinçage, grinçage, malaxage, claquéage, en un mot le ménage...

As has been pointed out, "What the clown achieves by properties, personality, and actions on one level, Beckett's use of words confirms on another level. He puts language through the same shocks, discrepancies, and disintegrations which beset his clowns." Just as Beckett's characters wear masks, so are his words disguised. Godot is most probably a bilingual play on God and Balzac's Godeau. Lucky is a double-edged pun because in one sense Lucky is lucky. Everything is decided for him so that he has no responsibility other than doing as Pozzo commands; but in another sense, he is most unlucky because in giving up his freedom he has lost his

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47 Beckett, *Tous ceux qui tombent*, p. 64.
48 Ibid., p. 62.
50 In Balzac's *Mercadet* the dénouement of the play depends upon Godeau's return, an event for which the characters wait throughout the play.
humanity. **Hamm** is derived from **hammer** and Martin Esslin in his *The Theater of the Absurd* suggests that the names **Nagg, Nell,** and **Clov** refer to nails—objects to be "driven in" by the hammer. The pun on Krapp's name is self-evident. In each case, the name has become a label, giving advance notice about the nature of the person.

Having considered the general characteristics that Beckett's characters share with one another, let us focus our attention on the unique features of the characters from his three major plays: *En attendant Godot, Fin de partie,* and *La Dernière bande*--on the qualities that distinguish one character structure from another.

In psychological terminology, Vladimir and Estragon would be classified as authoritarian characters for two distinct reasons: one, their looking outside of themselves—to each other and to Godot—for self-affirmation; and two, their belief in fate—in forces beyond their control. Vladimir and Estragon represent the only occurrence of friendship in all of Beckett's theater. As with all of Beckett's other characters, they are psychologically dependent on each other. But whereas all of the other characters hate the one to whom they are bound, Vladimir and Estragon feel a genuine affection for one another. They spend their time playing verbal games, telling each other jokes and stories, helping each other put on and take off shoes, reminding one another of what has been forgotten, giving one another carrots and turnips to eat, and in general comforting each other to the limited degree that each is able, except in the case of nightmares:
Estragon: J'ai fait un rêve.
Vladimir: Ne le raconte pas!
Estragon: Je rêvais que...
Vladimir: NE LE RACONTE PAS!
Estragon: ...Tu n'es pas gentil, Didi. À qui veux-tu que je raconte mes cauchemars privés, sinon à toi?
Vladimir: Qu'ils restent privés. Tu sais bien que je ne supporte pas ça.
Estragon (froidement): Il y a des moments où je me demande si on ne ferait pas mieux de se quitter.
Vladimir: Tu n'iras pas loin.\(^{51}\)

Their friendship suffers from their inability to exist alone, so that they are constantly torn between their need and their affection for the other and their wish to be independent beings. Psychologists inform us that only as an individual is able to love himself will he be able to love others. As long as he fails to accept himself—past, present, and future—he feels guilty and dislikes what he is and, consequently, is unable to like others:

Love of others and love of ourselves are not alternatives. On the contrary, an attitude of love towards themselves will be found in all those who are capable of loving others. Love, in principle, is indivisible as far as the connection between "objects" and one’s own self is concerned. Genuine love is an expression of productiveness and implies care, respect, responsibility, and knowledge.\(^{52}\)

Neither Estragon nor Vladimir has been able to establish himself as an individual self. They are aware of their inauthenticity and


\(^{52}\)Mullahy, *op. cit.*, p. 263.
dislike themselves and each other for it. The duality of their relationship is declared in the opening scene:

Vladimir: Alors, te revoilà, toi.

Estragon: Tu crois?

Vladimir: Je suis content de te revoir. Je te croyais parti pour toujours.

Estragon: Moi aussi.

Vladimir: Que faire pour fêter cette réunion? (Il réfléchit.) Lève-toi que je t'embrasse. (Il tend la main à Estragon.)

Estragon (avec irritation): Tout à l'heure, tout à l'heure.

Vladimir: Quand j'y pense...depuis le temps...je me demande...ce que tu serais devenu...sans moi (avec décision). Tu ne serais plus qu'un petit tas d'ossements à l'heure qu'il est, pas d'erreur.53

Although not visibly tied together by a rope as are Pozzo and Lucky, Vladimir and Estragon are none the less bound to each other. Their conversation informs us that such has been their relationship for quite some time, that they have even contemplated double suicide: "La main dans la main on se serait jeté en bas de la Tour Eiffel, parmi les premiers,"54 and that another time when Estragon tried to kill himself, Vladimir saved him:

Estragon: Tu te rappelles le jour où je me suis jeté dans la Durance?

Vladimir: On faisait les vendages.

Estragon: Tu m'as repêché.

54Ibid., p. 13.
Vladimir: Tout ça est mort et enterré.  

Estragon: Je me demande si on n’aurait pas mieux fait de rester seuls, chacun de son côté. (Un temps.) On n’était pas fait pour le même chemin.

Vladimir (sans se fâcher): Ce n’est pas sûr.

Estragon: Non, rien n’est sûr.

Vladimir: On peut toujours se quitter, si tu crois que ça vaut mieux.

Estragon: Maintenant ce n’est plus la peine.

Vladimir: C’est vrai, maintenant ce n’est plus la peine.  

Again and again they consider the ultimate escape—suicide—but their fear that the one will die leaving the other alone prevents their acting. As they talk of hanging themselves, Estragon offers an objection:

Estragon: Je vais t’expliquer. (Il réfléchit.) La branche... la branche... (Avec colère.) Mais essaie donc de comprendre!

Vladimir: Je ne compte plus que sur toi.

Estragon (avec effort): Gogo léger—branche pas casser—Gogo mort. Didi lourd—branche casser—Didi seul...

Vladimir: Je n’avais pas pensé à ça.  

Being unable to find the solution to their dilemma within themselves—neither as two separate beings nor as a mutually dependent pair—they look to their final authority, Godot:

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55 Ibid., p. 90.
56 Ibid., pp. 90-91.
Vladimir: Attendons voir ce qu'il va nous dire.

Estragon: Qui?

Vladimir: Godot.

Estragon: Voilà.

Vladimir: Attendons d'être fixés d'abord.  

Vladimir serves as the bond between the two of them and Godot. Estragon repeatedly talks of various means of escape from their inauthenticity: that they commit suicide ("Fais-moi penser d'apporter une corde demain."  


59 Ibid., p. 89.

60 Ibid., p. 17.

61 Ibid., pp. 20 and 80.

But at this last suggestion Vladimir reminds him that they are waiting for Godot. Personally, Estragon is not very interested in Godot, he waits because Vladimir waits. Vladimir acts as the intermediary between themselves and Godot. It is Vladimir who recognizes the place as the one agreed upon by Godot, who remembers that Saturday might have been the date agreed on for the meeting, who defines their role as suppliants before Godot, and who does all of the talking with Godot's messenger when he comes to tell them that Godot can not come that day. Estragon, in contrast, questions the authenticity of their relation to Godot:


Estragon: Quel est notre rôle là-dedans?

Estragon: À ce point-là?
Vladimir: Monsieur a des exigences à faire valoir?
Estragon: On n'a plus de droits?
Vladimir: Tu me ferais rire, si cela m'était permis.
Estragon: Nous les avons perdus?
Vladimir: Nous les avons bazar'des. 62

Vladimir's terminating statement reveals the fact that he is not unaware of what is happening to them, but he needs Godot to give purpose to his life, therefore he cannot face the reality of his bondage:

Estragon: Je demande si on est lié.
Vladimir: Lié?
Estragon: Lié.
Vladimir: Comment lié?
Estragon: Pieds et poings.
Vladimir: Mais à qui? Par qui?
Estragon: À ton bonhomme.
Vladimir: A Godot? Lié à Godot? Quelle idée! Jamais de la vie! (Un temps.) Pas encore.63

62 Ibid., pp. 28-29.
63 Ibid., p. 32.
Psychologists are well aware of the fact that the authoritarian character feels enslaved, whether he is able to be conscious of his slavery, like Estragon, or whether he keeps his awareness of his slavery at the unconscious level, like Vladimir. Erich Fromm expresses the relationship between the authoritarian character and his "magic helper" as follows: "...the very person who is dependent on the magic helper also feels, although often unconsciously, enslaved by 'him,' and to a greater or lesser degree, rebels against 'him.'"64

Vladimir's need to orient his life around Godot is accentuated by his predisposition to believe in fate and determinism. Early in the play, he suggests:

Vladimir: Si on se repentait?
Estragon: De quoi?
Vladimir: Eh bien...(Il cherche.) On n'aurait pas besoin d'entre dans les détails.
Estragon: D'être né?65

Thus Vladimir feels guilty about an event over which he had no control—the one event of his life for which he was not responsible. This irrational doubt, due to his unwillingness to look within himself for the meaning and purpose of life, has necessitated his looking outward to an authority bigger than himself—an authority who somehow controls and determines everything, thereby removing

64Fromm, op. cit., p. 199.
65Beckett, En attendant Godot, pp. 15-16.
the responsibility of being from his shoulders. To quiet his fears, 
Vladimir would like to make a virtue out of their waiting, but 
Estragon's realism prevents this: 

Vladimir: ...Nous sommes au rendez-vous, un point c'est tout. 
    Nous ne sommes pas des saints, mais nous sommes au rendez-
    vous. Combien de gens peuvent en dire autant? 

Estragon: Des masses. 66 

Vladimir assumes his role as the theologian in telling Estragon 
the story of the crucifixion of Christ and the two thieves. Estragon 
appears to know none of the details. Yet in a later conversation, 
to Vladimir's horror, Estragon compares himself to Jesus: 

Vladimir: Mais tu ne peux pas aller pieds nus. 

Estragon: Jésus l'a fait. 

Vladimir: Jésus! Qu'est-ce que tu vas chercher là! Tu ne 
    vas tout de même pas te comparer à lui. 

Estragon: Toute ma vie je me suis comparé à lui. 67 

Thus Vladimir reveals his inclination to dehumanize Jesus completely--
to remove him from the world of man--in order to make of him another 
authority. 

Tindall has described the triangular relationship among Vladimir 
and Estragon and Godot in the following words: 

But there they are incompatibly joined, on a lonely road, 
each dependent on the other—as closely "tied" with psy-
chological rope, or as Vladimir to Godot with metaphysical 

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66 Ibid., pp. 134-135. 
67 Ibid., p. 88.
rope. These disconnected pairs represent three of man's
collections: of friend and friend, master and slave,
man and God—or whatever you take Godot for.68

Estragon and Vladimir frequently punctuate their conversation
with "Rien a faire," which simultaneously expresses their personal
incapacity, their utter despair, and their authoritarian attitude
toward life. Frederick Hoffman, in his book Samuel Beckett: The
Language of Self, deals with the condition of dependence:

There is no question that Godot is an eternal "father
image," an image of authority deeply wished for and so
controlling the imaginations of the two tramps that they
consider "waiting for him" a major preoccupation and duty.
But the reliance upon the existence of an eternal being,
to the neglect of personal responsibility for existence,
is a major object of Beckett's criticism. The view of
Godot is onotheological and untraditional; it is a form
of anthropomorphic relationship, if you wish. But Waiting
for Godot is an existentialist play, and as such it argues
against the assumption of an image that drains off the
energy of stark human responsibility..."waiting" is in
itself a meaningless activity, if it is a waiting for a
specific supporting force. The two tramps describe again
and again the futility of such expectations.69

In his essay Proust in describing Proust's relationship to
Albertine "who has promised to come and who does not come and whose
non-arrival exalts a simply physical irritation into a flame of
moral anguish, so that he listens for her step or for the sublime
summons of the telephone, not with his ear and mind, but with his
heart,"70 Beckett has anticipated the anguished existence of Estragon

68Tindall, op. cit., p. 11.

69Frederick J. Hoffman, Samuel Beckett: The Language of Self

70Beckett, Proust, p. 34.
and Vladimir as they wait for Godot. Beckett's comment in this same essay concerning Proust's literary achievement is a remarkable foreshadowing of his own future literary accomplishments: "Surely in the whole of literature there is no study of that desert of loneliness and recrimination that men call love posed and developed with such diabolical unscrupulousness."71

Whereas Vladimir and Estragon have given up their rights and individuality to each other and to Godot, and are thus bound together, they are nevertheless still capable of authentic questioning. They continue to be aware of their humanity, as when they attempt to help Pozzo who has become blind: "L'appel que nous venons d'entendre, c'est plutôt à l'humanité tout entière qu'il s'adresse. Mais à cet endroit, en ce moment, l'humanité c'est nous, que ça nous plaise ou non.72 And they are also conscious of the humanity of others.

Pozzo and Lucky are tied together to a much greater extent than are Vladimir and Estragon, as symbolized by the rope that connects them. Their inauthenticity is such that in psychological terminology they would be identified as neurotics with sadistic and masochistic character structures. Pozzo has taken everything from Lucky, who has literally been devoured—so that all that is left of him is a physical form still capable of performing certain functions at the command of the master. Pozzo, who has consumed everything, is still nothing but a collection of roles.

71Ibid., p. 38.
The nature of their entrance on stage establishes immediately their relationship. Lucky, burdened with a heavy suitcase, a folding stool, a picnic basket, and a greatcoat, enters first. Around his neck is a rope which connects him with Pozzo, who is holding a whip. Having successfully imposed himself as master over Lucky, Pozzo seeks to assume a similar role with Estragon and Vladimir:

Estragon (à Pozzo): Vous n'êtes pas Monsieur Godot, Monsieur?

Pozzo (d'une voix terrible): Je suis Pozzo! (Silence) Ce nom ne vous dit rien? (Silence.) Je vous demande si ce nom ne vous dit rien?73

Karen Horney, who has studied the sadistic character structure extensively, says: "The power-driven neurotic is constantly preoccupied with inflating his ego—everything else is secondary—in order to protect himself from unbearable feelings of insignificance and helplessness."74 When Estragon and Vladimir explain to him that they are waiting for Godot, Pozzo attempts a new role, that of a property-owner:

Pozzo: L'attente? Vous l'attendiez donc?

Vladimir: C'est-à-dire...

Pozzo: Ici? Sur mes terres?

Vladimir: On ne pensait pas à mal.

Estragon: C'était dans une bonne intention.

Pozzo: La route est à tout le monde.

73Ibid., p. 35.

74Mullahy, op. cit., p. 222.
Vladimir: C'est ce qu'on se disait.

Pozzo: C'est une honte, mais c'est ainsi.75

Pozzo reverts to his role as master as he puts Lucky through an intricate set of manoeuvres at his command. Lucky is allowed no freedom whatsoever. Pozzo answers for him and relays all questions to him, so that there is no phase of his existence that is not controlled by Pozzo.

A flaw soon appears in Pozzo's veneer of self-assurance. Having stood up as if to leave, he suddenly wants to stay, but does not know how to manage the situation: "Mais comment me rasseoir maintenant avec naturel, maintenant que je me suis mis debout? Sans avoir l'air de--comment dire--de fléchir?"76

Without warning Pozzo assumes a new role—that of socialite, as he expresses his desire to meet Godot:

Moi aussi je serais heureux de le rencontrer. Plus je rencontre de gens, plus je suis heureux. Avec la moindre créature on s'instruit, on s'enrichit, on goûte mieux son bonheur. Vous-mêmes (il les regarde attentivement l'un après l'autre, afin qu'ils se sachent visés tous les deux) vous-mêmes, qui sait, vous m'auriez peut-être apporté quelque chose.?7

Estragon's asking him why Lucky does not put down his bags triggers the role of the orator, and the performance begins. Pozzo places himself in the center, assures himself that everyone is looking

75Beckett, En attendant Godot, pp. 36-37.
76Ibid., p. 44.
77Ibid., p. 46.
at him, sprays his throat, checks to be sure that everyone is ready, and begins his speech:

Pozzo: ...Pourquoi il ne se met pas à son aise. Essayons d'y voir clair. N'en a-t-il pas le droit? Si. C'est donc qu'il ne veut pas? Voilà qui est raisonné. Et pourquoi, ne veut-il pas? (Un temps.) Messieurs, je vais vous le dire.

Vladimir: Attention!

Pozzo: C'est pour m'impressionner, pour que je le garde.

Estragon: Comment?

Pozzo: Je me suis peut-être mal exprimé. Il cherche à m'apitoyer, pour que je renonce à me séparer de lui.78

And the rationalizations begin to pile up, one on top of another, but Pozzo's conveniently not hearing certain questions that Vladimir and Estragon ask him about his intentions toward Lucky and certain statements that he makes following his "explanations," such as, "No, ce n'est pas tout à fait ça,"79 reveal his own dim awareness of his inauthenticity. After Vladimir asks him six times if he wants to get rid of Lucky, Pozzo finally answers:

En effet. Mais au lieu de le chasser, comme j'aurais pu, je veux dire au lieu de le mettre tout simplement à la porte, coups de pied dans le cul, je l'emmane, telle est ma bonté, au marché de Saint-Sauveur, où je compte bien en tirer quelque chose. A vrai dire, chasser de tels êtres, ce n'est pas possible. Pour bien faire, il faudrait les tuer.80

78Ibid., p. 49.
79Ibid.
80Ibid., p. 51.
At this point, Lucky begins to cry. This is one of the only two personal responses that he manifests during the entire play, but it is sufficient to reveal his still existent sensitivity. His other reaction—that of kicking Estragon in the shins when he attempts to wipe the tears from his eyes—reveals his usually latent and repressed hostility.

 Abruptly Pozzo assumes the role of poet:

Pozzo: Il ne pleure plus. Vous l'avez remplacé en quelque sorte. (Rêveusement.) Les larmes du monde sont immuables. Pour chacun qui se met à pleurer, quelque part un autre s'arrête. Il en va de même du rire...Savez-vous qui m'a appris toutes ces belles choses? (Un temps. Dardant son doigt vers Lucky.) Lui...Sans lui je n'aurais jamais pensé, jamais senti, que des choses basses...La beauté, la grâce, la vérité de première classe, je m'en savais incapable...Il y aura bientôt soixante ans que ça dure...

Vladimir: Après en avoir sucé la substance vous le jetez comme un...(il cherche)...comme une peau de banane...

At this moment the protective walls of inauthenticity begin to crumble and the rationalization is of no avail. Pozzo can no longer tolerate seeing what he has made of Lucky: "Je n'en peux plus...plus supporter...ce qu'il fait...pouvez pas savoir...c'est affreux...faut qu'il s'en aille...(Il brandit les bras)...je deviens fou... (Il s'effondre, la tête dans les bras.) Je n'en peux plus...peux plus..."82

Pozzo appears to be on the point of turning from inauthentic to authentic relating, but the habit of role playing is too deeply engrained. Almost immediately he regains control:

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81Ibid., pp. 52-54.
82Ibid., p. 54.
Messieurs, je ne sais pas ce qui m'est arrivé. Je vous demande pardon. Oubliez tout ça. (De plus en plus maître de lui.) Je ne sais plus très bien ce que j'ai dit, mais vous pouvez être sûrs qu'il n'y avait pas un mot de vrai là-dedans. (Se redresse, se frappe la poitrine.) Est-ce que j'ai l'air d'un homme qu'on fait souffrir moi? Voyons! (Il fouille dans ses poches.) Qu'est-ce que j'ai fait de ma pipe?\footnotemark[3]

No one is fooled by this quick repairing of the facade, not even Vladimir and Estragon, whose own ability to stand-in authentically is limited:

Vladimir: On se croirait au spectacle.

Estragon: Au cirque.

Vladimir: Au music-hall.\footnotemark[4]

Before he leaves, Pozzo again plays the role of poet, putting meaningless, "poetic" words together in an attempt to describe the coming of night and in one final, magnanimous gesture, in his role of philanthropist, asks what he can do for "ces braves gens qui sont en train de s'ennuyer?"\footnotemark[5] He uses his convenient trick of not hearing when Estragon replies that "un louis" would be welcomed, and calls upon Lucky to dance and think for them. After Lucky's dance, Pozzo brags: "Autrefois, il dansait la farandole, l'almée, le brande, la gigue, le fandango et même le hornpipe. Il bondissait. Mais il ne fait plus que ça. Savez-vous comment il l'appella?..."

\footnotetext[3]{Ibid., pp. 55-56.}
\footnotetext[4]{Ibid., p. 56.}
\footnotetext[5]{Ibid., p. 63.}
La danse du filet. Il se croit emprêté dans un filet."86

At the command "Pense, porc," Lucky begins his mechanical oration to which Vladimir and Estragon listen with attention, then with protest, and ultimately with violence, while Pozzo's disgust turns to suffering and finally to agony. In order to stop him, they grab his hat, and in the events that follow the sadist-masochist relationship is crystallized:

Pozzo: Donnez-moi ça! (Il arrache le chapeau des mains de Vladimir, le jette par terre, saute dessus.) Comme ça il ne pensera plus!

Vladimir: Mais va-t-il pouvoir s'orienter?

Pozzo: C'est moi qui l'orienterai.87

In Fin de partie, Beckett works with a dual theme: sadism and masochism as an inauthentic escape mechanism, and finitude from which no man escapes—"La fin est dans le commencement..."88 As the scene opens, two garbage cans covered by a sheet, Hamm in his wheelchair likewise covered, and Clov's stiff, unsteady walk attest to the proximity of death. The feeling is further accentuated by Clov's opening line: "Fini, c'est fini, ça va finir, ça va peut-être finir."89 The remainder of this same speech establishes the other theme—that of his dominance by Hamm:

86 Ibid., pp. 65-66.
87 Ibid., p. 75.
88 Ibid., p. 91.
89 Beckett, Fin de partie, p. 15.
Les grains s'ajoutent aux grains, un à un, et un jour, soudain, c'est un tas, un petit tas, l'impossible tas. On ne peut plus me punir. Je m'en vais dans ma cuisine, trois mètres sur trois mètres sur trois mètres, attendre qu'il me siffle. Ce sont de jolies dimensions, je m'appuierai à la table, je regarderai le mur, en attendant qu'il me sifle.90

As with all of his characters, Beckett has Hamm, in his opening lines, declare his identity. He is the sadist who by his very nature is a role-player: "À moi. (Un temps.) De jouer."91

He is furthermore so completely egocentric that he has contrived a one-room universe in which he rules supreme over his adopted son, Clov, his mother, Nell, and his father, Nagg. Hamm's egocentricity manifests itself on the physical level in his demanding that he always be seated at the exact center of the room. He even wants his toy dog to be placed before him as if it were imploring him. On the psychological level it expresses itself in his belief that he is unique from all mankind and that because of his uniqueness he need feel no compassion for the suffering of others: "Peut-il y avoir misère plus...plus haute que la mienne? Sans doute. Autrefois. Mais aujourd'hui? (Un temps.) Oh je veux bien qu'ils souffrent autant que de tels êtres peuvent souffrir."92

Like Pozzo of Act II, Hamm is blind. It appears that in both Hamm and Pozzo, Beckett uses physical blindness as a symbol for a

90Ibid., pp. 15-16.
91Ibid., p. 16.
92Ibid., p. 17.
corresponding psychic blindness, for neither is able to perceive realistically himself or others. Hamm is also crippled. His physical paralysis is but a material manifestation of his emotional state which has been very well described by Dr. L. J. Saul: "The person who shows exaggerated egotism, need for power, and above all, hostility is an emotional cripple..."93

Both Hamm and Clov are so neurotically dependent on one another that each has lost the ability to reach for the freedom that they both long for and fear:

Hamm: Seul, je m'embarquerai seul! Prépare-moi ce radeau immédiatement. Demain je serai loin.

Clov (se précipitant vers la parti): Je m'y mets tout de suite.

Hamm: Attend! (Clov s'arrête.) Tu crois qu'il y aura des squales?94

Needless to say, Hamm does not set out alone, nor is Clov able to do so either:

Clov: Vous voulez donc tous que je vous quitte?

Hamm: Bien sûr.

Clov: Alors je vous quitterai.

Hamm: Tu ne peux pas nous quitter.

Clov: Alors je ne vous quitterai pas.95

Hamm and Clov are partially conscious of the fact that they have lost their identity as individuals. Hamm, in particular, realizes

93Saul, op. cit., p. 44.
94Beckett, Fin de partie, p. 52.
95Ibid., p. 55.
that he has never really been fully present in reality: "Je n'ai jamais été là...Je n'ai jamais été là...Absent toujours. Tout s'est fait sans moi. Je ne sais pas ce qui s'est passé."96

The result of this lack of presence is that their life is meaningless and purposeless. Hamm keeps searching for some significance to their lives, but Clov's ability to see reality more objectively prevents this additional self-deception:

Hamm: On n'est pas en train de...de...signifier quelque chose?

Clov: Signifier? Nous, signifier! (Rire bref.) Ah elle est bonne.97

Clov also longs to have a purpose in life, but when he asks his existential question, "A quoi est-ce que je sers?"98 Hamm has a ready answer, "A me donner la réplique."99

Psychologists maintain that unlived life is the basic cause of hostility. Because the sadist-masochist relationship causes a thwarting and a distorting of one's potentialities for living, it is natural that such a relationship fosters both hostility and destructive tendencies which are usually felt most intensely by the one being subjected. Hamm is aware of Clov's hostility and,

96 Ibid., pp. 97-98.
97 Ibid., p. 49.
98 Ibid., p. 79.
99 Ibid., p. 80.
fearing that his hatred will express itself in direct action, will not allow Clov to stand behind him: "Ne restez pas là, tu me fais peur." 100

Hamm, like Clov, is aware that death is near: "Assez, il est temps que cela finisse, dans le refuge aussi. Et cependant j'hésite encore à...à finir." 101 It is very probable that "cela" refers not only to his physical death which would end all of his sufferings but also to his inauthenticity. But Hamm lacks the courage to face either the reality of life or the reality of death. Therefore, his sterile withdrawal must be perpetuated. This state of existence can be sustained only if everything is rigidly controlled. No unexpected factors can be allowed to interfere with the fixed routine. When Clov discovers a flea and later a rat, they must be exterminated, for as Hamm expresses it: "...à partir de là l'humanité pourrait se reconstituer!" 102

Their conversation reflects the importance of habit in their lives:

Hamm: Quelle heure est-il?
Clov: La même que d'habitude. 103

100 Ibid., pp. 43, 48, and 88.
101 Ibid., p. 17.
102 Ibid., p. 50.
103 Ibid., p. 18.
Hamm: Quel temps fait-il?
Clov: Le même que d'habitude. 104

Hamm: Alors, il n'y a pas de raison pour que ça change.
Clov: Toute la vie les mêmes questions, les mêmes réponses. 105

Hamm: C'est l'heure de mon histoire. 106

Hamm: Ce n'est pas l'heure de mon calmant? 107

Clov: Tu m'as posé ces questions des millions des fois.
Hamm: J'aime les vieilles questions. Ah les vieilles questions, les vieilles réponses, il n'y a que ça! 108

Clov, with his psychological need to submit, is just as dependent upon an ordered existence as is Hamm, with his need to dominate. Unlike Lucky, who has been totally consumed by Pozzo, Clov continues to maintain an almost imperceptible degree of independence, which manifests itself upon occasions by his failure to respond immediately to Hamm's commands. Physically unable to whip Clov into line, as Pozzo would Lucky, Hamm resorts to threats which will have to be

104 Ibid., p. 43.
105 Ibid., p. 19.
106 Ibid., p. 67.
107 Ibid., pp. 21, 52, 67, and 93.
108 Ibid., p. 56.
executed by Clov himself, since he (Hamm), being both blind and paralyzed, is unable to do anything:

Hamm: Je ne te donnerai plus rien à manger.

Clov: Alors nous mourrons.

Hamm: Je te donnerai juste assez pour t'empêcher de mourir. Tu auras tout le temps faim.

Clov: Alors nous ne mourrons pas. (Un temps.) Je vais chercher le drap.

Hamm: Pas la peine. (Clov s'arrête.) Je te donnerai un biscuit par jour. (Un temps.) Un biscuit et demi. (Un temps.) Pourquoi restes-tu avec moi?

Clov: Pourquoi me gardes-tu? 109

Although habit is essential to the continued existence of the world that they have created for themselves, habit is also responsible for the despair that they feel because of their spiritual barrenness:

Hamm: Amène-moi sous la fenêtre. Je veux sentir la lumière sur mon visage. (Clov fait avancer le fauteuil.) Tu te rappelles, au début, quand tu me faisais faire ma promenade, comme tu t'y prenais mal? Tu appuyais trop haut. A chaque pas tu manquais de me verser! He hé, on s'est bien amusés tous les deux, bien amusés! (Morne.) Puis on a pris l'habitude. 110

Despite their psychological dependence upon one another, there is no affection between Hamm and Clov:

Hamm: Embrasse-moi. Tu ne veux pas m'embrasser?

Clov: Non.

109 Ibid., p. 20.
110 Ibid., p. 85.
Hamm: Sur le front.

Clov: Je ne veux t'embrasser nulle part.

Hamm: Donne-moi la main au moins. Tu ne veux pas me donner la main?

Clov: Je ne veux pas te toucher.\textsuperscript{111}

It appears that Hamm has never been loved by anyone nor loved anyone, except a "fictitious" friend, described later, who sounds very much like Hamm himself. He has rejected his parents, who are dying in their garbage cans. Whenever Hamm chooses not to be bothered with their senile chatter, he has Clov fasten the tops down. When Hamm was an infant and while Nagg and Nell were still in control, they used much the same technique, according to Nagg:

Qui appelais-tu, quand tu étais tout petit et avais peur, dans la nuit? Ta mère? Non. Moi. On te laissait crier. Puis on t'éloigna pour pouvoir dormir. Je dormais, j'étais comme un roi, et tu m'as fait réveiller pour que je t'écoute. Ce n'était pas indispensable, tu n'avais pas vraiment besoin que je t'écoute. D'ailleurs je ne t'ai pas écouté.\textsuperscript{112}

Hamm himself has never shown any compassion for the needs of others. Clov reminds him of his cruelty not only to him as a child but to la Mère Pegg also: Quand la Mère Pegg te demandait de l'huile pour sa lampe et que tu l'envoyais pâtre, à ce moment-là tu savais ce qui se passait, non? Tu sais de quoi elle est morte, la Mère Pegg? D'obscurité.\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{111}Ibid., pp. 89-90.

\textsuperscript{112}Ibid., p. 77.

\textsuperscript{113}Ibid., pp. 98-99.
The only signs of affection in *Fin de partie* pass between Nagg and Nell, whose relationship is a greatly reduced version of that of Vladimir and Estragon. They attempt to comfort each other as best they can, sharing their biscuits and hard candy, amusing each other with jokes and memories, asking about each other's welfare, and, like the two bums, they have contemplated suicide together.

As has been pointed out earlier, all of Beckett's characters have their moments of lucidity, in which they glimpse their inauthenticity. But unfortunately they are either unwilling or unable to shake off the shackles of habit that bind them to their self-deception. Both Clov and Hamm have these moments of insight when they realize that their vision of the world is distorted:

Clov: Personne au monde n'a jamais pensé aussi tortu que nous.

Hamm: On fait ce qu'on peut.

Clov: On a tort.  

Although he is unable to function outside his neurotic submission pattern, Clov is none the less conscious of his masochism. All of his life he has wanted to leave Hamm and cannot understand why he remains: "Il y a une chose qui me dépasse. Pourquoi je t'obéis toujours."  

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115 Ibid., p. 99.
In spite of his self-deception, which goes even deeper than that of Clov, Hamm is able to wonder about the reality of his relation to the world:

Hamm: As-tu jamais pensé à une chose?

Clov: Jamais.

Hamm: Qu'ici nous sommes dans un trou. Mais derrière la montagne? Hein? Si c'était encore vert?\footnote{Ibid., p. 56.}

Later in parable form Hamm describes himself and his distorted view of reality:

\begin{quote}
J'ai connu un fou qui croyait que la fin du monde était arrivée. Il faisait de la peinture. Je l'aimais bien. J'allais le voir, à l'asile. Je le prenais par la main et le trainais devant la fenêtre. Mais regarde! Lâ! Tout ce blé qui lève! Et là! Regarde! Les voiles des sardiniers! Toute cette beauté! Il m'arrachait sa main et retournait dans son coin. Épouvanté. Il n'avait vu que des cendres. Lui seul avait été épargné. (Un temps.) Oublié. (Un temps.) Il paraît que le cas n'est...n'était pas si...si rare.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 62-63.}
\end{quote}

Although their world is desolate and becoming more and more barren as things apparently cease to exist ("Il n'y a plus de bouillie,";\footnote{Ibid., p. 23.} "Il n'y a plus de nature;"\footnote{Ibid., p. 25.} "Il n'y a plus de roues de bicyclette;"\footnote{Ibid., p. 22.} "Il n'y a plus de marée;"\footnote{Ibid., p. 83.} "Il n'y a plus de plaids;"\footnote{Ibid., p. 89.} "Il..."
n'y a plus de calmant;"^{123} "Il n'y a plus de cercueils."^{124} the reality of life nevertheless continues: A flea is discovered, a rat appears, and, most important of all, a child is seen from the window. This last bit of reality is like a wedge driven into the growing fissure in his inauthentic world. At last Hamm must face what he has become:

Hamm: C'est fini, Clov, nous avons fini. Je n'ai plus besoin de toi.

Clov: Je te quitte.^{125}

Alone, Hamm begins his final speech as he did his first: "A moi. (Un temps.) De jouer. (Un temps. Avec lassitude.) Vieille fin de partie perdue, finir de perdre."^{126}

The basic theme of La Dernière bande is the same as that of En attendant Godot: One spends one's life looking to an outside force or event to give meaning to existence. In En attendant Godot, life is directed towards a future event—the arrival of Godot; in La Dernière bande life is oriented around a past event—a love affair. Beyond these events life is meaningless.

In character structure Krapp is related to Hamm, for he has used both physical and psychial withdrawal as an escape mechanism. Like Hamm, he sits at the center of his little world, and from

^{123}Ibid., p. 94.

^{124}Ibid., p. 102.

^{125}Ibid., pp. 106-107.

^{126}Ibid., p. 110.
time to time gets up from his table in order to move about; usually in the direction of his wine bottle. On one of his tapes Krapp records: "Le nouvel éclairage au-dessus de ma table est une grande amélioration. Avec toute cette obscurité autour de moi je me sens moins seul. (Pause.) En un sens. (Pause.) J'aime me lever pour y aller faire un tour, puis revenir ici... (il hésite)... moi." 127

Thus Krapp sits at his table playing and replaying his tapes which he has made each year on his birthday from notes jotted down on an envelope; and as he plays them, we see the succession of individuals that have comprised Krapp through the years. Krapp, himself, is frequently surprised at the changes that have taken place. On the tape that he made at thirty-nine, he mentions that he has been listening to a recording made previously:

Viens juste d'écouter une vieille année, des passages au hasard. Je n'ai pas vérifié dans le livre, mais ça doit nous ramener à dix ou douze ans en arrière—au moins. Je crois qu'à ce moment-là je vivais encore avec Bianca dans Kedar Street, enfin par à-coups. Bien sorti de ça, ah foutre oui! C'était sans espoir. Pas grand chose sur elle, à part un hommage à ses yeux. Enthousiaste. Je les ai revus tout à coup. Incomparables!...Difficile de croire que j'aie jamais été ce petit crétin. Cette voix! Jésus! Et ces aspirations! (Bref rire de Krapp seul.) Plans pour une vie sexuelle moins...absorbante. 128

By means of a tape recording, Beckett simultaneously projects Krapp at three different periods of his life. As a young man, he was not yet withdrawn into his isolated, loveless world, and he

128 Ibid., pp. 16-17.
was still somewhat idealistic. At thirty-nine, however, the optimism has yielded to occasional cynicism; and the only thing that remains of the love affair with Bianca is a later reference to a girl in a faded green coat on a train station platform. Krapp at thirty-nine laughs at the aspirations and resolutions of the young man he had been. And the present Krapp, sitting at his table, joins in the mocking laughter on the tape.

Krapp's psychic withdrawal has been directly responsible for the unfeeling, divided personality that he has become. Erich Fromm has pointed out man's need to be related to the world both physically and psychologically:

The physiologically conditioned needs are not the only imperative part of man's nature. There is another part just as compelling, one which is not rooted in bodily processes but in the very essence of the human mode and practice of life; the need to be related to the world outside oneself, the need to avoid aloneness. To feel completely alone and isolated leads to mental disintegration just as physical starvation leads to death.129

It is Krapp's sixty-ninth birthday, and having listened to the tape he made at thirty-nine,130 he picks up his microphone and begins recording:

Viens d'écouter ce pauvre crétin pour qui je me prenais il y a trente ans, difficile de croire que j'ai jamais été con à ce point-là. Ça au moins c'est fini, Dieu merci. (Pause.) Les yeux qu'elle avait! (Révasse, se rend compte qu'il est en train d'enregistrer le silence, débranche l'appareil, révase.)131

129 Fromm, op. cit., pp. 33-34.

130 Beckett takes liberties with the fact that tape recorders date from the post World War II period.

131 Beckett, La Dernière bande, p. 27.
Thus Krapp again rejects what he was in the past, yet he must live in the past for there lies the only meaningful event of his life—this love affair that he alludes to on all of his tapes. As has been pointed out earlier, in order for a person to be authentic, he must know and accept his past as it has formed his present, and must also be conscious of the potentialities of the future in relation to what he is and has been. Instead of living in this three-fold temporal domain, Krapp has retreated from the present and the future to live in the past, but he is not even able fully to accept his past: He either overtly rejects parts of it by means of scorn and derision, deceiving himself into believing that he is "bigger" than he once was; or he suppresses parts of his past by skipping over painful parts of the recording.

It is important to note at this point that Krapp's tape recorder is a physical symbolization of memory. In his essay Proust, Beckett describes memory as most men know it: "The man with a good memory does not remember anything because he does not forget anything. His memory is uniform, a creature of routine, at once a condition and function of his impeccable habit, an instrument of discovery."\(^{132}\) Krapp's tapes serve exactly this function for him—they are a permanent reference to his past.

Just as Krapp is able to control what parts of his recordings he will hear, so is man able to control, to a large degree, what will be remembered. As Jacobsen and Mueller have pointed out:

\(^{132}\)Beckett, Proust, p. 17.
"In most men memory is related to habit, is indeed to a great extent controlled by it. Most men remember essentially what has been filtered through the dark glass of habit; as a rule they remember what they wish to remember, what is comforting to remember."  

One of the most revealing things about Krapp at sixty-nine is his refusal to listen to a significant part of the recording that he made at thirty-nine:

Being unwilling to listen to this "vision," this "miracle," this moment of authentic self-discovery, Krapp winds the tape forward, stopping arbitrarily:

...mon visage dans ses seins et ma main sur elle. Nous restions là, couchés, sans remuer. Mais, sous nous, tout remuait, et nous remuait, doucement, de haut en bas, et d'un côté à l'autre. Passé minuit. Jamais entendu pareil silence. La terre pourrait être inhabituée.\textsuperscript{135}

This is the passage that Krapp has been waiting for since earlier in the evening when he consulted his register for the resume of his tape: "Maman en paix enfin...La balle noire...La

\textsuperscript{133}Jacobsen and Mueller, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 63.

\textsuperscript{134}Beckett, \textit{La Dernière bande}, pp. 22-23.

\textsuperscript{135}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 24.
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One of the most revealing things about Krapp at sixty-nine is his refusal to listen to a significant part of the recording that he made at thirty-nine:

Spirituellement une année on ne peut plus noire et pauvre jusqu'à cette mémorable nuit de mars, au bout de la jetée, dans la rafale, je n'oublierai jamais, où tout m'est devenu clair. La vision, enfin. Voilà j'imagine ce que j'ai surtout à enregistrer ce soir, en prévision du jour où mon labou r sera...(il hésite)...éteint et où je naurai peut-être plus aucun souvenir, ni bon ni mauvais, du miracle qui...(il hésite)...du feu qui l'avait embrasé. Ce que soudain j'ai vu alors, c'était que la croyance qui avait guidé toute ma vie, à savoir...134

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134Beckett, La Dernière bande, pp. 22-23.
135Ibid., p. 24.
boniche brune...Légère amélioration de l'état intestinal...Mémo-
ramble équinoxe...Adieu à l'amour." He rewinds the tape:

...le haut du lac, avec la barque, nage près de la rive,
puis pousse la barque au large et laisse aller à la dérive.
Elle était couchée sur les planches du fond, les mains
sous la tête et les yeux fermés...J'ai dit encore que
gâ me semblait sans espoir et pas la peine de continuer
et elle a fait oui sans ouvrir les yeux. Je lui ai de-
mandé de me regarder et après quelques instants--après
quelques instants elle l'a fait, mais les yeux comme des
fentes à cause du soleil. Je me suis penché sur elle
pour qu'ils soient dans l'ombre et ils se sont ouverts.
M'ont laissé entrer. Nous dérivions parmi les roseaux
et la barque s'est coinçée...Je me suis coulé sur elle,
mon visage dans ses seins et ma main sur elle...

Krapp listens to the end, then takes from his pocket an envelope
on which he has jotted down some notes concerning his sixty-ninth
year and begins to record:

Dégusté le mot bobine. (Avec déflection.) Bobine!
L'instant le plus heureux des derniers cinq cent mille
...Me suis trainé dehors une fois ou deux avant que l'été
se glace. Resté assis à grelotter dans le parc, noyé
dans les rêves et brulant d'envir. Personne...Me suis
crévé les yeux à lire Effie encore...Fanny est venue une
ou deux fois. Vieille ombre de putain squelette que...
Été aux Vêpres une fois...Me suis demandé quelque fois
dans la nuit si un dernier effort ne serait peut-être
...Assez! Vide ta bouteille...

It is evident from this last recording that the habits dating
back many years have become more and more rigid: the withdrawal,
the alcoholism, the whoring. But there is a significant difference
between the first two recordings and the last one. The first two

137 Ibid., pp. 24-25.
138 Ibid., pp. 28-30.
reveal a Krapp who is capable of loving another person. It is never clear whether the girl in the boat was Bianca or another. The fact that in telling of both affairs Krapp praises her eyes suggests that it may have been Bianca, but one cannot be sure. In reality, the identity of the girl is unimportant. What is important is Krapp's reaction to her. In this one authentic experience Krapp was at one with himself and with her. The inner peace that he felt seemed to be reflected in the silence of the earth. And it seemed as if the earth were uninhabited and as if he were alone. The solitude that he felt at that moment was not the inauthentic aloneness of withdrawal that later came to be his mode of life; but the solitude he expresses is that felt by the authentic existent, who stands as an individual separate from and yet in need of others. The last recording reveals Krapp as being devoid of feeling, except for his sentimental attachment to the memory of his last love affair. His authenticity lies in the past and inauthenticity has become his mode of life.

Abruptly Krapp interrupts the recording of his sixty-ninth year, throws that tape away, replaces the one played earlier, and winds it forward to "the" passage which he plays again from beginning to end.

Je me suis coulé sur elle, mon visage dans ses seins et ma main sur elle. Nous restions là, couchés, sans remuer. Mais, sous nous, tout remuait, et nous remuait, doucement, de haut en bas, et d'un côté à l'autre. Passe
As the tape ends Krapp sits motionless, staring into space.

As we have seen, Beckett's plays contain a kaleidoscope of impostors caught up in the isolation and boredom of inauthentic existence. Beckett in no way suggests that man is destined to such inauthenticity. In fact, moments of authenticity appear and reappear in his works. However, his characters never are able to come into possession of their true Selves. Heidegger himself describes the difficulty of achieving authenticity as a "fantastic requirement."  

Beckett's characters, in general, reveal man as aware of and yet failing to live up to this fantastic requirement.

In describing Beckett's representation of most men's temporal experience, Pierre Macabru writes: "Samuel Beckett prend ainsi l'exacte mesure de la dégradation du corps et de l'esprit: cet épuisement qui gagne sournoisement, ce délabrement que l'on ne sent point venir, cette sape des forces vives. Travail lent, régulier, secret, et dont les attaques demeurent obscures: la marche quotidienne de la mort et le dépouillement de la chair."  

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140 Ibid., pp. 32-33.
141 Langan, op. cit., p. 34.
Beckett's works are not only an expression of his belief that man is free to relate to reality authentically or inauthentically; they are actual quests for truth, for self-discovery. Just as some of his characters appear to wander in an undefined, suspended state, one senses likewise that Beckett himself is moving out into unexplored regions, searching out the still undiscovered possibilities of literature. It is this ability to move into yet uncharted areas that places him in the forefront of the avant-garde movement.
CHAPTER IV

THE INAUTHENTICITY OF IONESCO'S GUIGNOL

Like Beckett, Ionesco conceives of the theater as an artistic medium for revealing a reality more fundamental to man than exterior reality. Man is more than a product of an age, a society, or an ideology. In describing the essence of his theater Ionesco writes: "Mes pièces n'ont jamais voulu dire autre chose. Mais simplement que l'homme n'est pas seulement un animal social prisonnier de son temps, mais qu'il est aussi, et surtout, dans tous les temps, différent historiquement, dans ses accidents, identique dans son essence."¹ Man is a finite being, who is free to choose and is therefore responsible for the creation of his essence. He moves in a world of things to which he gives meaning and which he, in turn, needs as a means of self-discovery. He experiences the agony of the existential question: "Do I exist?" and the anguish of his finitude. Ionesco's concept of man is in agreement with existential thought. As he phrases it:

Il me semble que la solitude et surtout l'angoisse caractérisent la condition fondamentale de l'homme...
Et j'ai dit, plusieurs fois, que c'est dans notre solitude fondamentale que nous nous retrouvons et que plus je suis seul, plus je suis en communion avec

Society by its very nature, tends to divide mankind, to classify man according to profession, class, race, nation, religion, to impoverish him spiritually, and to encourage inauthenticity and role-playing. The man who does not accept himself as an individual, separate from, yet in communion with, other individuals, seeks to identify himself in terms of society. This social view of man is dangerous in that it encourages self-deception and superficiality, as Ionesco points out: "Si je peux m'exprimer en paradoxe, je dirai que la société véritable, l'authe nctique communauté humaine, est extra-sociale,—c'est une société plus vaste et plus profonde, celle qui se révèle par des angoisses communes, des désirs, des nostalgies secrètes qui sont le fait de tous."  

The man who accepts only his social self is basically irresponsible, for he can allow inhuman events to go on all around him and in no way feel personally responsible, because they lie outside of the area of duty delineated by his role. The one who accepts himself as a person, however, sees the whole world as his area of responsibility.

In speaking of Beckett, Ionesco has pointed out their mutual conception of the reality of man:

...chez lui, c'est la totalité de la condition qui entre en jeu et non pas l'homme de telle ou telle société, ni l'homme vu à travers et aliéné par une

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2Ibid.
3Ibid., p. 73.
certaine idéologie qui, à la fois, simplifie et ampute la réalité historique et métaphysique, la réalité authentique dans laquelle l'homme est intégré. Que l'on soit pessimiste ou optimiste, c'est un autre problème. L'important, la vérité, c'est que l'homme apparaîsse dans ses dimensions, ses profondeurs multiples. Chez Beckett, c'est le problème des fins dernières de l'homme qui se pose...  

Ionesco recognizes the fact that the theater cannot be completely detached from its age, but he also realizes that art is always, by its very nature, somewhat independent of time, incorporating in itself certain universal characteristics that are not bound by time. As he expresses it: "Chaque temps demande l'introduction d'un 'hors temps' incommunicable, dans le temps, dans le communicable. Tout est moment circonscrit dans l'histoire, bien sûr. Mais dans chaque moment est toute l'histoire: toute histoire est valable lors qu'elle est transhistorique; dans l'individuel on lit l'universel."  

Ionesco has aligned himself with the classical tradition of expressing the universal through the individual. He has expressed his orientation as follows: "...je suis pour le classicisme: c'est cela, l'avant-garde. Découverte d'archétypes oubliés, immuables, renouvelés dans l'expression: tout vrai créateur est classique...Le petit-bourgeois est celui qui a oublié l'archétype pour se perdre dans le stéréotype. L'archétype est toujours jeune."  

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4Ibid., p. 114.
5Ibid., p. 9.
6Ibid., p. 110.
Ionesco, like Beckett, is aware that habit prevents man from seeing behind the superficial reality of everyday affairs, that habit and routine are devices used unconsciously by man to limit his perception; and, like Beckett, Ionesco conceives of the theater as a means of breaking down one's habitual perception of reality so that the "fascination of reality" can re-enter one's life:

Pour s'arracher au quotidien à l'habitude, à la paresse mentale qui nous cache l'étrangeté du monde, il faut recevoir comme un véritable coup de matraque. Sans une virginité nouvelle de l'esprit, sans une nouvelle prise de conscience, purifiée, de la réalité existentielle, il n'y a pas de théâtre, il n'y a pas d'art non plus; il faut réaliser une sorte de dislocation du réel, qui doit précéder sa réintégration.

Audiences conditioned to respond to "realistic" theater, where the principle of cause and effect is clearly seen, have had great difficulty in understanding Ionesco's use of the fantastic and the absurd. He has been accused of being surrealist and incomprehensible. In answering these criticisms, he has argued:

Bien sûr, on dira que tout le monde ne se représente pas la réalité de la même façon que moi. Il y aura certainement des gens qui penseront que ma vision de la réalité est en fait irrationnelle ou surréaliste. Je dois dire que, personnellement, je refuse cette sorte de réalisme qui n'est qu'un sous-réalisme qui n'a que deux dimensions sur trois, quatre ou n-dimensions. Ce réalisme aliène l'homme de sa profondeur qui est la troisième dimension indispensable à partir de laquelle l'homme commence à être vrai. Quelle valeur de vérité peut-il y avoir dans cette sorte de réalisme qui oublie de reconnaître les réalités humaines les

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7 Beckett, Proust, p. 11.
8 Ionesco, Notes et contres-notes, p. 13.
plus profondes: l'amour, la mort, l'étonnement, la souffrance et les rêves de nos coeurs extra-sociaux.  

Ionesco has repeatedly expressed his belief that the inner world of man is logical, that it is the exterior world that is absurd and incomprehensible, and that, if the truth is to come from man, it must come from within:

...on semble ne plus se rendre compte que le monde que l'on invente, ne peut pas être faux. Il ne peut être faux que si je veux faire du vrai, si j'imite le vrai, et par là en faisant du faux vrai. J'ai la conscience d'être vrai lorsque j'invente et que j'imagine. Rien de plus évident et "logique" que la construction imaginative. Je pourrais même dire que c'est le monde qui me semble irrationnel, qui se fait irrationnel, et échappe à ma raison...C'est en soi-même que l'on retrouve les figures et les schèmes permanents, profonds, de la théâtralité.

In order to comprehend and enjoy Ionesco, one must be able, according to Robert Abirached, to: "...entrer dans le jeu et accepter qu'une comédie puisse se dérouler selon une autre logique que la cartésienne."  

One must be child-like in one's willingness to incorporate the fantastic with the real, to see the reality behind the enchantment.

The realization that the world is absurd is not new, but it is a painful realization and one that man seeks to avoid, preferring to conceive of his world as an ordered, rational one in which every effect has a cause. But such a view according to Existential

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9Ibid., pp. 174-175.

10Ibid., pp. 32-33.

philosophy is unrealistic and leads to inauthenticity. Ionesco
and all of the other avant-garde writers attempt to break through
our habitual perception of the world in order to reveal to us
its chaotic, nightmarish quality:

Maintenant, si vous me demandez mon avis personnel
sur ce "cauchemar réel" je vous avoue... que j'ai bien
le sentiment que la vie est cauchemardesque, qu'elle
est pénible, insupportable comme un mauvais rêve.
Regardez autour de vous: guerres, catastrophes et
désastres, haines et persécutions, confusion, la mort
qui nous guette, on parle et on ne se comprend pas,
nous nous débattons, comme nous pouvons, dans un monde
qui semble atteint d'une grande fièvre: l'homme n'est-il
pas, comme on l'a dit, l'animal malade, n'avons-nous
pas l'impression que le réel est faux, qu'il ne
nous convient pas? que ce monde n'est pas notre vrai
monde? Autrement, non seulement nous ne voudrions rien
changer mais nous n'aurions même pas conscience
de son imperfection, du mal.12

Indeed, man in general is unwilling to see the chaos, the inhumanity
and the cruelty of his world; or if he sees it at all, he main-
tains psychic detachment from it, denying any personal responsi-
bility by hiding behind his social function, which has precisely
classified him and has thereby clearly outlined for him his realm
of duty and responsibility. In all of Ionesco's theater, only
one character, Bérenger, relates to reality authentically—that
is to say, as a human being. In Tueur sans gages and Rhinocéros,
Bérenger, in contrast to all of the other characters, feels per-
sonally responsible to hunt down the killer and to oppose the mass
hysteria of rhinocerosity. In Le Roi se meurt, Bérenger attempts
to accept his finitude. In Le Piéton de l'air, at a moment when

12Ionesco, Notes et contre-notes, pp. 91-92.
he is feeling very intensely the "fascination of reality," Bérenger
redisCOVERS his ability to fly. From "on high" he looks down on
the world and sees the nightmare of reality. Bérenger's description
is similar to that of Ionesco:

\[ \text{J'ai vu des colonnes de guillotines marchant sans têtes... J'ai vu des milliers de gens que l'on fouettait et qui disaient: Bien fait pour nous, bien fait pour nous... J'ai vu les couteaux, j'ai vu des tombeaux... Ailleurs, la terre craque... Les montagnes s'effondrent, des océans de sang... de la boue, du sang, de la boue...} \]

Having rejected "realistic" theater, Ionesco seeks to define
the kind of theater that he would like to create—a theater that
is highly visual, primitive, and infantine\(^1\)\(^4\)—a theater in which
"il est donc non seulement permis, mais recommandé de faire jouer
les accessoires, faire vivre les objets, animer le décors, con-
crétiser les symboles.\(^1\)^\(^5\) He describes a theater "non pas sym-
boliste, mais mythique; ayant sa source dans nos angoisses éter-
nelles; un théâtre où l'invisible devient visible...\(^1\)\(^6\) In all
the avant-garde theater, the invisible becoming visible is a tech-
nique exclusive to Ionesco. It is perhaps the most distinctive
feature of his theater. A couple's dead love and sexual incompati-
bility take the form of a growing corpse (Amédee), conforming to


\(^{14}\)Ionesco, \textit{Notes et contre-notes}, p. 111.

\(^{15}\)Ibid., p. 16.

\(^{16}\)Ibid., p. 206.
the demands of family and society to procreate is represented by a prolific laying of eggs (*L'Avenir est dans les oeufs*), man's inability or unwillingness to communicate assumes the shape of a deaf and dumb orator (*Les Chaises*), man's feeling of having been overcome by the object-world is expressed by a proliferation of furniture (*Le Nouveau locataire*), automaton-like conformity is made visible by men's turning into rhinoceroses (*Rhinocéros*), and man's euphoria is seen in the flying of Amédée (*Amédée ou Comment s'en débarrasser*) and Berenger (*Le Pion de l'air*).

In an article "Depuis dix ans je me bats contre l'esprit bourgeois et les tyrannies politiques," Ionesco amplifies his concept of theater:

...je veux, moi, sur un plateau faire pousser des champignons énormes, faire grandir des cadavres,...n'avoir autres limites que celles de mon imagination. Et puisque l'imagination a naturellement des lois, son fonctionnement s'inscrit dans l'exploration d'une réalité plus profonde que la réalité réaliste...dont nous libérerà la réalité substantielle, l'imaginaire.

Ionesco's theater, like that of Georges Schéhadé, is poetic, for its main concern is the communication of states of being. According to Ionesco, the theater is dramatic, not epic: "Une pièce de théâtre est une construction, constituée d'une série d'états de conscience, ou de situations, qui s'intensifient, puis se nouent, soit pour se dénouer, soit pour finir dans un inextricable insoutenable."

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18 Ionesco, *Notes et contre-notes*, pp. 219-220.
It is a poetic representation of his own personal experience. On many occasions, Ionesco has maintained that it is in self-discovery that he becomes able to discover others, that in facing his own feelings he comes to understand the feelings of others. "Reussir à être soi-même, c'est là la véritable prise de conscience. Et c'est en étant tout à fait soi-même que l'on a des chances d'être aussi les autres."19 Ionesco, like Beckett, finds literature both a means of self-discovery and a means of communicating to others what has been discovered in himself:

Pour moi, le théâtre—le mien—est, le plus souvent, une confession; je ne fais que des aveux (incompréhensibles, pour des sourds, cela ne peut être qu'ainsi), car que puis-je faire d'autre? Je tâche de projeter sur scène un drame intérieur (incompréhensible à moi-même) me disant, toutefois, que le microcosme étant à l'image du macrocosme, il peut arriver que ce monde intérieur, déchiqueté, désarticulé, soit, en quelque sorte, le miroir ou le symbole des contradictions universelles.20

Ionesco's creative process is very much like that of Proust in his attempt to portray reality as he sees it—untouched by the principle of cause and effect. As he expresses his endeavor:

"...je tâche d'être témoin objectif dans ma subjectivité. Puisque j'écris pour le théâtre je me préoccupe seulement de personnifier, d'incarner un sens comique et tragique, à la fois, de la réalité."21

19Ibid., p. 131.
20Ibid., p. 136.
21Ibid., p. 131.
The comic wedded to the tragic is a universal feature of the avant-garde theater. It is a basic quality of reality; and the avant-garde is engaged in portraying that level of reality where the real merges with the unreal, the prosaic with the poetic, and the comic with the tragic. Ionesco uses the guignol, the fantoche (Ionesco himself used the latter term in describing the characters of La Cantatrice chauve\textsuperscript{22}) to express the co-existence of the comic with the tragic in much the same way that Beckett uses his clown-character. In expressing his concepts of the theater Ionesco makes clear his intentional use of the guignol: "Il fallait non pas cacher les ficelles, mais les rendre plus visible encore, délibérément évidentes, aller à fond dans le grotesque, la caricature..."\textsuperscript{23}

Ionesco has referred to some of his plays as drames comiques and farces tragiques because of their dual nature. In explaining his concept of the inter-relationship between comedy and tragedy, he has written:

\begin{quote}
J'ai tenté, dans Victimes du Devoir, de noyer le comique au tragique pour les réunir dans une synthèse théâtrale nouvelle. Mais ce n'est pas une véritable synthèse, car ces deux éléments ne se fondent pas, l'un dans l'autre, ils coexistent, se repoussent l'un l'autre en permanence; se mettent en relief l'un par l'autre; se critiquent, se nient mutuellement, pouvant constituer ainsi, grâce à cette opposition, un équilibre dynamique, une tension.\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., p. 161.
\textsuperscript{23}Ibid., p. 13.
\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., p. 14.
Because Ionesco is personally aware of the anguish (angoisse) that underlies the human condition and because the purpose of his theater is to communicate that state of being, it may appear paradoxical that his plays all take the external form of comedies. However, he reminds us that "on rit pour ne pas pleurer..." and it is clear, even in his funniest of comedies, that the tragic is indeed present, even if not felt by the characters themselves.

In speaking of Ionesco's guignol, a distinction must be made between the completely dehumanized characters, such as the Smiths, Martins, and Bobby Watsons of La Cantatrice chauve, the professor of La Lecon, the Jacques and the Roberts of Jacques ou la Soumission and L'Avenir est dans les oeufs, which this writer will refer to as Ionesco's comic guignols, and the more human, and consequently tragic, guignols of Les Chaises, Victimes du devoir, and Amédée ou Comment s'en débarrasser. In the former case, the characters have been completely drained of inner life, and like puppets they perform the mechanics of daily life. Unlike Beckett's clown, whose humanity is always evident in spite of his disguise, Ionesco's Smiths and Martins are as insensitive as wooden puppets. Ionesco analyzes the character structure of his guignols as follows:

Les Smith, les Martin ne savent plus parler, parce qu'ils ne savent plus penser, ils ne savent plus penser parce qu'ils ne savent plus s'émouvoir, n'ont plus de passions, ils ne savent plus être, ils peuvent "devenir" n'importe qui, n'importe quoi car, n'étant pas, ils ne sont que les autres, le monde de l'impersonnel, ils sont interchangeables: on peut mettre Martin à la place de Smith.

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25 Ibid., p. 98.
et vice versa, on ne s'en apercevra pas. Le personnage tragique ne change pas, il se brise; il est lui, il est reel. Les personnages comiques, ce sont les gens qui n'existent pas. 26

A study of Ionesco's theater from the perspective of character analysis reveals a two-fold division of his plays: one, the guignolades (a term which he applied to one of his minor plays, Le Tableau) and two, the Berenger plays. In describing how his plays should be acted, Ionesco clearly establishes their relationship to the guignol theater: "Les comédiens ont su trouver un style plus naturel et plus excessif à la fois, un jeu se tenant entre le personnage réaliste et la marionette..." 27 Robert Abirached, in an article previously cited, describes the characters of Les Chaises as follows: "Ces personnages ne sont pas tout à fait des hommes, et ils ne sont pas tout à fait des pantins..." 28

As we have already seen, the guignolades must be subdivided into those whose characters are essentially comic because of their dehumanization (like Jarry's Pere Ubu) and those whose characters are essentially tragic because of their capacity to feel both the joy and the anguish of life. Ionesco is aware that if man relinquishes his liberty, he suffers. It is possible that he be so out of touch with himself, so inner-divided, that he is unconscious of the cause of his suffering, as are his guignols comiques. It

26 Ibid., p. 160.
27 Ionesco, Notes et contre-notes, p. 224.
28 Abirached, op. cit., pp. 116-120.
is Ionesco's hope that art may be able to liberate man from his fixed patterns of responding. "Je me demande si l'art ne pourrait pas être cette libération, le réapprentissage d'une liberté d'esprit dont nous sommes désabitués, que nous avons oubliée, mais dont l'absence fait souffrir aussi bien ceux qui se croient libres sans l'être que ceux qui pensent ne pas l'être ou ne pas pouvoir l'être."  

Though vastly different in structure, both the guignolades and the Bérenger plays are based on Ionesco's view of reality, which he describes as follows:

Deux états de conscience fondamentaux sont à l'origine de toutes mes pièces: tantôt l'un, tantôt l'autre prédomine, tantôt ils s'entremêlent. Ces deux prises de conscience originelles sont celles de l'évanescence ou de la lourdeur; du vide et du trop de présence; de la transparence irréelle du monde et de son opacité; de la lumière et des ténèbres épissées.

In La Cantatrice chauve (1948), Jacques ou La Soumission (1950), L'Avenir est dans les œufs (1951), Le Nouveau locataire (1953), La Légion (1950) which this writer classifies as guignolades comiques are found the presence and intermingling of the states of being to which Ionesco has referred. In general the guignolades comiques portray the emptiness of inner life—the lack of being—and the over-presence of things that characterize the life of the petit bourgeois as Ionesco conceives of him: "...le petit bourgeois n'est pour moi que l'homme des slogans, ne pensant plus par lui-même,

29Ionesco, Notes et contre-notes, p. 63.
30Ibid., p. 140.
mais répétant les vérités toutes faites, et par cela mortes, que d'autres lui ont imposées. Bref, le petit bourgeois, c'est l'homme dirigé. 31

In psychological terms, Ionesco's petit bourgeois is the extreme authoritarian character, totally controlled by the "they" and totally unaware of his puppet-like nature. Into this category fall the Smiths, Martins, and Bobby Watsons of La Cantatrice Chauve, and the Jacques and Roberts of Jacques ou la Soumission and L'Avenir est dans les oeufs. There is a very intricate relationship between their lack of Being and their language (or prattle, as Heidegger would refer to it). Their inner void is paralleled by the emptiness of their words; yet the relationship between being and language does not stop here. Their lack of Being—their emptiness—demands the presence of something; thus the proliferation of words. Ionesco has expressed their inauthenticity by saying, "Derrière les clichés, l'homme se cache." 32 They can find no relief from the extreme boredom and stagnation that typify their existence. They try words, in vast quantities, but without success. In En Attendant Godot, Vladimir and Estragon find themselves engaged in the same inauthentic way of passing time:

Estragon: En attendant, essayons de converser sans nous exalter, puis que nous sommes incapable de nous taire.

Vladimir: C'est vrai, nous sommes intarissables.

31Ibid., p. 49.
32Ibid., p. 204.
Estragon: C'est pour ne pas penser.

Vladimir: Nous avons des excuses.

Estragon: C'est pour ne pas entendre.33

Unfortunately, unlike Estragon and Vladimir, the Smiths, Martins, Jacques, and Roberts are not conscious of what they are doing, or of what they have become.

Ionesco has often maintained that in writing a play he does not start with a fixed idea, but rather with a plurality of half conscious, half unconscious intentions, and that consequently the results surprise him. A good example is the creative process from which La Cantatrice chauve developed:

Il y a déjà quelques années, j'eus l'idée, un beau jour, de mettre, l'une à la suite de l'autre, les phrases les plus banales, faites des mots les plus vides de sens, des clichés les plus éculés que j'ai pu trouver dans mon propre vocabulaire, dans celui de mes amis ou, d'une manière plus réduite, dans les manuels de conversation étrangère.

Malheureuse initiative: envahi par la prolifération de cadavres de mots, abruti par les automatismes de la conversation, je faillis succomber au dégoût, à une tristesse innomable, à la dépression nerveuse, à une véritable asphyxie... Un jeune metteur en scène dans les mains duquel tomba, tout à fait par hasard, ce texte, considéra que c'était une oeuvre théâtrale et en fit un spectacle: nous lui donnâmes pour titre: La Cantatrice chauve et la pièce fit beaucoup rire les gens. J'en fus tout étonné, moi, qui avais cru écrire la "Tragédie du langage."34

The Bobby Watsons referred to in La Cantatrice chauve are paralleled in Jacques ou la Soumission and L'Avenir est dans les


34Ionesco, Notes et contre-notes, p. 65.
Oeufs by all of the Jacques—Jacques-père, Jacques-mère, Jacques-grand-père, Jacques-grand-mère, Jacqueline, and Jacques—and the Roberts—Roberte I, Roberte II, Robert-père, and Robert-mère—whose lack of identity makes them indistinguishable. Jacques, alone, at the beginning of the play has not yielded to the conformity that has destroyed the identity of the rest of his family—he refuses to pronounce the family creed: "J'adore les pommes de terre au lard." The stage directions attest to Jacques' individuality by indicating that "Sauf Jacques, les personnages peuvent porter des masques." 35

Unfortunately, Jacques' individuality is short-lived, and once he has yielded to the pattern of conformity, his family undertakes to direct his life. He will marry Robert I. Once again, briefly, Jacques' individuality asserts itself. He refuses Robert I, who has only two noses, and demands a fiancée with three. To his dismay, Robert-père produces Roberta II, complete with three noses. Jacques again tries to be different, insisting that she is not ugly enough, but, alone with her, he finds himself attracted to her, so that again he conforms, this time to the demands of his own sexuality. The story of the Jacques and the Roberts is continued in L'Avenir est dans les œufs, where the theme of conformity is repeated. The dictate is issued from the two families that Jacques (now called Jacques-Fils) and Robert II are to procreate.

Hesitant at first, they yield to the parental authority; and Robert II begins to lay eggs in fantastic quantities, which the two families pile around Jacques-Fils until he is completely buried.

In *La Cantatrice chauve* and *L'Avenir est dans les œufs*, the absence of identity is juxtaposed against the over-presence of things—words in the former, and eggs in the latter. A similar proliferation of matter occurs in *Le Nouveau locataire* in the form of words and furniture. Like the Smiths and Martins, the concierge hides her nothingness behind a barrage of words. In contrast to her is the taciturn tenant, who is in the process of arranging a solitary existence for himself. He locks all of the windows, tells the concierge that he will not need her services as housekeeper, and waits for the movers to arrive with his possessions. As they do so, we are told that his furniture has blocked the stairwell, the entrance court, the streets, the métro, and even the Seine. Finally they manage to get it all into his apartment by piling things on top of each other from floor to ceiling until he is completely walled in. As the movers leave, he tells them to put out the light, leaving him alone in the dark with his possessions.

In discussing the absence of being that demands the presence of things, Ionesco has written: "Lorsque la parole est usée, c'est que l'esprit est usé. L'univers, encombré par la matière, est vide, alors, de présence: le 'trop' rejoint ainsi le 'pas assez'"
et les objets sont la concrétisation de la solitude, de la victoire des forces antispirituelles, de tout ce contre quoi nous nous débattons." 

Having produced a "tragédie du langage" in La Cantatrice chauve, Ionesco develops the theme of language as an instrument of domination in La Leçon. The sadistic professor attempts to control his student by insisting that words have only the meaning that he assigns to them. The student's emotional disturbance, caused by the professor's attempt to subject her to his will, begins to manifest itself in physical pains— toothaches, earaches, stomach aches, and so forth. Unable to make her conform completely, the professor rapes and kills her. His physical attack on her is another case of the invisible becoming visible, for he has already attempted intellectual rape and murder.

In spite of the tragedy inherent in each of these guignolades comiques, we are unable to feel any emotion, other than that of derision, for the characters. We are unable to feel for them because they are too empty, too dehumanized to feel for themselves. We can only laugh at them. Such is not the case with the characters of the guignolades tragiques: Les Chaises (1951), Victimes du devoir (1952), and Amédée ou Comment s'en débarrasser (1953).

La Vieille and Le Vieux of Les Chaises suffer from their isolation, from the absence of human contact that has typified their

36Ionesco, Notes et contre-notes, pp. 141-142.
lives. In this and many other ways they are related to Beckett's characters. This absence is accentuated by the presence of the chairs. Ionesco himself has defined the play's basic theme:

The subject of the play is not the message, nor the failures of life, nor the moral disaster of the two old people, but the chairs themselves; that is to say, the absence of people, the absence of the emperor, the absence of God, the absence of matter, the unreality of the world, metaphysical emptiness. The theme of the play is nothingness...37

The old couple also suffers from an inability to communicate personal experiences to others. Their tragedy is all the more poignant because of their self-deception—thinking that they can communicate a lifetime of experience and feeling by means of a formalized message to be delivered by a professional orator. Thinking that at last they will be heard and perhaps understood, the old couple commits suicide, leaving the orator to speak for them. But the orator can only make gutteral, incomprehensible sounds.

Here is another instance of the invisible made visible—the fact that no one can speak for another, manifesting itself in the deaf and dumb orator. Thus the tragedy of the old couple is the tragedy of silence, sustained by the deception that they were incapable of speaking for themselves. The underlying implication of the play is that, if one wishes to be in communion with mankind, one must communicate what one is and what one feels at the time.

Otherwise one's "message," divorced from the time and the circumstances that gave rise to it, will be incomprehensible.

Victimes du devoir is a complicated play and a good example of Ionesco's plurality of intent. In the opening scene the conversation, which centers around Chaubert's question "Pense-tu vraiment que l'on puisse faire du nouveau au théâtre?" makes one think of Molière's Critique de l'école des femmes, and also of Ionesco's later confession of faith as a dramatist, L'Impromptu de l'Alma, modeled on Molière's L'Impromptu de Versailles. A young police investigator arrives seeking information about how the previous tenant of Chaubert's apartment spelled his name, and although Chaubert has never known the former tenant, Mallot or Mallod, he is encouraged by his wife and the detective to delve into his subconscious. As he does so, he begins to change, he becomes a succession of individuals—those that he has been, is, and potentially will be. And as he changes, his wife changes, becoming alternately his mother, an old woman, and the detective's mistress. Urged to go deeper into his subconscious, Chaubert finally sees nothing but a gaping hole. The detective attempts to remedy the situation by feeding Chaubert large quantities of bread, which will hopefully stop up the hole. (Simultaneously, the accumulation of matter is taking place as Chaubert's wife brings in cups of coffee until the stage is literally covered.) Serge

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Doubrovsky has pointed out that Ionesco is illustrating "Sartre's proposition that man is a 'hole in Being.' ... Man is nothing because he has the liberty of choice and therefore is always that which he is in the process of choosing himself to be, a permanent potentiality rather than actual being." 39

Ionesco has referred to *Victimes du devoir* as a pseudo-drame: pseudo because the information that they are searching for is trivial; drame because of the suffering that the characters undergo in an attempt to carry out their duty, in spite of the triviality of their search. The detective testifies to the sense of duty under which they all agonize: "Chaubert, Chaubert, Chaubert. Comprends-moi bien, il faut retrouver Mallot. C'est une question de vie ou de mort. C'est ton devoir. Le sort de l'humanité tout entière depend de toi..." 40 And at the end of the play Madeleine, Chaubert's wife, concludes: "Nous sommes tous des victimes du devoir!" 41 As was pointed out in Chapter II, a sense of duty is the result of an internalization of authority. The duty-bound person has so completely identified with the "they" that he has taken in all of their cliches, their thought patterns, their morality, so that he no longer has to look outside of himself. But what is inside him is not authentic since it has been absorbed without conscious choice. Consequently the duty-bound character is as

39 Esslin, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-104.
40 Ionesco, *Victimes du devoir*, p. 205.
41 Ibid., p. 228.
which a "slave" of his internalized authority as the authoritarian character to his external authority.

In *Amédée ou Comment s'en débarrasser* Ionesco adds another dimension to the theme of absence and presence: that of évanes­cence and lourdeur, a theme that will recur in all of the Bérenger plays. Amédée is Ionesco's first three-act play. All the plays discussed to this point, with the exception of the Bérenger plays, have been one-act plays. In the first two acts Amédée appears weighted down by despair, boredom, and frustration: "Je n'a pas d'inspiration...Je me sens fatigué. Je suis rompu, lourd..."42

He and Madeleine, his wife, have isolated themselves for fifteen years. Like many of Beckett's characters, though psychologically dependent on one another, they detest each other. They quarrel incessantly. Madeleine criticizes everything that Amédée does. She will not even allow him to speak to her in endearing terms. The only emotion that she is capable of feeling is self-pity.

Amédée, on the other hand, is far more human. He is genuinely sympathetic towards Madeleine, and regrets very much their incompatibility. Meanwhile, there are mushrooms coming up all over the apartment, the corpse in the next room is growing and even the walls are beginning to crack under the strain. They fear that soon the neighbors will become suspicious, and Madeleine insists that Amédée dispose of the corpse. As they sit waiting for the concealment

of night, two actors resembling Amédée and Madeleine appear; they are dressed as if they had just come from their own wedding. The stage directions indicate that the voice of Madeleine II must be very shrill, almost inhuman, resembling the cry of an animal.

Amédée II: Madeleine, Madeleine!

Madeleine II: N'approche pas. Ne me touche pas. Tu piques, piques, piques. Tu me fais ma-al!...

Amédée II: Madeleine, réveille-toi, ouvrons les rideaux, c'est l'aurore du printemps...le soleil inonde la chambre... Lumière de gloire...

Madeleine II: ...nuit, pluie...boue!...Aveugle, tu embellis la réalité!...

Amédée: ...La vallée verte ou fleurissent les lys...

Madeleine II: Des champignons!...des champignons!... champignons...champignons!...43

The overtones of the flashback become more and more sensual; Amédée is revealed as romantic and affectionate, Madeleine as fearful and frigid. Thus on their wedding night their love died, and the corpse (their hate) began to grow. Madeleine's vision of the world, where mushrooms grew in place of flowers, became the reality of their existence; and Amédée's evanescence of spirit was lost.

Having decided that they must dispose of this corpse that is overtaking them, they discover that they have actually grown attached to it. Having it around has become a habit, and they are not sure what their life will be without it. Thus they wa:ver between

43 Ibid., p. 277.
maintaining the existence they know and hate or taking a chance on the unknown. As Amédée expresses their mixed feelings: "En somme, il a grandi, vieilli dans notre maison, avec nous. Ça compte! Que veux-tu, on s'attache à tout, ainsi est le cœur de l'homme... Il a été le témoin muet de tout un passé, pas toujours agréable ce passé, évidemment, évidemment...On pourrait même dire: à cause de lui pas agréable..." At Madeleine's insistence that it is time to act, Amédée opens the window through which he is to drag the corpse. As he does so, he is struck by the beauty of the night, and his feeling of evanescence returns:

Regarde, Madeleine...tous les acacias brillent. Leurs fleurs explosent. Elles montent. La lune s'est épanouie au milieu du ciel, elle est devenue un astre vivant... La lumière c'est de la soie...Je n'y avais jamais touché... Des bouquets de neige fleurie...Et de l'espace, de l'espace, un espace infini."

As on her wedding night, Madeleine is unable to accept this poetic expression of his sensitivity and replies: "Ne perds pas ton temps. A quoi penses-tu? Le froid pénètre. Nous allons nous enrhumer. Dépéchons-nous." Finally, Amédée, with a supreme effort, begins pulling the corpse toward the window. The stage directions indicate the intimate relationship between Amédée and Madeleine and the corpse:

"On doit avoir l'impression que le cadavre, dont on ne voit toujours
pas la tête et qui, trainé par Amédée, avance, maintenant, nettement, en direction de la fenêtre, entraîne dans son départ toute la maison et les entrailles des personnages.  

The couple's existence, surrounded by vestiges of death, parallels the withdrawal of Hamm and Clov, and though not as extreme as in Fin de partie, their relationship is essentially sadistic-masochistic. Even when Amédée follows explicitly Madeleine's instructions, he is wrong. As he pulls the corpse through the window, Madeleine is suddenly afraid: "J'ai peur...On n'aurait pas dû se décider si vite...On aurait dû attendre...Non, on n'aurait pas pu attendre. C'est ta faute..." Although psychologically unaware of it, Madeleine has become dependent on Amédée, so that when she realizes that he is no longer with her and that she is alone, she is suddenly frightened and disoriented. Act III reveals Amédée dragging the body through the streets of Paris in the direction of the Seine. At the suggestion of an American soldier whom he meets, Amédée wraps the body around his waist in order to carry it more easily. An abrupt change occurs:  

Le corps, entouré autour de la taille d'Amédée, a dû se déployer comme une voile ou comme un énorme parachute; la tête du mort est devenue une sorte d'étendard lumineux, et l'on voit apparaître, au-dessus du mur du fond, la tête d'Amédée, enlevé par ce parachute, puis ses épaules, son tronc, ses jambes; Amédée s'envole...

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48 Ibid., p. 294.
49 Ibid., p. 305.
Suddenly Amédée's heaviness, his futility, and despair have turned to lightness, hope, and joy. His evanescence of spirit is made visual by the fact of his being carried aloft. Having separated himself from Madeleine and having been able to release himself from the hatred that bound them together, Amédée is suddenly free. Madeleine pleads with him to come down, warning that he will surely catch cold; but Amédée slowly disappears from sight. In one last attempt to retain him, Madeleine cries out: "Amédée, tu peux venir à la maison, les champignons ont fleuri..." revealing that even her vision of life has changed with the removal of the corpse.

In the tradition of Jarry, Ionesco has fashioned his guignolades on the techniques of the farce, as Richard N. Coe points out:

"Entre le comique et le tragique—ou, pour être plus précis, entre le grand guignol et la farce—il existe un état de tension continue, qui grandit au centième quand on les rapproche; et c'est cet état de tension qui constitue un des éléments de base dans la construction des pièces de Ionesco." Aside from the innate value of the farce as an art form, it, like satire, is able to present in an acceptable way the realities of life that man usually avoids. In discussing Ionesco's use of the farce, Robert Abirached states:

C'est dire que le comique naît d'une situation qui pourrait être cruelle et désespérante, mais où la cruauté et le désespoir sont eludés: nous rions de

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50 Ibid., pp. 307-308.

ce qui nous menace, de ce qui nous ronge, on rit parce qu'on est sensible à la cocasse absurdité de la société et des conventions les plus unanimément respectées; mais la farce est tragiqque parce qu'elle dénonce nos hypocrisies, nos habitudes les plus chères et le mensonge paliement dissimulé de notre existence.

In Tueur sans gages (1957), Rhinocéros (1958), Le Roi se meurt (1962), and Le Piéton de l'air (1962), Ionesco's theater changes significantly with the creation of Bérenger, who, unlike the guignol, is unquestionably human and is like Camus' heroes (perhaps "non-heroes" is a more descriptive term), a very ordinary person. In Tueur sans gages he is described as "âge moyen, citoyen moyen." Whereas the domain of the guignol was the farce, Bérenger's domain is comedy. Whereas in the guignolades the internal void is represented by the external presence of matter, in the Bérenger plays both void and presence (in addition to their external manifestations) are internalized states of being felt by the protagonist, Bérenger.

It is obvious that Ionesco created Bérenger as his spokesman. Having attempted to portray the inauthenticity of the petit bourgeois from an external point of view by using the guignol, Ionesco, in an abrupt change of technique, creates a character who, being fully human (capable of authenticity and inauthenticity) can speak to us directly. Bérenger is seen in the grips of the two states of being that Ionesco has described as "celles de l'évanescence ou de la

52 Abirached, op. cit., pp. 116-120.
53 Ionesco, Tueur sans gages, p. 61.
lourdeur; du vide et du trop de présence; de la transparence irréelle du monde et son opacité; de la lumière et des ténèbres épaisses." It is important for the reader to perceive that for Ionesco and Bérenger alike, each of these states of being is as real as the other, and that they can exist independently of external reality, although they can equally well be influenced by external reality.

The setting for Act I of Tueur sans gages establishes the interplay between presence and absence, real and unreal, light and shadow that Ionesco has referred to. The stage directions indicate:

Au premier acte, l'ambiance sera donnée uniquement, par la lumière. Au début, pendant que la scène est encore vide, la lumière est grise comme celle d'un jour de novembre ou de février l'après-midi, lorsque le ciel est couvert. Dans le lointain, bruit d'un tramway, silhouettes confuses des maisons qui s'évanouissent lorsque, "soudain," la scène s'éclaire fortement: c'est une lumière très forte, très blanche;...il y a aussi le bleu du ciel éclatant et dense...Les bruits du tramway, du vent ou de la pluie auront cessé à l'instant même où se sera produit le changement d'éclairage. Le bleu, le blanc, le silence, la scène vide doivent créer une impression de calme étrange.

The contrast between these two states of being, which are here expressed in physical form, will occur each time the scene shifts from the town characterized by grayness (wind, rain, and overcast skies), noise (tramway, traffic, voices in the streets), and clutter (houses, cars, trucks, people) to the cité radieuse characterized by light, silence, and space.

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54 Ionesco, Notes et contre-notes, p. 140.

55 Ionesco, Tueur sans gages, p. 63.
As the play begins, Bérenger is visiting the cité with the architect, who has designed this remarkable quarter, made beautiful by perpetual sunshine, fragrant flowers, lush lawns, and pleasant walks with a reflection pool. Bérenger has just come from his own quarter, where everything is cold, damp, and gray:

...dans mon quartier, chez moi plus particulièrement, tout est humide: le charbon, le pain, le vent, le vin, les murs, l'air et même le feu. Que j'ai eu du mal ce matin à me lever, j'ai dû faire un grand effort. C'était bien pénible. Si les draps n'avaient pas été humides eux aussi je ne serais pas décidé. J'étais loin de prévoir que, tout d'un coup, comme par enchantement, je me verrais au milieu du printemps, en plein avril, en cet avril de mes rêves—de mes plus anciens rêves...

At this point Bérenger begins to confide in the architect, telling him of the two states of being that have characterized his life. As he does so we see the reality of the town with its grayness, noise, and clutter merging with the reality of his depression and the lightness, silence, and spaciousness of the cité with his evanescence. Looking around at the beauty of the cité, Bérenger rediscovers the part of himself that has ceased to exist except in his dreams, and expresses his need for exterior surroundings which will facilitate:

...le prolongement de l'univers du dedans...pour qu'il puisse jaillir, cet univers du dedans, il lui faut le secours extérieur d'une certaine lumière existante...

Des jardins, du ciel bleu, un printemps qui correspondent à l'univers intérieur, dans lequel celui-ci puisse se reconnaître, qui soit comme sa traduction ou comme son anticipation, ou ses miroirs dans lesquels son propre sourire pourrait se refléchir...dans lesquels il puisse

56 ibid., pp. 67-68.
se reconnaître, dire : voilà ce que je suis en vérité et que j'avais oublié, un être souriant dans un monde souriant...
En somme, monde intérieur, monde extérieur, ce sont des expressions impropre, il n'y a pas de véritables frontières entre ces soi-disant deux mondes; il y a une impulsion première, évidemment, qui vient de nous, et lorsqu'elle ne peut s'extérioriser, lorsqu'elle ne peut se réaliser objectivement, lorsqu'il n'y a pas un accord total entre moi du dedans et moi du dehors c'est la catastrophe, la contradiction universelle, la cassure.  

In his own poetic way, Bérenger is describing what existential philosophers mean when they say that man has a dual relationship to the world. He both needs it and gives meaning to it. Bérenger's first reaction to the ville is that of joy. He needed the beauty of the ville to rediscover his love of life. However, he was the prime mover—his being what he was made the response possible.

The Smiths, Martins, and Bobby Watsons in the same surroundings would have felt nothing. Later in the play, when Bérenger learns of the killer, who is terrorizing the quarter, his state of being is completely reversed, although he is physically still in contact with the same surroundings that had inspired his first response. He says to the architect, who has informed him that the quarter is being abandoned by its inhabitants who fear the killer: "Je me sens de nouveau envahi par la nuit intérieure!" Bérenger describes la nuit intérieure that has been his predominant state of being for many years as follows:

57 Ibid., p. 73.
58 Ibid., p. 87.
Depuis des années et des années, de la neige sale,
un vent aigre, un climat sans égard pour les créatures...
des rues, des maisons, des quartiers entiers, de gens pas
vraiment malheureux, c'est pire, des gens ni heureux ni
malheureux, laids, parce qu'ils ne sont ni laids ni beaux,
des êtres tristement neutres, nostalgiques sans nostalgies,
comme inconscients, souffrant inconsciemment d'exister.
Mais moi j'avais conscience du malaise de l'existence.59

Ionesco in Notes et contre-notes describes an experience of malaise
which exactly parallels that of Bérénger:

Je n'ai jamais réussi à m'habituer, tout à fait,
à l'existence, ni à celle du monde, celle des autres,
ni surtout, à la mienne. Il m'arrive de sentir que
les fermes se vident, tout à coup, de leur contenu,
la réalité est irréelle, les mots ne sont que des bruits
dépeuillés de sens, ces maisons, ce ciel ne sont plus que
les façades du rien, les gens me semblent se mouvoir
automatiquement, sans raison; tout semble se volatiliser,
tout est menacé...Je me contemple moi-même, me vois
assailli par une souffrance incompréhensible, des regrets
sans nom, des remords sans objet...car je ne puis évidem-
ment pas savoir qui je suis, ni pourquoi je suis.60

The experience described as "une souffrance incompréhensible, des
regrets sans objet" is the experience that Heidegger refers to as
Angst, and psychologists, as anxiety. Heidegger maintains that
Angst is the threshold to authenticity—an experience that Bérénger
has had occasionally and the absence of which has weighed upon him
heavily. He attempts to communicate to the architect the state
of being to which he has reference:

La dernière fois, je devais avoir dix-sept ans,
dix-huit ans, je me trouvais dans une petite ville de campagne...les lieux ne comptent guère, je me promenais
dans une rue étroite, à la fois ancienne et neuve, bordée

59Ibid., p. 74.
60Ionesco, Notes et contre-notes, p. 135.
de maisons basses, toutes blanches...J'étais seul dans la rue...Je marchais à vive allure, vers quel but? Je ne sais plus. Je sentis profondément le bonheur unique de vivre. J'avais tout oublié, je ne pensais plus à rien sauf à ces maisons-là, ce ciel profond, ce soleil qui semblait s'être rapproché, à portée de la main dans ce monde construit à ma mesure.61

In the state of inauthenticity man feels overcome by the world and its proliferation of objects; he feels powerless, alone, and depressed. In the state of authenticity, man feels united with the world, and his emotion is that of intense joy. Bérenger's conclusion to this experience of authenticity is very similar to Krapp's ("Jamais entendu pareil silence. La terre pourrait être inhabituée."

Heidegger has described man as the being who illumines, who gives meaning to the things-that-are. In concluding his account of his last experience of authenticity, Bérenger voices his awareness of this:

Ma paix, ma propre lumière a leur tour s'épanchaient dans le monde, je comblais l'univers d'une sorte d'énergie aérienne. Pas une parcelle vide, tout était un mélange de plénitude et de légèreté, un parfait équilibre...Je marchais, je courais, je criaïs: Je suis, je suis, tout est, tout est! Oh, j'aurais certainement pu m'envoler,

61 Ionesco, Tueur sans gages, pp. 76-77.
62 Beckett, La Dernière bande, p. 32.
63 Ionesco, Tueur sans gages, p. 77.
The feeling of euphoria that accompanies authentic standing-in serves as the theme of Le Piston de l'air, where, using his technique of the invisible made visible, Ionesco represents Bérenger's spiritual soaring as physical flying.

The nature of man, a finite being, makes it impossible for him always to stand-in authentically, and such was the experience of Bérenger, so that little by little: "...tout était redevenu gris ou pâle ou neutre...Il se fit en moi une sorte de vide tumultueux, une tristesse profonde s'empara de moi, comme au moment d'une séparation tragique, intolérable...je me sentis abandonné parmi tous ces gens, toutes ces choses..."65 As with Krapp, the memory of this moment of authenticity has been the thing that has sustained Bérenger: "Dans mes jours de tristesse, de dépression nerveuse ou d'angoisse, je me rappellerai toujours, me suis-je dit, cet instant lumineux qui me permettrait de tout supporter, qui devait être ma raison d'exister, mon appui."66 As more time passes without a re-occurrence of authenticity, Bérenger's memory becomes less and less meaningful and more and more like the events recorded on Krapp's "mechanical memory." Bérenger expresses the change as follows: "Le souvenir que j'en ai gardé n'est plus que le souvenir d'un souvenir, comme une pensée devenue extérieure à moi-même.

64 Ibid., pp. 77-78.
65 Ibid., p. 79.
66 Ibid.
The significant difference between Bérenger and Krapp is that Krapp is rarely conscious of his inauthenticity, and when he is, he runs from what he sees, usually seeking help from his wine bottle. Bérenger, in contrast, is fully aware of the alienation from which he has been suffering; he is also still capable of authentic standing-in, as we have seen in his response to the beauty of the cité, and furthermore, he recognizes himself as a responsible being. He is aghast to learn that the killer has been drowning several people a day in the pond near the entrance to the cité, luring them to their deaths by offering to show them the colonel's picture. (The significance of the colonel's picture is never made clear.) He even sees three of the victims: an army officer, a woman, and a child. When he learns that Mlle Dany, a pretty blond whom he has just met and fallen in love with, is the killer's latest victim, he decides that something must be done. The architect, who knows himself only as his social function—namely, architect and police commissioner of the cité—has a very precise idea concerning where his responsibilities begin and end, and therefore, cannot understand Bérenger's reaction:

Bérenger: On ne peut pas, on ne doit pas laisser cela comme ça! Ça ne peut plus aller! Ça ne peut plus aller!


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67 Ibid., p. 80.

68 Ibid., p. 97.
The architect's character is perhaps best revealed by his response early in the play to Bérenger's enthusiastic praise of the cité:

"C'est un noyau qui doit, qui devait plutôt, en principe, s'élargir. J'en ai fait les plans sur ordre de la Municipalité. Je ne me permets pas d'avoir des initiatives personnelles."\(^6\) Thus the architect belongs to the tradition of the petit bourgeois—"l'homme dirige"\(^7\) as Ionesco has described him. In fact, all of the characters of Tueur sans gages except Bérenger belong to this class—la Mère Oie and her political supporters, the bartender, the concierge, the passers-by in the street, the traffic cops, and even Bérenger's friend, Edouard. For example, when Bérenger asks a policeman to help him track down the killer, the contrast in their conceptions of responsibility is evident:

Bérenger: Pardon, pardon, je suis citoyen, ça me regarde, cela nous concerne tous, nous sommes tous responsables des crimes qui... Enfin, je suis un vrai citoyen.

Le Deuxième Agent: Ce n'est pas mon rayon. Vous n'êtes pas idiot, vous voyez bien que je suis dans la circulation!\(^7\)

As Act II opens, Edouard is in Bérenger's apartment, waiting for Bérenger's return. He is described as "mince, très pâle, l'air fiévreux, vêtu de noir, crêpe de deuil à son bras droit, chapeau noir de feutre, pardessus noir, souliers noirs, chemise blanche au col amidonné, cravate noire."\(^8\) There is an obvious suggestion of death

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\(^6\)Ibid., p. 65.
\(^7\)Ionesco, Notes et contre-notes, p. 49.
\(^7\)Ionesco, Tueur sans gages, pp. 155-156.
\(^7\)Ibid., p. 100.
about him, seen not only in his mourning clothes, but in his illness (he coughs frequently) and in his deformity (his right arm is shorter than his left). There is also an air of mystery about him because of his concern for his briefcase and his presence in Bérenger's apartment, which had been locked. However, he produces a set of keys, which he insists that Bérenger gave him, although Bérenger does not remember doing so.

Edouard, like the architect, cannot understand Bérenger's horrified reaction to the killer:

Bérenger: ...Il vient un moment où l'on ne peut plus admettre les choses horribles qui arrivent...

Edouard: Mais c'est l'ordre du monde...?3

Furthermore, Edouard has known for some time about the killer, who masquerades as a beggar in order to lure his victims to the edge of the pond. A freak accident causes Edouard's briefcase to open, and its contents to pour out. There are the artificial flowers, the postcards, the obscene pictures, the photographs, and all of the paraphernalia of the killer. Bérenger is astounded:

Bérenger: ...Qu'est-ce que cela veut dire: Mais c'est la photo, la fameuse photo du colonel! Vous l'avez là-dedans...vous ne m'en aviez jamais parlé!

Edouard: Je ne regarde pas tout le temps dans ma serviette.

Bérenger: C'est bien votre serviette, pourtant, vous ne vous en séparez jamais!74

73Tbid., p. 121.
74Tbid., p. 126.
Edouard's reaction to this turn of events reminds one of a similar reaction on the part of the professor of La Leçon when his maid confronts him with his responsibility for the student's death. Seeing the student dead, the maid says: "Alors, vous êtes content de votre élève, elle a bien profité de votre leçon?" and the professor replies: "Ce n'est pas moi... Ce n'est pas moi... Marie... Non... Je vous assure... ce n'est pas moi..." Edouard's reaction to Bérenger's questions about his briefcase is the same:

Edouard: Je ne sais pas... je ne sais rien... je ne suis pas au courant.

Bérenger: Ce sont les objets du monstre. Vous les aviez là!

Edouard: Je n'en savais rien, je n'en savais rien.

Edouard, however, continues to produce things belonging to the killer—his diary giving all the details of his crimes, his visiting cards, his plans for future crimes. At Bérenger's insistance, they put everything back in the briefcase in order to take it to police headquarters. As they leave the apartment, Edouard, in turning off the light, forgets the briefcase, and Bérenger, in his highly emotional state, notices nothing.

Continuing into Act III we see Bérenger attempting to carry out the dictates of his conscience—to help apprehend the killer—in spite of the impediments imposed upon him by the political rally


76 Ibid.

77 Ionesco, Tueur sans gages, pp. 127-128.
of La Mère Oie, a fantastic traffic jam, and the "disappearance" of Edouard's briefcase. In desperation to reach police headquarters before it closes, Bérenger sends Edouard back to look for the lost briefcase, and sets out alone. Suddenly the scene begins to change. The stage directions indicate that: "Le metteur en scène, le décorateur, le spécialiste de l'éclairage doivent faire sentir la solitude de Bérenger, le vide qui l'entoure...Dans sa marche, Bérenger aura l'air de plus en plus inquiet...du plus en plus souvent, il se retournera, son pas se fera moins vif, hésitant..."

Bérenger realizes that he is all alone, that it is almost dark, and that he is very afraid. He considers turning back:

...Il faut continuer! Sous la protection de l'Administration, j'avance...j'avance...il faut...il faut...(Arret.) Non. Non. Ce n'est pas la peine, de toute façon j'arriverai trop tard. Ce n'est pas ma faute, c'est la faute de...c'est la faute de...de la circulation, l'embouteillage m'a retardé...Et surtout la faute d'Edouard...il oublie tout...L'assassin va tuer peut-être cette nuit...Je dois absolument empêcher cela. Je dois y aller. J'y vais.79

Bérenger is sorely tempted by inauthentic rationalizations. But his feeling of personal responsibility toward humanity forces him to continue; and he becomes, at this point, like Sartre's homme engagé.

Suddenly the killer confronts him. He is described as "...tout petit, mal rasé, chétif, chapeau déchiré sur la tête, vieille gabardine usée, il est borgne; son oeil unique a des reflets

78 Ibid., p. 158.

79 Ibid., pp. 160-161.
d’acier; figure immobile, comme figée...”

Seeing the small size of the killer, Bérenger is somewhat reassured: "Je pourrais vous écraser comme un ver de terre. Je ne le ferai pas. Je veux comprendre. Vous allez répondre à mes questions. Vous êtes un être humain, après tout. Vous avez peut-être des raisons. Vous devez m’expliquer, sinon je ne sais ce que...”

At this moment, Bérenger’s weakness becomes apparent: he must understand; there has to be a reason, based on cause and effect, for the killer’s actions. He himself does not know what he will do if he can not discover that reason. Exhausting his imagination for every possible explanation, he begins his questioning:

Vous croyez que le bonheur est impossible dans ce monde? Vous voulez détruire le monde parce que vous pensez que le monde est condamné au malheur. N’est-ce pas? C’est bien cela? Répondez!! (Ricanement du Tueur.)...Vous êtes un pessimiste? (Ricanement de l’assassin.) Un anarchiste?...Dites-moi quelle est votre conception de la vie; quelle est votre philosophie?...Vos buts? Répondez!! (Ricanement de l’assassin.)...Mai...dites-moi alors...que vous a fait l’officier...(Ricanement de l’assassin.) D’accord...je comprends: il y a des personnes qui détestent l’uniforme. Ils y voient...le symbole de l’autorité abusive, de la tyrannie, de la guerre qui détruit les civilisations. Bon: ne soulevons pas ce problème, il nous mènerait trop loin peut-être; mais la femme (ricanement du Tueur)...Admettons que vous détestez les femmes: elles vous ont peut-être trahi, elles ne vous ont pas aimé parce que...vous êtes...enfin, vous n’êtes pas très beau...c’est injuste, en effet, mais il n’y a pas que l’érotisme dans la vie, dépassez cette rancune...(Ricanement du Tueur.) Mais l’enfant, l’enfant, que vous a-t-il fait?...les enfants sont notre espoir, on ne doit pas toucher à un enfant, c’est l’opinion générale!

80 Ibid., p. 161.
81 Ibid., pp. 162-163.
Bérenger proposes other conceivable reasons, obtaining no other response than the killer's sneering laugh. Again and again he tries to understand: "...vous êtes un être humain, nous sommes de la même espèce, nous devons nous entendre, c'est notre devoir..."83

Bérenger becomes progressively less sure of himself; and his moral values appear more and more banal. Finally he confesses:

Although armed with two pistols, Bérenger, overcome by his own doubts, submits without protest to the killer—to Death, which is always absurd, that is to say, without reason. Bérenger, as he confronts the killer, represents not only Ionesco, but all mankind at grips with the absurdity, the purposelessness of finitude. But the killer is more than Death, he is also Evil—the evil that is in man, the evil that Ionesco alludes to when he describes man as "l'animal malade,"85 the evil that Camus calls

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82 Ibid., pp. 163-165.
83 Ibid., p. 166.
84 Ibid., pp. 169-170.
85 Ibid., p. 165.
la peste. Thus in facing the killer Bérenger faces part of himself, for evil and finitude are never really separate from man, and it is for this reason that he yields.

In Rhinocéros, Ionesco again portrays Bérenger as the authentic existent surrounded by inauthenticity. Several of the themes from Tueur sans gages reappear: Bérenger's experiences of euphoria and anguish are contrasted to the non-feeling of the petits bourgeois that surround him; his feeling of responsibility toward his own integrity and toward mankind stands in opposition to the limited concept of duty as a "social" function; his ability to stand alone as an individual is juxtaposed against the mass hysteria of conformity that overtake the other characters. This last theme, which was apparent in the enthusiastic support of the mass for La Mère Oie's political program in Tueur sans gages, becomes the main theme of Rhinocéros.

In Notes et contre-notes, Ionesco maintains that his point of departure for Rhinocéros was the reaction of the writer Denis de Rougemont in 1938 to the hysteria that swept over a crowd waiting for the arrival of Hitler:

L'hystérie se répandait, avançait, avec Hitler, comme une marée...lorsque le Führer arriva tout près et que tous les gens, à ses côtés, furent contaminés par l'hystérie générale, Denis de Rougemont sentit, en lui-même cette rage qui tentait de l'enivrir, ce délire qui "l'électrisait." Il était tout prêt à succomber à cette magie, lorsque quelque chose monta des profondeurs de son être et résista à l'orage collectif. Denis de Rougemont nous raconte qu'il se sentait mal à l'aise, affreusement seul, dans la foule, à la fois résistant et hésitant...ce n'était pas sa pensée qui résistait, ce n'était pas des arguments qui lui venaient à l'esprit mais c'était tout son être, toute "sa personnalité" qui se rebiffait.

*Ionesco, Notes et contre-notes, pp. 176-177.*
Such is the reaction of Bérenger; he does not oppose the spread of "rhinocerosity" because he is in intellectual disagreement with its ideology; he opposes it because from out of the depths of his being he is horrified at the metamorphosis of men into rhinoceroses. In commenting on Bérenger's reaction, Ionesco has written: "Bérenger ne sait donc pas très bien, sur le moment, pourquoi il résiste à la rhinocérite et c'est la preuve que cette résistance est authentique et profonde."\textsuperscript{87}

The story of 	extit{Rhinocéros} is of infantine simplicity. It traces the spread of rhinocerosity through a small provincial town from the time that a rhinoceros is observed charging down the main street by an astonished group of citizens to the time that all of the inhabitants of the town except Bérenger have undergone this rhinocerotic metamorphosis. The significance of the play lies not in the story, but in the character types that made this mass mutation possible.

As the play begins, Bérenger and his friend Jean arrive at the cafe, coming from different directions. The difference in their personalities is immediately evident:

Bérenger: Bonjour, Jean.

Jean: Toujours en retard, évidemment! Nous avions rendez-vous à onze heures trente. Il est bientôt midi.

Bérenger: Excusez-moi. Vous m'attendez depuis longtemps?

Jean: Non, j'arrive, vous voyez bien.

\textsuperscript{87}Ibid., p. 177.
Berenger: Alors, je me sens moins coupable, puisque vous-mêmes...

Jean: Moi, c'est pas pareil, je n'aime pas attendre, et je n'ai pas de temps à perdre. Comme vous ne venez jamais à l'heure, je viens express en retard, au moment ou je suppose avoir la chance de vous trouver.88

Jean, who is very conscious of his "duty" and terribly proud of himself for his respectability, is very critical of Berenger's nonchalant way of life, particularly his drinking:

Berenger: Ecoutez, Jean. Je n'ai guère de distractions, on s'ennuie dans cette ville, je ne suis pas fait pour le travail que j'ai...tous les jours, au bureau, pendant huit heures...Le samedi soir, je suis plutôt fatigué, alors, vous me comprenez, pour me détendre...

Jean: Mon cher, tout le monde travaille et moi aussi, moi aussi comme tout le monde, je fais tous les jours mes huit heures de bureau, moi aussi...pourtant vous me voyez...De la volonté, que diable!

Berenger: Oh, de la volonté, tout le monde n'a pas la vôtre. Moi je ne m'y fais pas...

Jean: Tout le monde doit s'y faire. Seriez-vous une nature supérieure?

Berenger: Je ne pretends pas...

Jean (interrompant): Je vous vauk bien; et même, sans fausse modestie, je vauk mieux que vous. L'homme supérieur est celui qui remplit son devoir.

Berenger: Quel devoir?

Jean: Son devoir...son devoir d'employé par exemple.89

Thus Jean conceives of himself as a person of will, a superior being, a person who fulfills his duty. Unfortunately, his self-deception

prevents his seeing the superficiality of what he calls duty, and when his will power is put to a real test—that of remaining human in the face of the contagion of "rhinocerosity"—he is unable to resist. Whereas Bérenger, who, as he says, does not pretend in any way to be superior and who thinks that he is woefully lacking in will power, will resist to the very end.

In line with his perception of himself as a superior being, Jean feels that he has the right to give Bérenger orders and to insult him:

Jean: Laissez ce verre sur la table. Ne le buvez pas. (Jean boit une grande gorgée de son pastis et pose le verre à moitié vide sur la table. Bérenger continue de tenir son verre dans la main, sans le poser, sans oser le boire non plus.)

Bérenger: Je ne vais tout de même pas le laisser au patron! (Il fait mine de vouloir boire.)

Jean: Laissez-le, je vous dis.90

A few seconds later in an awkward movement, Bérenger turns over his glass and his drink spills on Jean: "Que vous êtes maladroit...Vous êtes impardonnable."91

While they are sitting at the cafe, a rhinoceros charges up the street; and a few minutes later another rhinoceros rushes by. Or is it the same one? Jean maintains that there were two rhinoceroses: That the first one had two horns and was, therefore, an Asian rhinoceros; while the second one had only one horn and

90Ibid., p. 22.
91Ibid., pp. 22-23.
was, therefore, an African rhinoceros. Bérenger thinks this is stupid and says so; and Jean, who openly disapproves of everything that Bérenger says and does, cannot tolerate the slightest criticism of his own actions without becoming extremely angry:

Jean: (à Bérenger): Moi? Vous osez prétendre que je dis des sottises?
Bérenger: Oui, parfaitement, des sottises.
Jean: Je ne dis jamais de sottises, moi!
Bérenger: Et vous n'êtes qu'un prétentieux! Un pédant...
Un pédant, qui n'est pas sûr de ces connaissances, car, d'abord, c'est le rhinocéros d'Asie qui a une corne sur le nez, le rhinocéros d'Afrique, lui, en a deux.
Jean: Vous vous trompez, c'est le contraire!
Bérenger: Voulez-vous parier?
Jean: Je ne parie pas avec vous. Les deux cornes, c'est vous qui les avez! Espèce d'Asiatique!
Bérenger: Je n'ai pas de corne. Je n'en porterai jamais.92

Jean leaves in a fury and Bérenger does not see him again until Act II, when he goes to Jean's apartment hoping for a reconciliation. During this visit Jean is transformed before Bérenger's very eyes into a rhinoceros. This is another example of the invisible becoming visible, for, in reality, Jean had always been rhinoceros because of his animal egotism, his insensitivity, his lack of imagination, his stubbornness, his irrational anger, his desire to dominate, and his belligerency. In explaining his imagery in Rhinocéros Ionesco has written:

92Ibid., pp. 35-36.
Je ne sais pas si vous l'avez remarqué, mais lorsque les gens ne partagent plus votre opinion, lorsqu'on ne peut plus s'entendre avec eux, on a l'impression de s'adresser à des monstres... Ils vous tueraient en toute bonne conscience si vous ne pensiez pas comme eux. Et l'histoire nous a bien prouvé au cours de ce dernier quart du siècle que les personnes ainsi transformées ne ressemblent pas seulement à des rhinocéros, ils le deviennent véritablement. Ou il est très possible, bien qu'apparemment extraordinaire, que quelques consciences individuelles représentent la vérité contre l'histoire... Ce sont toujours quelques consciences isolées qui ont représenté contre tout le monde la conscience universelle. Les révolutionnaires eux-mêmes étaient au départ isolés. Au point d'avoir mauvaise conscience, de ne pas savoir s'ils avaient tort ou raison. Je n'arrive pas à comprendre comment ils ont trouvé en eux-mêmes le courage de continuer tout seuls. Ce sont des héros.93

The agony of isolation, of being different is the agony that Bérenger suffers in the last scene. Looking at himself in a mirror,

Bérenger says:

Ce sont eux qui sont beaux. J'ai eu tort! Oh, comme je voudrais être comme eux. Je n'ai pas de cornes, hélas!... Hélas, je suis un monstre, je suis un monstre. Hélas, jamais je ne deviendrai rhinocéros, jamais, jamais! Je ne peux plus changer. Je voudrais bien, je voudrais tellement, mais je ne peux pas... Malheur à celui qui veut conserver son originalité... En bien tant pis! Je me défendrai contre tout le monde! Ma carabine, ma carabine!... Je suis le dernier homme, je le resterai jusqu'au bout! Je ne capitule pas!94

None of the other inhabitants of the town can stand this isolation, however, and capitulate—some with almost no resistance, such as Bérenger's boss, M. Papillon, who thinks that the "administration" is responsible for everything, and that his sole function

93Ionesco, Notes et contre-notes, pp. 182-183.

94Ionesco, Rhinocéros, pp. 116-117.
is to carry out orders. Others, such as Botard, make a temporary, verbal protest, at first denying, in spite of reliable evidence, that there is any such thing as "rhinocerosity," then denouncing it with furor, then joining in because, as he expressed it, "...il faut suivre son temps." Still others, such as Dudard, the educated man, in attempting to consider all points of view, to be excessively liberal, to chance new experiences, allows himself to be seduced by the new "ideology." Bérenger, seeing Dudard weaken, attempts to strengthen his resolve:

Bérenger: L'homme est supérieur au rhinocéros.

Dudard: Je ne dis pas le contraire. Je ne vous approuve pas non plus. Je ne sais pas, c'est l'expérience qui le prouve.

Bérenger: Vous aussi, vous êtes un faible, Dudard.

Dudard: J'ai des scrupules! Mon devoir m'impose de suivre mes chefs et mes camarades, pour le meilleur et pour le pire.

Not even Mlle Daisy, Bérenger's fiancee, is able to resist the temptation of conformity, because she is unable to believe that she and Bérenger could be right and all the others wrong: "Il n'y a pas de raison absolue. C'est le monde qui a raison, ce n'est pas toi, ni moi." And soon she is admiring the rhinocéroses:

95 Ibid., p. 98.
96 Ibid., p. 103.
97 Ibid., p. 113.
Daisy: Ils chantent, tu entends?

Berenger: Ils ne chantent pas, ils barrassent.

Daisy: Ils chantent.

Berenger: Ils barrassent, je te dis.

Daisy: Tu n'y connais rien en musique, mon pauvre ami, et puis regarde, ils jouent, ils dansent.

Berenger: Tu appelles ça de la danse?

Daisy: C'est leur façon. Ils sont beaux.

Berenger: Ils sont ignobles!

Daisy: Ce sont des dieux.98

And, therefore, she must follow them. But Bérenger sees himself and the rhinoceroses in an entirely different light. In defiance he calls out: "Je ne vous suivrai pas, je ne vous comprenez pas! Je reste ce que je suis. Je suis un être humain. Un être humain."99

In his next play, Le Roi se meurt, Ionesco deals with man's experience as he confronts his finitude. The factor common to all mankind is death. Man is finite and is conscious of his finitude. As Langan points out, a realistic acceptance of finitude is a liberating experience for man: "Alone of all beings man is capable of grasping and willing the reality of its own Nothingness. Therein lies its freedom—in the acceptance or rejection of that destiny."100

98Ibid., p. 114.

99Ibid., p. 115.

100Langan, op. cit., p. 36.
An acceptance of one's finitude does not mean an intellectual awareness of death as some future event; nor does it mean an awareness of the death of others. It means an awareness of one's being as a being-toward-death, dying from the moment of birth; it means an awareness of one's movement from Nothing to Nothing. Authenticity resides in such awareness. Unwillingness to accept one's finitude is the source of inauthenticity. If one cannot be realistic about one's own death, one cannot be realistic about anything; and yet authenticity is such a fantastic requirement—demanding all that one is—that few rise to the challenge.

All men die. Thus we are united in essence by our common end. Societies and ideologies tend to divide mankind, but this division represents a superficial reality; at a deeper level of reality we are all united in that we share the same fate. Ionesco writes: "La condition essentielle de l'homme n'est pas sa condition de citoyen mais sa condition de mortel."\(^{101}\) Ionesco's concept of death parallels that of Heidegger:

In the vision of the last moment I see literally everything slipping away together, dissolving in the gloom of an all-pervading Nothing. It is thus that I come to see that the presence of anything and everything before me is a united whole, as I also see that it is due to nothing other than my own finite horizon-projection. I see for the first time clearly, that the Seienden als Ganzen could not "be" without my Dasein, and at the same time I realize that the apparent solidity of that "world" of things offers no lasting thing upon which I can depend as a projection from the dissolution of the world in death.\(^{102}\)

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\(^{101}\) Ionesco, *Notes et contre-notes*, p. 205.

\(^{102}\) Langan, *op. cit.*, p. 93.
In Le Roi se meurt, Ionesco seeks to represent man's unwillingness to face the brutal reality of death, and his desire to live forever. But death is a reality that man cannot avoid, although he does have the capacity to avoid relating authentically to death. This is the drama that Ionesco presents as Bérenger turns from his inauthentic illusions of immortality to the vision of the last moment as Heidegger describes it.

As the play begins the guard announces: "Sa Majesté, le roi Bérenger ler. Vive le Roi!" and Bérenger, oblivious to the fact that he is dying, strides across the stage. All of the court, however, have seen the signs—dust and worms cover the floor, the cow has no milk, the radiators are no longer working, the sun is late coming up, the cracks in the walls are growing larger, earthquakes have been felt, wars have laid waste the land, the nine million inhabitants have been reduced to a thousand old people and forty-five adolescents, and throughout the entire kingdom no vegetation is growing. And what is more, the heavenly signs confirm those of the earth. Le Médecin, who also serves as "chirurgien, bourreau, bactériologue et astrologue" interprets for the two queens: "Le soleil a perdu entre cinquante et soixante-quinze pour cent de sa force...Il tombe de la neige au pôle Nord du soleil. La Voie lactée a l'air de s'agglutiner. La comète est épuisée de fatigue, elle a vieilli, elle s'entoure de sa queue, s'enroule sur elle-même

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comme un chien moribond." Queen Marguerite, the realist, insists that Bérenger must be informed that he is dying; Queen Marie, the romanticist, would spare him this painful reality and longs to avoid facing it herself:

**Marguerite:** Ne recommencez pas à sangloter.

**Marie:** J'ai du mal à m'en empêcher, hélas.

**Marguerite:** Ne vous affolez pas, surtout. Cela ne servirait à rien. C'est bien dans la norme des choses, n'est-ce pas? Vous vous y attendiez. Vous ne vous y attendiez plus.

**Marie:** Vous n'attendiez que cela.

**Marguerite:** Heureusement. Ainsi, tout est au point...

**Marie:** J'esperais toujours...

**Marguerite:** C'est du temps perdu. Esperer, esperer.105

Marguerite resents the fact that Bérenger has been so happy with Marie that he has lived in a dream world:

C'est votre faute s'il n'est pas préparé, c'est votre faute si cela va le surprendre. Vous l'avez laissé faire, vous l'avez même aidé à s'égayer. Ah! La douceur de vivre. Vos bals, vos amusettes, vos cortèges; vos dîners d'honneurs, vos artifices et vos feux d'artifice, les noces et vos voyages de noces! Combien de voyages de noces avez-vous faits?106

And Marguerite blames Marie for making death appear illusionary, for encouraging Bérenger's self-deception: "Quand je vous rappelais qu'il fallait vivre avec la conscience de son destin, vous me

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104. Ibid., p. 25.
105. Ibid., p. 15.
106. Ibid., p. 18.
Bérenger, having been informed by Marguerite that he is going to die, replies: "Je mourrai, oui, je mourrai. Dans quarante ans, dans cinquante ans, dans trois cents ans. Plus tard. Quand je voudrais, quand j'aurai le temps, quand je le déciderai." But Marguerite is determined that, at last, he face the reality of his own death. She announces: Tu vas mourir à la fin du spectacle," to which the Médecin adds his support: "Vous n'aurez pas votre petit déjeuner demain matin. Pas de dîner ce soir non plus. Le cuisinier a éteint le gaz. Il rend son tablier. Il range pour l'éternité les nappes et les serviettes dans le placard." But the king refuses to admit that he cannot control his ultimate destiny: "Je mourrai quand je voudrai, je suis le Roi, c'est moi qui décide." His self-deception makes it impossible for him to see himself as moving toward death, in spite of the deterioration that is taking place in his kingdom and in himself. He begins to limp, to stagger and finally falls. Each time he rises painfully the guard announces: "Vive le Roi"; and as he falls, "Le Roi se meurt." Again and again the king rises and falls,

107 Ibid., p. 18.
108 Ibid., p. 33.
109 Ibid., p. 37.
110 Ibid., p. 38.
111 Ibid.
112 Ibid., p. 44.
113 Ibid., pp. 44-45.
each movement accompanied by the guard's declaration. The stage
directions indicate that this scene should be played "en guignol
tragique."\textsuperscript{114} It is important to realize that until Bérenger-Roi
can admit his finitude he is more closely related to the inauthentic
characters of the guignolades than he is to the Bérenger of Tueur
sans gages and Rhinocéros.

Attempting to prove to himself and to the others that he is
all powerful, Bérenger begins issuing commands:

\textit{J'ordonne que des arbres poussent du plancher. (Pause.)}
\textit{J'ordonne que le toit disparaisse. (Pause.) Quoi? Rien? J'ordonne qu'il y ait la pluie. (Pause. Toujours rien ne se passe.) J'ordonne qu'il y ait la foudre et que je la tienne dans ma main. J'ordonne que les feuilles repoussent. (Il va à la fenêtre.) Quoi! Rien? J'ordonne que J uliette entre par la grande porte. (Juliette entre par la petite porte au fond à droite.) Pas par celle-la, par celle-ci. Sors par cette porte. (Il montre la grande porte. Elle sort par la petite porte...)}\textsuperscript{115}

Marie continues to encourage him in all of his efforts to evade reality:

\textit{Le Roi: Que le temps retourne sur ses pas.}
\textit{Marie: Que nous soyons il y a vingt ans.}
\textit{Le Roi: Que nous soyons la semaine dernière.}
\textit{Marie: Que nous soyons hier soir. Temps retourne, temps retourne; temps, arrête-toi.}\textsuperscript{116}

To the inauthentic existent time is always considered man's
enemy because it brings about that which the inauthentic existent

\begin{itemize}
  \item[\textsuperscript{114}]Ibid., p. 45.
  \item[\textsuperscript{115}]Ibid., p. 53.
  \item[\textsuperscript{116}]Ibid., p. 55.
\end{itemize}
wishes to avoid—death. Furthermore, the inauthentic conception of time as a temporal measuring system proves to be meaningless when the deepest realities of man are involved. In *Tueur sans gages* when the architect asks Bérenger at what time his feeling of euphoria yielded to the depression that followed, Bérenger answers: "Il doit y avoir des siècles...ou peut-être seulement quelques années, ou peut-être était-ce hier..."117 Bérenger-Roi, beginning to accept the possibility of his death and lamenting his mortality, reacts likewise to time:

Le Roi: Pourquoi suis-je né si ce n'était pas pour toujours. Maudits parents. Quelle drôle d'idée, quelle bonne blague! Je suis venu au monde il y a cinq minutes, je me suis marié il y a trois minutes.

Marguerite: Cela fait deux cents quatre-vingt-trois ans.

Le Roi: Je suis monté sur le trône il y a deux minutes et demie.

Marguerite: Il y a deux cent soixante-dix-sept ans et trois mois.118

Having been forced to accept the reality of his finitude, Bérenger seeks consolation in another illusion—that of eternal fame:

Sans moi, sans moi. Ils vont rire, ils vont bouffer, ils vont danser sur ma tombe. Je n'aurai jamais existé. Ah, qu'on se souvienne de moi. Que l'on pleure, que l'on désespère. Que l'on perpétue ma mémoire dans tous les manuels d'histoire. Que tout le monde connaisse ma vie par cœur. Que tous la revivent. Que les écoliers et les savants n'aiment pas d'autre sujet d'étude que moi, mon royaume, mes exploits. Qu'on brûle tous les

117 Ionesco, *Tueur sans gages*, p. 75.

118 Ionesco, *Le Roi se meurt*, p. 73.
autres livres, qu'on détruisse toutes les statues, qu'on mette la mienne sur toute les places publiques...Qu'je sois sur les icônes, que je sois sur les millions de croix dans toutes les églises...Qu'on m'appelle éternellement, qu'on me supplie, que l'on m'implore.

As the reality of death threatens to destroy the illusion of godhood that Bérenger had maintained all of his life, he would perpetuate the deception by having others relate to him as a deity: "Peut-être reviendrai-je. Que l'on garde mon corps intact dans un palais sur un trône, que l'on m'apporte des nourritures." So great is his horror of his own death that he would have everyone else die, if he could, in that way, be saved: "Que tous meurent pourvu que je vive éternellement même tout seul dans le désert sans frontières. Je m'arrangerais avec la solitude."

Little by little Bérenger comes to see the vision of the last moment, as described by Heidegger. Seeing his "world" dissolving into Nothing makes it possible for him to see himself as man (not God) united by his finitude to mankind and to the world of things.

Le Garde: Oh, Grand Rien, aidez le Roi.

Le Roi: Des milliards de morts. Ils multiplient mon angoisse. Je suis leurs agonies. La mort est innombrable. Tant d'univers s'éteignent en moi.

Marguerite: La vie est un exil.

Le Roi: Je sais, je sais.

Le Médecin: En somme, Majesté, vous retournerez dans votre patrie.

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119Ibid., pp. 79-80.
120Ibid., p. 80.
121Ibid., p. 85.
Marie: Tu iras là où tu étais avant de naître.122

Man moves from Nothing to Nothing, but because of his inauthenticity he longs to be immortal, to Be always. Such is the desire of Bérenger: "Il n'est pas naturel de mourir, puisqu'on ne veut pas. Je veux être."123 But he has accepted death and because of the authenticity that comes with such acceptance, he is now free to encounter life fully. Bérenger's new perspective is seen in his conversation with Juliette, the chambermaid, who has been describing the hardships of her life:

Juliette: Je n'en peux plus de fatigue.

Le Roi: Tu aurais du nous le dire.

Juliette: Je vous l'avais dit.


Juliette: Ma chambre n'a pas de fenêtre.

Le Roi (avec le même ravissement): Pas de fenêtre! On sort. On cherche la lumière. On la trouve. On lui sourit. Pour sortir, tu tournes la clef dans la serrure, tu ouvres la porte, tu fais de nouveau tourner la clef, tu refermes la porte. Où habites-tu?

Juliette: Au grenier.

Le Roi: Pour descendre, tu prends l'escalier, tu descends une marche, encore une marche, encore une marche, encore une marche, encore une marche.124

122Ibid., p. 91.
123Ibid., p. 94.
124Ibid., pp. 102-103.
Heidegger has explained the experience that Bérenger is at last undergoing as follows: "It is only when I come to realize that my every moment and my every act share the same fate, all destined to the same all-dissolving end, all capable of being swept up and fixed in the complete picture of a terminated existence, that the reality of my finite destiny reveals the meaning of the moment.125  

In his new state of being Bérenger discovers that everything about life is good—because it is life; that everything about life is beautiful—because it is life:

C'est beau aussi de s'ennuyer, c'est beau aussi de ne pas s'ennuyer, et de se mettre en colère, et de ne pas se mettre en colère, et d'être mécontent et d'être content, et de se résigner et de revendiquer. On s'agite, et vous parlez et on vous parle, vous touchez et on vous touche. Une fée rée tout ça, une fête continuelle.126

In order to be authentic, man must not only accept the reality of his Nothingness; he must actually will it. And such is the next step for Bérenger. Still caught up in his new appreciation of life in all its forms, he remembers le pot-au-feu:

Le Roi: J'aimais tellement le pot-au-feu; avec des légumes, des pommes de terre, des choux et des carottes...

Juliette: On pourrait lui en apporter...

Marguerite: Non...Il faut qu'il s'en détache.

125Langan, op. cit., pp. 32-33.
126Ionesco, Le Roi se meurt, p. 105.
Le Roi (avec fatigue): Je n'avais encore jamais remarqué que les carottes étaient si belles... le pot-au-feu... disparu de l'univers. Il n'y a jamais eu de pot-au-feu...

Marguerite: Enfin! Une chose faite! Il y a renoncé.127

Thus begins the process of detachment from all of the things he has loved, even from Marie. It is a detachment that he himself wills, a renunciation that frees him to face death authentically. And as he undergoes the anguish of comprehending death, he comes to know himself as the being who gives meaning to the world; thus he comes to understand what Heidegger refers to as founding the world. Bérenger says: "Je me vois. Derrière toute chose, je suis. Plus que moi partout. Je suis la terre, je suis le ciel, je suis le vent, je suis le feu. Suis-je dans tous les miroirs ou bien suis-je le miroir de tout?"128

Bérenger is now ready to die. He is alone, having detached himself from all his court. As the play ends, the dissolution of everything "in the gloom of an all-pervading Nothing"129 is enacted before our eyes:

Le Roi est assis sur son trône. On aura vu, pendant cette dernière scène, disparaître progressivement les portes, les fenêtres, les murs de la salle du trône... Maintenant, il n'y a plus rien sur le plateau sauf le Roi sur son trône dans une lumière grise. Puis, le Roi et son trône disparaissent également. Enfin, il n'y a plus que cette lumière grise.130

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127 Ibid., pp. 106-108.
128 Ibid., p. 145.
129 Langan, op. cit., p. 93.
130 Ionesco, Le Roi se meurt, p. 157.
As Ionesco has said, at the base of all of his plays, lie two states of being: one, alienation from reality, a state in which one feels depressed, overcome by emptiness and overpresence, and threatened by the apparent unreality of the world; and two, unification with reality, a state in which one feels light, free, and harmonious. In describing man's turning from the former to the latter state of being, Ionesco writes:

Mais tout cela peut, tout aussi bien, devenir euphorique; l'angoisse se transforme soudain en liberté; plus rien n'a de l'importance en dehors de l'émerveillement d'être, de la nouvelle, surprenante conscience de notre existence dans une lumière d'aurore, dans la liberté retrouvée; nous sommes étonnés d'être...Certainement, cet état de conscience est très rare, ce bonjour, cet émerveillement d'être dans un univers que ne me gêne plus, qui n'est plus, ne tient guère; je suis, le plus souvent, sous la domination du sentiment opposé: la légèreté se mue en lourdeur; la transparence en épaisseur; le monde pèse; l'univers m'écrase.  

Although these words were written in 1954 and Le Piéton de l'air did not appear until late in 1962, they nevertheless parallel the experience of Bérenger as he turns from the first state of being described by Ionesco to the second. In a state of depression, overcome by doubts concerning the value of literature, Bérenger-writer, seeks refuge from the world in a small English village. Interviewed by a journalist, Bérenger attempts to explain his withdrawal from the literary world:

Bérenger: Je suis obligé de vous faire des aveux. Je ne suis toujours rendu compte que je n'avais aucune raison d'écrire.

131Ionesco, Notes et contre-notes, pp. 140-141.
Journaliste: C'est tout à fait compréhensible. Mais ne pas avoir de raison, ce n'est pas une raison. Il n'y a aucune raison à rien, cela nous le savons tous.

Bérenger: Evidemment. Seulement, les gens font des choses bien qu'il n'y ait aucune raison d'en faire. Toutefois, les âmes faibles sédonnent des raisons apparentes de leurs activités. Il font semblant d'y croire. Il faut bien faire quelque chose, disent-ils. Je ne suis pas de ceux-là. Il y avait autrefois en moi une force inexplicable qui me déterminait à agir ou à écrire malgré un nihilisme fondamental. Je ne peux plus continuer. 132

Bérenger admits to the journalist that, "L'activité littéraire n'est plus un jeu, ne peut plus être un jeu pour moi. Elle devrait être un passage vers autre chose." 133 It appears that this is exactly the evolution that had been taking place in Ionesco, as he moved from the guignolade (especially La Cantatrice chauve and La Légion, which he called "anti-pieces"), to the Bérenger plays, in which he attempts to communicate his own states of being.

Ionesco has confessed openly that he is often surprised by what he finds in his own works, that during the creative process he is not fully aware of what is taking place; that ideas take form almost without his awareness. Bérenger admits a similar experience to the journalist:

Journaliste: Un instant...Vous faites donc un théâtre à message? Un message qui n'est pas celui des autres mais qui en est tout de même un...Votre message...

132 Ionesco, Le Pisto de l'air, p. 125.
133 Ibid., p. 126.
It has always been true that the spirit of an age is expressed in concrete form first in art. It appears that the sensitivity of the artist puts him in tune with the vibrations of his time, although he may be unconscious of this atunement. It is during the creative process that he becomes consciously aware of what he has been doing intuitively. He comes to discover himself in his creation.

Berenger's decision to retreat from the literary world springs not only from his doubts concerning the value of literature, but also, and mainly, from his need for a "renouvellement intérieur." As he explains: "Je suis paralysé parce que je sais que je vais mourir. Ce n'est pas une vérité neuve. C'est une vérité qu'on oublie... afin de pouvoir faire quelque chose. Moi, je ne peux plus faire quelque chose, je veux guérir de la mort." Thus Berenger-writer must deal with the same reality as Berenger-roi, and as must all mankind.

The theme of inauthentic relating to death occurs throughout the play. To Josephine, Berenger's wife, death is equated with aloneness. Unable to confront the reality of her own death, she

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134 Ibid., p. 127.
135 Ibid., p. 126.
136 Ibid., p. 128.
perceives of death as that which takes her loved ones from her, leaving her alone. Following a dream in which she is informed that her father is not dead, she realizes how much she has missed him: "Je sais maintenant combien son absence me faisait mal...personne n'est remplacable. Quelqu'un de perdu, c'est un trou qu'on ne pourra jamais combler."137 Man has the ability to let the things-that-are be as they are (to stand-in authentically) or not to let them be as they are (to stand-in inauthentically). Because man gives meaning to the world, whether he chooses to stand-in authentically or inauthentically, his interpretation of the world is the only one that can be valid for him. Psychologists describe this relationship by saying that whatever man's vision of the world is, for him it has psychic reality. In other words, as far as man is concerned, the world is as he sees it. Joséphine's overwhelming feeling of aloneness makes her see herself as all alone, abandoned, although she is surrounded by people. Seeing what is happening to her mother, Marthe tries to call her back to reality, but Joséphine is in another world, a world of her own making:

Joséphine: Je suis seule. Je suis toute seule, abandonnée dans les ténèbres, abandonnée.

Marthe: Mais regarde, je suis là, moi.

Josephine: Je suis toute seule, dans les grands bois, loin de tout. J'ai peur.138

137Ibid., p. 133.
138Ibid., p. 179.
To make visible that which is taking place, namely Joséphine's distorted perception of reality, the stage directions indicate that the people around Joséphine should appear slightly disfigured, as they might be in a dream, but nevertheless recognizable.

Joséphine feels not only physically, but spiritually alone, alienated from mankind: "Je suis minuscule dans ce monde énorme. Je suis une fourmi égarée, affolée, qui cherche ses compagnes. Mon père est mort, ma mère est morte, tous ceux de ma famille sont morts," Joséphine is so emotionally dependent on her deceased parents that she is unable to love the living:

Marthe: Il y a les autres, tous les autres. Il y a beaucoup de gens.

Joséphine: Je ne les connais pas. Ils ne me connaissent pas. Des étrangers... J'avais des parents grands et puissants. Pour traverser la vie, ils me tenaient par la main... Avec eux, je n'avais rien à craindre... Sauf la peur de les perdre. Je pensais tout le temps que j'allais les perdre; cela ne pouvait être autrement.

In reality, Josephine is not only enslaved to her deceased parents, but to her own fear of death. She is fighting so hard against death that she has little energy left for living; in fact, her life is most miserable, but, like Beckett's characters, she fears death too much to let go of her unhappy existence. In her distorted view of reality, the executioner comes for her, but she resists her destiny:

\[139\textit{Ibid.}, p. 180.\]
\[140\textit{Ibid.}\]
Homme en Blanc: Vous savez bien que vous n'y échapperez
pas. Vous savez bien que tout le monde y passe. Vous
n'y gagnez que du vent, un peu de temps.

Joséphine: Demain, demain, demain. Encore un moment, Mon-
sieur en Blanc. Encore un moment, Monsieur le Bourreau.141

Unable to confront death realistically she must go on in inauthen-
ticity.

Rotating around Bérenger and his family are the inhabitants
of the village to which he has withdrawn. They are in the tradition
of the guignols—the Smiths, Martins, Jacques, and Roberts—and
like them, so lacking in identity that they are interchangeable.
In fact, they do not even have names, but are designated 1er
Anglais, IIe Anglais, IRe Anglaise, IIe Anglaise, IRe Vieille
Dame Anglaise, IIe Vieille Dame Anglaise, Le petit Garçon, La
Petite Fille, and John Bull, whose name is not a real name, but
a slogan. Their inauthenticity is very well expressed by the
1er Anglais: "J'ai vécu une vie qui était celle d'un autre";142
and their lack of sensitivity by John Bull: "Il parait qu'il faut
faire très attention à ce que disent les poètes. Ils ont souvent
raison. C'est ce que l'on m'a dit. Ils prévoient et cela se
vérifie. Je préfère les saucisses. Je préfère mon chien."143

Whereas in Tueur sans gages it was the beauty of the cite
that reminded Bérenger of his almost forgotten euphoria, in Le

141 Ibid., p. 189.
142 Ibid., p. 140.
143 Ibid., p. 141.
Piéton de l'air it is the open, loving nature of his daughter, Marthe. As she gives him a flower Bérenger replies:

Bérenger: Je ne résiste pas aux gestes tendres. Ah! si tout le monde était comme toi. On vivrait dans la douceur. La vie serait possible et l'on pourrait aussi mourir sans chagrin, paisiblement. Quand on vit joyeusement, on peut mourir joyeusement. On devrait s'aider toujours.

Marthe: Moi, j'aime toujours.

Bérenger: Qu'est-ce que tu aimes?

Marthe: J'aime... Je ne sais pas quoi. Mais j'aime. C'est tellement beau ce que l'on voit.

Bérenger: Tu as raison. Mais on oublie. La plupart du temps, on oublie... Jamais je n'ai été si détendu; jamais je n'ai été si heureux. Jamais je ne me suis senti si léger. Que m'arrive-t-il?... Je regarde, c'est comme si c'était la première fois que je voyais. Je viens de naître.

It is in this state of being that Bérenger, under the disapproving eyes of the villagers and Joséphine, who thinks he is making a fool of himself, discovers that he can fly. And most important, he rediscovers that flying (euphoria) is an innate capacity in man and that it is indispensable if man is to be man. The villagers, seeing no utility in it, do not believe him:

Bérenger: Voler est un besoin indispensable à l'homme.

John Bull: Je ne vous crois pas.

Ier Anglais: Nous avons surtout besoin de manger.

IIe Anglais: Ensuite de boire.

Journaliste: Ensuite de philosopher.
Ire Anglaise: Et s'il nous reste du temps.

IIe Anglaise: Volerons-nous peut-être, pour nous amuser.

Joséphine: Tout le monde te donne tort.

Berenger: Mais non, mais non, tout le monde doit savoir voler. C'est une faculté innée. Tout le monde oublie. Comment en ai-je pu oublier le procédé. C'est simple, pourtant, lumineux, enfantin. Quand on ne voie pas, c'est pire que si nous étions privés de nourriture. C'est pour cela sans doute que nous nous sentons malheureux. 145

In more philosophical terms Martin Buber has expressed this same necessity for man to experience full presence. However, it is not possible for man to live always in the bare present:

Life would be quite consumed if precautions were not taken to subdue the present speedily and thoroughly. But it is possible to live in the bare past, indeed only in it may life be organized. We only need to fill each moment with experiencing and using, and it ceases to burn.

And in all seriousness of truth, hear this: without it man cannot live. But he who lives with it alone is not a man. 146

In spite of the villagers' objections that flying will ruin the economy, that it is not natural, that it is against scientific progress, and in spite of their attempts to explain away his flying: that he walked on an invisible arch, that there was a solidification of the air, that even if he did fly, he did not go as fast as airplanes do—in spite of all these rationalizations, Bérenger rises higher and higher in the air until he becomes invisible.

When he returns later, aghast by what he has seen—"des colonnes

145 Ibid., p. 166.

146 Buber, op. cit., p. 34.
de guillotines, des gens que l'on fouettait, des couteaux, des
tombeaux, la terre qui craque, the inauthenticity of the
villagers makes it as impossible for them to believe in what he
has seen as it was for them to accept his flying:

Journaliste: Il n'a rien vu du tout. Il a tout simplement
lu cela dans l'Apocalypse...Si vous n'avez pas autre
chose à nous dire, Monsieur, je ne prends pas de notes.

IIe Anglaise: Faites un effort, Monsieur Bérenger, pour nous
qui vous admirons. Racontez-nous votre voyage.

Bérenger: J'essaie.

Ire Anglaise: Des choses plus intéressantes et plus modernes.148

Their refusal to hear him grows out of the same unwillingness to
face reality that motivated Vladimir's refusal to hear Estragon's
nightmare. In I and Thou, Martin Buber referred to the same
embracing of reality that Bérenger has experienced, when he wrote:
"If only we love the real world, that will not let itself be
extinguished, really in its horror, if only we venture to surround
it with the arms of our spirit, our hands will meet hands that
grip them."149 And Ionesco himself confesses a similar confrontation
with reality in a passage previously cited:

Maintenant, si vous me demandez mon avis personnel
sur ce "cauchemar réel" je vous avoue, tout à fait entre
nous, que j'ai bien le sentiment que la vie est cauche-
mardesque, qu'elle est pénible, insupportable comme

147Ionesco, Le Piéton de l'air, p. 195.
148Ibid.
149Buber, op. cit., pp. 94-95.
un mauvais rêve. Regardez autour de vous: guerres, catastrophes et désastres, haines et persécutions, confusion, la mort qui nous guette...

Abandoned by all of the villagers even before he reaches the end of his "vision," Bérenger appears almost overcome by what he has seen and their disbelief:

Bérenger: Personne ne peut me croire. Je savais bien que personne ne me croirait...de la boue, du feu, du sang...des rideaux immenses de flammes.

Marthe: Moi, je te crois. Nous te croyons.

Joséphine: Envoie-nous, plus loin que l'autre côté, plus loin que les Enfers.

Bérenger: Hélas! je ne peux pas, mes chéries. Après, il n'y a plus rien.

Joséphine: Comment rien?

Bérenger: Rien. Après, il n'y a plus rien, plus rien que les abîmes illimités...que les abîmes.

Thus Bérenger-writer confronts his finitude and accepts his movement toward Nothing. This is the experience that the villagers are unconsciously avoiding, and that Bérenger-roi had refused to face, until it was forced upon him. Heidegger, as quoted by Langan, described both the emotion that Bérenger felt and the experience that he underwent when he wrote: "In anguish the Dasein discovers himself confronted by the Nothingness of the possible impossibility of his existence."152

150Ionesco, Notes et contre-notes, pp. 91-92.
151Ionesco, Le Piéton de l'air, pp. 197-198.
152Langan, op. cit., p. 36.
The man who cannot accept his finitude, his movement from Nothing to Nothing, cannot be authentic, for he has denied his essential nature. Unable to accept himself as he really is—being-toward-death—he becomes alienated from himself (he loses his identity) and from the world (he feels overcome by the world.). Beckett expresses this latter state by his often repeated "Rien à faire"; Ionesco, by the proliferation of things. None of the characters of Beckett's theater relate to death realistically; consequently authenticity is denied them. Even Vladimir and Estragon only stand on the threshold of authenticity. Existing in a limbo of boredom halfway between life and death, Beckett's characters long for the ultimate escape, but they hesitate. Having never been really sure of their existence, they are unable to face the possibility of their Nothingness.

In Ionesco's theater one character stands out in his authenticity—Bérenger. He alone is willing to suffer the anguish (Angst) of seeing his own finitude; and consequently, he alone is able to live fully present. Bérenger is not always authentic—in fact, a life of complete authenticity is not possible—and when he is not, he feels the same depression and ennui that beset Beckett's characters. Ionesco describes this state as being "entre l'être et le non-être." But at other times Bérenger undergoes the hell of anguish and the

153Ionesco, Notes et contre-notes, p. 115.
heaven of euphoria and at such times he sees as if for the first

time—he is fully alive and in tune with reality.
CHAPTER V

THE INAUTHENTICITY OF GENET'S PERSONA

Jean Genet's world is that of the neurotic where the real is "derealized," and the unreal made real. His world is like a reflection in a broken mirror—a myriad of distorted shapes, further removed from reality by being reflected in still other mirrors. This world is not a product of his imagination; it is a poetized reflection of his life—that of a thief, betrayer, and homosexual.

When he was ten years old, his foster parents caught him in the act of stealing. In an instant, as they denounced him as a thief, his whole life was metamorphosed. The innocent child suddenly became the thief. In the years immediately following the theft, Genet sought to go backwards, to undo his crime in some way, and above all, to avoid its repetition. In *Haute Surveillance*, Yeux-Verts, who has committed murder (the crime that Genet, in a later stage of development comes to idolize), describes his attempt—and Genet's—to regain innocence, only to find that his crime is irremediable:

>J'ai voulu revenir en arrière, macache! Pourtant on peut dire que j'ai fait des efforts. Je courrais à droite et à gauche. Je me tortillais. J'essayais toutes les formes pour ne pas devenir un assassin. Essayé d'être un chien, un chat, un cheval, un tigre, une table, une pierre! Une fois j'ai essayé d'être une rose. Vous n'allez pas rigoler, non, les gars? J'ai fait ce que j'ai pu. Je me contorsionnais. On m'aurait cru en caoutchouc. Les gens disaient que j'étais convulsionnaire.

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Mais je voulais remonter le temps, défaire mon travail, revivre jusqu'avant le crime. Remonter à l'air facile, c'est mon corps qui ne passait pas. Je faisais ce que je pouvais : impossible... Ma danse! Si tu avais vu ma danse! J'ai dansé, les gars, j'ai dansé!

Surrounded by righteous parents who now suspect his every action, Genêt finds his crime irreversible—he is no longer that which he was; for, indeed, that which he was is now dead. Prior to his crime, Genêt was not aware of himself as an object; that is to say, he had no image of himself. In his innocence he was in a state of total subjectivity. This state of being ended abruptly with the accusation "You are a thief," which, in essence, robbed him of his subjectivity and objectified him. From this moment on, Genêt attempts to look at himself only as others see him and he completely ceases to exist for himself. He knows himself only as an image, a persona.²

It is at this point that Genêt makes the decision that will shape the rest of his life—the decision to will his crime, the decision to will his being what crime has made of him, the decision to become a thief. But from the very moment of its conception this enterprise is doomed to failure. It is inauthentic at its very core, both from the point of view of society and from the point of view of his own coming-to-be. Society has already branded Genêt a thief, therefore it is impossible for him to will becoming that


2Persona originally referred to the mask worn by an actor; it has been adopted by psychologists to refer to the image that one has of oneself. It is essentially a role that one plays in life.
which, in their eyes, he already is. In terms of his own Self, neither one act of theft nor numerous acts of theft can make him be a thief, no more than one act or many acts of heroism can make him be a hero. The Self is never constant, never fixed; in reality, therefore, it can never be absolutely identified as thief, hero, coward, saint, and so on. The only constant thing about the Self is its potential for change. Thus, in attempting to identify his essence with the reflection that he sees of himself in the world, Genet begins his long and tortuous struggle with inauthenticity. He creates a myth of his being a thief. Alan W. Watts, in The Two Hands of God: The Myth of Polarity, offers a definition of myth that is directly related to Genet's experience: "Myths are the instruments by which we continually struggle to make our experience intelligible to ourselves. A myth is a large controlling image that gives philosophical meaning to the facts of ordinary life; that is, which has organizing value for experience." Genet, being unable to tolerate his parents' accusation, which represented to him the withdrawal of their affection, begins to identify with them in the role that they have assumed toward him—just as they become his judges, he begins to judge himself and to see himself as a thief.

Genet wants being, but the being he strives for is outside of himself and is therefore unattainable. At the same time, on

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a deeper psychic leve, he wants non-being. Longing for his lost innocence, he would like to destroy the world that stole it from him and would like to destroy what he thinks he has become—the thief. Consciously, he sets out to become a thief; unconsciously he resents the thief that he thinks the world has forced on the innocent child and, far below the level of his awareness, a reversal of roles takes place—the world becomes the thief for having robbed him of his innocence and he, the "thief," becomes the victim. From this point begins the complex interplay between reality and appearance, and between the revolté who seeks to destroy and the victim who seeks self-destruction, that comprises Genêt's personality. Un fortunately neither Genêt the revolté nor Genêt the victim is real. Both are the product of a dream or myth, and both can be perpetuated only by the imagination. Jean-Paul Sartre has analyzed Genêt's self-deception as follows:

Le secret de ces comédi es forcées réside en ceci: Il est des situations qu'on ne peut que subir mais subir est impossible parce que l'homme se définit par l'acte; quand l'action est refoulée par le monde, elle s'intériorise et s'irréalis e, elle est jouée; réduit à l'impuissance, l'agent devient acteur. Tel est précisément le cas de Genêt: sa volonté oisive passe à l'imagination; comédien malgré lui, son refus du monde n'est qu'un geste.4

Genêt knows that he is pretending and he wills the perpetuation of his falsity. Unlike the characters of Beckett and Ionesco, who sense their inauthenticity and long to escape from it, Genêt's

characters, like Genêt himself, entrench themselves in pretense. In ritual-like fashion they play at being what they are not, with the diabolical lucidity of the schizophrenic. They are simultaneously themselves and the Other and are fully conscious of their duality. In *Les Bonnes*, Claire, the maid plays the part of her mistress while her sister, Solange, also a maid, plays the part of Claire. As "Madame," Claire is the Other—the mistress that she neither loves nor hates—but she is also still Claire, the maid who from behind the protective shield of her role as "Madame" can attack herself and her sister in the form of Solange-Claire. Such is Genêt's dualism. Having internalized the Other, the Accuser, the Judge, Genêt will never know the experience of self-acceptance. Sartre describes Genêt's inner division as follows:

5Because Genêt's characters are always consciously acting out their roles, Lionel Abel has classified his theater as metatheater, in the tradition of Shakespeare and Calderon. He explains his point concerning the metaplay as follows:

"But to come back to the metaplay. It is the necessary form for dramatizing characters who, having full self-consciousness, cannot but participate in their own dramatization. Hence the famous lines of Jacques, Shakespeare's philosopher of metatheater, 'All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players.' The same motion is expressed by Calderon, who entitled one of his works The Great Stage of the World. For both the Spanish and the English poet there could not but be an essential illusoriness in reality...Life is a Dream is the title of Calderon's greatest play, and Shakespeare's theater terminates with the famous: 'We are such stuff as dreams are made on.'

"In the metaplay there will always be a fantastic element. For in this kind of play fantasy is essential, it is what one finds at the heart of reality...As in tragedy the misfortunes of the hero must be necessary and not accidental, so in a metaplay life must be a dream and the world must be a stage."

Il est fait comme un rat: la morale au nom de laquelle on le condamne, on la lui a si profondément inculquée qu'elle fait corps avec lui. Non: quoi qu'il fasse, les gens de bien ont l'initiative et ne la perdront plus: ils ont pénétré au plus profond de son coeur et y ont établi un délégué permanent qui est lui-même. C'est lui-même qui sera en même temps le tribunal et l'accuse, le gendarme et le voleur; c'est lui qui commettra le délit, qui rendra la sentence et qui l'appliquera. S'il veut rentrer en soi pour échapper au blâme de son entourage, il trouvera un blâme plus sévère encore: le sien. Bourreau zélé de soi-même il ressentira désormais ses affections, ses humeurs, ses pensées, jusqu'à ses perceptions sous forme d'un conflit. Le désir le plus simple, le plus légitime lui apparaîtra comme désir de voleur, donc comme coupable.

Being an authoritarian character, Genêt has adopted the morality of the "they" as his own. Seeing himself only as reflected in the eyes of the Other, Genêt accepts his crime as a permanent predisposition—hence a kind of destiny. In analyzing this metamorphosis, Sartre writes:

Il tient l'existence des adultes pour plus certaine que la sienne propre et leurs témoignages pour plus vrais que celui de sa conscience. Il affirme la priorité de l'objet qu'il est pour eux sur le sujet qu'il est pour soi; donc, sans en avoir clairement conscience, il juge que l'apparence (ce qu'il est pour eux) est la réalité (ce qu'il est pour soi) n'est qu'apparence. C'est sa certitude intime qu'il sacrifie au principe d'autorité; c'est la voix du cognito qu'il refuse d'entendre...

Circumstances, however, have placed him in opposition to the very morality that he has internalized; thus he is in eternal conflict with himself. Determined to will that which he has been declared by the Other—a thief—Genêt, in essence, determines to will his allegiance to Evil. Thus he aligns himself with thieves, murderers,

6 Sartre, Saint Genêt: Comédien et Martyr, p. 27.

7 Ibid., p. 40.
beggars, and homosexuals, as do the characters of his theater. From this position he can both revolt against the Other by perpetuating his crimes and punish himself for what he is—a criminal.

No longer able to distinguish his reality (that which he really is) from his appearance (the persona which is reflected by the "they"), Genêt becomes a stranger to himself. The only hope of establishing identity seems to lie in role-playing like that of the characters of Les Bonnes, Les Nègres, and Le Balcon, or in close association (usually in the form of homosexual relationships) with someone who is sure of his identity, as is Yeux-Verts of Haute Surveillance.

Genêt finds no more acceptance in the world of the criminal than he did in the world of the righteous, for the true criminals know him as a fraud—a thief who stole, not out of covetousness, but simply in order to be a thief. Finding himself condemned by the criminal world, Genêt, always in search of being, turns to homosexuality. As Sartre has pointed out, behind homosexuality is the longing for identity: "...l'amour est un cérémonial magique par quoi l'amant vole à l'aimé son être pour se l'incorporer." Thus like Maurice and Lefranc (Haute Surveillance), who vie for the affection of Yeux-Verts, Genêt will submit to the haughty criminals with whom he seeks to identify. Genêt's passive homosexuality is an amplification of the role of victim that he has already chosen for himself. Having determined to steal so that he can be condemned

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8 Ibid., p. 84.
and punished by society (he was convicted ten times for theft), he now determines to surrender to the male. Sartre describes Genêt's inclination for suffering at the hand of his beloved as follows: "Pour qu'il se sente apparentir à l'Autre et que, par cette démission, il devienne l'Autre à ses propres yeux, il faut que la force de l'aimé le courbe jusqu'à terre. Qu'on le viole, qu'on le brutalise, qu'on le frappe et surtout qu'il ne puisse rompre ses chaînes, sous peine de mort." In line with his strong masochistic tendencies, Genêt both loves and hates the criminals who dominate him. Such is the feeling of Lefranc and Maurice towards Boule-de-Neige and Yeux-Verts (Haute Surveillance), of the maids towards their mistress (Les Bonnes), and of the "blacks" towards the "whites" (Les Nègres).

For Genêt the emotions of hate and love are not only directed at the Other as separate from him, but also at the Other within himself. From this complex duality of emotions develops his idea of murder as the ideal crime. For Genêt, one kills oneself as one kills the Other—thus one perpetuates the duality of being both the revolté and the victim—without terminating one's existence—an event which would make further revenge and self-punishment impossible. Genêt recognizes himself as being incapable of murder, just as he came to realize that in spite of his will to be a thief he could in reality only act the part. In a like manner, some of his

9Ibid., p. 106.
characters (Lefranc, the maids, and the blacks) seek to establish their identity through the act of murder, only to find that they do not belong to the "race of murderers" and that their act, being inauthentic, is unable to provide them with the identity that they seek.

Having failed at being a thief, and being unable to murder, Genét turns to another "crime"—betrayal. Although not against the law in the sense that theft and murder are, betrayal is nevertheless "criminal"—its evil lying in its destructiveness. Furthermore, betrayal by its very essence is in harmony with Genét's duality: one can betray only that which one is a part of; in other words, in betraying the Other, one betrays oneself. To be specific, in betraying the criminals, he, in a sublimated manner, betrays the criminal part of himself that he unconsciously would like to destroy. Likewise, many of his characters are betayers. The maids betray Madame's lover by falsely accusing him of theft; but they also betray themselves, leaving obvious clues that they have been masquerading as Madame, such as powder spilled on the dressing table, the misplaced key to the desk, and the presence of the kitchen alarm clock in Madame's room. In Les Nègres, while the blacks are enacting a false murder in ritual form, a Negro betrayer is being killed elsewhere. Lefranc in Haute Surveillance betrays Yeux-Vert in spite of loving him so much that he commits murder in order to be like him.

Having been condemned by society and rejected by criminals, Genét finds himself defenseless in a no-man's-land between the two.
Unable to be absorbed by either, he is forced to find some way to make his existence tolerable. Betrayal is a means toward this end, as Sartre points out:

As is typical of the neurotic, Genêt's perception of reality and his behavior patterns become rigidly fixed. He is not free to see reality in any other fashion than he has in the past and his responses tend to be automatic repetitions of past responses.

His characters likewise exist within a relatively closed system whose repetitious nature takes on the appearance of a ritual—each day the maids masquerade as Madame, the blacks enact their false murder, and the clients come to the Balcony to play their personal drama. In describing the existence that Genêt created for himself, Sartre writes: "Cet adolescent s'est enfermé dans un véritable système paranoïaque: il ne se voit plus ni l'univers qu'au travers de petits maelstroms locaux. L'expérience ne lui apporte rien: c'est tout au plus si elle donne le branle à ces automatismes. Sa pensée devient de moins en moins communicable et il le sait:

10Ibid., pp. 171-172.
Like a puppet Genêt goes through the motions of willing both being and non-being. Thus, he wills being, in acting out what he considers to be a preordained destiny; but at the same time he wills non-being, that is to say, destruction. These two conflicting acts of will have one thing in common: they are both imaginary; they both belong to a dream world. The purpose of both is to "derealize" reality. In retreating into an imaginary world, the neurotic, in effect, makes himself invulnerable. Genêt and his characters deliberately choose to be actors rather than persons. Unlike many neurotics whose withdrawal from reality goes on below the level of their awareness, Genêt and his personnages are always conscious of their fakery and they strive to maintain it, for it is within this pretense that they find their identity. When the clients of Le Balcon are given the chance to become that which they have been acting out, they hesitate, knowing that for them reality will be far less satisfying than pretense.

Concerning the willful perpetuation of this hoax, Sartre writes:

A ce reveur eveillé, rien n'appartient sur terre sauf les mensonges, les faux et les contrefaçons. C'est le seigneur des faux-semblants, des attrape-mignons et des trompe-l'oeil. Partout où des objets se donnent pour ce qu'ils ne sont pas, ne se donnent pas pour ce qu'ils sont, il est roi. Roi en toc, Roi du toc. Et qu'est-ce que le toc, sinon la contre-façon de l'être? Ce faux diamant est une iréalisation du verre et la caricature du vrai diamant. Genêt se devait d'affirmer la supériorité absolue du faux luxe sur le vrai, du mauvais goût sur le bon goût.12

11 Ibid., p. 314.
12 Ibid., p. 335.
The deliberate perpetuation of fraud, even unto death, is the underlying theme of Genèt's first play, *Les Bonnes* (1948). Fakery is suspected from the moment the curtain opens and reveals the profusion of flowers that fill Madame's bedroom, whose Louis XV furnishings and lace accessories testify to an exaggerated femininity. "Madame's" artificially tragic gestures, as she stands in a dressing gown before the mirror, give validity to the feeling that this is a world of make-believe. The stage directions define her attitude as follows: "Son geste—le bras tendu—et le ton, seront d'un tragique exaspéré." At this point the spectator can only intuitively sense the fraud; not until a few minutes later, with the sounding of the kitchen alarm clock which reminds Claire and Solange that it is time for Madame's return, is the sham fully revealed.

The "Madame" that has been preening herself in her mirror and insulting her maid, "Claire" is not Madame at all; nor is the maid "Claire" real. They are both fakes. Claire, masquerading as Madame, has been interpreting "Madame," not as she really is, but as the maids want her to be. Needing a reason to hate Madame, whose kindness to them makes their hate difficult to accept in good conscience, Claire portrays her as cruel and abusive. Solange, a maid like her sister Claire, does not enter into the play as herself, for realistic relating would be too confining. In order to partake of the fakery and the freedom it offers, she must play the other

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maid, Claire. But like schizophrenics, neither Claire nor Solange is able to rid herself completely of her Self as she plays the Other; therefore, they relate to one another in a dual fashion: Claire speaks as "Madame," based on her image of Madame, but also as Claire; likewise, Solange in speaking to the duality that is Claire-Madame, speaks as the maid Claire, according to the image that they think Madame has of her, and as herself, Solange. Here is Genet's world of mirrors and its reflections of reflections at its very best, for one is always questioning the identity of the speaker. This schizophrenic relationship serves not only to justify the hate that the maids feel, but also to intensify it and to allow it to be expressed overtly. When they are themselves, the maids are wary of giving expression to their hatred of each other and of what they are; but in their roles they feel free to express not only their hatred of Madame, but also of each other and of themselves. In the first speech of the play, Claire as "Madame," referring to the rubber gloves that Solange-Claire is holding, expresses this fusion of hate:

Et ces gants! Ces éternels gants! Je t'ai dit assez souvent de les laisser à la cuisine. C'est avec ça, sans doute, que tu espères séduire le laitier. Non, non, ne mens pas, c'est inutile. Pends-les au-dessus de l'évier. Quand comprendras-tu que cette chambre ne doit pas être souillée? Tout, mais tout! ce qui vient de la cuisine est crachats! Sors. Et remporte tes crachats!...

14 Ibid.
Their hatred for Madame is given verbal expression as Claire, speaking as "Madame," continues: "Vous me détestez, n'est-ce pas? Vous m'écrasez sous vos prévenances, sous votre humilité,..."\textsuperscript{15} But immediately the focus of the hatred shifts again as Claire says: "Je serais belle. Plus que vous ne le serez jamais. Car, ce n'est pas avec ce corps et cette face que vous séduirez Mario. Ce jeune laitier ridicule nous méprise, et s'il vous a fait un gosse..."\textsuperscript{16} Claire appears to despise her condition as maid so intensely that as "Madame" she will not even allow Solange to touch her: "Evitez de me froîler. Reculez-vous. Vous sentez le fauve."\textsuperscript{17}

When they are themselves, Claire tends to submit to Solange's stronger personality. Even in their role-playing this relationship continues, in spite of the fact that Claire plays the role that should dominate. When Claire-Madame decides that she will wear her white dress, Solange-Claire replies: "Je regrette. Madame portera ce soir la robe de velours écarlate."\textsuperscript{18} Although Solange is the dominant personality and the instigator of most of their undertakings, Claire is the one who actually executes the plans. At Solange's suggestion, she has written a number of letters accusing Monsieur (Madame's lover) of theft. They have, in fact, led to

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., p. 63.
\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., p. 67.
\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., p. 64.
his arrest. As she plays "Madame," Claire repeatedly slips out of her role and speaks for herself, as she does in referring to her part in betraying Monsieur:

Claire: Si Monsieur est en prison, c'est grâce à moi, ose le dire! Ose! Tu as ton franc-parler, parle. J'agis en dessous, camouflée par mes fleurs, mais tu ne peux rien contre moi.

Solang: Le moindre mot vous paraît une menace. Que Madame se souvienne que je suis la bonne.19

Like Genêt, who found pleasure in humbling himself to the haughty criminals he adored, Claire, safe in her role as "Madame," reveals a similar masochistic disposition which makes itself evident as she imagines Monsieur condemned to prison: "Monsieur, de bagne en bagne, sera conduit jusqu'à la Guyane peut-être, et moi, sa maîtresse, folle de douleur, je l'accompagnerai. Je serai du convoi. Je partagerai sa gloire. Tu parles de veuvages. La robe blanche est le deuil des reines, Claire, tu l'ignores. Tu me refuses la robe blanche!"20 Claire's suffering, her mourning for Monsieur are as false as the part she plays. When Madame enters some time later on, one senses that the emotions, the martyrdom, and the mourning that she manifests because of Monsieur's imprisonment are no more real than is Claire's suffering as she plays "Madame."

It is also evident that like Claire and Solange, who find their identity in masquerading as "Madame," she finds hers in belonging.

19 Ibid., p. 65.
20 Ibid., p. 66.
to Monsieur. In a speech almost parallel to that of Claire-Madame, she reveals her secret desire to humble herself to Monsieur:

Il l'est! Il l'est! Mais innocent ou coupable, je ne l'abandonnerai jamais, jamais. Voici à quoi on reconnaît son amour pour un être: Monsieur n'est pas coupable, mais s'il l'était, je deviendrais sa complice. Je l'accompagnerais jusqu'à la Guyane, jusqu'en Sibérie. Je sais qu'il s'en tirera, au moins par cette histoire imbécile n'est-il donné de prendre conscience de mon attachement à lui. Et cet événement destine a nous séparer nous lie davantage. Et me rend presque plus heureuse. D'un bonheur monstrueux! Monsieur n'est pas coupable mais s'il l'était, avec quelle joie j'accepterais de porter sa croix. D'étape en étape, de prison en prison, et jusqu'au bagne je le suivrais.21

It is evident that, like her maids, Madame lives in a world of make-believe and that her suffering is imaginary. Sartre has suggested that Genêt's suffering is equally inauthentic: "Nous connaissons son faux masochisme, son dolorisme feint...il ne faut pas perdre de vue que ces souffrances sont imaginaires: il ne les ressent pas."22

Genêt, existing only as a persona (defined by his accusers as a thief), became totally dependent on the "they" for his identity. A fake thief can exist only as long as he maintains the appearance of a thief in the eyes of the Other. Out of this inauthenticity grew his hatred for the Other, and for the part of him that had identified with the Other. Such is the state of being of Solange and Claire, who find their identity in being Madame's maids, so

21Ibid., p. 104.

that without Madame they are nothing. In her role as "Madame," Claire expresses their dependence upon Madame for their being and the hatred that springs from their inauthenticity:

Par moi, par moi seule, la bonne existe. Par mes cris et par mes gestes...C'est grâce à moi que tu es, et tu me nargues! Tu ne peux savoir comme il est pénible d'être Madame, Claire, d'être le prétexte à vos simagrées. Il me suffirait de si peu et n'existerais plus. Mais je suis bonne, mais je suis belle, et je te défie.

Speaking as Claire, Solange voices the venomous hatred that the maids feel for Madame; the hatred that they hope will lead them to murder her:

Je vous hais! Je vous méprise. Vous ne m'intimidez plus. Réveillez le souvenir de votre amant, qu'il vous protège. Je vous hais!...(Elle crache sur la robe rouge.) Je vous hais!...Oui Madame, ma belle Madame. Vous croyez que tout vous sera permis jusqu'au bout? Vous croyez pouvoir dérober la beauté du ciel et m'en priver? Choisir vos parfums, vos poudres, vos rouges à ongles, la soie, le velours, la dentelle, et m'en priver?

Suddenly her mask slips and reveals her, not playing "Claire" speaking to "Madame," but being herself speaking to Claire:

Alan Watts in The Two Hands of God: They Myths of Polarity, offers a definition of polarity that is very applicable to the relationship between Madame and the maids. Watts writes:

"What, exactly, is polarity? It is something much more than simple duality or opposition. For to say that opposites are polar is to say much more than that they are far apart: it is to say that they are related and joined—that they are the terms, ends, or extremities of a single whole. Polar opposites are therefore inseparable opposites, like the poles of the earth or of a magnet, or the ends of a stick or the faces of a coin."

Watts, op. cit., p. 49.

Genêt, Les Bonnes, pp. 70-71.

Ibid., p. 72.

Claire: Claire! Claire!

Solange: Hein?

Claire: Claire, Solange, Claire.

Solange: Ah, oui, Claire. Claire vous emmède! Claire est là, plus claire que jamais. Lumineuse! (Elle gifle Claire).25

Thus Claire and Solange are jealous of one another, the object of this jealousy being the milkman. In Haute Surveillance a parallel emotional conflict exists between Lefranc and Maurice, who compete for the affection of Yeux-Verts.

The intensity of the emotion increases to the point that Solange-Claire appears on the verge of killing Claire-Madame, until her action is stopped by the ringing of the alarm clock which signals the end of their performance. Quickly they must put everything in order before Madame returns, but they find it exceedingly difficult to make the psychic adjustment necessary to be themselves again. They are both disconcerted by the hatred that they revealed for one another as they played their roles. Solange in particular feels insecure and unloved, both as an individual and as one of the maids:

Solange: Personne ne m'aime. Personne ne nous aime!

Claire: Elle, elle nous aime. Elle est bonne. Madame est bonne! Madame nous adore.

26Ibid., pp. 72-73.
Solange: Elle nous aime comme ses fauteuils... Comme son bidet. Et nous, nous ne pouvons pas nous aimer. La crasse... N'aime pas la crasse. Later in a more direct manner, Solange refers to their inability to love one another: "S'aimer dans la servitude, ce n'est pas s'aimer." Each evening, Claire and Solange perform their ritual-like masquerade, but their pretense and their identification with Madame do not end with the ceremony. During the night, when she thinks she is all alone, Claire, wrapped in a lace bedspread, smiles at herself in mirrors and walks along the balcony as if before a crowd of admirers. Solange continues her pretense in quite another way. She has stolen a postcard from Monsieur to Madame, and has hidden it among her things in the attic. One night, Solange, planning to strangle Madame, tiptoed to her bed, but frightened by a sudden movement, fled. Just as Solange has spied on Claire's solitary promenades, so has Claire seen Solange attempting to murder Madame; and she is frightened of her sister, knowing that Solange's hatred is directed not only at Madame, but at her also: "Je t'ai vue. Et j'ai eu peur. Peur, Solange. Quand nous accomplissons la cérémonie, je protège mon cou. C'est moi que tu vises à travers Madame, c'est moi qui suis en danger." Solange is equally distrustful of Claire, fearing her to be a betrayer: "Tu aurais été la première

27 I bid., pp. 81-82.
28 I bid., p. 96.
29 I bid., p. 88.
Solange, like Genêt, is not capable of being a murderer, but she longs to commit a crime whose beauty will redeem her menial nature. She is suffocating from the intensity of her desire and her impatience to act. She expresses her frustration saying: "Depuis longtemps je voulais mener le jeu à la face du monde, hurler ma vérité sur les toits, descendre dans la rue sous les apparences de Madame..."31

An unexpected telephone call from Monsieur, who has been released from prison, puts the maids in a state of panic. Knowing that there will be an attempt to discover the betrayer, and knowing also that they always leave traces of their masquerade, they become extremely frightened—so frightened that all of reality seems to be accusing them. Solange, the more fearful of the two, expresses her anxiety in these words:

"Malheureuse! Mais le jeu même est dangereux. Je suis sûre que nous avons laissé des traces. Par ta faute. Nous en laissons chaque fois. Je vois une foule de traces que je ne pourrai jamais effacer. Et elle, elle se promène au milieu de cela qu'elle apprivoise. Elle le décifre. Elle pose le bout de son pied rose sur nos traces. L'une après l'autre, elle nous découvre...Elle saura que nous mettions ses robes, que nous volions ses gestes, que nous embobinions son amant de nos simagrées. Tout va parler, Claire. Tout nous accusera. Les rideaux marqués par tes épaules, les miroirs par mon visage, la lumière qui avait l'habitude de nos folies, la lumière va tout avouer."32

30 Ibid., p. 88.
31 Ibid., p. 91.
32 Ibid., pp. 93-94.
Claire and Solange realize that the only way to save themselves is to commit the murder that they have dreamed of. Or perhaps their fear of discovery is only a rationalization that will make it possible for them to act. Concerning latent hatred, Erich Fromm has written: "...the destructive impulses are a passion within a person, and they always succeed in finding some object. If for any reason other persons cannot become the object of an individual's destructiveness, his own self easily becomes the object. When this happens in a marked degree, physical illness is often the result and even suicide may be attempted." 33

In spite of the fact that she has already failed to find within herself the courage to kill, Solange says: "Je peux encore trouver la force qu'il faut." 34 But Claire knows her sister too well to rely on her: "Tu es incapable d'un acte aussi terrible. Mais moi, je peux réussir. Je suis capable de tout, tu sais." 35 In reality, Claire is less impotent than Solange—she does put an overdose of sleeping pills in Madame's tea—but in the final analysis, she too is lacking in sufficient strength to carry the deed to its conclusion. She is unable to resist telling Madame that Monsieur is free, and in her haste to be united with him again, Madame leaves without drinking her tea. Unable to accomplish a real murder, and aware that their betrayal is soon to be discovered, Claire and

33Fromm, op. cit., p. 203.
34Genêt, Les Bonnes, p. 94.
35Ibid., pp. 94-95.
Solange turn to their world of illusion and ceremony for a solution. Solange thinks of killing Claire, whose death will cause her to be condemned to death. But she can commit murder only in her imagination. In contradiction to her declaration "Madame est morte! étendue sur le linoléum...étranglée par les gants de la vaisselle," Madame is with Monsieur, and Claire-Madame is crouching in the corner. In her imagination Solange sees herself as a famous criminal: "Je suis l'êtrangleuse. Mademoiselle Solange, celle qui étrangla sa soeur!" But the image which has provided her with a momentary sense of identity fades, and Solange stands in fearful impotence, not knowing what to do. It is at this point that Claire reveals again her capacity for action. As "Madame" she instructs Solange-Claire to pour her a cup of tea. Claire is forced to apply pressure in order to persuade Solange to play her role as "Claire," who will give the poisoned tea to "Madame:"


Solange: Non, je ne veux pas.

Claire: Garce! répète. Madame prendra son tilleul.

Solange: Madame prendra son tilleul...

36 Ibid., p. 134.

37 Ibid., p. 136.
Claire: Car il faut qu'elle dorme...
Solange: Car il faut qu'elle dorme...
Claire: Et que je veille.
Solange: Et que je veille.

Claire's death will make it possible for Solange to have identity: that of "la poisonneuse." However, in reality, the identity will be as false as the murder for which society will condemn her. Claire's death cannot be considered murder, since she engineered it herself, but it is not a true suicide either, for at the moment of her death she was not Claire, but "Madame;" therefore, she was, in essence, killing the Other. The death is real, but the crime is false--false murder, false suicide.

Genet's second play, *Haute Surveillance* (1949), exactly duplicates the character structures of *Les Bonnes*. The counterparts of Claire and Solange are Lefranc and Maurice, two petty criminals who seek their identity in Yeux-Verts, the murderer, who of course parallels Madame. The place of Monsieur, that somewhat mysterious person who is never seen yet whose presence is always felt, is reproduced in *Haute Surveillance* by Boule-de-Neige, who, though likewise invisible, makes his presence felt through the entire prison. Lefranc describes his effect on all the prisons of France as follows: "Il brille. Il rayonne. Il est noir et il éclaire les dix mille cellules."39

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38*Ibid.*, pp. 139-140.
The masquerade ends with Les Bonnes, not to be resumed until Le Balcon, but the world of unreality continues. In the stage directions to Haute Surveillance Genêt indicates that "Toute la pièce se déroulera comme dans un rêve..." and concludes by reminding the reader that the characters are not persons, but actors: "Nous jouons tragiquement mais nous jouons."

The play is a reflection of Genêt's personal concept of Beauty—that which is evil and false. The characters are described as follows:

Le Survellant: Jeune et beau.

Although never seen, Boule-de-Neige is similarly described by Maurice: "C'est un beau gosse." Each of the criminals is also conscious of his own personal beauty. Yeux-Verts, in defending the beauty of his crime against Lefranc's disparaging remarks, asks rhetorically: "Jules, il y en a combien qui sont aussi jeunes que moi, aussi beau que moi et qui ont connu un pareil malheur?"

Maurice vaunting himself in front of Lefranc says: "Tu ne vas pas nier que je suis le plus beau gosse de la tôle?...Avec une gueule

\[40\textit{Ibid.}, p. 9.\]
\[41\textit{Ibid.}, p. 10.\]
\[42\textit{Ibid.}, p. 9.\]
\[43\textit{Ibid.}, p. 15.\]
\[44\textit{Ibid.}, p. 54.\]
The theme of homosexuality, which existed in a somewhat nebulous form in *Les Bonnes*, becomes one of the principal themes of *Haute Surveillance*. Its presence in *Les Bonnes* would have been immediately felt had the directors followed Genet's suggestion that the part of the maids be played by boys: "S'il me fallait faire représenter une pièce théâtrale où des femmes auraient un rôle, j'exigerais que ce rôle fut tenu par des adolescents, et j'en avertirais le public, grâce à une pancarte qui resterait clouée à droite ou à gauche..."

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des décors durant toute la représentation." However, Jouvet, who directed the first production of *Les Bonnes* chose not to develop this aspect of the play; therefore, one's awareness of the homosexual tendencies of Claire and Solange, in spite of their protests about the milkman, are dependent upon such passages as the following one in which Solange comforts Claire, who has exhausted herself as Madame:

Solange: Ne parle pas. Laisse-moi faire. Je vais t'endormir. Quand tu dormiras, je te porterai la-haut, dans la mansarde. Je te déshabillerai et je te coucherai dans ton lit-cage. Dors, je serai là...

Claire: Tu as de beaux cheveux. Quels beaux cheveux. Les siens...

Solange: Ne parle plus d'elle.

Claire: Les siens sont faux. Tu te rappelles, toutes les deux. Sous l'arbre. Nos pieds au soleil?...

In *Haute Surveillance* Yeux-Vert, Maurice, and Lefranc share a cell, although it is evident from the context that Lefranc's presence in the cell has occurred very recently and that it is a constant source of friction. In this *menage à trois* Yeux-Vert is obviously the male for whose affection Maurice and Lefranc compete; it is even questionable if Yeux-Vert shares their homosexuality, for he is visted each day by his wife, whom he apparently loves very much. The probability that Yeux-Vert has not been inclined to engage in homosexual relations is further suggested by the fact that Lefranc

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is forced to betray Yeux-Verts in order to separate him from his wife, a separation which will place him in a more approachable position. Of the three prisoners, Maurice is unquestionably the female, his femininity being apparent in his size, looks, and gestures. Lefranc's disposition is variable. With Maurice he would be the male and has actually attempted to assume that relationship only to be rebuffed by Maurice, who will settle for no less than Yeux-Verts. With Yeux-Verts, Lefranc functions as the female. Sartre has revealed that Genet's homosexuality is directionally variable, like that of Lefranc. In his youth Genet was always the female; in his maturity he has become the male, a role which Sartre claims has never proven satisfying for Genet.

The criminals of Haute Surveillance search for identity, not in masquerading like the maids of Les Bonnes, but in crime and homosexuality. Yeux-Verts and Boule-de-Neige have established their identity—they are murderers; and yet, in spite of the crime that unites them, they are distinctly different. Boule-de-Neige is the callous criminal who is basically insensitive. He kills and steals with premeditation for utilitarian purposes. Yeux-Verts expresses the distinction between their crimes as follows: "Je suis peut-être moins fort que Boule-de-Neige parce que son crime était un peu plus nécessaire que le mien, parce qu'il a tué pour piller.

Because Yeux-Verts can neither read nor write, he has been dictating his letters to Lefranc; however, in order to cause Yeux-Verts' wife to leave him, Lefranc has been tampering with the content of the letters.
et pour voler, mais comme lui j'ai tué pour vivre et j'ai déjà le sourire."\(^5\) Yeux-Verts, like Genêt, was innocent once upon a time before the crime that changed his existence, and his crime was like an accident that befell him or an unknown destiny that caught him unaware. "C'est la fatalité qui a pris la forme de mes mains,"\(^3\) he says. Yeux-Verts describes the way he was before the crime: "Mais si vous m'aviez vu avant, les mains dans les poches, avec mes fleurs, avec toujours une fleur entre les dents!"\(^4\)

Suddenly the innocence, symbolized by the flowers, was destroyed by the reality of death: "Entre les dents, j'avais une grappe de lilas. C'est comme ça qu'elle est venue avec moi. Elle me suivait. Elle était aimantée. Après...après elle a voulu gueuler parce que je lui faisais mal. Je l'ai étouffée. J'ai cru qu'une fois morte je pourrais la ressuciter. Je l'ai vraiment cru."\(^5\) The wish to bring her back to life is in essence the wish to undo the crime, to regain the lost innocence. Having accepted the futility of longing to go backwards, Yeux-Verts begins the slow process of reconciliation that takes place throughout the play and results in his accepting what he has become and the fate that awaits him. Early in the play he says:

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\(^3\)Ibid., p. 65.
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 65.
\(^5\)Ibid., p. 66.
J'ai fait les gestes qui devaient me mener le plus tranquillement possible à la guillotine. Maintenant, je suis calme. Ça me délivre. La danse me délivre un peu mais pas tout à fait. J'ai l'impression qu'il me reste encore quelque chose sur le cœur. Par moment, je suffoque. Ma nouvelle vie commencera quand je serai complètement calme. Complètement seul. 56

At this point he is unaware that the experience that is lacking is that of renunciation, the experience to which Berenger-Roi (Le Roi se meurt) finally submitted and which made freedom possible for him. Ultimately Yeux-Verts undergoes this same experience, his renunciation being revealed by his giving up his wife to the guardian (who had befriended him upon occasion). Finally he is able to say: "Le malheur, je l'ai d'abord refusé. C'est seulement quand j'ai vu qu'il n'y avait plus rien à faire que je me suis calmé. Je viens à peine de l'accepter. Il me le fallait total... C'est seulement d'aujourd'hui que je m'installe complètement dans le malheur et que j'en fais mon paradis." 57 Unlike Yeux-Verts and Boule-de-Neige who have already found their identity, the petty criminals, Lefranc and Maurice, are reaching out in search of theirs. Like Genêt, who willed being a thief in order to find identity, Lefranc wills being a murderer and does in fact murder Maurice, but the difference between his crime and that of Yeux-Verts is great, as Yeux-Verts points out:

56 Ibid., p. 58.
57 Ibid., p. 133.
Yeux-Verts: Ne me cause plus! Et ne me touche plus! Qu'est-ce que tu as fait? Tu sais ce que c'est que le malheur? Tu ne sais pas que j'ai tout espéré pour l'éviter? Salaud. Salaud. Salaud. Et toi tu croyais tout seul devenir aussi grand que moi? Tu espérais peut-être me dépasser? Et tu as le courage de te servir d'un innocent. Mais, malheureux, tu ne sais pas qu'on ne peut plus me dépasser?

Je n'ai rien voulu. Tu m'entends? Je n'ai rien voulu de ce qui m'est arrivé. Tout m'a été donné. Un cadeau. Du bon dieu ou du diable, mais quelque chose que je n'ai pas voulu.

Lefranc: J'ai compris. J'ai compris que je ne serai jamais avec vous Yeux-Verts. Mais dis-toi bien que je suis plus fort que personne. Parce que moi, je n'aurai pas besoin de danser pour essayer de défaire mon crime. Je l'ai voulu.

Yeux-Verts: Voilà le danger. Tu t'amènes légèrement et tu décides de descendre un gamin?...Moi, je n'ai jamais su que j'étirais la gosse. J'étais emporté. Je ne voulais rejoindre personne. J'ai tout risqué tout seul. J'ai fait un faux-pas qui m'a précipité dans le trou.

Lefranc: ...n'oublie pas que j'ai voulu devenir ce que tu étais...

Yeux-Verts: Ce que je suis malgré moi. Et ce que j'ai voulu détruire en dansant.

Lefranc: Mais que tu es fier d'être devenu. Tu te fais briller. Tu t'épuises à briller. J'ai voulu prendre ta place...

Yeux-Verts: Et mon crime?

Lefranc: Jusqu'au crime. 58

But like Genet, Lefranc learns that he is all alone; he does not belong; he is not one of the elect. He was deceived when he thought that acting led to being and murder to identity. It is not sufficient simply to kill, one must be recognized as a killer, for in Lefranc's world, as in Genet's, identity is synonymous with one's persona--

58 Ibid., pp. 130-132.
the image held by the Other; if the Other refuses to recognize one as a murderer, the crime is to no avail, for it has failed to establish the identity longed for. Genêt, explaining his idealization of murder, has written: "Toujours je demeurai hanté par l'idée d'un meurtre qui, irrémédiablement, me détacherait de votre monde."\(^5^9\)

In commenting on Genêt's statement, Sartre has pointed out that: "Ce qui le tente dans le crime, ce n'est pas le sang, encore moins la souffrance et les cris de la victime ou le bruit mou du couteau pénétrant dans la chair, c'est la gloire qu'il procure. En ce 'détachement irrémédiable,' vous reconnaissiez 'la gloire infâme,' du condamné à mort."\(^6^0\) In spite of all his attempts to identify with true murderers (such as wearing Yeux-Verts' coat, collecting photographs of famous murderers, having his chest tattooed like Yeux-Verts', and even killing Maurice), Lefranc is rejected, just as Genêt was, for the inauthenticity of his crime. Although Maurice, at the time of the play, has not yet established his identity and is seeking to do so by relating himself to Yeux-Verts, there is evidence that he is potentially a real criminal—that only his youth is hindering his fulfilling the destiny that awaits him. Yeux-Verts, recognizing Maurice's potential says: "Toi, dans un an ou deux tu feras un beau petit homme. Un cruel."\(^6^1\) And he is

\(^{5^9}\)Sartre, *Saint Genêt: Comédien et Martyr*, pp. 448-449.

\(^{6^0}\)Ibid., p. 449.

\(^{6^1}\)Genêt, *Haute Surveillance*, p. 43.
accepted by the criminals as belonging to their ranks. Lefranc, however, stands alone. Condemned by society because of his crimes and ostracized by the criminals because of his inauthenticity, he exists in painful isolation, an experience that was not unfamiliar to Genet himself.

In his next play, *Le Balcon* (1956), the search for identity through the medium of ritualistic masquerade, similar to that of *Les Bonnes*, is resumed. The clients of the Balcony come regularly, finding in Madame Irma's mirrors temporary relief from non-being. In this "house of illusion" they are free to enact their secret desires, to live in their imaginations that which is denied them in reality. Thus the routine of their lives as gasmen, bankers, waiters, plumbers, accountants, railroadmen fades before the illusion of what they long to be. Each of Madame Irma's clients creates his own scenario, some of which, according to Madame Irma's enumeration, are as follows:

...il y a deux rois de France, avec cérémonies du sacre et rituels différents, un admiral sombrant à la poupe de son torpilleur, un évêque pendant l'adoration perpétuelle, un juge dans ses fonctions, un général à cheval, un déy d'Alger capitulant, un pompier éteignant un incendie, une chèvre attachée au piquet, une ménagère revenant du marché, un voleur à la tire, un volé attaché et roué de coups, un saint Sébastien, un fermier dans sa grange, ...un missionnaire mourant sur la croix, et le Christ en personne.

Lest the spectator be seduced into confusing the masquerades with reality, the actors playing the scenarios are made considerably larger than life size. Thus the bishop is costumed as follows:

L'évêque, mitré et en chape dorée, est assis dans le fauteuil. Il est manifestement plus grand que nature. Le rôle sera tenu par un acteur qui montera sur des patins de tragédien d'environ 0\textsuperscript{m} 50 de haut. Ses épaules, ou repose la chape, seront élargies à l'extrême, de façon qu'il appaissa, au lever du rideau, démesuré et raide, comme un épouvantail.

Like the bishop, the judge "paraîtra démesuré, lui aussi rallongé par des patins..."65 In the general's scenario the spectator is permitted to watch the transformation of a timid, ordinary little man into a general of gigantic proportions:

Pendant toute la scène qui va suivre, la fille va aider le général à se déshabiller, puis à s'habiller en général. Lorsque celui-ci sera complètement habillé, l'on s'apercevra qu'il a pris des proportions gigantiques, grâce à un truquage de théâtre: patins invisibles, épaules élargies, visage maquillé à l'extrême.66

L'Évêque pronounces a benediction, hears the confessions of a young prostitute, and offers absolution; le Juge humbles himself before a thief, licks her foot, suddenly assumes the authority of a magistrate, questions her about her crime until she refuses to play the role of thief any longer, falls on his knees in supplication, licks her foot, and begins the cycle again; le General is first carried into battle by his beloved steed, then, dead, is drawn by

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64\textit{Ibid.}, p. 12.
65\textit{Ibid.}, p. 27.
66\textit{Ibid.}, p. 49.
her with pomp and ceremony in a military funeral parade. With the same duality that manifested itself in the maids as they are simultaneously themselves and the Other, each of the clients of the Balcony plays his role without ever completely forgetting himself. In fact, each finds identity, not in total self-deception, so that he thinks he actually is a bishop, a judge, or a general, but in pretense—that is to say, in the knowledge that he is the image of a bishop, a judge, or a general. Standing in front of one of Madame Irma's mirrors, l'Evêque says: "...je veux être évêque dans la solitude, pour la seule apparence..." and le Général almost echoes his words in speaking to the prostitute playing his horse: "Tu vas baisser ta tête et te cacher les yeux, car je veux être général dans la solitude. Pas même pour moi, mais pour mon image, et mon image pour son image, et ainsi de suite," Later when the real officiaries of the country are destroyed by the revolution and l'Evêque, le Juge, and le Général are offered the possibility of assuming their positions and of thereby becoming real, they are reluctant to do so, knowing that they find Being in illusion more satisfying than Being in reality. As Madame Irma suggests, in the midst of the reality that is their everyday life, each carries with him a glimmer of the dream he creates in the "house of illusion":

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67Ibid., p. 22.
68Ibid., pp. 55-56.
69Ibid., p. 72.
"Comme un lampion restant d'un 14 juillet, attendant l'autre, ou, si tu veux comme une lumière imperceptible à la fenêtre imperceptible d'un imperceptible château qu'ils peuvent en un éclair agrandir pour venir s'y reposer."  

Like their clients, the prostitutes of the Balcony prefer illusion to reality, as Carmen points out in speaking of the scenario in which she played the part of the Madonna healing a leper: "J'aimais ma robe, mon voile et mon rosier."  

Arthur, the Balcony's male prostitute, who is also seduced by the world of illusion, vaunts himself in the mirrors, reveling in the image of himself as a murderer. As it did for Lefranc, murder for Arthur offers an illusionary identity. He explains his motivation as follows: "...je n'ai pas tué Tino pour me défendre...ne même pour le tuer...mais pour que mon geste fasse de moi...fasse de moi un mac...un assassin, peut-être un bagnard...en tous cas qu'il me gagne un casier judiciaire."  

Genêt and his characters hunger for purity of being but such is not possible in the real world; in order for pure being to be possible, change would have to cease, but life without change is impossible. Therefore, the only refuge for those who want absolute being is illusion. Madame Irma is fully aware of the attraction

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70 Ibid.
71 Ibid., p. 73.
72 Ibid., p. 97.
that her "house of mirrors" has on her clients and her prostitutes, for as she says: "Ici la Comédie, l'Apparence se gardent pures, la Fête intacte." 73

Like the other characters, the Chief of Police frequents the Balcony, hoping to find identity there. Unlike the usual client who seeks identity in masquerading as another, the Chief of Police looks for self-affirmation in being impersonated by another. Unfortunately his public image has not yet assumed the proportions necessary for hero-worship, as madame Irma points out: "Mon cher, votre fonction n'a pas la noblesse suffisante pour proposer aux rêveurs une image qui les consolerait. Faute d'ancêtres illustres, peut-être? Non, cher ami...il faut en prendre votre parti: votre image n'accède pas encore aux liturgies du boxon." 74 The Chief of Police hopes to remedy this by triumphing over the revolution that is threatening to overthrow the government and thereby to create a colossal image of himself in the public eye. His secret desire is not only to be idolized in life, but also in death:

Le Chef de la Police: Oui ma chère, je veux construire un Empire...pour que l'Empire en échange me construise...

Irma: Un tombeau...

Le Chef de la Police: Mais, après tout, pourquoi pas? Alors? (Exalté) Alexandrie! J'aurai mon tombeau, Irma. 75

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73 Ibid., p. 76.
74 Ibid., p. 103.
75 Ibid., p. 106.
Within the Balcony all is false (except Madame Irma's jewels), all is illusion and sham, but pretense is not limited to this house of mirrors—it permeates the outside world as well. In spite of the efforts of the leaders of the revolution, Roger and Georgette, to keep it realistic, the revolutionaries are playing. As the Chief of Police says: "La révolte est elle-même un jeu." Roger and Georgette attempt to convince the revolutionaries of the danger of pretense, saying:

Georgette: L'essentiel, comme dit Roger, c'est que la révolte prenne son départ dans le dégout des comédies...

Roger: ...Georgette a raison. Ce que nous entreprions est trop sérieux pour qu'on le fasse avec légèreté. Si on se conduit comme ceux d'en face, on est ceux d'en face. Au lieu de changer le monde on ne réussira que le reflet de celui qu'on veut détruire.

Roger, who wants the revolution to be conducted by rationality, is opposed by other revolutionaries who argue that emotionalism is essential to the success of the revolution. They want Chantal, a prostitute from the Balcony who has joined the revolution, to sing from the barricades, inspiring the masses to greater efforts; and Chantal herself, proud of her image as the symbol of the revolution, wants to arouse the people. But Roger, considering this a concession to illusion, protests: "J'ai mis tout mon espoir en toi, Chantal. C'est sur toi que j'ai d'abord travaillé, et

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76 Ibid., p. 88.
77 Ibid., p. 109.
78 Ibid., pp. 126-127.
j'ai voulu te désensorceler. Chanteuse ou putain, c'est pareil.
Il ne faut plus séduire mais servir."

The Central Committee of the revolution overrides Roger's protest, issuing the following order:
"C'est du Balcon du Palais que Chantal va exciter le peuple, et chanter. Ce n'est plus le moment de raisonner, c'est le moment de s'énerver et de combattre dans la fureur. Chantal symbolise la lutte, le peuple attend qu'elle représente la victoire."

With this decision the revolution aligns itself with the powers of illusion; however, as the Queen's Envoyé makes clear, the revolutionaries "ne savent pas ce qu'ils jouent."

The revolutionaries successfully overthrow the government and kill the real queen, bishop, judge and general. The Queen's Envoyé persuades Madame Irma and her clients to masquerade as la Reine, l'Évêque, le Juge, and le Général. Order is restored and the revolution subsides. L'Évêque, le Juge, and le Général, drunk with the prospect of real power, attempt to gain control of the country, but their efforts are thwarted by a coalition between la Reine and le Chef de la Police. Unexpectedly, word comes that a young revolutionary has come to the Balcony to masquerade as the Chief of Police. It is Roger, whose idealism has been destroyed by the failure of the revolution. He comes seeking identity by

79 Ibid., p. 136.
80 Ibid., p. 142.
81 Ibid., p. 161.
impersonating the man whose power has defeated him. The Chief of Police has become the Other for him—the one to admire but also the one to hate. Roger acts out his scenario, hearing "himself" idolized by a slave building the magnificent mausoleum destined for the "hero" (the Chief of Police). But when the scenario is over, like Claire and Solange, Roger is not able to rid himself completely of the Other. He is unwilling to leave the "mausoleum" to return to the world, for as he says: 
"...dehors, dans ce que tu nommes la vie, tout a flanché. Aucune vérité n'était possible..." 82
Nor is he willing to abandon his role as the Chief of Police: 
"...j'ai le droit d'y conduire le personnage que j'ai choisi, jusqu'à l'extrême limite de son destin...non, du mien...de confondre son destin avec le mien..." 83 In order to do this, however, he must renounce reality and take up his abode in illusion. Wanting to destroy the power of the "hero," Roger castrates himself. Thus the hostility that was intended for the Other is turned against the Self. Although the deed itself is real, it is pregnant with illusion, like Claire's "murder." Roger, the powerless, defeated revolutionary does not castrate "himself," but the powerful Chief of Police that he has internalized. Having failed in the world to destroy the power structure (symbolized by la Reine, l'Eveque, le Juge, le

82 Ibid., p. 238.
83 Ibid., p. 239.
Général, and le Chef de la Police) by revolution, Roger attempts to bring about this destruction within the illusionary world of the Balcony.

The real Chief of Police, who is watching in secret Roger’s scenario, is completely seduced by the illusion that at last he has found pure being. As he expresses it: "Maintenant, je vais pouvoir être bon...et pieux...et juste. Vous avez vu? Vous m’avez vu? Là, tout à l’heure, plus grand que grand, plus fort que fort, plus mort que mort."^{84}

Erich Fromm in Escape from Freedom describes man’s tendency to see himself as a social self, that is, as a role he is supposed to play in society. His observations on the underlying inauthenticity of such an orientation are very pertinent to the Chief of Police:

Man does not only sell commodities, he sells himself and feels himself to be a commodity...As with any other commodity it is the market which decides the value of these human qualities, yes, even their very existence. If there is no use for the qualities a person offers, he has none; just as an unsalable commodity is valueless though it might have its use value. Thus, the self-confidence, the "feeling of self," is merely an indication of what others think of the person...If he is sought after, he is somebody; if he is not popular he is simply nobody.^{85}

For the Chief of Police and for Génêt himself, the reality longed for is the reality of illusion; for them identity resides not in the world, but in the image, in the persona. And if it is possible to achieve, the image of the image is even more to be

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^{85} *Fromm, op. cit.*, p. 140.
desired than is the single image. This is the process that occurs within the mind of the neurotic who rejects the world and views reality as a distorted reflection of itself. As the psychic distance between the neurotic and reality increases, the reflection becomes a reflection of a reflection, and so on, so that ultimately, contact with the world can be reduced to little more than physical contact. Such is the process that is taking place in the Chief of Police. Roger’s masquerade provides him with the first image; from that image he projects a second image of himself as “plus grand que grand, plus fort que fort, plus mort que mort.” The ultimate withdrawal from reality occurs as he closes himself up in the mausoleum, saying; “J’ai gagné le droit d’aller m’asseoir et d’attendre deux mille ans.” At this point machine gun fire is heard as a new revolution begins. Madame Irma orders Carmen to put out the lights, concluding:

Tout à l’heure, il va falloir recommencer...tout rallumer...s’habiller...s’habiller...oh, les déguisements! Redistribuer les rôles...endosser le mien...(Elle s’arrête au milieu de la scène, face au public.) préparer le vôtre...juges, généraux, chambellans, révoltés qui laissez la révolte se figer, je vais préparer mes costumes et mes salons pour demain...il faut rentrer chez nous, où tout,n’en doutez pas, sera encore plus faux qu’ici... 

Genêt’s first three plays, Les Bonnes, Haute Surveillance, and Le Balcon, although very ritualistic in nature, nevertheless have

87Ibid., p. 242.
88Ibid., pp. 244-245.
a basic plot. In his fourth play, Les Nègres (1959), the plot is reduced to an absolute minimum while the ceremonial element is greatly expanded. Two groups of Negroes combine their efforts to create what amounts to an illusionary Black Mass. The first group masquerades as the "Negro" in much the same way that the maid So-lange masquerades as the other maid, Claire. Thus the Negroes will play the part of Negroes. The second group will play the part of the Other—in this case, of the whites represented by a grotesquely masked Reine, Juge, Valet, Missionnaire, and Gouverneur. These "officials" serve as a court before which the "Negroes" enact their drama—a false murder. There is an obvious parallelism between the symbols of authority of Le Balcon and those of Les Nègres: the Reine and the Juge are duplicates, the Envoie, the Evêque, and the Général of Le Balcon are equivalent to the Valet, the Missionnaire, and the Gouverneur of Les Nègres. The slight modification of the officiaries of Les Nègres is necessary because they represent a colonial government. The parallelism of character structure is likewise evident in the opposition group of both plays. The revolutionaries of Le Balcon are replaced by the "Negroes" of Les Nègres, but their role is identical—they are to play the part of the révoltes. From the point of view of character structure, Genet's first four plays can be reduced to two pairs: Les Bonnes and Haute Surveillance; Le Balcon and Les Nègres. Genet's last play, Les Paravents.

89 The subject is the Algerian war, which Genet treats as a conflict between the révolte (the Algerian peasant) and the Colonials.
a highly complicated and elaborate play that taxes to the utmost the possibilities of the theater, is far more socially oriented than the preceding plays. For this reason it will not be analyzed in this study.

Le Balcon and Les Nègres are related not only in character structure, but also in their function—both are the dramatization of illusion. Madame Irma's mirrors that reflected the images and the images of the images in Le Balcon are replaced by the Court which will reflect the images of the "Negroes" of Les Nègres. Thus the group playing the "Negroes" will play the part according to the image reflected to them by the "whites" who in turn are images as reflected by the Negroes. Thus both groups are frauds; they are both wearing disguises—the "Negro" disguises himself according to how he imagines himself to be seen by the whites; the Court, wearing white masks, conducts itself according to the Negro's image of white authority. Like the maids, who portrayed Madame as cruel and vindictive, the Negroes will represent the "whites" as unjust and despotic.

On the frontispiece, Genêt calls Les Nègres a clownerie; to further increase the improbability that one may take the play seriously, he insists that the parts must be played by Negro actors before a white audience:

Cette pièce, je le répète, écrite par un Blanc, est destinée à un public de Blancs. Mais si, par improbable, elle était jouée un soir devant un public de Noirs, il faudrait qu'à chaque représentation un Blanc fût invité—masse ou femelle. L'organisateur du Spectacle ira le recevoir solennellement, le fera habiller d'un costume de cérémonie et le conduira à sa place, de préférence au
centre de la première rangée des fauteuils d'orchestre. On jouera pour lui. Sur ce Blanc symbolique un projecteur sera dirigé durant tout le spectacle.

Et si aucun Blanc n'acceptait cette représentation? Qu'on distribue au public noir à l'entrée de la salle des masques de Blancs. Et si les Noirs refusent les masques qu'on utilise un mannequin.  

Why does Genet insist that a white must be present, even if the white is not authentic? Because without him the play is nothing. An image must exist for someone. The image being dramatized by the Negroes is the image that they have of themselves as reflected back to them by the "White World;" they are dependent upon the whites for their being, just as Claire and Solange are dependent upon Madame, Lefranc and Maurice upon Yeux-Verts, the clients of the Balcony upon their reflections, and Roger upon the Chief of Police. In resume, a persona cannot stand alone; it is the image of oneself as projected by the Other and is therefore dependent upon the Other.

To the already familiar manifestations of illusion, Genet adds a new dimension in Les Nègres—that of deliberate obscurity of meaning. The language of Les Bonnes and Haute Surveillance is perfectly lucid. Any difficulty in comprehension results, not from the language, but from the schizophrenic nature of the characters. Le Balcon appears to be a transition play in Genet's use of language. In certain scenes, its lucidity rivals that of Les Bonnes and Haute Surveillance; in others its deliberate obscurity foreshadows Les

Negres. In the opening scene of *Les Negres* Archibald announces
the intent of the "actors":

Ce soir nous jouerons pour vous. Mais, afin que dans vos fauteuils vous demeurez à votre aise en face du drame qui déjà se déroule ici, afin que vous soyez assurés qu'un tel drame ne risque pas de pénétrer dans vos vies précieuses, nous aurons encore de la politesse, apprise parmi vous, de rendre la communication impossible. La distance qui nous sépare, originelle, nous l'augmenterons par nos fastes, nos manières, notre insolence—car nous sommes aussi des comédiens.91

The Negroes have assembled to dramatize a murder—for themselves, for the white Court and for the white audience. In order for the ceremony to be meaningful, it must always be obvious that it is only a game. No one will be allowed to mistake illusion for reality, certainly not the "actors" themselves. Bobo scolds Neige for taking a flower from the catafalque: "Elles sont là pour le jeu."92 Archibald also reprimands her: "Votre geste d'enfant gâtée n'appartenait pas au rite."93 Just as the clients of the Balcony must abide by their scenarios, the Negroes, under Archibald's direction, must remain within their predefined text: "Vous n'avez pas le droit de rien changer au céralonial, sauf, naturellement, si vous découvrez quelque détail cruel qui en rehausserait l'ordonnance...C'est à moi qu'il faut obéir. Et au texte que nous

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91Ibid., pp. 20-23.
92Ibid., p. 25.
avons mis au point."94 Village, the Negro whose duty it is to murder a white for each ceremony insists upon his freedom within the confines of the game: "Mais je reste libre d'aller vite ou lentement dans mon récit et dans mon jeu... D'ailleurs je suis fatigué. Vous oubliez que je suis déjà éreinté par un crime qu'il me fallait bien accomplir avant votre arrivée puisqu'il vous faut à chaque séance un cadavre frais."95

Of particular importance in the ceremony is Village's account of the murder:

Monsieur Hérode Aventure et moi, juste après le dîner, nous sommes passés sur les quais... Un peu avant l'entrée du pont, il y avait une vieille clocharde accroupie—ou allongée—sur un tas de guenilles... Monsieur Hérode Aventure et moi, nous nous sommes approchés, carrément... Dans le noir elle a dû nous prendre pour des agents. Elle puait le vin... Elle a dit: "Je ne fais pas de mal..." Je l'ai étouffée avec mes deux mains...95

Later in the ceremony Village is supposed to dramatize the murder, but lest one mistake his story for truth, he invents a completely different set of circumstances in which a buxom white woman invites him to her bedroom where he rapes and strangles her. During this climactic point of the rite, all of the "Negroes" join him in acting out the murder; one wearing a white mask plays "La morte." It is necessary that the Court know the details of the crime, for it is on the basis of this that they will punish the "Negroes," as

94Ibid., p. 29.
95Ibid., p. 31.
96Ibid., pp. 32-34.
the Judge points out: "Vous nous avez promis la représentation du crime afin de mériter votre condamnation." But since the Court are really Negroes, their condemnation of the "Negroes" will in reality be self-condemnation, like that known so well by Genet himself.

Archibald, the "high priest" of this Black Mass, reminds the "actors" that the purpose of their ritual is to evoke their hatred: "Inventez non l'amour, mais la haine, et faites donc de la poésie, puisque c'est le seul domaine qu'il nous soit permis d'exploiter."  

The fusion of love and hate which has been observed in Les Bonnes and in Haute Surveillance exists in Les Negres also. Solange's observation, "La crasse n'aime pas la crasse," is applicable to Village and Vertu, a young prostitute. Village describes his emotions upon seeing Vertu:

"Quand je vous vis, sur de hauts talons vous marchiez dans la pluie. Vous aviez une robe de soie noire, des bas noirs, un parapluie noir et des souliers vernis. Oh, si je n'étais né en esclavage! Une étrange émotion m'a bouleversé... Quand je vous vis, j'eus tout à coup... la force de hier tout ce qui n'était pas vous, et de rire devant l'illusion, hélas mes épaules sont bien fragiles. Je ne pus supporter la condamnation du monde. Et je me suis mis à vous haire quand tout en vous m'a fait entrevoir l'amour...

97 Ibid., p. 37.
98 Ibid., p. 38.
99 Genet, Les Bonnes, pp. 81-82.
100 Genet, Les Negres, p. 53.
Thus, tempted by love, Village almost renounces the world of illu-
sion, but like the others he lacks the strength to live in reality.
Nevertheless, he is not happy with the fakery. As he expresses
it: "Cette cérémonie me fait mal." Persistent in declaring
his love for Vertu and his intention to marry her, he arouses
Archibald's anger: "Alors foutez le camp! Sors! Va-t-en. Emporte
là. (sic), Va chez eux (IL indique le public) s'il t'acceptent.
S'il vous acceptent...Mais faites-vous d'abord décolorer...Descendez.
Allez avec eux et soyez spectateurs. Nous, nous serons sauvés par
ça (IL montre le catafalque). But Village and Vertu can no
more "uncolor" themselves in order to be accepted by the whites
than Genét was able to become a thief in order to be accepted by
the criminals. Therefore, Village must be a Negro and play his
part in their ceremony. His reenactment of the murder is in essence
his renunciation of his hope to leave the world of illusion in
order to live in the world of reality with Vertu. Just as Roger
begged Chantal, who had left the "house of illusion" for the world,
to remain in reality and not to yield to the illusion of herself as
the symbol of the revolution, Vertu pleads with Village not to
resume the fakery of the ritual, but he cannot bear the condemnation
of the other Negroes, and in order to belong, he will perform.
According to the ritual, following the dramatization of his crime,

101 Ibid., p. 57.
102 Ibid., p. 59.
Village must be punished by the Court. Having been mesmerized by the incantation of the ceremony, Village, at least temporarily, can not separate illusion from reality, and is actually afraid. Archibald comforts him:

Village: Ils vont venir, monsieur? Ils vont venir nous juger, nous peser? (Village est tremblant.)

Archibald: Ne crains rien, il s'agit d'une comédie. 103

The Court, led by the Gouverneur, who represents the military, makes a punitive expedition to the Negro colony. They discover that there has been no murder. The catafalque which, like the altar in a church has served as the focal point of the ceremony, has been as false as the murder—a sheet stretched across two chairs. Although the murder is mere pretense, the hatred is real. The "Negroes" fake murder grows out of the same vincitive spirit manifested by the one who tortures the voodoo doll in order to punish the real object of his hate by sympathetic magic. Just as Claire and Solange are unable to give overt expression of their hatred of Madame in her presence and must therefore resort to their masquerade as a ceremonial enactment of their hatred, the Negroes confronted with the reality of the whites would likewise be unable to express their hate. Like the maids they rely on pretense and masquerade; thus the "Negroes" can declare their hatred of the whites before the Court of Negroes wearing white masks, just as Solange can give vehement

103 Ibid., p. 127.
expression of her hatred before Madame-Claire. The utility of the masquerade for this purpose is evident in the exchange between the Court and Archibald:

Le Juge: ...toute l'Afrique n'est pas responsable de la mort d'une Blanche, pourtant, il faut bien le reconnaître, l'un de vous est coupable et nous avons fait le voyage pour venir le juger...Il a tué par haine. Haine de la couleur blanche. C'était tuer notre race et nous tuer jusqu'à la fin du monde. Il n'y avait personne dans la caisse et dites-nous pourquoi?

Archibald: Hélas, monsieur le Juge, il n'y avait pas de caisse non plus.

Le Gouverneur: Pas de caisse? Pas de caisse, non plus? Ils nous tuent sans nous tuer et nous enferment dans pas de caisse non plus!104

The ceremony is briefly interrupted by Ville de Saint-Nazaire, who introduces the first bit of reality into the play in announcing the execution of a Negro betrayer: "Il a payé. Il faudra nous habituer à cette responsabilité: exécuter nous-mêmes nos propres traitres."105

While he is speaking the Court take off their white masks and for an instant both the "Negroes" and the "whites" are themselves, but Archibald, sensing the danger of this instant of reality, calls them back to their roles: "...nous devons achever ce spectacle, et nous débarrasser de nos juges...comme prévu."106 The "Negroes" execute the Court, one by one, in such a way that each "death" is grotesquely

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105 *Ibid*.
artificial. Elaborate precautions are taken so that the "deaths" in no way resemble reality. The "execution" of the Gouverneur illustrates the general technique used:

(Village tire un coup de revolver, mais aucun bruit n'explose. Le Gouverneur tombe sur place.)

Archibald: (désignant le milieu de la scène) Non. Viens mourir ici.

(Archibald, avec son talon, fait éclater une petite capsule comme celles dont se servent pour jouer les gosses. Le Gouverneur qui s'est relevé, vient tomber au milieu de la scène.)

In Les Bonnes the "murder" was a sham but the death was real; in Les Nègres, Genêt moves farther away from reality. Here is the image of the image in all of its grotesquity. Regardless of the difference in degree of fakery, embodied in both deeds is the hatred of the Other directed against the Self. Motivated by hate, Claire kills Madame-Claire because she cannot kill Madame; the "Negroes" play at killing the "Negro-whites," because they cannot kill the whites.

Archibald, high priest of the ceremony, in terminating the ritual, pronounces what can be considered a benediction on all of Genêt's theater—the theater of the persona: "Nous sommes ce qu'on veut que nous soyons, nous le serons donc jusqu'au bout absurdement. Remettez vos masques pour sortir, et qu'on les reconduise aux Enfers."  

107Ibid., p. 171.

The persona is the mask of non-being. It demands of the actor who wears it that he forget the Self in order to interpret the role created for him by another. As one replaces the Self by appearance, one turns from reality to pretense and from authenticity to inauthenticity. Whereas most of the characters of the avant-garde theater slip into inauthenticity unconsciously, Genet's characters will the perpetuation of the persona. Finding in pretense a satisfaction that is denied them in reality, they put on their masks with determination and play at life, absurdly, to the very end.
CONCLUSION

Two modes of standing-in are open to Dasein. Authentic standing-in requires all that one is; it requires one's being fully present in the now while being tuned to the past and sensitive to the possibilities of the future; it requires following the insights of the Self rather than the dictates of the "they;" it requires full acceptance of one's innate capacities and limitations; it requires suffering the anguish of finitude. Inauthenticity is a state of living death, which occurs when one allows his potentialities to lie dormant, when one rejects any part of his temporality—his Past, his Present, or his Future, when one allows himself to be consumed by the "they" so that he loses contact with the Self, or when one avoids the reality of finitude.

Authentic standing-in is the greatest challenge that confronts man; it is the Biblical "second birth;" its demands are such that most men know it only in rare and fleeting moments in the midst of a life of inauthenticity. Such is the experience of Estragon, Vladimir, Pozzo and Lucky (En Attendant Godot), Krapp (La Dernière bande), Hamm and Clov (Fin de partie), Amédée (Amédée ou Comment s'en débarrasser), Yeux-Verts (Haute Surveillance), Roger (Le Balcon), Village, Vertu, and Ville de Saint-Nazaire (Les Negres).

Certain individuals, such as Ionesco's Bérenger (Tueur sans gages, Rhinocéros, Le Roi se meurt, and Le Piéton de l'air), are
relatively familiar with the experience of authenticity and with
the feeling of freedom and exuberance that it brings; but being
finite, such individuals are not able always to be authentic and
in such moments they experience the stifling depression and ennui
of inauthenticity.

Still others are so divided inwardly and out of tune with them-
selves and with reality that they appear to be unconscious of the
inauthenticity of their lives. Of these, some are unaware of their
lack of identity and exist as veritable automatons. Such is the
case of Ionesco's comic "guignols" (the Smiths and Martins of _La
Cantatrice Chauve_, the student and the professor of _La
Leçon_, the Roberts and the Jacques of _Jacques ou la Soumission_ and _L'Avenir est
dans les oeufs_, and the tenant of _Le Nouveau Locataire_). In contrast
certain others suffer cruelly from their lack of identity and fran-
tically seek being; but because of their inability to break the bonds
of inauthenticity, they seek being by doing; and in the process the
circle of inauthenticity closes in upon them. Such is the experience
of the characters of _Les Chaises_, _Victimes du devoir_, _Les Bonnes_,
_Haute Surveillance_ (with the exception of Yeux-Verts), _Le Balcon_,
and _Les Nègres_.

Avant-garde theater, in general, is an attempt to reconnect
man with reality by revealing the inauthenticity that typifies most
lives. It is an attempt to dethrone "sacred" values so that man
will be forced to create his own personal value system, to make man
live creatively by showing him the emptiness and sterility of
conformity, to make him accept himself as a being responsible to Self and to the world by revealing the superficiality of man as a social function.

Richard Gilman, in discussing the avant-garde comedy, has written:

It is one of the spirits of the age, a spirit composed of some or all of these elements: irony, parody, irreverence in search of reverence, innocence obtained provisionally and by an act of will, mockery designed to bring down false gods, extremity reached or sought for by trampling, with greater or lesser harshness, on all the stiff, lifeless forms and genres that still satisfy certain imaginations.

The serious is, in the end, whatever changes or replenishes us. And the "new comedy," operating in the space left by almost all our previous seriousness, our sanctified cultural values and humanistic schemata for interpreting and dealing with experience, whose emptiness and irrelevance astound us continually, presents us with the paradox of the humorous being more effective and more fecund than the sober. It also presents us with the invitation to throw out all classifications whatsoever, including its own name.¹

Thus avant-garde theater invites one to question old ideas and modes of existing and to search for authenticity within oneself. It reflects the loss of identity that typifies mid-twentieth century man. It invites him to turn from automaton conformity in order to become an individual who possesses the psychic maturity to stand alone and to be open to truth and in tune with reality.

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