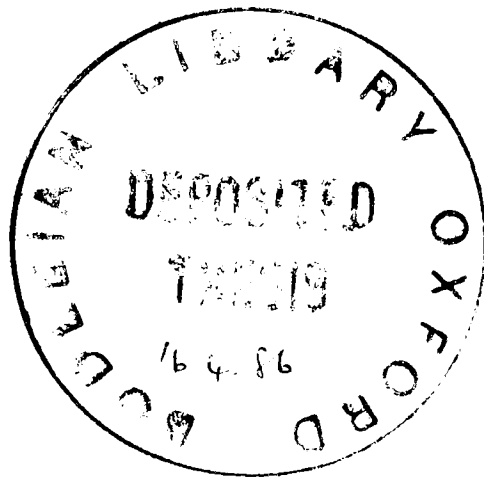


(o)



CONFLICTS OF LIFE AND DEATH: THE PLAYS OF JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

Benedict Paul O'Donohoe

Magdalen College, Oxford

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (D.Phil.)

Michaelmas Term 1985

SHORT ABSTRACT

Conflicts of Life and Death: The Plays of Jean-Paul Sartre.

B.P. O'Donohoe

Magdalen College, Oxford
 Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (D.Phil.)
 Michaelmas Term 1985

This thesis proposes that Sartre's plays are predominantly life-affirming, and their violence can be explained in terms of their central theme: conflict between life and death. Extensive reference is made throughout to Sartre's non-dramatic writings.

This theme occurs on the literal and metaphorical planes: characters struggle for life, commit violent acts, and emerge 'existentially alive', or 'existentially dead'. Sartre's theories of life and death are summarised, and three examples of existential death considered. The theme is then analysed in each play under the headings 'Myth and Situation', 'Act and Agent'.

Bariona's colonised people eventually escape from existential death, having contemplated martyrdom, when Bariona is influenced by the life-enhancing philosophy of Balthazar, and the experience of the Nativity. Argos, also, is suffused with death: 'Philèbe''s need to 'feel' his existence impels him to act definitively, punishing the regicides, and coming to existential life in his true identity as Oreste.

In Huis clos, Sartre explores the deadness of lives led in moral cowardice, and the implicit message is, ironically, life-affirming. Morts sans sépulture propounds an argument for life which prevails, despite the hollow victory of the 'miliciens'. La Putain illustrates a triumph for the mortifying force of essentialist ethics. A seemingly comparable triumph of death in Les Mains sales is, in fact, a defeat for Hugo and an implicit victory for the life-advocate, Hoederer.

Goetz exemplifies existential life perfectly, reaching it via every kind of moribund moral idealism. Kean burlesques Oreste's experience, escaping his vacuity through metaphorical suicide, and individualistically asserting his right to life. Nekrassov's hero parodies Goetz's odyssey, finally opting for life in the imaginary realm.

Les Séquestrés depicts the triumph of death as man is crushed by the march of History. Les Troyennes, however, still advocates hope.

Why did Sartre quit the theatre? Did the 'hero', through whom life is affirmed, become impossible?

LONG ABSTRACT

Conflicts of Life and Death: The Plays of Jean-Paul Sartre.

B.P. O'Donohoe

Magdalen College, Oxford
 Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (D.Phil.)
 Michaelmas Term 1985

This thesis proposes that the thrust of Sartre's theatre is predominantly life-affirming; moreover, that the violence which is prominent in several plays can be accounted for in the light of one common central theme: the conflict between life and death.

The plays treated include the 'adaptations', but exclude the screenplays. Wide-ranging reference is made throughout to Sartre's non-dramatic writings, especially the major philosophic works; the works of psychology and existential psychoanalysis (particularly Saint Genet); the circumstantial essays (in Situations); the autobiographical documents; and, not least, to the texts on the theatre (in Un Théâtre de situations, and Les Écrits de Sartre).

Conflict between life and death is present on the literal and metaphorical levels in all Sartre's plays (except Kean). On the literal plane, characters struggle for life, and risk their lives, in situations of mortal threat; heroes frequently inflict, or suffer death, and sometimes both. On the metaphorical plane, the actions of these 'agents' -or their failure to act, as the case may be- reveal them as persons who are either existentially living, or existentially dead -(for short: "alive", having "life"; "dead", in "death").

To gain a theoretical understanding before applying these categories to an interpretation of the plays, we expound briefly Sartre's formal analyses of human life, and the external event of death. Human existence is characterised by consciousness, at the heart of which is the gap which enables reflection ('pour-soi'): this is the kernel of freedom. Contrasted with this mode of being is that of things, which are what they are ('en-soi'). These modes coincide for the human reality in death, which converts subjectivity into objectivity. Most people, being in the midst of others to whom they appear objectively ('pour-autrui'), tend towards a modus vivendi which gives primacy to the public persona over the autonomous self, becoming 'en-soi/pour-autrui/pour-soi', or 'un mort-vivant'.

To illustrate this metaphor, we consider three examples of existential death: Baudelaire, a "suicide" for whom poetic creativity was both a vicarious living and a symbolic, premature death; the Jew, "murdered" by the anti-Semite, whose contradictory aim is to impose objectivity without literally destroying subjectivity;

LONG ABSTRACT

Genet, a "martyr" who compounds an original "murder" by a self-willed "suicide" in testimony to life's impossibility.

This theme is studied in four principal, and closely related, aspects of Sartre's drama: myth and situation, act and agent. Death is foremost among the 'myths' (real and universal, but intangible, elements of the human condition) which the playwright 'forges'. The threat of death constitutes a 'situation-limite', and it is in such extreme situations that Sartre's dramatic figures are usually located: their circumstances require them to act in significant and sometimes violent ways. Their acts, and their response to their consequences, define the characters' status as 'agents', since it is axiomatic that we are what we do.

Bariona is an ideal introduction to this theme. Death pervades the situation of the colonised, for the coloniser wants his victims simultaneously "dead" and alive. Bariona understands this well, and proposes slow self-extinction in order to convert that "murder" into a "martyrdom". This tactic is a genuine but flawed act of resistance because of its essential passivity. He is prompted to make a more active response by his meeting with Balthazar, and his experience of the Nativity. The decision to take up arms marks an accession to "life", symbolised also by his acceptance of Sarah's pregnancy. In one of Sartre's most life-affirming plays, Bariona emerges as the closest relative to the archetypal hero, Goetz.

The crucial problem of Les Mouches is Oreste's matricide. The Argives' situation is imbued with death to the point where they have abandoned all semblance of ordinary life: they are fixated on the past, and petrified in remorse. Oreste freely enters this situation. His decision to stay and act is explained less by Électre's influence, or by altruism, than by the ontological need to feel his hitherto vacuous existence. Only Action can confer Being, and finding circumstances which call for and sanction a definitive act -natural justice demands punishment of the regicides- Oreste quits the cocoon of 'Phylèbe' in performing an act which, however terrible, paradoxically affirms "life". Though his failure to draw out the consequences in some collectively beneficial way can be criticised retrospectively, Oreste's individualistic assertion of the right to "life" nevertheless sounds the dominant note in Sartre's drama.

Huis clos is a metaphor in which Sartre explores the "deadness" of existences lived in perpetual flight from freedom. Though not concerned with death per se, Sartre shows us three deceased characters in order to examine, a posteriori, the quality of their acts (since the individual 'is' in death what he 'has done' in life). We learn that the impotence which Garcin, Inès, and Estelle experience in 'hell' is the inevitable legacy of their moral cowardice in life: instead of acting to change the world, each had

LONG ABSTRACT

invested his freedom in constructing an image 'pour-autrui'. Thus, they were existentially dead, and their punishment is fitting, for they are condemned to be dead as though alive, 'morts conscients'. The oft-held view that Huis clos is a radically pessimistic statement on the human condition, is refuted by emphasising the salutary lesson implicit in this 'cautionary tale'.

Morts sans sépulture marks Sartre's début in the realistic theatre, which however does not preclude the evocation of 'myths'. The resistance fighters are in an extreme situation: they must choose between life and death. Their dilemma is more complex than that of Bariona or Oreste, because the option of saving their own lives implies the near-certain death of dozens of comrades in consequence. They have initially, therefore, to persuade themselves that their deaths can assert the value of life - 'plutôt la mort que...' - even if this implies the 'execution' of one of their number at their own hands when their situation is changed by the capture of Jean. His subsequent release forces the captives to consider more positive resistance: the need for silence having been removed, the duty to survive imposes itself. Canoris emerges here as among the most eloquent and persuasive of Sartre's life-proponents, prevailing eventually upon his comrades to strike a false deal which should bring their liberation. Their choice for life constitutes the 'message' of the play, their subsequent gratuitous execution notwithstanding.

La Putain respectueuse deals more particularly with the existential life of the heroine. Her situation is mortifying in a moral sense, both because she is, professionally, an object, and because she falls prey to the essentialist ethic of the white Southerners, who assign fixed roles and identities to themselves and others (especially to the sub-class of the Negro). Lizzie's chance to act lies in defending a negro wrongly accused of assaulting her; the real culprit is a white youth of 'good' family. Her initial resistance to Fred's cajoling and threats hints at an escape from her 'objectité', and an assertion of moral independence. However, she succumbs to the blandishments of the Senator, and her potential to act is finally quenched when she becomes a toy in the hands of Fred. La Putain illustrates the first triumph of "death" in Sartre's theatre. Elements in it of cultural conditioning adumbrate important themes in later plays.

In Les Mains sales we again find a hero whose existential life is more in question than his physical life, although there is always the possibility of violent death. The central question is whether Hugo's interpretation of his 'act' will enable him to embrace life, or whether he will remain the abstract intellectual (like 'Philèbe'), embracing (literally, in the end) death. The play's structure permits us to 're-live' Hugo's situation, and to trace his progress towards the enigmatic murder of Hoederer. So doing, we see

LONG ABSTRACT

that Hoederer's principal attraction is that he offers "life", which has been withheld from Hugo, first by his father, then by the Party. Hoederer offers trust, intellectual and moral independence, integrity; above all, a practical view of the world as changeable by pragmatic politics. Gradually, Hugo moves away from his stance of moribund idealism as the 'reality' of Hoederer fascinates him, though he remains sceptical about the politics of compromise. This dichotomy between Hugo's affective attachment to Hoederer, and his intellectual dissent, is crucial, for it enables us to understand the assassination as a 'crime of passion sui generis'. To comprehend the whole play as, in a sense, 'life-affirming', we must appreciate that Hugo regresses and fails radically when he surrenders to the executioners' guns. Hoederer is the advocate of life, and although he dies gratuitously, his philosophy survives through the Party. Hugo's suicide is an infidelity, a self-serving gesture.

The affirmation of life proclaimed loudly from the mouths of Bariona and Oreste (having fallen ironically silent in Huis clos and La Putain, and been slightly muted in Morts sans sépulture and Les Mains sales), is sonorously reasserted by Goetz in Le Diable et le bon Dieu. He is the only hero to experience the entire moral spectrum, from existential death to existential life, rehearsing the odyssey of his contemporary counterpart, Jean Genet. Death is the very fabric of Goetz's situation: a bastard by birth, a social pariah, "murdered" (like Genet) at an early age, he deals in death as a mercenary warrior. This is his response to his social condition, to lay claim to the identity others have foisted on him as though it were his creation, to be 'pour-autrui/pour-soi', and not, as he mistakenly supposes, 'fils de [ses] oeuvres'. Hence "suicide" compounds a previous "murder". It is in the light of his aspiration to be as others -and, especially, God- see him, that we understand the successive phases of Goetz's situation (malefactor, philanthropist, ascetic), and his consistent failure to perform 'acts' as distinct from 'gestures'. It is only when Heinrich attempts to judge him in the name of the Law, that Goetz perceives the non-existence of the Absolute Other and draws the logical inference: 'Il n'y a que des hommes.' He thus enters the world of relativity which calls forth acts to change it in terms of the concrete situation: so doing, he becomes tenacious of his life, both physical and existential. Hence the killings of Heinrich and an officer: these are acts of 'self-defence', in the name of the cause and the group, as well as of the individual. So far from marking a return to 'Evil', Goetz's acts are affirmations of the people's, and his own, right to life.

Kean is a burlesque of Les Mouches. Like 'Philèbe', Kean 'acteur' is plagued by insubstantiality. His situation

LONG ABSTRACT

is in a sense of his choosing -he could return to the simple life of Old Bob's troupe- but he feels impelled to assert himself as a man, and not as a mere 'analogon', in the face of the aristocratic demi-gods whose plaything he is. Like Oreste, he yearns for a definitive act to help him emerge from the realm of the abstract and imaginary, and he likewise turns to lethal violence. In Kean's case, however, this takes the form of a metaphorical suicide in which Kean 'acteur' is slain, reviving -after some hesitation, and a near relapse- as M. Edmond, 'agent'. He abandons the make-believe of the London stage for the 'real life' of New York. Like Oreste, his accession to existential life is individualistic, and his departure changes nothing of the situation he quits. Unlike Oreste, his beloved accompanies him to share his new life, as is fitting in a comedy.

The experience of Georges de Valera, in Nekrassov, parodies that of Goetz. The theme of the life/death conflict is entirely subverted, as suicide attempts are gratuitously thwarted, threats of mass-destruction proliferate, and slapstick violence abounds. The hero's situation, due in part to his facticity, and in part to his will, necessitates that he too be 'fils de ses oeuvres'; but whereas Goetz revelled in real death and destruction, Valera flees into the imaginary. The identity he adopts is radically false; like Goetz, he confounds and conflates Good and Evil, becoming simultaneously an angel of death and the saviour of the Western World -yet all in a radically ironic mode. He is an existential non-entity, as "dead" as if his suicide bid had succeeded. By contrast with Goetz, the glimpse he has of 'real' life -which he owes to his involvement with the only unsatirical character, Véronique- propels him back into the imaginary domain where he pursues his subversively comic existence, a life of sorts.

Any humour in Les Séquestrés d'Altona is decidedly black. The situation is suffused with death: the hero is publicly and legally 'dead'; he inhabits the past, entombed in his room. The other characters are equally interred in the mausoleum of the family home, dominated by the tyrannical patriarch, von Gerlach, who is dying of cancer and intends suicide. From him, the threat of death extends to all members of the family, and Frantz above all. The degree to which he, Frantz, is already "dead" can be gauged by examining, retrospectively, his past 'acts'; and by considering, prospectively, whether he retains the potential to 'act'. 'Flashbacks' enable us to witness the episodes of Frantz's moral development, and to appreciate the impotence to which his father, and History, had condemned him. Successive attempts to act freely, merely reinforced, paradoxically, his existential morbidity. Extending paradox to its logical conclusion ('qui perd gagne'), Frantz finally achieves a modicum of moral autonomy in pressing his father to the very deed which he had intended, though 'not yet'. Hence, Frantz's sole 'act' -suicide-cum-parricide- is the

LONG ABSTRACT

life-denying act par excellence. Les Séquestrés is by far the bleakest of Sartre's plays, announcing a triumph of death which contains no whisper of the implications in Huis clos and La Putain that there is, and must be, an alternative ethical choice which is viable ('livable').

Though Les Troyennes is also bleak, superficially, -its characters are caught in an inescapable, life-threatening situation- it argues strongly for the survival of hope, which is to assert a belief in a future where action will be possible. Thus, hope is itself a kind of action, and those who hold on to and propagate it, resist death and affirm life. The 'gospel' taught by Hécube to her despairing companions recalls that preached by Balthazar to Bariona. There is, then, a continuity of optimism in Sartre's theatre, despite the profound pessimism of Les Séquestrés.

The Conclusion considers the standing of Sartre's theatre in the context of his work as a whole. It is unique in that it is 'complete', and in that it unifies the realms of philosophy and literature. Sartre's avowed 'reasons' for quitting the theatre are critically reviewed, and it is proposed that the genre became otiose for him once his conception of the hero appeared no longer possible. Nevertheless, a re-affirmation of the principal thesis of this study can be made.

CONFLICTS OF LIFE AND DEATH: THE PLAYS OF JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

L'action n'apparaît que lorsqu'on prend sa chance. Elle suppose le risque, donc l'ignorance. L'idéal n'est pas de contempler ce qui est fait mais de vivre. Toute morale qui mutilé la vie est suspecte. De même que l'époque phénoménologique selon Husserl n'ôte pas une nuance du monde, de même l'époque morale ne doit pas ôter une nuance de la vie humaine.

Cahiers pour une morale, p.96.

To my children.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	(xi)
A Note on References, Abbreviations, Presentation ...	(xii)
1. Introduction: A Sketch of the Theoretical Bases	1
2. Bariona, ou le Fils du tonnerre	25
3. Les Mouches	54
4. Huis clos	78
5. Morts sans sépulture	101
6. La Putain respectueuse	124
7. Les Mains sales	145
8. Le Diable et le bon Dieu	176
9. Kean	226
10. Nekrassov	256
11. Les Séquestrés d'Altona	292
12. Les Troyennes	345
Conclusion	367
NOTES: Introduction	384
Bariona	388
Les Mouches	392
Huis clos	396
Morts sans sépulture	399
La Putain respectueuse	402
Les Mains sales	403
Le Diable et le bon Dieu	405
Kean	408
Nekrassov	411
Les Séquestrés d'Altona	415
Les Troyennes	421
Conclusion	422
BIBLIOGRAPHY: I Bibliographical Sources	425
II Primary Sources	426
III Secondary Sources	430

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my Supervisor, Rhiannon Goldthorpe (St Anne's College), for her invariably friendly encouragement and illuminating advice; to George Trevelyan, for his scrupulous typing of the twelve chapters; above all, to my wife Anne, for her enduring love and support.

B.P.O'D.
Bedford.
1st September 1985.

A NOTE ON

(i) REFERENCES, (ii) ABBREVIATIONS, (iii) PRESENTATION

(i) Full publication details of all titles referred to will be found in the Bibliography. First references to essays and interviews by Sartre include original publication details as well as those of the book-form reprint (where applicable). Later references are to the book only (where applicable). All other references follow the recommendations of the MHRA Style Book, Third Edition (London, 1981).

(ii) Initial-letter abbreviations have been kept to a minimum, and used only for page references to works repeatedly cited. The following will be found:

<u>CRD</u>	:	<u>Critique de la raison dialectique</u>
<u>EN</u>	:	<u>L'Être et le néant</u>
<u>ES</u>	:	<u>Les Écrits de Sartre</u>
<u>SG</u>	:	<u>Saint Genet, comédien et martyr</u>
<u>TS</u>	:	<u>Un Théâtre de situations</u>

(iii) Typographical conventions are, with a very few minor exceptions, those recommended in the MHRA Style Book, Third Edition (London, 1981). It is regretted that circumstances have necessitated the use of two different typewriting machines in the production of this text.

Chapter 1

Introduction: A Sketch of the Theoretical Bases

Ces remarques, on le notera, ne sont pas tirées de la considération de la mort, mais, au contraire, de celle de la vie.

L'Être et le néant, p.624.

My purpose in this thesis is twofold: first, to show, from a scrutiny of the texts, that the tension in Sartre's plays derives essentially from a conflict between life and death; second, to show that in the majority of the plays, the concluding emphasis is upon life.¹

The contrapuntal theme of life and death is present in Sartre's plays on two levels, the literal and the metaphorical. On the first of these we are presented with characters living and dead, confronted with choices between life and death; we witness death in all its forms, birth in its purest incarnation, and the after-life at its least exalted. On the metaphorical level, there is an abundant imagery of life and death: atmosphere and landscape are evoked in terms of growth and decay, light and dark, heat and cold, motion and stasis. More interestingly, living characters are described as dead, and mistake the dead for the living, as do the dead themselves. It will be my contention that the life/death metaphor as applied to characters in Sartre's theatre is no mere poetic cliché, but has a particular and important signification in existentialist ontology and morality.

My second aim is a corollary of my first and is not, I think, either subordinate or less interesting. Certain critics insist that Sartre, both as philosopher and creative writer, has a morbid obsession with, even a predilection for, death.² Others are ready to concede Sartre's claim that his inquiry has life as its object.³ Where the plays specifically are concerned, a number of commentators have put much stress on the violence in them, so giving the impression that they are all deeply pessimistic descriptions of the human condition.⁴ I shall try to

reintegrate the violence into the action as a whole, and to view it in the overall perspective of the life/death duologue.

The two levels of this theme constantly intersect and it would be unrealistic to separate them.⁵ I intend, therefore, to study it integrally in each of the plays in four distinct but related aspects: myth and situation, act and agent. In the remainder of this chapter I shall give a very brief exposition of Sartre's formal analyses of life and death; show how these translate into a metaphor of inauthentic modes of being; and explain why the aspects given are appropriate categories for the study of my chosen theme. The chapters which follow this represent my enterprise, as a reader, to 'totalise' Sartre's dramatic oeuvre.⁶

Life and Death: the Literal Plane.

Birth and death are, for Sartre, phenomena of the same order of contingency: they are the data of our facticity.⁷ Life has an inherent tendency to perpetuate its being (EN, p.519, and CRD, p.255), and the inescapable fact of death simply signifies that life is a biologically closed system (EN, p.619).

Human life is characterised by consciousness, the ability to reflect and to choose, the 'pour-soi' (EN, pp.115-274). This consciousness, in so far it has being, is body (EN, p.368), and finds itself, again as given fact, in the midst of others (EN, pp.275-507). The human reality is defined as 'un être-pour-soi-pour-autrui'. Every subject is to some degree object in that it has a being for others.

The category of being Sartre distinguishes from 'l'être-pour-soi', as that which it negates, is 'l'être-en-soi' (EN, pp.30-36, 58-84, 711-20). This is the realm of the inanimate, the unconscious. It is characteristic of objects to be what they are, whereas the human subjectivity is always a plethora of projects for future fulfilment, a constant becoming. The human reality has its being in action: man is what he does (EN, pp.508-642); 'l'être-en-soi' is what it is. Thus, Sartre describes the 'pour-soi' as 'being what it is not and not being what it is' (EN, p.33). The human individual stands outside himself, or ex-ists. The gap between thethetic and non-thetic aspects of consciousness - which Sartre also calls positional and non-positional⁸ - mirrors the gap in being itself between the subjective consciousness ('pour-soi') and objective material reality ('en-soi'). The capacity of consciousness to transcend that gap is the very kernel of human freedom, and yet the disjunction between consciousness and immanence is commonly apprehended as a lack (EN, p.145) which men seek to supply by achieving an identity of 'pour-soi' and 'en-soi', that is, to be the very foundation of their own being (EN, pp.115-27). It is when he engages in this impossible quest to be, like God, 'ens causa sui' that man is a 'useless passion' (EN, p.708).

Ironically, the ontological status of 'l'être-en-soi' comes to the human reality only through death.⁹ In his existence the conscious being determines himself, defines his essence by his free acts. So doing, he secretes and accumulates a past which has an objective reality. While he lives he can modify the sense of that past by new acts. When he dies, however, his past is closed and total. At best, the impossible identity

of 'en-soi-pour-soi' might be said to occur for an infinitesimal moment before death. Then his life is suddenly thing-like, he has an essence whose interpretation is wholly at the discretion of others. Thus death entails a falling out of the world qua subject, but a consecration in the world qua object. In short, death converts 'pour-soi-pour-autrui' to 'en-soi-pour-autrui'.

Gratuitous and indeterminate, death can never be recuperated as 'un accord de résolution': it is always meaningless. Moreover since by definition death annihilates consciousness, we can have no experience or knowledge of it. This being so, we cannot, Sartre argues, regard death as one of our possibilities. On the contrary, it is that external event which deprives us of all possibility (just as birth is that event which endows us therewith). This argument makes of suicide an act sui generis, a project which paradoxically refuses the future upon which all projects depend for their meaning. Thus while suicide is an always available option, it is self-defeating for it neither absolves us from the absurdity of being, nor frees us from a system of basically antagonistic human relations (EN, pp. 480-81, 641). Suicide is one mode among others of being-in-the-world, 'une absurdité qui fait sombrer ma vie dans l'absurde' (EN, p.624).

Sartre's refutation of Heidegger's Sein zum Tode leads him to conclude not only that death is not among my possibilities, but, further, that it cannot therefore impinge upon them.¹⁰ The 'pour-soi' is in its nature finite and human mortality is an accident which does not delimit freedom. Sartre asserts that the liberty of the 'pour-soi' is inviolable except

in so far as the presence of the Other represents the 'hidden death' of all my possibilities in the world (EN, p.323). This effect is, ceteris paribus, mutual. But it can occur that one subjectivity chooses to subjugate, to objectify the other. Such an attempt can take different forms and vary in degree, but at the extreme it is murder (EN, p.481). The pursuit of the Other's death is hatred, and is no less futile a conduct than suicide (EN, pp.483-84). For just as suicide hastens the moment at which the subject becomes total object for others, so the death of a victim stops his judgment upon his assassin and freezes it irrevocably. There is a sense, then, in which the living are a prey to the dead, as well as vice-versa.

To sum up: human life, or existence, is 'pour-soi-pour-autrui', freedom and action in the midst of others. Death transfers the 'pour-soi' to the realm of the 'en-soi', making the closed life an object at the mercy of others. Suicide and murder are two conducts stamped with futility, for both objectify the agent. Life and death on this plane I shall call literal or physical.

Life and Death: the Metaphorical Plane.

Life is the province of the subject and doing, death the domain of the object and being. Yet we are all, to some degree, objects for others. Are we therefore all, to some degree and in some sense, dead? Not necessarily, for the objectification implied in inter-personal relations

is reciprocal and self-cancelling (EN, p.283). However, there are those who exaggerate, who are forced to exaggerate, or who allow others to exaggerate, their status as objects: they conform to a predetermined pattern or image which they project or which others project upon them. They refuse to accept the fact of the gap in their being, its not being what it is. They yearn for a unitary identity and so flee from their freedom to take refuge in an imaginary essence (EN, p.96). Such people are masking the truth from themselves, and are in what Sartre calls 'mauvaise foi' (EN, p.37). A very great number of people live in this attitude, Sartre asserts (EN, p.88), and yet he customarily refers to those who do, in his theatre and elsewhere, as being 'dead'.¹¹ This apparent death of the free consciousness I propose to call 'metaphorical' or 'existential' because, although it is not literally death, it constitutes a denial, or a circumvention, of the fundamental defining characteristic of human ex-istence, taking the form of an attempt by the subject to achieve the impossible coincidence of subject and object, to be 'en-soi-pour-soi'.¹² This endeavour to totalise oneself while still living entails looking at one's life through the eyes of the Other, or - which is the same thing - from the point of view of death. Clearly that endeavour can only fail (EN, p. 630). Nevertheless, essentialist thinking of this kind tends to dominate commonsense philosophy. The existentialist, by contrast, insists upon the predominance of the 'pour-soi' over the 'en-soi' and 'pour-autrui'. He accepts the 'gap' in being and all that it entails. Rather than strive vainly for a self-deluding 'identity', he shoulders the burden of his freedom knowing that he must constantly

recreate himself with each new act, knowing that he will not, can not, be what he is until death makes of him what he has done. Such a man is honest, authentic, in good faith. He is existentially, and not just physically, alive. ¹³

Existential death, unlike physical death, cannot occur by natural causes, since a degree of compliance from the 'pour-soi' is required. As I have indicated, that compliance may vary from total and wilful to partial and reluctant. The three manners of metaphorical death I shall call (after Sartre) "suicide", "murder", and "martyrdom". A brief look at selected case studies which Sartre has made of each of these will help to clarify the metaphor.

Three examples of Existential Death.

Sartre considers Baudelaire a man who converted the temptation to actual suicide into symbolic suicide which, paradoxically, guaranteed his physical life:

Car lorsqu'il se nie totalement, [Baudelaire] songe à se tuer; or le suicide, chez lui, n'est pas une aspiration vers le néant absolu; lorsqu'il se représente qu'il va se supprimer, il veut faire disparaître en lui la nature, qu'il assimile au présent et aux limbes de la conscience. Il demande à l'idée de suicide ce léger secours, cette chiquenaude qui lui permettra de considérer

sa vie comme irrémédiable et accomplie, c'est-à-dire comme un destin éternel ou, si l'on préfère, comme un passé clos. Il voit surtout, dans l'acte de mettre fin à ses jours, comme une récupération ultime de son être: c'est lui qui tirera le trait, c'est lui, enfin, qui, en arrêtant sa vie, la transformera en une essence qui sera, à la fois, donnée pour toujours et pour toujours créée par lui-même. Ainsi se délivrera-t-il du sentiment insupportable d'être de trop dans le monde. Seulement, pour jouir des résultats de son suicide, il faut de toute évidence qu'il y survive. C'est pourquoi Baudelaire a choisi de se constituer en survivant. Et s'il ne se tue pas d'un coup, au moins a-t-il fait en sorte que chacun de ses actes soit l'équivalent symbolique d'une mort qu'il ne peut pas se donner. Frigidité, impuissance, stérilité, absence de générosité, refus de servir, péché: voilà de nouveau, autant d'équivalents du suicide. [...] Et la création poétique, qu'il a préférée à toutes les espèces de l'action, se rapproche, chez lui, du suicide qu'il ne cesse de ruminer.¹⁴

Baudelaire's existential suicide is typical: it is the will to be outre-tombe, to live posthumously, to be as much an object for oneself as one is for others, in short, to be simultaneously alive and "dead". The enterprise is futile, as Baudelaire was well aware. But though he exercised his will in the creation of sublime poetry, he never exorcised the delusion.¹⁵

Equally futile is existential murder, whereby the subject is forced to

conform to an objective image of himself. The metaphorical assassin tries to make of his victim an 'en-soi-pour-autrui(-pour-soi)', to objectify and dehumanise him without actually killing him. This is the démarche of the sadist, for instance, and (as we shall see in chapter two) of the colonialist. But given the reciprocity of human relations, existential murder cannot succeed unless the victim acquiesces (in which case it is no longer "murder"), or the effort to objectify the victim culminates in the physical abolition of the 'pour-soi', in which case metaphorical murder becomes literal murder. In Réflexions sur la question juive Sartre gives a chilling analysis of hatred: the abortive pursuit of the death of the victim's free consciousness, culminating in physical murder:

Destructeur par fonction, sadique au coeur pur, l'antisémite est, au plus profond de son coeur, un criminel. Ce qu'il souhaite, ce qu'il prépare, c'est la mort du Juif. Certes, tous les ennemis du Juif ne réclament pas sa mort au grand jour, mais les mesures qu'ils proposent et qui, toutes, visent à son abaissement, sont des succédanés de cet assassinat qu'ils méditent en eux-mêmes: ce sont des meurtres symboliques. [...] Ainsi l'antisémite s'est choisi criminel, et criminel blanc: ici encore il fuit les responsabilités, il a censuré ses instincts de meurtre, mais il a trouvé moyen de les assouvir sans se les avouer. ¹⁶

The Jew is Jew because others take him to be so. And whether he revolts, acquiesces, or complies with his persecutors, he cannot but take account of the fact that prejudice exists, and that he is seen, willy-nilly, to conform to a certain image:

Les antisémites ont raison de dire que le Juif mange, boit, lit, dort et meurt comme un Juif. Que pourrait-il faire d'autre? Ils ont subtilement empoisonné sa nourriture, son sommeil et jusqu'à sa mort: comment ne serait-il pas à chaque minute contraint de prendre position en face de cet empoisonnement? ¹⁷

Existential murder and suicide are conflated in the phenomenon of "martyrdom". In Saint Genet, comédien et martyr Sartre describes this complex process. He tells us that, as a child, Genet was "killed" by the 'mot vertigineux' uttered by the grown-ups, 'Voleur!'. Genet's "assassins" precipitated in him a change similar to that wrought by death itself. ¹⁸ His response was collaboration: he chose to be 'en-soi-pour-autrui-pour-soi', affirming 'la priorité de l'objet sur le sujet; de ce qu'on est pour les autres sur ce qu'on est pour soi' (SG, p.15). It is this "suicide" compounding an original "murder" which makes of Genet a "martyr". He will be what others have made him so as to bear witness to the impossibility of a life which is already "death" (SG, p.71). At first, criminality and homosexuality presented themselves as ideal essences to adopt (SG, pp.117, 129). But the contradiction inherent in living one's death requires a constant compromise between

the ethical categories of 'Being' (including 'mort, évanouissement') on the one hand, and 'Doing' (including 'vie, volonté de vivre') on the other (SG, p.77). This system of 'tourniquets', as Sartre calls it, can never solve the paradox of the 'mort vivante':

Nous avons vu, plus haut, Genet s'acharner à vouloir ses échecs pour les transformer en victoires et nous l'avons surpris tentant de prendre le point de vue des autres sur ses propres aventures: [...], il est déjà par-delà sa mort et c'est un autre qui se penche avec amour sur son lamentable naufrage pour y découvrir une secrète réussite. Comme si la victime expiatoire qu'on mène au lieu du sacrifice tentait d'emprunter la mémoire éblouie de la foule qui lui survivra pour se remémorer sa mort future. Cet effort constant de transfiguration ne paie pas: il demeure verbal et abstrait. (SG, pp.306-07)

Genet chose poetry as a way out of this vicious circle, 'un moyen de salut. [...] une manière de vivre. [...] effort pour devenir cet Autre qu'il est aux yeux d'autrui' (SG, p.337), but now assuming total responsibility for his "death". Like Baudelaire, his art became at once a symbolic suicide, and an affirmation of his survival:

En voulant dissoudre l'être dans le non-être, Genet reconquiert le non-être pour le compte de l'être; il l'enferme dans ses livres comme le Diable dans une bouteille. Ses ouvrages sont par un

côté des suicides recommencés et par un autre l'affirmation renouvelée de la grandeur humaine. Nous retrouvons ici le jeu de qui perd gagne. (SG, p.616)

Unlike Baudelaire, but like Sartre himself, Genet finally recovers from his suicidal delusion and is reborn to a new existential life: 'Le vrai c'est qu'un certain Genet vient de mourir et que Jean Genet m'a prié de prononcer son oraison funèbre: [...] : il faut tenter de vivre. [...]' Le Poète avait enterré le Saint; à présent, l'homme enterre le Poète.' (SG, p.635) ¹⁹ We shall find examples of the "martyr" in Sartre's plays, though Genet's entire existential evolution - "murder/suicide/martyrdom/re-birth" - is matched by the experience of only one character, and he is Goetz.

Myth.

In a lecture given in New York in 1946, Sartre counted death as first among the 'myths forged by the young playwrights of France': 'Pourtant, si nous rejetons le théâtre de symboles, nous voulons cependant que le nôtre soit un théâtre de mythes; nous voulons tenter de montrer au public les grands mythes de la mort, de l'exil, de l'amour.' ²⁰ A myth in this sense is an abstract but real constituent of universal experience (TS, pp.61-63). Death is the myth par excellence, being not only a characteristic datum of the human condition, but an always possible - though an always deceptive - issue from any situation. Moreover, in an age when,

according to Freud, 'at bottom nobody believes in his own death',²¹ war has brought men face to face with 'l'exil, la captivité, la mort surtout, que l'on masque habilement dans les époques heureuses.'²² The playwright does the same through his mythification: 'on n'atteint pas la mort par degrés, on est soudainement confronté à elle' (TS, p.63).

In another lecture on the theatre, given twenty years later, Sartre explained the modern dramatists' refusal of realism as follows:

[...] les termes essentiels de l'aventure humaine ne sont plus réalistes, parce que nous ne pouvons plus les saisir réellement. Nous ne pouvons pas saisir une mort, nous sommes toujours incapables de penser la mort, même si par ailleurs nous sommes parfaitement convaincus, comme je le suis, qu'il s'agit d'un processus d'un ordre purement biologique, car, même ainsi, la brusque absence, le dialogue interrompu, c'est une chose qui n'est pas réalisable. En conséquence, quand on veut parler de la vie, ce n'est pas en réaliste qu'on peut en parler. Et si on veut parler de la naissance, de notre naissance, chose que nous n'avons jamais vécue, et qui cependant nous a faits ce que nous sommes, là encore le réalisme ne signifie rien car nous ne pouvons pas réaliser notre naissance.²³

Sartre was still of the opinion that modern theatre had to be a kind of sublimating process if it would treat convincingly the great and fundamental theme: man, and the poles of his facticity.

The modern mythifier's démarche is akin to that of the classical models, viz. to establish, over a certain theatrical distance, an empathic relation of spectator to hero (far profounder than the bourgeois pleasure of 'participation').²⁴ 'Faut-il donc penser que nous allons rester impassibles sur nos sièges pendant qu'on crie, qu'on torture, et qu'on tue sur la scène? Non, puisque ces assassins, ces victimes, ces bourreaux ne sont autres que nous.'²⁵ The effect of this empathy is twofold and ambiguous. On the one hand, the theatrical distance demands a suspension of disbelief (TS, p.175), while impressing upon the spectator his impotence: 'l'univers présenté [...] est hors d'atteinte, on ne peut pas agir sur lui, le faire cesser. Du coup, il nous révèle notre impuissance par rapport à lui.'²⁶ On the other hand, the spectator's identification with the universal mythic aspect of the drama invests him with a total responsibility. The characters, after all, are non-existent:

On nous montre nos amours, nos jalousies, nos rêves de meurtre et on nous les montre à froid, séparés de nous, inaccessibles et terribles, d'autant plus étranges que ce sont les nôtres, que nous croyons les gouverner, et qu'ils se développent hors de notre atteinte, avec une impitoyable rigueur que nous découvrons et reconnaissons tout à la fois. (TS, p.83)

The dramatic creation of 'myth', evoking an ambivalent, transcendent response from his audience - such is the 'forger's' endeavour to bring about a prise de conscience, a real-isation of the myth:

Le monologue d'Hamlet, [...], devrait, pour être exact, se murmurer: voix monotone, blanche, sans intonation; c'est qu'il dit ses passions; il a pris la distance réflexive. Et ses soucis sont les nôtres: la vie, la mort, l'action, le suicide. Tout est généralité: être ou ne pas être? Qui pose la question? N'importe qui, si l'on n'en juge que par les mots. Donc moi, dans ma réalité présente. ²⁷

I propose to show that Sartre's theatre poses and re-poses, frames and re-frames Hamlet's question.

Situation.

Living man is not an essence, but an embodied being in a concrete situation. In the broadest sense he is situated in the world and among others, 'confronté à la nécessité de travailler et de mourir, d'être jeté dans un monde qui est déjà là et qui est pourtant sa propre entreprise et dans lequel il ne peut jamais reprendre son coup' (TS, p.57). It is the theatre's peculiar faculty so to represent him: 'Mais s'il est vrai que l'homme est libre dans une situation donnée et qu'il se choisit dans et par cette situation, alors il faut montrer au théâtre des situations simples et humaines et des libertés qui se choisissent dans ces situations.' ²⁸

If the theatre is to be truly dramatic, the situations it depicts

should be critical, situations-limites; that is to say, dilemmas demanding a choice between absolutes:

Ce que le théâtre peut montrer de plus émouvant est un caractère en train de se faire, le moment du choix, de la libre décision qui engage une morale et toute une vie. La situation est un appel; elle nous cerne; elle nous propose des solutions, à nous de décider. Et pour que la décision soit profondément humaine, pour qu'elle met en jeu la totalité de l'homme, à chaque fois il faut porter sur la scène des situations-limites, c'est-à-dire qui présentent des alternatives dont la mort est l'un des termes. Ainsi, la liberté se découvre à son plus haut degré puisqu'elle accepte de se perdre pour pouvoir s'affirmer. Et comme il n'y a de théâtre que si l'on réalise l'unité de tous les spectateurs, il faut trouver des situations si générales qu'elles soient communes à tous. Plongez des hommes dans ces situations universelles et extrêmes qui ne leur laissent qu'un couple d'issues, faites qu'en choisissant l'issue ils se choisissent eux-mêmes: vous avez gagné, la pièce est bonne. (TS, p.20) ²⁹

These words support my assertion that Sartre the dramatist, so far from leading us, as Garaudy says, 'into a dead-end', seeks on the contrary to propagate what Gaulupeau calls 'une métaphysique de la vie'. ³⁰ If, in his terms, his plays are to be 'good', his heroes must find ways out of their situations leading not to death but to life, existential as well as

merely physical.

Of all situations-limites, none is more extreme than death itself. Sartre does not believe that we survive or even experience death, so we can never be in death. Nevertheless, there are those who live as though, to all intents and purposes, dead - Frantz, for example, in Les Séquestrés d'Altona - and those who are presented as conscious in death - for instance, the characters of Huis clos and of the screenplay Les Jeux sont faits - whose experience teaches us something about life. Sartre translates the term 'Grenz-Situation' from Jaspers.³¹ Death, qua situation, is indeed the most constricted, the most limited situation conceivable, for it is always its own sole 'exit', which is to say that the characters of Huis clos could only escape their living death if they could, paradoxically, take refuge in death itself:

[...] les limites externes de la situations deviennent situation-limite, c'est-à-dire qu'elles sont incorporées à la situation de l'intérieur, avec la caractéristique 'irréalisable' comme 'irréalisables à réaliser', comme envers choisi et fuyant de mon choix, elles deviennent un sens de mon effort pour être bien qu'elles soient situées a priori par-delà cet effort, exactement comme la mort - autre type d'irréalisable que nous n'avons pas à considérer pour l'instant - devient situation-limite à la condition qu'elle soit prise pour un événement de la vie, encore qu'elle indique vers un monde où ma présence et ma vie ne se réalisent plus, c'est-à-dire vers un au-delà de la vie. (EN, pp.613-14)

In his later thought, Sartre saw death as an integral feature of the human situation in so far as the danger of it is inherent in the scarcity of matter. Death is therefore present also as the point of articulation of interpersonal relationships in the mode of threat: as such, it is a determinant feature of man's praxis.³² Every individual is located in such a place at such a time, his personal situation more or less constrained and circumscribed by historical circumstances: this is the essence of the 'grand thème fondamental de la théâtralité qui est au fond, l'homme comme événement, l'homme comme Histoire dans l'événement' (TS, p.192). Freedom appears increasingly to be conditioned and hemmed in by external forces. As a consequence, the onus of responsibility and the necessity for action begin to shift their focus from the subject qua isolated individual, to the subject qua member of a group. Man transcends his solitude and escapes his seriality by combining with his fellows in such a way that 'chacun éprouve, en effet, son aliénation comme vie (comme vie d'un autre à travers sa propre vie) au lieu de l'éprouver comme une mort (comme réification de toutes ses relations)' (CRD, p.603). The constriction of individual liberty by historical circumstances is a dominant theme in Sartre's last two plays. And it is interesting to note that - as we shall see - the theme of the group as a response to external conditions is a powerful and important one in his earliest plays - notably Bariona, but also, to a lesser extent, Morts sans sépulture - plays which thereby anticipate his theoretical discussion of this mode of human organisation in Critique de la raison dialectique.³³

Act.

The premise of Sartre's philosophy is that man's existence precedes his essence. He therefore creates his being by what he does.³⁴ An individual is not a mere collection of psychological traits, nor a copy from the mould of human nature, but the sum of his acts, and thus he should appear: 'Nous ne rejetons pas la psychologie, ce qui serait absurde: nous intégrons la vie.' (TS, p.60) It is pre-eminently the role of the theatre, Sartre believes, to reveal man to himself in action:

Une pièce de théâtre [...] c'est la forme la plus appropriée aujourd'hui pour montrer l'homme en acte (c'est-à-dire l'homme, tout simplement). Et la philosophie, d'un autre point de vue, c'est de cet homme-là qu'elle prétend s'occuper. C'est pour cela que le théâtre est philosophique et que la philosophie est dramatique.³⁵

Dramatic human action flows from and includes 'la libre décision qui engage une morale et toute une vie' (TS, p.20). When the theatre depicts individuals acting in given situations, it reflects men collectively in the world at large:

Ainsi le théâtre présente l'action de l'homme aux hommes spectateurs et, à travers cette action, le monde où il vit et la personne qui fait l'action. Cela ne veut pas dire volontarisme,

cela veut dire que tout, même l'échec, l'impuissance, et la mort, doit se manifester comme la signification des actes. (TS, p.87)

Has action from which proceed failure and even death, any rightful place in dramas whose final stress falls, as I intend to show, more usually on life than on death?

Critics of Sartre's theatre have tended to regard the violence in it - of which, admittedly, there is an abundance (though this is by no means exceptional in modern French drama) - as per se significant; ³⁶ whereas, for Sartre, violence is simply one kind of action (whose 'meaning' may be 'failure, impotence, death'). Violent acts are, like all acts, means to an end, not ends in themselves. (Witness Goetz's failure to practise 'le Mal pour le Mal'.) Moreover, the theatre is very apt to portray violence, which is intrinsically dynamic and dramatic. But violence is not indispensable. Speech too is dramatic inasmuch as it articulates action: 'Le geste le plus clair, c'est-à-dire la représentation la plus claire de l'acte, c'est la parole. Mais il faut comprendre: la parole au théâtre est nécessairement la présentation d'un acte.' (TS, p.88) (We may, however, with some justification wonder whether Sartre's dialogue always lives up to this axiom.)

I will argue that little, if any, of the violence in Sartre's plays is gratuitous, and that in most cases it manifestly flows from free decisions lucidly made. Thus when Sorbier or Hugo commit suicide, each is consciously choosing: '"Plutôt la mort que ... "'. ³⁷ When Bariona decrees the slow self-extinction of his people, he is opting

en connaissance de cause for a kind of martyrdom, a positive act of defiance. Or, when Oreste slays his mother, he is not merely indulging an adolescent phantasy (though that is part of it), he is satisfying a profoundly felt lack in his self-consciousness. (As Howells has pointed out, Sartre can 'accept the findings of Freudian psychoanalysis as processes but not as explicative categories'.)³⁸ And when Goetz kills Heinrich and le Chef, he does so in self-defence. Furthermore, I shall show that a number of the problematic aspirations to, and acts of, violence are quite intelligible in ontological terms: Hugo, for instance, wants to kill Hoederer in order to be a man of action, a killer, objectively, that is, for others and hence for himself. And so we come to the question of the agent.

Agent.

It is axiomatic in Sartre's philosophy that men define their essence by their free acts. What they do is not determined by innate characteristics. Essentialist concepts of character, personality, temperament, circumstances, as limitations of freedom are anathema to existentialist thinking. Sartre's theatre of situations aims to replace the stereotypes of the bourgeois 'theatre of character' by truly free agents:

L'homme libre dans les limites de sa propre situation, [...] -
voilà le sujet de nos pièces. Pour remplacer le théâtre de

caractères nous voulons un théâtre de situations; [...] Les personnages de nos pièces différeront les uns des autres non pas comme un lâche diffère d'un avare ou un avare d'un homme courageux, mais plutôt comme les actes divergent ou se heurtent, comme le droit peut entrer en conflit avec le droit. (TS, pp.58-59)

The term 'agent', therefore, should not be construed as 'character' in any conventional or traditional sense (as it is understood in the context of the nineteenth century novel, for example): 'nous n'éprouvons pas besoin de détailler l'évolution imperceptible d'un caractère' (TS, p.63).

Rather, the agent is the individual encountered through his acts.

Essentialist character is anterior to action, existentialist 'character' is posterior to it: 'L'action au théâtre révèle le sentiment. La haine, la jalousie, l'amour désespéré d'Hermione paraissent dans l'acte qui lui fait envoyer Oreste tuer Pyrrhus. [...] Le théâtre est donc une présentation de l'homme aux hommes à travers des actions imaginaires.' (TS, p.88)

As 'act' is the main province of the literal plane of the life/death theme, so is 'agent' of the metaphorical plane, for, according to what acts reveal, we judge whether the agent is fleeing from or assuming his freedom; whether he is in bad or good faith; whether he is "dead" or "alive". Thus we shall be able to say that Oreste, who defies Jupiter, accedes to "life", while Électre, who capitulates, succumbs to "death"; that Inès, Estelle, and Garcin were "dead" in life; that Franz is "dead" before he takes his own life; and so on. It is, then, under this last heading that I shall be concerned with the metaphor of life and death in its

ontologico-moral (and specifically Sartrean) sense.

As a 'forger of myths', Sartre the dramatist confronts men with the real but intangible aspects of their lives, not the least of which is death. His theatre is one of 'extreme situations' which demand that his heroes choose between life and death. In responding, they frequently do violence to themselves or to others. Their acts create them as agents, and reveal them as existentially alive or existentially dead.

Chapter 2Bariona, ou le Fils du tonnerre

Le quiétisme, poussé à l'extrême, ce serait la mort.

Saint Genet, comédien et martyr, p.293.

Sartre's first play, Bariona, ou le Fils du tonnerre, is an ideal overture to this present study, for it not only raises centrally questions about suicide, murder, and abortion, but it does so in the context of the most celebrated of all legends of life and death, that of Christ's incarnation. Ostensibly a nativity play, a celebration of birth, Bariona in fact queries the purpose and value of life, asking whether there are not certain conditions in which premature and collective death is its only possible outcome. Essentially a resistance play, Bariona concludes by asserting the positive meaning of life lived in the shadow of, but in revolt against, death.

Myth and Situation.

All three of the great myths - death, exile, love - which the modern playwright 'forges' are present in Bariona. Love is explicit in the bond between Bariona and his people, implicit in the incredible gesture of God made man. Exile defines the Jewish condition: separated from God by sin and apostasy; divorced from unity and tradition by faction and internecine dissension - (Bariona's brother-in-law has been unjustly crucified by a 'tribunal juif')¹ - above all, the Jews have been colonised by the Romans, made strangers in their own land.

At the centre of the Jewish exile is the myth of death, embodied in a constant threat: 'ils n'ont plus rien à espérer, depuis leur enfance. Ils n'ont plus rien à espérer sauf la mort.' (p.579) Colonialism is an

essentially murderous system '[qui] veut à la fois la mort et la multiplication de ses victimes';² a system whose aim is to dehumanise the colonised in the fullest sense, to sustain them 'entre la vie et la mort - toujours plus près de la mort que de la vie - [...] à considérer des hommes comme des bêtes qui parlent'.³ The coloniser would commit existential murder, killing his victim without taking his life: 'On laissera vivre les corps mais on tuera l'esprit.'⁴ This 'perfect crime' - whose weapons are the 'lourde machine', the 'idéologie pétrifiée' of the colonialist mentality⁵ - though ultimately unrealisable, nevertheless installs an interim régime of stasis. By suppressing opposition, such a system bottles up the resentment of the indigenous people until, in due time, the pressure explodes in a bloody revolt: the institutionalised violence of the colonisateur is reproduced as the counter-violence of the colonisé;⁶ until then, it is interiorised and causes the disunities which plague an oppressed people:

dans le temps de leur impuissance, la folie meurtrière est l'inconscient collectif des colonisés.

Cette furie contenue [...] ravage les opprimés eux-mêmes. Pour s'en libérer, ils viennent à se massacrer entre eux: les tribus se battent les unes contre les autres faute de pouvoir affronter l'ennemi véritable - [...] ⁷

However, though the inadvertent absorption of the coloniser's aggression is in the short term destructive, in the long term it is that which

restores the expropriated humanity of the colonised: 'par leur désir permanent de nous tuer, par la contracture permanente de muscles puissants qui ont peur de se dénouer, [les colonisés] sont hommes: par le colon, qui les veut hommes de peine, et contre lui.'⁸ Bariona traces the evolution of a leader and his people from the toleration of colonialist stasis - the mortifying tyranny of exis - to the re-assertion of human action - the revivifying victory of praxis.⁹

If the general situation in Bariona is one of constriction and alienation, the particular dilemma of the people is a situation-limite par excellence. Iélius's demand for an increased capitation levy confronts Bariona with two options, both of which seem to spell death. On the one hand, payment will literally bleed the village to death: 'nous ne pouvons pas payer cet impôt. Nos bras sont trop faibles, nos bêtes crèvent' (p.578). On the other hand, failure to comply with Rome's orders would provoke violent retribution, resulting still in the loss of their livelihood (p.575), and perhaps of their very lives: 'Tu veux te révolter, [...] tu nous ferais tous massacrer.' (p.578)

As is often the case in Sartre's plays, the physical environment reflects and symbolises the situation-limite of Bariona. The atmosphere is stony cold (p.568). The village is repeatedly described as a dying body or rotting corpse. Not only is 'la natalité [...] faible' (p.571), but ironically it is principally to Bethlehem that Béthaur is losing its young blood (pp.574-75). Bariona sees the village in its death throes, and knows too well that colonisation is to blame: 'Depuis que nos colons romains ont créé les scieries mécaniques à Bethléem,

nôtre plus jeune sang coule en hémorragie et cascade de rocher en rocher, comme une source chaude jusqu'aux basses terres qu'il arrose.'

(p.575) The sawmills incarnate the 'lourde machine' of colonial repression, which maintains the population at the level of starvation so that they turn against themselves. Bariona's 'beau-frère', Simon, has been a victim of a typical outbreak of inverted violence. Reflecting on Simon's fate, Bariona goes on to depict Béthaur as an already decaying corpse: 'Ce village agonise [...] Dans cent ans il ne restera plus trace de notre hameau, ni sur cette terre, ni dans la mémoire des hommes.' (p.575) Envisaging old men and women crawling like maggots through the carrion of their putrefying village, Bariona sees their future as that of the forgotten dead.

The people themselves, who both constitute and inhabit Bariona's situation, take scarcely more optimistic a view of their lives than he does. The Choeur des Anciens echoes the refrain 'Notre village agonise', adding the image of a bird of prey circling above it (p.576). 'Notre coeur est en cendres', they chant (p.576) - ashes to ashes amidst the dust of their decaying dwellings (p.574), set in the pitiless, chilling landscape so fearfully evoked by Lélius (pp.567-68) - while their heads are filled with 'des pensées d'impuissance' (p.577), impotence being a principal effect (and cause) of death itself. A death, moreover, to which many of them are resigned, huddled in holes in the ground not as the savages they are in the colonists' eyes (p.568), nor even just as beasts (the status of the colonised), but 'comme des bêtes malades' (p.577). Again, they echo Bariona in their only prayer:

'Qu'on nous laisse crever en paix! (p.577) They have nothing to hope for but death (p.579).

It is against this mortifying and moribund background - the bleakness and sterility of the land are repeatedly stressed (pp.583, 587, 588) - that the oppressed will be offered the new life of Christ's birth. Appropriately, the good news announces itself in extraordinary physical signs, reported initially to the shepherds by le Passant whom Sartre ironically names Pierre: 'stone', the archetypal symbol of the en-soi, is chosen for the harbinger of life.¹⁰ The first supernatural manifestation is 'une odeur épaisse comme un brouillard [...] Plutôt bonne [...] on aurait dit qu'elle était vivante, [...] comme une compagnie de perdrix ou plutôt comme ces gros nuages de pollen qui courent sur la terre féconde des plaines au printemps' (p.587). This sweet and living perfume countervails the putrid stench of Béthaur; the air is filled with the breath of fecundity. Spring, the season of re-creation, seems to oust the infertile winter, and sounds too of new growth challenge the eery silence of the village: Ça craquait, ça chantonnait, ça bruissait tout partout, [...]; on aurait dit que des bourgeons poussaient à des arbres invisibles, on aurait dit que la nature avait choisi ces plateaux déserts et glacés pour se donner à elle seule, pendant une nuit d'hiver, la fête magnifique du printemps.' (p.588)

Though the old man is disturbed by the omens he has witnessed, the shepherds are sceptical until the evidence of their own senses begins to confirm his account (pp.590-91). They see the heavens stretched out on the earth like a lover on his mistress in sexual congress: 'Il y a

des nuits comme celle-là. On croit qu'elles vont accoucher de quelque chose' (p.591). Indeed, the union of earth and sky will bear fruit, though paradoxically the shepherds' speculations about the auguries tend rather toward death than life. Simon, for example, predicts 'la mort d'un roi pour le moins' (p.591), and wishes kings could keep such news to themselves: 'Les morts des rois, c'est des histoires pour occuper les oisifs dans les villes. Mais nous n'avons pas besoin de ça ici.'

(p.591) How wrong he is on both counts: first, it is the birth of a king which the strange events foretell; second, it is precisely for the likes of Simon - the poor, the humble; the shepherds, the fishermen - that Christ has come into the world. God chooses another of them, Caïphe, to interpret their experience more accurately: 'Je suis transi jusqu'aux moelles par une vie qui n'est pas la mienne et que je ne connais pas. Je suis perdu au fond d'une autre vie comme au fonds d'un puits, j'étouffe, je suis noyé de parfum' (p.592). The new life is Christ's, in which the faithful share through the rejuvenating waters of baptism, here evoked by the image of the well and of the sea a few lines before (compare Chalem's speech on page 621).¹¹ The annunciation to the shepherds concludes with the angel charging them to spread the news to men of good will, and especially to Bariona 'dont le coeur est plein de fiel' (p.595).

In the scene of the first evangelists, Sartre sustains the established life/death duologue of images: Caïphe describes the night as 'féconde comme un ventre de femme' (p.596) - renewal and renaissance are his themes. But Chalem complains of having been dragged from his

bed: 'Ne savez-vous pas avec quelle impatience nous attendons chaque jour le sommeil, nous autres de Béthaur, le sommeil qui ressemble à la mort?' (p.597) Likewise, Simon's excited 'cris de joie' meet a churlish rebuke from le Publicain (p.597). But at last the sepulchral silence of Béthaur has been broken by the word of life.

However, the shepherds' joy is shortlived, for Bariona pours scorn on their expectations of a heaven on earth (pp.598-99). Such an event would require the inversion of the world order, 'l'univers d'un fou' (p.601). Bariona's insistence that 'ce monde est une chute interminable' (p.601) locates his philosophy firmly in the Genesis tradition. Were it not for the intervention of Balthazar, who completely undermines his authority (pp.604-05), this gloomy view would prevail. As it is, he is abandoned, 'délaissé sur cette roche stérile', even by his wife, Sarah: 'Mon village est mort' (p.606). More than ever, then, he is convinced that the earth is a dead planet and the men on it a sub-human species, 'ces vermines-là' (p.607).¹²

In the empty village, resembling the 'théâtre vide' Bariona had earlier called it (p.579), he and Lélius debate the probability of the Messiah's coming before hearing le Sorcier's prediction of Christ's life. This is uncannily accurate, from the slaughter of the Innocents (p.611) to Christ's last words on the Cross (p.613). The crucial point for Bariona, though, is that le Sorcier foresees no alleviation of the colonial situation (p.614), but indeed rather an aggravation of it: 'Vous ne voyez donc pas qu'il s'agit de l'assassinat du peuple juif?' (p.613) In the light of the inevitable deterioration of the Jewish situation, Bariona resolves to slay the Christ (p.615).

Dissuaded by the angel Marc (pp.619-20), Bariona's intention dissolves utterly during the long soliloquy on pages 622-23, which articulates his crisis of faith, and in which, again, the material world seems to reflect supernatural events. For instance, Bariona speaks of a new silence, 'pas pareil à celui de nos montagnes', a quietness suggestive of growth, movement and life by contrast with the moribund muteness of Béthaur. Light too has a place in Bariona's imagery: the profound and starless obscurity of the night, matched by the darkness of Bariona's heart, is now punctuated by the brilliant new dawn in this humble cattle-shed: 'Dans cette étable un matin se lève ... Dans cette étable il fait matin. [...], le premier matin du monde.' (pp.622-23) Though Bariona cannot yet believe it, it is this very light - lumen Christi - which will illumine the whole face of the earth. ¹³

I have tried to show that death is inherent in the colonialist system which oppresses the Jews; that it is implicit in both poles of the situation-limite of Bariona and his people; that the death theme is echoed in the hearts and minds of the villagers, as well as in the decadence of the physical environment; and, not least, that the natural world, imagistically evoked, sustains a whispering, background duologue of life and death. Let us now look more closely at the characters in this situation.

Act and Agent.

Action - if it is understood to include 'acts' - is conspicuous by its absence from Bariona. The occurrence of events is excluded from the stage and introduced through reports. The action consists in the making of choices; in the affirming or revising of projects formed under extreme pressures; in the hero's visible struggle to reconcile conflicting intellectual and emotional reactions. In this respect, and certain others, Bariona shares in the quasi-classical purity of Les Troyennes, and has more in common structurally with the sparest of Racine's tragedies (for example, Bérénice), than with any other of Sartre's plays. ¹⁴

What manner of agent emerges from this neo-classical drama?

Lélius's message about the capitation tax is the catalyst of the action, it creates the situation-limite. Bariona fails to move Lélius with his oratory and calls a meeting of the elders, apparently to debate what action should be taken, but in fact to decree the course he has already chosen, and at which he had ambiguously hinted in his reply to Lélius: 'Je souhaite que le procureur se rappelle longtemps notre docilité.' (p.575) The 'docility' Bariona has in mind is of a radical and subversive kind. Lélius is right to be suspicious of his 'obéissance subite' (p.576).

Rome's new tax is a veritable sentence of death, an ultimatum which, as I have noted, calls upon the Jews to choose between a slow and lingering death by exploitation (i.e. compliance), or a swift death in the repression of a revolt (i.e. resistance). In either case, death is

inevitable, yet the logic of violence demands that some way be found to affirm the value of life: 'quand un peuple n'a d'autre ressource que de choisir son genre de mort, quand il n'a reçu de ses oppresseurs qu'un seul cadeau, le désespoir, qu'est-ce qui lui reste à perdre? C'est son malheur qui deviendra son courage'.¹⁵ Thus while the elders argue the pros and cons of submission and rebellion, Bariona proposes a middle way which, paradoxically, promises both to submit and rebel: 'nous paierons cet impôt. (Un temps.) Mais personne, après nous, ne paiera plus d'impôts dans ce village!' (p.579)

Bariona prepares the ground carefully before delivering his considered but controversial judgment. He reminds his fellows of the general misery of a fallen world, and of their particular wretchedness as a subject people. He expounds a deeply pessimistic, even fatalistic world-view: 'la vie est une défaite, personne n'est victorieux et tout le monde est vaincu' (p.580). His gospel is one of despair, and I use the English word advisedly in order not to confuse it with the 'désespoir' of Oreste, from which it differs importantly. Oreste's 'désespoir' is the abandonment of a false hope that there are higher powers to relieve us of our responsibility. Bariona's despair, on the other hand, is the defeatist renunciation of the hope that men can ever acquire responsibility. Oreste goes beyond his 'désespoir', Bariona remains embroiled in his - for the time being:

La dignité de l'homme est dans son désespoir. Voici ma
décision: nous ne nous révolterons point - un vieux chien

galeux qui se révolte, on le renvoie d'un coup de pied à sa niche. Nous paierons l'impôt pour que nos femmes ne souffrent point. Mais le village va s'ensevelir de ses propres mains. Nous ne ferons plus d'enfants. J'ai dit. (p.580)

Bariona's decree does indeed appear desperate and life-denying.¹⁶ But his reasoning is sound: if the villagers do not satisfy Lélius's demands, retribution will be swift and terrible; if, alternatively, they offer armed resistance, they can have no hope of success. Bariona sees this drastic measure as the only way to end 'l'interminable agonie du monde' (p.581). By sparing their unborn children the slavery which awaits them, Bariona will both rob the Romans of their dominion - since one cannot be a master without slaves - and clarify their guilt for the blood of the Jews: 'que notre sang retombe sur leurs têtes' (p.581). By this shift of responsibility from himself to his colonialist masters, Bariona is proposing not 'national suicide', as Quinn calls it, but rather national martyrdom.¹⁷ He exhorts his people to abjure procreation so as to bear witness to their suffering, and to give an example to the whole of Judée.

Critical opinion is divided over Bariona's unique revolt by continence.¹⁸ Quinn asks:

what could possibly cause Bariona to decree national suicide? To deprive the Romans of manpower is one thing, but to rob man of any future whatsoever is the height of absurdity. Is it

Bariona's fear of an open future - with limited possibilities to be sure - that prompts him to negate life instead of trying to invent ways of affirming it as a primary value? [...] he displays a desire that is characteristic of a number of Sartre's person-ages; that is, flight from freedom epitomised by an attempt to immerse oneself in the objectified existence of the en-soi .¹⁹

Quinn here charges Bariona with attempting existential suicide, and Mohanty takes much the same line, though stressing the physical aspect of the suffering Bariona envisages:

One way of eluding the power of le regard and thus the judgment of others is to retreat into 'objectivity' via an emphasis upon the suffering of the body. [...] Balthazar compares Bariona's attitude to the petrification of a rock, [...] When he declares that 'les jeux sont faits d'avance', Bariona signs his own death certificate.²⁰

My estimation of Bariona's strategy is not so harsh as these, and closer to Laraque's point of view. He takes it as self-evident that 'le droit à la vie [est l'un des] thèmes fondamentaux du drame', and considers further that, given Bariona's dilemma, 'la seule solution consiste à éteindre la source de vie'.²¹

I think Quinn is wrong to interpret Bariona's policy as being entirely a negation of life. On the contrary, in order to find a

third way between two impossible options, Bariona will spare the lives of all his people for as long as may be, perhaps 'un quart de siècle' (p.580). By their endurance the villagers will not only demonstrate, albeit mutely, their own right to live, but they will also assert the right of future generations to a life which offers more to hope for than death. Talk of 'national suicide' is misleading, for although the village 'va s'ensevelir de ses propres mains' (p.580), the death prior to interment will be that of a martyr, whose purpose will be, precisely, to affirm life as a 'primary value'.

The first part of Mohanty's comment flies in the face of the text. Certainly Bariona prescribes that they should 'use up their lives in the contemplation of evil, injustice, and suffering'. But we should not infer that he views this prospect with any relish. In fact, he sees his scheme as the least painful way of putting an end to suffering: 'Nous ne voulons plus perpétuer la vie, ni prolonger les souffrances de notre race.' (p.580) Life is a defeat and synonymous - above all for the Jews - with wretchedness. The next generation in Béthaur is awaited by a destiny which, whatever exact form it takes, hides the seeds of death in its heart: 'Quel destin souhaitez-vous pour vos enfants futurs?' (p.581) One could argue, with Laraque, that Bariona makes the only possible response to his own realistic analysis of the situation, unwittingly anticipating the first phase of the disintegration of the colonialist system, what Sartre has called '[le] temps de la déflagration': 'que la montée des naissances accroisse la disette, que les nouveaux venus aient à redouter de vivre un peu plus que de mourir,

le torrent de la violence emporte toutes les barrières.' ²² Bariona sees no point in creating children for whom life is not worth living, nor in precipitating the flood of violence which would sweep his people away.

Nevertheless, there is perhaps some justification in the charge of 'suicide'. In this first movement, Bariona stalls at the point of what Laraque calls 'revolt' as distinct from 'revolution', a reaction characterised by its retrospection and orientation towards death. ²³ Though his motives are of the highest order, he clearly regards the future as immutable, closed and entire: this is tantamount to treating the future as the past, or (which is the same thing) to considering life from the point of view of death. While the pre-ordination of the future would objectify men by nullifying their freedom, the future cannot be preordained so long as men live. Bariona's despair, therefore, could be said to approximate to suicide and to 'la résignation [qui] est indigne d'un homme' (p.580), which, paradoxically, he resists. However, I have argued above that the Jews, as a colonised people, are already, to some degree at least, existentially dead. Moreover, I observed in my first chapter that, in certain cases, when "suicide" is added to an accomplished "murder", existential martyrdom results. ²⁴ Just as Genet opted to be the voleur after the "murder" of the little boy, so Bariona decrees that the Jews shall be what the Romans have made of them: "dead" men. ²⁵ It is not a matter of 'depriving the Romans of manpower'; that is how Lélius sees it. Bariona is out to strike a deeper and subtler blow at the very identity of the Romans. He is saying in effect: 'You

want us "dead"; but what becomes of your will once we are dead?' ²⁶

This "martyrdom" is neither a soft option, nor a failure to protest practically against Roman tyranny. Because they believe this, the people are ready, if reluctant, to take the unnatural oath of sexual abstinence. ²⁷ Only the timely entrance of Bariona's wife Sarah saves them from a vow which, in time, they would not be willing to keep.

Sarah's announcement of her pregnancy brings home the terrible reality of this oath: 'tu voues notre enfant à la mort' (p.582). Bariona's strategy makes its first move from passive to active when, stressing that this is for the child's sake (p.582), he proposes abortion to his wife. This raises a peculiarly modern controversy, springing from the equally modern conviction that man is 'maître de la vie et de la mort' (p.582). There is some truth in that claim: as leader of the groupe assermenté he is trying to found, Bariona would indeed have the power of life and death as the sovereign executor of the general will. ²⁸ However, nothing could be more contrary to the Old Testament ethos: God alone decreed the fertility or barrenness of the people; He alone could sanction the destruction of this or that erring tribe; and He it was, Sarah tells us, who has given her a child (p.582). Her protests and assurances of love for the child are met by Bariona's insistence that they have no right to inflict a wretched existence upon him: 'Personne ne pourra souffrir pour lui ses souffrances; pour souffrir, pour mourir, on est toujours seul.' (p.582) Their argument opposing the misery of the world to its beauty is curtailed by Bariona's impatient outburst: 'Tais-toi. [...] Les jeux sont faits d'avance. La

misère, le désespoir, la mort l'attendent au carrefour.' (p.583) His authoritarianism leaves him open to Sarah's charge of 'orgueil' and 'mauvaise volonté'. But is he also in mauvaise foi?

Lélius's exposition of the Roman viewpoint is a disarmingly candid, not to say profoundly cynical, lesson in the economics of exploitation. Whether at war or in peace, Rome needs the Jewish offspring for cannon-fodder or factory-fodder, particularly at present when the demand for manpower is outstripping supply. Though Lélius congratulates himself on his intervention, it has in fact the opposite of its desired effect, making us wonder at his naïvety.²⁹ His speech highlights the political good sense of Bariona's plan, much to Sarah's embarrassment (p.584). Needless to say, her attitude is not remotely political, but partly religious, partly ethical, and predominantly instinctive (maternal).³⁰ It is suitable, therefore, that Bariona's final appeal to Sarah should be couched in moral terms:

Peux-tu prendre sur toi de dire: si ce monde était à refaire je le referais juste comme il est? Laisse, ma douce Sarah, laisse. L'existence est une lèpre affreuse qui nous ronge tous et nos parents ont été coupables. Garde tes mains pures, Sarah, et puisses-tu dire au jour de ta mort: je ne laisse personne après moi pour perpétuer la souffrance humaine. (p.585)

It is interesting to contrast the metaphor of 'clean hands' with the sense it has in the later play, Les Mains sales. Hoederer will teach

that political action requires a readiness to dirty one's hands; Bariona, by contrast, contends that a dubious moral blamelessness based upon metaphysical considerations of the human condition is a proper basis for political defiance. It is ironic that Bariona should speak of pure hands while advocating abortion. His words prefigure those of the cowardly Pontius Pilate, who would likewise consign Jewry, in the person of Christ, to a deadly fate at its own hands.

Bariona's dictate of non-procreation, and its corollary of abortion, have raised questions in some minds as to Sartre's own attitudes on the subject. Stenström wonders if 'Bariona's refusal to engender children, as a protest against the world order, is not an idea which has haunted Sartre himself'.³¹ But he is overlooking three things. First, the plan for national sterility is abandoned once shown to be a self-defeating form of protest. Second, Balthazar, who converts Bariona, was played by Sartre himself and is much more likely to be his mouth-piece. Indeed, this probability is virtually confirmed by Sartre's remark that he was expressing 'des idées existentialistes en refusant à Bariona le droit de se suicider et en le décidant à combattre'.³² Third, a rare mention of abortion in Sartre's work - in the Critique - implies, by its tone and context, a strong condemnation of the practice.³³ Mohanty has made much the same mistake as Stenström for much the same reason.³⁴ The fact is that Bariona very much wants a child (pp. 572, 582) and is decidedly reluctant to abort him. This is a personal sacrifice on his part, and the very difficulty of it makes him a quasi-heroic figure. Mohanty is mistaken too to speak of Sartre's 'rejection

of the physical aspect of existence' and of his 'disapproval of the propagation of new matter'.³⁵ It is clear from the very speech she cites that Bariona is repulsed rather by the recreation of consciousness, which, as he puts it, endorses the world by printing a new edition of it: 'Tu vas recréer le monde, il va se former comme une croûte épaisse et noire autour d'une petite conscience scandalisée' (p. 584).

Only a sign from God himself - which Bariona seeks (pp.585-86) - can move the people from their course of self-imposed sterility: the birth of Christ.

The Nativity is announced by God's angel - 'comme Lazare le resuscité parmi les vivants' (p.586), 'pâle comme la mort' (p.593) - to the initially incredulous shepherds on a night of 'propheying with accents terrible'.³⁶ They transmit the news to the villagers, only to be greeted by complaints and, from Bariona, by a profound scepticism bordering on contempt. His long and important speech of haughty defiance - 'je veux me dresser contre le ciel; je mourrai seul et irréconcilié' (p. 599) - adumbrates a number of central themes in the theatre as a whole, prefiguring in particular the humanitarian politics of Hoederer, the blasphemous arrogance of Goetz, and the philosophic enlightenment of Oreste.³⁷ However, Bariona's eloquent harangue does not disillusion those who glimpse at last an end to their bondage. He therefore constructs a rational refutation of the shepherds' claim, and holds their credulity up to ridicule, carrying the crowd with him.

When for the third time Bariona's pessimism seems to have prevailed,

the Magi enter and tip the scales in favour of the shepherds. Their air of confidence and natural authority begins to win the people over so that they turn and denounce Bariona as '[le] mauvais berger' (p.603).³⁸ His obdurate insistence that 'la dignité de l'homme est dans son désespoir' (p.603) evokes from Balthazar a lengthy and reasoned reproach which amounts to a description of Bariona's present existential death. He is wilfully insensible and has the immobility of a statue, 'l'une de ces idoles tragiques et sanglantes qu'adorent les peuples païens' (p.603). Unlike the fulfilled being of the angel on the one hand, and the dense, unconscious matter of the stone on the other, man, Balthazar teaches, has been so fashioned that hope is an integral part of his make-up, his very nature indeed. He elaborates his lesson in ontology in terms which presage the famous theorem of L'Être et le néant, namely that man is what he is not and is not what he is (EN, p.33):

Mais lorsque Dieu a façonné la nature de l'homme, il a fondé ensemble l'espoir et le souci. Car l'homme, vois-tu, est toujours beaucoup plus que ce qu'il est. Tu vois cet homme-ci, tout alourdi par sa chair, enraciné sur la place par ses deux grands pieds et tu dis, étendant la main pour le toucher: il est là. Et cela n'est pas vrai: où que soit un homme, Bariona, il est toujours ailleurs. (p.604)

Bariona's refusal to hope for change reduces him and his people to mere beasts, which is precisely their status in the eyes of the colonising

Romans.³⁹ Worse than that, in his despair he exchanges his humanity, the fluidity of the 'pour-soi' for the petrification of the 'en-soi': 'tu ne seras qu'une pierre dure et noire sur la route' (p.605).

Bariona remains deaf to the wise king's teaching, and to his warnings of ostracism (p.605) (which prefigure the lot of Oreste). Not so the villagers, however, who - to judge by Simon's apologia pro vita (p.589)- are much more favourably predisposed to the king's message of hope and life than their leader: contrast Simon's simple non-sequitur, 'Eh bien, si je n'étais pas né, moi, je le regretterais' (p.589), with Bariona's embittered reproach to God: 'Je veux vivre longtemps sur cette roche stérile, moi qui n'ai jamais demandé à naître et je veux être ton remords' (p.606).⁴⁰

His authority undermined, Bariona's isolation begins as his people abandon him, including Sarah who naturally sees in the holy birth 'la permission de mettre mon enfant au monde' (p.606). Clearly, if Christ has chosen this moment to come to his people, it cannot be God's will that they should erase themselves from the earth. On the contrary, Christ's coming saves Sarah's child as the symbol of all future generations. With that joyful conviction, Sarah leaves her husband to utter his futile threats to God in an access of hubris which only the early Goetz will equal.

In the pivotal scene of le Sorcier's predictions, Sartre is at his dramatic best. The witty and rapid dialogue, larded with potent symbols and significant allusions builds to a climax in which the superbly angry Bariona impetuously takes his ~~second~~ major decision, even

more controversial than his first: he decides to kill the Christ. This extension of his existing stance invites close scrutiny of his motives, of which Laraque has to date offered the most satisfactory account:

Sa révolte exacerbée par la haine et la solitude le conduisent inévitablement à l'extrême point de la négation: l'acte négateur. Puisque le Christ prêchera la résignation et l'acceptation de la mort au lieu de la révolte et de l'insoumission, puisque sa naissance signifiera trente-trois ans sinon de collaboration du moins d'acceptation, il faut avancer l'événement, tuer le Christ à sa naissance. [...] Cette naissance n'est pas simplement en contradiction avec sa politique de l'enfantement-zéro, elle en signifie l'anéantissement. Une seule solution s'impose: la mort du Christ. ⁴¹

I can add little to the above. But this scene is crucial to the conflict of life and death in the play, and so merits our attention.

Christ's very arrival, says le Sorcier, will occasion 'beaucoup de mortalité infantile parmi les Juifs' (p.611), i.e. the massacre of the Innocents. And in his ministry Christ will not preach revolt. For Bariona this is the conduct of a collaborationist, and cannot be compensated by the revival of the dead (Lazarus), or the enunciation of paradoxes such as: '"Celui qui veut gagner sa vie la perdra"' (p.612). (The familiar Sartrean theme of 'qui perd gagne' makes its first

appearance in his theatre in the form of this famous Christian enigma.) Unable - or unwilling - to understand that Christ's death will vouchsafe not only his new life, but the life of the Resurrection for all men, Bariona becomes increasingly scornful as he listens to the prediction of Christ's life of poverty and suffering, culminating in the humiliation of the Cross. But his scorn turns to anger when he hears that it is Christ's 'mort ignominieuse' rather than his 'vie ratée' (p.613) which will inspire his followers to spread the word. He pours forth a stream of indignant exclamations in which the word 'mort' recurs like a refrain (p.613). He sees the life's work of this alleged Messiah as nothing less than 'l'assassinat du peuple juif' (p.613). It is ironic that whereas he had decreed the slow extinction of his people, Bariona should now be scandalised by the prospect of their virtual genocide. The reason is that his strategy of radical passivity would be compromised by the supervention of an actively subversive element - 'la foule adoptera sa doctrine' (p.614) - whose effect would be not only Sion's death, but its ignominy also: 'O Jérusalem humiliée!' (p.614). Far from delivering the Jews out of bondage, the boy Messiah will, it seems, endorse their slavery: 'nous attendions un soldat et on nous envoie un agneau mystique qui nous prêche la résignation et qui nous dit: "Faites comme moi, mourez sur votre croix, [...]"' (pp.614-15) Resignation is not the same as passive revolt: ultimately it would make of Bariona's people suicides, not martyrs - 'une nation de crucifiés consentants' (p.615). Bariona's mistake, of course, is to regard Jesus's life in an exclusively political perspective, which is too

narrow to encompass the Christian ethos. Nevertheless, within those limits his decision to kill the alleged Messiah is, as Laraque has explained, quite logical. The real irony is that he is obliged to act in order to preserve passivity. When he announces his intention to 'tordre le cou frêle d'un enfant, fût-il le Roi des Juifs!' (p.615), he takes a significant step away from the realm of exis towards that of praxis. The political logic of Bariona's project is outweighed by the philosophic illogicality of assimilating action to passivity. His decision to kill Rome's accomplice marks Bariona's coming to existential life.

Arriving in Bethléem with Lélius, Bariona justifies the deed he is determined to perform by the argument that he is merely precipitating an inevitable event, as if Christ's life were not an essential prologue to his death. Like Pilate, Lélius washes his hands of the affair. It is important that Bariona believes this infanticide is a necessary adjunct to his chosen method of resistance, but his speech on page 618 suggests that he is still a slave to pride, the self-styled 'master of life and death'. Hence the importance of his encounter with the angel Marc, who enjoins him to 'pense[r] au regard de Joseph' (p.620). It is the impact of that look - a look of tenderness, above all of hope - on the hitherto dormant paternal instinct of Bariona that causes him finally to renounce his project (p.620). His feelings for Joseph are not sympathy but empathy. He sees Jesus both in Joseph's eyes and through Joseph's eyes. Bariona is that formerly childless father, and Jesus is, in effect, his son.

Bariona's soliloquy on pages 622-23 evinces a mixture of conflicting emotions. On the one hand, he regrets his rediscovered tenderness and rebukes his inconstancy and the 'softening up' of his pride. On the other hand, he envies his fellows' faith and is pained by his exclusion from their joy. As before, Balthazar introduces some order into this mental confusion. His speech on pages 624-26 is simultaneously an exegesis of Christ's ambiguous message of suffering and redemption (i.e. death in life and life in death), and a lesson in modernised Cartesian dualism.

Mind and body, transcendence and immanence are distinct, says Balthazar. The static and self-indulgent contemplation of one's own suffering is futile and death-like (being an extreme concession to matter). Christ's way with suffering is neither to dwell on it, nor to pride oneself on it, nor to resign oneself to it. His good news is that man is not his suffering because he transcends it by virtue of his responsibility for it (p.625). Using a metaphor common to Christianity and Sartrean existentialism, Balthazar contrasts Bariona's 'pesanteur' with the levity which, as a man in God's image, his freedom guarantees him: 'Ah si tu savais combien l'homme est léger. Et si tu acceptes ta part de douleur comme ton pain quotidien, alors tu es par-delà.' He who, in full consciousness, shoulders his burden - generally, his cross; specifically, his suffering under oppression - will find it is alleviated: in Christian terms, by Christ; in existential terms, by the cognizance of his freedom, the knowledge that man is a perpetual recreation of himself: 'tu es à toi-même un don perpétuellement gratuit' (p.625).

The corollary of this truth is that each new freedom constitutes both a challenge to and a pact with God, an assertion of the human right to suffer, and a triumph over suffering: 'Le Christ est né pour tous les enfants du monde, Bariona, et chaque fois qu'un enfant va naître, le Christ naîtra en lui et par lui' (p.626). It follows therefore that the Jews in general must not 's'abstenir de faire des enfants', and that Bariona in particular must 'laisser [son] enfant naître' (p.626).

It is not at once evident that Bariona is persuaded by Balthazar to repeal his original decree. That critical change of heart is brought about by an unforeseen development, namely the publication of Herod's intention to slaughter the Innocents. This new horror causes a desertion of the ineffectual Messiah, and a general return to the Barionan stance - on the part of all except Bariona. Addressed as Christ addresses his Father, Bariona replies as Christ to his disciples (p.629), giving orders to assure the escape of the Holy Family, and exhorting his men to armed uprising, the risk - or certainty - of death notwithstanding: 'Préférez-vous mourir de misère et de vieillesse?' (p.630) These speeches mark Bariona's complete transition from passivity to action, his accession to new "life": 'Vive Bariona!' (p.631).

In the final scenes, the play's themes of life and death modulate, conflict, and combine in a crescendo of ambiguity and equivocation which resumes the inscrutable Christian message, and spells out the conditions in which the colonised man has to seek his freedom:

cet homme neuf [i.e. 'le combattant'] commence sa vie

d'homme par la fin; il se tient pour un mort en puissance. Il sera tué: ce n'est pas seulement qu'il en accepte le risque, c'est qu'il en a la certitude; ce mort en puissance a perdu sa femme, ses fils; il a vu tant d'agonies qu'il veut vaincre plutôt que survivre; d'autres profiteront de la victoire, pas lui: il est trop las. Mais cette fatigue du coeur est à l'origine d'un incroyable courage. Nous trouvons notre humanité en deçà de la mort et du désespoir, il la trouve au-delà des supplices et de la mort. ⁴²

Nowhere more effectively than in the following exchange has Sartre formulated and juxtaposed the enigma of Christianity - 'whoever would save his life shall lose it' - and the comparable paradox of political resistance - 'only a cause worth living for is worth dying for' - :

SARAH: Est-ce que tu veux vraiment mourir ...? Le Christ exige au contraire que l'on vive ...

BARIONA: Je ne veux pas mourir. Je n'ai aucune envie de mourir. J'aimerais vivre et jouir de ce monde qui m'est découvert et t'aider à élever notre enfant. Mais je veux empêcher qu'on ne tue notre Messie et je crois bien que je n'ai pas le choix: je ne puis le défendre qu'en donnant ma vie.

(p.631)

Bariona's conversion, which Stenström finds unconvincing, has been

rationalised by Laraque as consistent with his automatic opposition to the Romans: '[Bariona] a choisi de défendre le Christ seulement lorsqu'il a su que les Romains avaient décrété la mort de celui-ci.' ⁴³ While there is no doubt some truth here, I believe there is a broader, more spiritual aspect to Bariona's existential re-birth, and that in fact it is a kind of religious experience. Listen to the tone of fanaticism in this exhortation: 'Je veux que vous mouriez dans la joie. Le Christ est né, ô mes hommes, et vous allez accomplir votre destin. Vous allez mourir en guerriers comme vous le rêviez dans votre jeunesse et vous allez mourir pour Dieu.' (p.632). ⁴⁴ Religious conviction authorises the first political blows of counter-violence. ⁴⁵ Whether Bariona's conversion actually is religious is hard to say, and in a sense immaterial. His final soliloquy suggests he has found faith in man before God: 'Je serai libre, libre. Libre contre Dieu et pour Dieu, contre moi-même et pour moi-même ...' (p.627) What, in any event, is clear from his closing speech is that 'espoir itself becomes the locus around which men are called upon to die, not in some senseless suicidal gesture, but in a courageous assertion of the primacy of life and freedom'. ⁴⁶

I have devoted considerable space to a play which has had only a tardy and limited publication, has never been publicly performed, and has attracted very little critical attention. I hope to have shown, however, that it is a tense drama which richly rewards attention,

especially from the point of view of my chosen theme. Bariona is a minor masterpiece and an essential introduction to the conflict of life and death as a theme in Sartre's theatre.

Chapter 3.

Les Mouches

Mais il est à remarquer que la collectivité opprimée aspire à cet état de pur équilibre indifférencié comme l'individu entraîné dans un mouvement déchirant et trop brusque aspire à la mort comme pur être indifférencié et total équilibre. [...] Aussi l'individu satisfait ou en partie satisfait de son mouvement, c'est-à-dire qui décide lui-même de la nature et du coefficient d'adversité des obstacles, juge cet idéal comme pur idéal mortel: il propose la vie, c'est-à-dire l'acte de surmonter perpétuellement.

Cahiers pour une morale, p.108.

Whereas in Bariona the action consists of a series of unrealised resolutions, the action of Les Mouches is a single momentous event preceded by a crucial decision. There have been various interpretations of that decision and consequent act, and I shall offer my own once I have sketched the situation, which is redolent with the odour of death.

Myth and Situation.

The Atrides are a mythical Greek dynasty whose congenital disease is internecine violence. Atrée himself 'égorgea lâchement ses neveux'.¹ Agamemnon sacrificed Clytemnestre's daughter, Iphigénie, and in turn died at the hands of his wife's lover, Égisthe. The Argos to which Oreste comes is one where 'l'assassin règne' (p.18); a city 'oppressed, dominated by flies, envoys of the dead';² a pseudo-theocratic dictatorship in which 'the religion of the state is a religion of mortification and repentance'.³ Égisthe's régime is 'not rooted in a future living order, but in a past petrified in death'.⁴ The Argives connive almost wholly at their own exploitation because they are accomplices of Agamemnon's murder: 'Les gens d'ici non rien dit parce qu'ils s'ennuyaient et qu'ils voulaient voir une mort violente.' (p.18) They are 'tous coupables de régicide',⁵ and in order less to expunge their guilt than to wallow in it, the people go permanently in mourning - 'le costume d'Argos' (p.19) - make regular libations to Jupiter, the god of

death; and annually celebrate the macabre 'Fête des Morts'. At this ritual, awaited with dread (p.49), the living invoke their predecessors with self-deprecating incantations whose refrain is: 'Pardonnez-nous de vivre alors que vous êtes morts' (pp.54, 55). The living have over the dead the advantage that they can still assign meanings to what they do. However, shame incapacitates that vital function.⁶ The Argives live by the very opposite of Christ's injunction to 'let the dead bury their dead': they are constantly exhuming and re-burying their dead in their effort to inter themselves. In self-mortification, the nearer they come to fixity, the more they resemble their forebears, and the less they offend them and Jupiter (p.30). 'Je suis une charogne immonde' (p.50), cries one penitent: the Argives are the carrion on which the flies grow fat. And once a year they become 'les grasses proies vivantes' (p.53) of the spirits of the dead themselves.

As in Bariona, the socio-political situation is reflected in the physical world. Argos impresses all the senses with its ghostly atmosphere: the steamy heat of the sun beats down on the 'rues désertes' and 'cours bien closes' (p.14), drawing off 'une odeur de boucherie' (p.21); the sepulchral silence of this 'charogne de ville' (p.22) is punctuated only by the 'cris insupportables' of the repentant people beating their breasts behind the 'murs barbouillés de sang' of their miserable dwellings (p.21). Contrasted with this oppressive setting are the tantalising images of Corinth with its 'places ombragées [...] où l'on se promène le soir' (p.34), where the sounds are of music, singing, and laughter.

Dominating Argos physically and morally is the statue of Jupiter, the god of death: 'Yeux blancs, face barbouillée de sang' (p.13) is how Sartre sees him, juxtaposing red and white as ambivalent but complementary symbols of life and death.⁷ This 'face d'assassin' is a constant reminder of the slain Agamemnon; and the immobility and coldness of the statue locate it in the mineral realm of petrification and death.

The situation-limite is not so readily discernible in Les Mouches as in Bariona. Indeed, at no point are any of the characters confronted with an uncompromising choice between life and death. Oreste and Électre can always just go away; and the Argives are under no pressure to risk their lives in revolt. On the contrary, all pressure is for the maintenance of the status quo. On the other hand, one could say that since the status quo is existential death, the Argives are already in the situation-limite par excellence. Nevertheless, in the literal sense of the term, only Électre risks her life by her defiance at the 'Fête des Morts' - Oreste warns her: 'Ils vont te tuer.' (p.63) How Électre copes with her situation, and how ultimately she saves her physical life only to lose her existential life, we shall soon see.

Act and Agent.

Of the characters in Les Mouches, only Oreste and Électre are, to any degree, existentially alive. The remainder are either existentially

dead, or unreal.

Le Pédagogue is the advocate of a futile and self-deluding liberal humanism, 'la liberté d'esprit' (p.24), an intellectual, solipsistic ethos akin to the Gidean lust for knowledge and experience - 'libre pour tous les engagements et sachant qu'il ne faut jamais s'engager' (p.26).⁸ His dualistic precepts, disdaining the real world and aspiring to the refinement of being as pure intelligence, result not in superior man but in a totally negative moral destitution: non-existent man - hence the lightweightness and vacuity of which Oreste complains (comparable to Mathieu's futile freedom at the end of L'Age de raison). Though he is right to insist that 'il n'y a que des hommes' (p.24), his conception of them as purely cerebral beings has done Oreste a grave disservice.

It matters little whether we regard Jupiter chiefly as the embodiment of a certain religious superstition, a figment of the Argives' imagination; as the chimerical representative of all illusory godheads; or as the allegorical figure for Nazi power in occupation of France/Argos: to some degree, he is all these things. What is important, from our point of view, is that he is the god of death: as such, he is both unreal (a mere image), and immortal (as long as men believe in him) (p.85); and that, in person or in effigy, he and his mortifying influence are ubiquitous. Hence he poses a powerful, if latent, threat of "death".

Though human, Égisthe and Clytemnestre share the divine Jupiter's being-as-image: 'Égisthe, ma créature et mon frère mortel' (p.86).

Their act is fifteen years past. In that time they have devoted themselves to being the sum of that act: they are the assassins of Agamemnon. This is the identity they have acquired, nurtured, projected, and which annually they ritually refurbish. They have distilled their own essence, are neither more nor less than what others take them to be, like Genet's Querelle, 'des suicidés moraux': 'Un mort c'est un être qui n'existe plus jamais pour soi-même mais seulement en soi, c'est-à-dire par l'opinion que les autres ont de lui. On tue pour pouvoir parler de soi à la troisième personne: [...]' ⁹ Their physical appearance betrays their existential death: Égisthe is 'gras et pâle' (pp.62-63) and still has 'du sang séché sous les ongles' (p.36); Clytemnestre, 'la plus coupable' (p.38), has '[des] yeux morts' set in her 'visage mort' (pp.36, 62).

The significant difference between Égisthe and Clytemnestre is that he is ready to avow his bad faith whereas she is anxious to sustain her public image even in private. Égisthe admits, 'je joue la comédie [...]' tous mes actes et tous mes paroles visent à composer mon image' (pp.84-85). His lucidity makes him perceive that he is, in his own words, 'plus mort qu'Agamemnon' (p.79), and is responsible for his lassitude, the loss of will to prolong this living death (pp.80-81).

Their different attitudes to their equally necrotic existences explain the contrast between Égisthe's and Clytemnestre's responses to death. The latter 'demandait grâce' (p.109), defending herself frantically so that Oreste killed her 'très malproprement, [...] en s'y reprenant à plusieurs fois' (p.102). Clytemnestre had no wish to die.

Her bond of hate with Électre (p.40) tended towards the eventual death of one at the other's hands. In the interim, it sustained them both. Moreover, Clytemnestre had not yet begun to tire of her thing-like existence: she took comfort in her identity and pleasure in the degradation of her daughter. By contrast, Égisthe welcomed his assassin 'comme un veau' (p.81), and died submissively. Égisthe's death relieves his 'weariness' and consecrates him eternally as the 'real tyrant' he sought to be.¹⁰ But above all it satisfies his lust for order:

C'est pour l'ordre que j'ai séduit Clytemnestre, pour l'ordre que j'ai tué mon roi; je voulais que l'ordre règne et qu'il règne par moi. J'ai vécu sans désir, sans amour, sans espoir: j'ai fait de l'ordre. O terrible et divine passion! (p.86)

To establish the reign of inertia, Égisthe murdered Agamemnon: in the name of Order. And if he yields unresisting to Oreste, 'C'est dans l'ordre, qu'y puis-je?' (p.81). Conversely, if he chooses to fight Oreste, it will be because 'cet ordre que nous servons tous deux' is threatened. Simone de Beauvoir has remarked that 'ce sont les fascistes qui attachent plus d'importance à la façon de mourir qu'aux actes'.¹¹ Égisthe's application of his mania for order is nothing if not fascist, that is to say, the attempt at a practical translation of an impossible aesthetic vision of human perfectibility. If we regard the following as a description of Égisthe's ethics and kingdom, we

should better understand the manner of his death:

Il y a une morale de la Beauté; elle exige de nous une sorte de stoïcisme démiurgique: optimisme sans espoir, acceptation du Mal comme condition de l'unité totale, affirmation de la réalité humaine, créatrice par-delà ses échecs, d'un univers qui l'écrase, assomption par la liberté des souffrances, des fautes et de la mort; il nous faut vouloir l'être comme si nous l'avions fait. [...] Je l'ai dit, il y a un optimisme stoïque et salaud de la beauté: elle nous demande d'accepter les douleurs et la mort pour l'amour de l'ordre, de l'harmonie, de l'unité. ¹²

Égisthe accepts his violent death under the same imperative - of which he is the author - as the Argives accept their living death of remorse. His last words suggest that he dies consoled by the belief - at once right and wrong - that the totalitarian régime he has founded will survive unchanged: 'Tout n'est pas fini.' (p.88) Égisthe's death is satisfying dramatically, aesthetically and morally. In death, Égisthe achieves an ethical integrity which renders him more sympathetic than Clytemnestre. As with the Thane of Cawdor, 'nothing in his life became him like the leaving it'. ¹³

The sole glimmer of vitality in the obscure necropolis of Argos is to be found in Électre. When she first appears to make her disrespectful offerings to Jupiter, she rubs her body in a semi-obscene gesture

against the cold white wood of the statue, with the taunt: 'Sens mon odeur de chair fraîche. Je suis jeune, moi, je suis vivante, ça doit te faire horreur.' (p.30) Her youth and vivacity radiate from her face, as Oreste remarks, and she does not resemble the Argives (p.31). Nor does she identify with their sole raison d'être, remorse: 'Ce sont leurs morts, non les miens.' (p.42) At the solemn 'Fête des Morts' she scandalises the assembly by her gaiety: 'je danse pour la joie, je danse pour la paix des hommes, je danse pour le bonheur et pour la vie.' (p.59) Électre's liveliness implies a propensity to action, and she alone seems to set Faire above Être in the scale of values. She alone has visions of overthrowing the usurpers and liberating Argos. How then does she come at the end of the play to give to Jupiter this "suicidal" undertaking: 'Je consacrerai ma vie entière à l'expiation.' (p.116) ? What curious process of "mortification" does Électre undergo in the course of the play? The answer lies in her relations with Oreste, and in the reality of his act as compared with her visions: 'La démarche d'Électre est très exactement opposé à celle de son frère: elle passe de la fermeté au refus alors qu'il va du non-engagement à l'acceptation; leurs trajectoires se croisent au point d'intersection marqué par le meurtre.' ¹⁴

Oreste returns to his 'ville natale' (p.67), the town where he was born and will be "re-born". He is a mere tourist, a visiting exile (pp.14,16,27) going under the ironical alias of Philèbe, 'lover of youth' (p.22). His steps are dogged by the god of death using the equally ironical pseudonym Démétrios (p.16). ¹⁵ The victim of his

preceptor's humanist upbringing, Philèbe is no more existent than le Pédagogue: 'J'existe à peine [...] j'ignore les denses passions des vivants.' (p.67) Unlike his teacher, however, he is impatient with his abstractness: 'je vis en l'air.' (p.26) Owning nothing (p.25) and having no reason to act (pp.24,27), Oreste feels devoid of being: 'Et quelle superbe absence que mon âme.' (p.27) He will attempt to accede to Être via Faire and Avoir.

Originally Oreste is not "dead" as the Argives and their tyrants are, though he is believed dead (p.21) and therefore is, for all practical purposes - which is why an alias is apt. The 'absence' of which Philèbe complains does not characterise the dead, but is rather the stamp of utter non-being, of l'existence en sursis.¹⁶ Philèbe complains of lightweightness and vacuity because he is as near to pure consciousness, i.e. nothingness, as it is possible to be. Significantly, it is only since he learned recently of his birth (p.28) that Oreste has had this heightened awareness of his ontological status: he is "unborn". I would endorse Royle's view that 'if Les Mouches does have an ontological as well as a moral meaning, what we must understand is that we are witnessing, on this level, nothing less than the birth of Oreste'.¹⁷ There is ample evidence in the text for this construction of the play. I propose to affirm it, and to re-interpret in the light of it what is perhaps the most controversial act in all Sartre's theatre: Oreste's matricide.

The frustrated youth who repudiates his teacher's conception of a rarefied intellectual liberty is very much disposed to act. Aware of

his non-entity, and as it were intuitively knowing that 'la réalité humaine n'est pas d'abord pour agir. Mais être pour elle, c'est agir et cesser d'agir, c'est cesser d'être',¹⁸ Oreste is anxious to commit that act which will 'combler le vide de mon coeur' (p.29): by taking possession of the memories, hopes and fears of the Argives, who, rightfully, should be both his fellow-citizens and his subjects, he hopes to acquire being. That he imagines so momentous an act might be 'un crime' is neither accidental nor the mere detail of rhetoric. As many critics have noted, there is a tendency among Sartre's characters to prefer violent action, since that alone - especially in the extreme of murder - ensures that a definitive change will be wrought in the world.¹⁹ Criminal action is additionally attractive because of the opprobrium that goes with it: the greater is the disapproval of an act, the greater is the attention fixed upon the agent, thereby conferring Being the more emphatically upon him.²⁰ It is not surprising, therefore, that Oreste should consider his mother's murder - 'dussé-je tuer ma propre mère' (p.29) - for it is the ideally justified crime (revenge and retribution), and the act most likely to effect his belated advent in the world. Though he may be criminal in the eyes of others, Oreste need have no qualms.

Clytemnestre is Oreste's natural (in every sense of the word) enemy. Not only did she conspire to kill his father, she has also ruined the life of his sister, whom he finds attractive and admirable. More importantly, she is to blame for his own exile (or death, as she believes), which is the one crime for which she seems to feel some

remorse (p.39). Compounding these accomplished wrongs is Clytemnestre's hostility towards the young stranger (pp.41,42). In short, she is responsible for Oreste's lack of being - the fact that he is only Philèbe - and seems to want to perpetuate his non-existence. Mothers should give life: Clytemnestre betrayed Oreste's in order to safeguard her own living death. Mythically, the logic of destiny compels Oreste to kill his mother - 'il a le crime et le malheur dans le sang' (p.64). Existentially, the logic of being compels him, for she is the sole obstacle between him and his existence. It stands to reason that Oreste should kill Clytemnestre.²¹ The process by which his predisposition is translated into fact depends on Oreste's relationship with the single life force he finds in the morgue of Argos, namely Électre.

Oreste is first of all struck by Électre's show of contempt for the statue of the tyrannical god of death (pp.29-31). Having rid himself of the moderate, rational and detached supervision of Le Pédagogue, Oreste at once falls under the vital influence of Électre: she pours her vituperation in his ear and he utters just the briefest occasional interjection (pp.31-33). His reserve is marked too in his reply to the supposedly hypothetical question from Électre as to how 'un gars de Corinthe' would react faced with the situation as it is in Argos (p.35). Since he is the 'gars de Corinthe' Oreste's hesitant 'Je ne sais pas' is understandable: he has not yet made up his mind to act, though in theory it seems evidently right to do so. Électre is unwittingly applying tremendous moral pressure, and though he remains non-committal,

Oreste has already progressed from his earlier stance, 'Ce sont des songes. Partons.' (p.29) Thus his first encounter with Électre begins to turn him in the direction of his act.

The penultimate scene of Act I, shot through with the dramatic irony of cross-purposes and mistaken identity, marks another vital stage for Oreste. Clytemnestre's indiscreet questions about Philèbe's parentage precede a violent skirmish with Électre culminating in Électre's plea that he stay and Clytemnestre's that he leave. Oreste's 'Je ne pars plus' (p.43) is the capital decision prerequisite to his act. Thereafter a kind of fatality, both mythological and existential, makes the assassinations inevitable. Again we note the impact of Électre's influence on Oreste's early development. We shall see that, like Lady Macbeth, she exhausts her own courage in supplying the impetus for the agent. From hence her strength will steadily diminish as Oreste's grows.

At the grim 'Fête des Morts', the priest conjures the dead (p.52), Égisthe lectures the Argives on the ruthlessness of their deceased (p.54), and the innocent children of the living dead apologise for their lives: 'Nous n'avons pas fait exprès de naître, [...], nous vivons à peine' (p.55). Égisthe focuses the general attention upon himself with the boast: 'le plus grand des morts va paraître, celui que j'ai tué de mes mains, Agamemnon', to which Oreste reacts violently, 'tirant son épée' (p.55). This is the first sign of an impulse on his part to avenge his father, the first spontaneous revelation that he is Oreste and not Philèbe. Jupiter hears and understands his outburst, and were it not for the fact that he restrains Oreste, we might see there and then a

hot-blooded and more readily understandable killing than later takes place. So Jupiter snuffs by force the first sparks of autonomous "life" shown by Oreste.

For several minutes Électre dominates the stage by her long, heretical speeches, her scandalous gestures, and her very presence, clothed as she is in sacrilegious white. Her daring apostrophe to Iphigénie and Agamemnon (p.59) impresses the crowd, and Oreste among them: 'Chère Électre!' (p.60). Again Jupiter intervenes to quench the spark of rebellion as soon as it threatens to fire Oreste, who must be prevented from fulfilling his potential for existential life. The little party trick that Jupiter then performs has the desired effect upon the crowd who at once turn against Électre. Were it not for Égisthe's re-establishing order, they would execute rough justice on Électre, who is surprisingly phlegmatic about her failure, almost as if she had not expected or even hoped for success... Égisthe's ultimatum, 'banishment or death', evidently encourages Oreste's growing sympathy for Électre, so that, for the first time, he admits his true identity to his self-appointed mentor (p.61). Jupiter is only too well aware that Philèbe is gradually taking on the identity to which he has just laid claim, and that he, Jupiter, is unable to halt that progress for good. Perhaps that is why he 'shrugs his shoulders' (p.61) as he exits.

That gradual changing of identity is completed in the next long and crucial scene between Électre and Oreste. It is traceable notably through Électre's alternating use of Oreste's two names: she begins by calling him Philèbe (p.62) and ends by acknowledging that he is her

'frère aîné' (p.73). Let us see how Philèbe becomes Oreste.

Philèbe has to understand two things: first, hatred of Égisthe and Clytemnestre is Électre's raison d'être; second, only violence can cure the sickness of the Argives, 'car on ne peut vaincre le mal que par un autre mal' (p.63). These facts seem to rule out the intervention of the gentle Philèbe. Actually, they must arouse the still dormant Oreste, an Atride with violence in his blood. He wonders therefore why Électre refuses his help (p.63). The reason is that Philèbe does not at all resemble the brother she has in mind (p.64). His tentative suggestion that Oreste may not match her preconception of him is met with contempt, and the ironic prophecy that he would commit the crime in spite of himself. Intending to persuade Électre otherwise, Oreste at last names himself and so shatters the most valuable of her illusions: 'Tu mens! ... Oreste ... Ah! j'aurais préféré que tu restes Philèbe et que mon frère fût mort.' (p.65) What clearer indication could there be that Électre prefers fantasy to reality? 'Je me sentais moins seule quand je ne te connaissais pas encore: j'attendais l'autre. Je ne pensais qu'à sa force et jamais à ma faiblesse.' (p.65) Deprived of her dreams, Électre is alone; 'l'autre' does not and never did exist; her 'faiblesse' is a refusal to face reality. Her life force is ebbing from her. Or is it that the signs of "life" we noted above were just the histrionics of her playing the 'self-assigned role of tragic heroine with theatrical passion'? ²² Certainly her excuse takes a particularly cowardly form of bad faith: determinism. ²³ She clings to her 'fate', refusing to acknowledge Philèbe as Oreste, and afraid to contemplate

flight from the only situation she knows (pp.65-66). It is no coincidence that Jupiter, from whose surveillance the scene had been momentarily free, re-enters at this point as if to claim Électre for himself. Henceforth her will to resist Jupiter weakens as Oreste's gets stronger.

Électre continues to insist that Oreste is dead and that she and Philèbe are, practically speaking, strangers since they have no shared experience: 'Tu avais confiance dans les gens, [...]: dans la vie [...]' (p.66) 'Moi, à six ans, j'étais servante et je me méfiais de tout.' (p.66) Her persistent rejection of him as Oreste exacerbates his already acute sense of non-being. In his complaint of non-existence, Oreste sees himself as a ghost (p.67). Substance is above all what he lacks, and Argos seems likely to provide the stuff of it: 'Je veux mes souvenirs, mon sol, ma place au milieu des hommes d'Argos.' (p.68) He ignores Électre's plea that he should leave and thrice declares, 'Je ne m'en irai pas', as though to convince himself that here is his one chance to be 'un homme parmi les hommes' (p.68). Électre remains sceptical and Oreste turns to Jupiter for a sign. This is a moment of suspense when we wonder whether Oreste is about to abnegate the freedom he is on the verge of discovering. The delighted Jupiter, to judge by his rubbing of hands, evidently thinks so (p.69), but in fact the following Freudian slip rather confirms Oreste's predisposition to criminal action: 'Est-ce là ta volonté? Je ne puis le croire. Et cependant... cependant tu as défendu de verser le sang... Ah! qui parle de verser le sang, je ne sais plus ce que je dis...' (p.69) His need

to act in a definitive way, his affection for Électre, and his sense of exile from Argos, all orientate Oreste towards the 'criminal' deed he almost subconsciously contemplates, and which is liable to become an end in itself, action for action's sake.²⁴

To Électre's alarm, Oreste ignores the signs of the gods. Like Bariona before him, he seeks guidance in order to assert himself against it: 'Elle n'est pas pour moi, cette lumière; et personne ne peut plus me donner d'ordre à présent.' (p.70) The divergence of Oreste and Électre is at its most marked as Philèbe at last makes way for Oreste:

ORESTE: Comme tu es loin de moi, tout à coup..., comme tout est changé! Il y avait autour de moi quelque chose de vivant et de chaud. Quelque chose qui vient de mourir.[...], qu'est-ce donc qui vient de mourir?

ÉLECTRE: Philèbe...

ORESTE: Je te dis qu'il y a un autre chemin..., mon chemin.
(p.70)

'C'est effectivement Philèbe qui vient de mourir, pour laisser place à Oreste.'²⁵ Oreste breaks out of his lightweight cocoon of abstractness to claim Argos as his town and Électre as his sister (p.71). But there has been a double "death": Électre's will has ebbed away and the truth of Oreste's identity frightens her for it threatens to rob her of her dreams (pp.71-72). Her regret at Philèbe's passing, and anxiety for the events which must inevitably follow, prepare us for Électre's

eventual capitulation to Jupiter. Meanwhile she has, however reluctantly, to acknowledge that Philèbe is indeed Oreste (p.73).

By forcing his own transformation from youthful intellectual to avenging son and brother, Oreste assumes responsibility for his destiny, and for the act which that destiny puts in his way: 'la responsabilité d'un criminel n'est pas donnée dans l'instant où il tue, mais dans l'instant où il se décide à entrer avec la victime dans un système de relations qui le conduit plus ou moins irrévocablement au meurtre.' ²⁶ By taking on his true identity, Oreste has freely entered into such a system of relations with Égisthe and Clytemnestre. It seems to me, then, neither that Oreste is in any sense forced to take the action he takes, 'acculé au meurtre', as Rabi asserts; nor, at the other extreme, that his matricide is 'deliberately gratuitous', as Dickinson would have it. ²⁷ Rather, he freely dons the mantle of avenger because it suits him to do so: the role of Oreste is the 'chemin' he has been seeking, and on its way lies the act of assassination:

Oreste '43 [sic] vient, certes, à Argos dans le projet de venger la mort de son père, mais il ne le sait pas encore, car ce qu'il poursuit, ce n'est pas la vengeance pure, c'est le geste, l'acte qui puisse lui 'donner droit de cité parmi son peuple'. [...] Quand il implore Zeus de lui indiquer son chemin, [...] son choix en vérité est déjà fait. ²⁸

Oreste indeed seeks 'a justification of his own individual existence',

and he makes no secret of that fact.²⁹ Interpretations of his act which overlook its introverted ontological significance are therefore incomplete.³⁰

Oreste clearly believes his killing of Égisthe is 'juste' (pp.87-88), and since Clytemnestre is as guilty as he, her punishment should not pose any special moral problems. But do we, as Dickinson argues, have 'taboos against matricide' as we do 'against incest'?³¹ And can Sartre justify this act in a mythic context only, because 'it is this which is hard to make credible, let alone palatable, to an audience'?³² Sartre does not seem to have had any such misgivings:

Son geste est celui d'un justicier puisque c'est pour venger le roi son père, assassiné par un usurpateur, qu'il tue à son tour ce dernier. Mais il étend le châtement à sa propre mère, la reine, qu'il sacrifie parce qu'elle fut la complice du crime initial.³³

Nevertheless, in company with some other critics, I feel that this explanation does not wholly account for the matricide committed by Sartre's Oreste, however satisfying it may be in terms of the original legend.³⁴

Having urged Oreste to strike Égisthe (p.87), Électre then tries to dissuade him from extending his wrath to Clytemnestre. He is determined, however, and goes alone to the chamber while Électre discovers that her hatred - her raison d'être - has died with her

enemies. The reality of the tyrant's death corresponds no more closely to her dreams of revenge than did Philèbe to her image of Oreste. As Oreste returns she is already prey to remorse, and an ominous darkness begins to obscure her vision, whereas the unrepentant Oreste senses a new dawn, a new "life":

Il ne fait pas nuit: c'est le point du jour. Nous sommes libres Électre. Il me semble que je t'ai fait naître et que je viens de naître avec toi; je t'aime et tu m'appartiens. [...]

Le sang nous unit doublement, car nous sommes de même sang et nous avons versé le sang. (p.91)

Électre recoils from the "life" she is offered while Oreste grasps it with both hands: this is revealed in their opposed attitudes to the matricide. For Électre it is a millstone which threatens to anchor them in the past: 'Peux-tu empêcher que nous soyons pour toujours les assassins de notre mère?' (p.91). For Oreste it is a blessed burden which at last sets his feet firmly on his path leading to his future: 'J'ai fait mon acte, Électre, et cet acte était bon. [...] Dieu sait où il mène: mais c'est mon chemin.' (pp.91-92) ³⁵

What Morin has written of the murder in modern tragedy is doubly true of Oreste's matricide: 'Le meurtre a une signification de véritable naissance virile: il est l'initiation elle-même, qui comporte mort et renaissance, mais au lieu de mourir soi-même, c'est autrui qui est sacrifié'. ³⁶ Oreste's decision to kill had marked the

"death" of Philèbe; his remorseless slaying of his mother - note that he struck at her belly (p.102) - consummates the "birth" of Oreste. By taking the life of her who had withheld "life" from him, Oreste enters the world at last. Clytemnestre dies in a metaphorical childbirth, and childbirth is invariably a bloody affair.³⁷

Once they have chosen their respective attitudes to the result of their conspiracy, it is as certain that Oreste will remain invulnerable to the Érinnyes as it is that Électre will fall prey to them. Électre's decline to a total collusion with Jupiter - marked physically by her growing resemblance to Clytemnestre (p.101) - is the reverse image of Oreste's ascent to individual autonomy, what McCall has dubbed 'the symbolic murder of Jupiter'.³⁸ The language used in the final Act strongly suggests that Sartre wants us to see Oreste's apotheosis as a coming to "life", and Électre's capitulation as a surrender to "death".

Taunted by the Érinnyes, Électre begins to question more anxiously whether she wanted this crime she had only dreamt of (p.102). For Oreste the deed brought an awakening to a new dawn, but dreams evaporate when we wake. Realisation destroys the dreams with which Électre 'vivait tranquille' (p.101). But had she truly "lived"? Oreste dates their new "life" from the moment of the murders: 'Je viens de naître avec toi' (p.91); 'qu'as-tu donc vécu que je n'aie vécu?' (p.103). Before, says Oreste, they were both 'trop légers' (p.115), but whereas he welcomes his burden as a warrant of substance, Électre allows it to make of her an object for others - 'petite poupée' (p.103) for the

Érinnyes - and for herself: 'tu as besoin de souffrir dans ton corps pour oublier les souffrances de ton âme.' (p.104) Électre's sufferings are of her own making (p.105), and the more she succumbs to them, the more thing-like she becomes (and the more closely she resembles Clytemnestre (p.108)). Oreste, by contrast, increasingly observes his independence of the world of objects, and of their god, 'le roi des pierres' (p.111), who warns him that 'les choses t'accusent de leurs voix pétrifiées' (p.110). But Oreste need not fear the mineral realm: he has no need of it to sustain him as it sustained the tyrants and will sustain Électre. He no longer needs an excuse to exist (p.112), for he has emerged into the exile of his freedom and his confident hope is of conscious human life. Tempting though remorse and sleep (p.113) ('death's counterfeit') ³⁹ might be, Oreste aspires to show the Argives, in spite of Jupiter and in spite of themselves, 'leur obscène et fade existence qui leur est donnée pour rien' (p.114). Only when they confront that truth and abandon false hopes can they learn, as Oreste has done, that 'la vie humaine commence de l'autre côté du désespoir' (p.114). The ironic echo of Oreste's triumphant assertion is Électre's abject vow of servitude - 'je consacrerai ma vie entière à l'expiation' (p.116) - an abnegation of humanity and of life itself which expresses the attitude of the Argives as a whole. How apposite that these slaves of the god of death should seek to stone their would-be saviour (p.119). And how understandable that Oreste, in the face of this hostility, should make at last his postponed departure from the city.

It has been argued that Oreste's quitting Argos is a hollow, mock-heroic gesture veiling an underlying cowardice or lack of commitment. Plausible as this view seems in the light of Sartre's later development, the text lends it little support. Oreste's final speech, unmistakably couched in the vocabulary of life, complements and concludes the dominant metaphor of the play:

Mon crime [...] est ma raison de vivre et mon orgueil, [...] c'est pour vous que j'ai tué [...] je prends tout sur moi. [...] Adieu, mes hommes, tentez de vivre: tout est neuf ici, tout est à commencer. Pour moi aussi la vie commence. Une étrange vie. (p.120)

It seems to me from Sartre's earliest remarks about Les Mouches that he believed he had shown, in allegory, the prise de conscience of an essentially free man, not of one politically or socially committed.⁴⁰ Perhaps Oreste can be taxed with 'mythifying' himself.⁴¹ But let us not forget that Sartre had not yet really come to grips with the question of the individual caught up in a common cause - a problem he would touch on in Morts sans sépulture, and concentrate on in Les Mains sales and Le Diable et le bon Dieu - and that he was still very much in transition from what he has called his pre-war period of metaphysics, moralism and individualism.⁴² Charges of 'inauthenticity', therefore, are anachronistic if not invalid. Furthermore, we should bear in mind that Sartre had to circumvent Nazi censorship if he was to reach an

audience at all, and that too overt - or successful- an exhortation to resistance might have proved self-defeating. I would agree with Royle, then, that 'there is no question of a betrayal' in Oreste's departure.⁴³ He is not to be blamed for hoping that his example of existential life might serve to awaken the existentially dead.

In so far as Les Mouches dramatises the "birth" of a free man, it is, like Bariona, a nativity play. By contrast with both, Huis clos is an ironic funeral oration.

Chapter 4Huis clos

La nature en moi c'est moi-même en tant qu'objectivité transcendée pour l'autre. Il va de soi que je ne peux jamais vivre ma nature. Ainsi l'autre me transforme en objectivité en m'opprimant et ma situation première est d'avoir un destin-nature et d'être devant des valeurs objectivées. Il va de soi qu'une conversion est possible mais elle impliquera non seulement un changement intérieur de moi mais un changement réel de l'autre. En l'absence de ce changement historique, il n'y a pas de conversion morale absolue.

Cahiers pour une morale, p.16.

Huis clos is one of the best known of Sartre's plays.¹ Since its first performance in May 1944 it has had frequent revivals and has been widely read and discussed. Regarded as a chef-d'oeuvre by many critics, it has been the subject of many articles and longer essays. The consensus of critical opinion is that this most abstract of Sartre's plays illustrates certain ideas set forth in L'Être et le néant, mainly apropos of interpersonal relations, but also of action in relation to essence, and of the nature and consequences of death. Each of these aspects has its partisans, each supported by the oft-quoted (and oft-abused) appropriate maxims from the text, viz (respectively): 'l'Enfer c'est les Autres'; 'Tu n'es rien d'autre que ta vie'; 'Je suis tombé dans le domaine public.'² Critics vary as to where the emphasis should be put, but on the whole there is considerable agreement as to the principal themes of Huis clos and how they should be interpreted.³ Nevertheless, I approach a new reading of this very rich play, proposing not merely to repeat existing critical opinion, but to endorse some of it, to question some of it, and above all to add to it.

Myth and Situation.

It is convenient to begin with one of Sartre's own comments on Huis clos, which succinctly indicates the orientation of this chapter:

Les trois personnes que vous entendrez dans Huis clos ne nous ressemblent pas en ceci que nous sommes vivants et qu'ils sont morts. Bien entendu, ici, 'morts' symbolise quelque chose. Ce que j'ai voulu indiquer, c'est précisément que beaucoup de gens sont en-croûtés dans une série d'habitudes, de coutumes, qu'ils ont sur eux des jugements dont ils souffrent mais qu'ils ne cherchent même pas à changer. Et que ces gens-là sont comme morts. En ce sens qu'ils ne peuvent briser le cadre de leurs soucis, de leurs préoccupations et de leurs coutumes; et qu'ils restent ainsi victimes souvent des jugements qu'on a portés sur eux. A partir de là il est bien évident qu'ils sont lâches ou méchants, par exemple. S'ils ont commencé à être lâches, rien ne vient changer le fait qu'ils étaient lâches. C'est pour cela qu'ils sont morts, c'est pour cela, c'est une manière de dire que c'est une mort vivante que d'être entouré par le souci perpétuel de jugements et d'actions qu'on ne veut pas changer. De sorte que, en vérité, comme nous sommes vivants, j'ai voulu montrer par l'absurde l'importance chez nous de la liberté, c'est-à-dire l'importance de changer les actes par d'autres actes. Quel que soit le cercle d'enfer dans lequel nous vivons, je pense que nous sommes tous libres de le briser. Et si les gens ne le brisent pas, c'est encore librement qu'ils y restent. De sorte qu'ils se mettent librement en enfer. ⁴

Certain critics have expanded usefully upon this text of capital

importance.⁵ On the one hand, by stressing that the play is a metaphor, Sartre invalidates all literal-minded criticism inclined to see it as a bizarre, imaginary evocation of the after-life: since there is no after-life for Sartre, any such speculation is misguided. Moreover, it is clear that he is not concerned to examine the nature or qualities of the external phenomenon Death, since we know from L'Être et le néant that Death is a thing of which we have no knowledge and which is not per se a proper subject for philosophic inquiry, whether in formal discourse or dramatic thesis.⁶ On the other hand, by asserting the difference between "dead" characters and "living" audience, Sartre contradicts those who hold that Huis clos is neither more nor less than 'une image de la vie telle qu'elle est décrite dans L'Être et le néant.'⁷ Sartre is not saying, 'all human beings are like this, therefore all human relationships are fruitless', but rather, 'some human beings are like this and we all have a tendency to be the same'. Huis clos is, then, a cautionary tale. Five years before the statement quoted above, Sartre had, in an interview given to Der Spiegel on Les Séquestrés d'Altona, made clear in passing the partial nature of the metaphor of Huis clos:

SARTRE: Dans Huis clos il n'y a pas d'alternative. Et c'est pourquoi j'ai comparé ma nouvelle pièce [Les Séquestrés d'Altona] avec Huis clos; il s'agit en effet plutôt d'une pièce descriptive.

DER SPIEGEL: Les héros sont morts.

SARTRE: Oui, dans les deux cas ils sont morts et dans les deux cas c'est, si vous voulez, notre partie morte qui est représentée. 8

Huis clos is indeed a metaphor, but it is neither wholly nor solely that; and it is certainly a play of ideas, though not therefore a thesis play. I share Royle's view that Sartre's 1965 commentary, though it sets us in the right direction, does not account for the work as a whole. Huis clos is first and foremost an accomplished piece of theatre.

Contat has noted that 'on a souvent négligé de voir que les personnages de Huis clos sont des consciences mortes et que leur existence est avant tout une existence théâtrale'.⁹ This is a most important remark. Sartre presents in Huis clos, as immediately as possible, that most fascinating and inconceivable of myths, that most intangible and inescapable of human truths: death. He does so in the medium of the theatre, itself a convention of the fictive, the imaginary. Moreover, the play in question, so far from being naturalistic as Sartre's next three were to be, is (as a number of critics have noted) no less mythological than Bariona and Les Mouches: the characters are in a Second Empire hell! Like Racine with Bajazet, Sartre makes remoteness of place compensate for proximity of time.¹⁰ It is as if he intended by a Hegelian negation (mythification) of a negation (death) to make real the unrealisable.¹¹

We are asked to believe (in so far as we believe any fiction) that Garcin, Inès, and Estelle have lived on earth, died, and now find themselves in hell, not resurrected in any sense, but dead. Hence they experience all the consequences of death: they learn that they are the total accumulation of their past, closed, thing-like beings; they suffer their complete objectification in the minds and mouths of others still living on earth; they discover their utter loss of subjectivity through their inability to effect any change either in themselves or in the world about them. But how is all this so? How can Sartre envisage a place whose existence he doubts, and of which none can conceive, and there locate dead people capable of 'learning, suffering, discovering', when the annihilation of consciousness is the definition of death? Such is the achievement of the theatrical illusion which Huis clos is, that Sartre has rendered dramatically convincing a representation of the paradox 'conscience morte'. And he has done so, as Jeanson has emphasised, not in order to depict 'la mort proprement dite', but rather, by a graphic illustration of the principal effects of death as described in L'Être et le néant, to tell us something about human life.¹² No less than his formal remarks on 'Ma Mort', Sartre's drama of the dead derives 'pas [...] de la considération de la mort, mais, au contraire, de celle de la vie'.¹³

Nevertheless, 'les personnages de Huis clos sont [...] dans une situation morte', and doubly so.¹⁴ First, in absolute terms: death is the ultimate situation-limite, and the fact that the characters are dead is a datum of their situation; deprived of all future, of all

possibility, it follows that any situation in which the dead find themselves - whether in heaven or hell, or even on earth as the dead characters of Les Jeux sont faits discover - must necessarily be 'une situation morte'. Secondly, in relative terms: that is to say, within the internal frame of reference of their given situation; for not only are they 'sans aucune ressource sur le plan de l'action', but also their triangular arrangement obliges them constantly to objectify (i.e. mortify) one another by their unblinking look. Boros writes:

C'est qu'en réalité, nous sommes en présence d'une situation-limite, la Mort, constituant l'accomplissement ultime de la menace infligée par autrui à notre liberté: 'l'existence même de la mort nous aliène tout entier dans notre propre vie, au profit d'autrui' (EN, p.628). [...] Le regard d'autrui engendre en quelque sorte une mort ontologique. Tout comme la mort, il nous fige dans une attitude arbitraire, anéantit notre projet d'être, entrave notre Liberté.

In other words, the dead characters of Huis clos incessantly renew one another's death through their very presence, by imposing their otherness upon one another - 'l'enfer c'est les autres'.¹⁵

As in the previous plays, the situation-limite of the characters of Huis clos is concretised by the surroundings in which they are set. Boros has elaborated the association between incarceration and death,

and Issacharoff has stressed the significance of place and spatiality in this regard.¹⁶ Inès, Estelle, and Garcin one by one lose touch with the world, and the space to which they are reduced is confined and claustrophobic: the door cannot be opened from the inside at will, there are no windows, and no artefacts of illusory space, e.g. pictures or mirrors. As Lorris has noted, the scene is dominated by the heavy, impassive, and immovable statue on the mantelpiece: 'L'homme échoue devant le bronze, massif, inerte, l'être-en-soi de la philosophie sartrienne qui tient dans Huis clos le rôle dévolu à la statue de Jupiter dans Les Mouches.'¹⁷ Other objects in the room have an alarming coefficient of adversity: there is no switch for the electric light; the bell to summon le Garçon sounds only when he is already present; the seemingly ordinary canapés are too heavy to be moved; there are no books in the room although there is a paper-knife which cannot even be used as a weapon. So this 'salon style Second Empire' is doubly a 'situation fausse' (pp. 127-28), as Garcin calls it. First, it is anachronistic, both in the sense that it is out-of-date and that it has no temporal dimension as we know it. Secondly, it is intrinsically inconsistent in that none of the objects it contains either corresponds to one's preconceptions, or relates conventionally to the other objects. Finally, enveloping all is an intolerable heat which, instead of emanating from the fireplace, seems to blow in through the open door as one expects a cold draught to do.

The perversion or suppression of the normal functions of phenomena extends to the bodies of the characters themselves. Garcin first

realises that 'on ne dort jamais' (p.129); that way of escape is closed to them, as is its waking equivalent, blinking - 'quatre mille petites évasions' (p.130). Their bodies are unable to express emotion: 'Ici les larmes ne coulent pas'. (p.160) (Note the emphasis on the eyes, the instrument of the look.) And we can infer that they will not experience through their senses any of the usual human pleasures or pains. Thus they can neither suffer physical harm, nor illness, nor - least of all - death: 'nous sommes ensemble pour toujours.' (p.182) Inès, Garcin and Estelle are consigned to the 'situation fausse' of 'la vie sans coupure' (p.130), and its cardinal falsity is this: it is not life, but death:

GARCIN: Très bien. Alors, il faut vivre les yeux ouverts...

LE GARÇON, ironique: Vivre...

GARCIN: Vous n'allez pas me chicaner pour une question de vocabulaire. (pp.131-32)

Why are the characters of Huis clos condemned to live their death?

Act and Agent.

It may seem paradoxical to propose to discuss acts and agents in a play of which we agree that 'le développement de l'action prend la forme d'une immobilisation progressive de l'action', and that 'la donnée de

base [...] est que les personnages sont morts'.¹⁸ Yet, as I intend to show, the fact that the characters are dead gives an added interest to our inquiry. For we can consider those of our subjects' acts committed in the world, and those we see attempted in hell, and make, so to speak, a stereoscopic assessment of their characters.

Being dead, Inès, Garcin, and Estelle are what they have done, the sum of their acts: 'Wesen ist was gewesen ist.'¹⁹ They have, in life, defined their essence. It follows that whatever they do, or try to do, in hell will be determined by that essence. Their behaviour in hell, therefore, necessarily conforms to their behaviour on earth. Which is to say that we can deduce with absolute certainty what Garcin, Inès, and Estelle are. And, unlike the opinion of their earthly acquaintances, our judgment upon them is not open to question: such is the chilling privilege of watching the dead "live".

The damned of Huis clos are all, more or less directly, responsible for the death of someone who loved them. Estelle is the most obviously guilty: not only did she murder her own baby, but by so doing she provoked her lover's suicide. Inès similarly drove her lover to despairing suicide having already ruined her cousin's life. Garcin too, though he predeceases his wife, has to answer for her death, 'morte [...] de chagrin' (p.173), which he reports in the course of the play. Inès is right to say: 'Il y a des gens qui ont souffert pour nous jusqu'à la mort et cela nous amusait beaucoup.' (p.146) What splendid credentials each has to be 'le bourreau, [...] pour les deux autres' (p.147), and how apt that their talents should be exploited in

a triangular relationship which reflects the relationships they created and destroyed in life: Garcin/ sa femme/ la mulatresse; Inès/ Florence/ son cousin; Estelle/ son mari/ Pierre. They are indeed 'entre assassins' (p.146). But does that alone account for their presence in hell as Inès seems to suggest (p.146)? Certainly it satisfies a central concept of natural justice - equal retribution, lex talionis - that those who inflict death should themselves suffer it. But if the ideal is that the punishment should fit the crime, we might say that in this case the penalty is excessive since Garcin, Inès, and Estelle are condemned to suffer death eternally. The answer I shall propose is that the particular acts of malice to which the three confess are only the symptoms of an underlying world-view or mode of being, freely chosen and revealed through their conduct, for which these three have been damned.

Within moments of his admission to hell, Garcin makes a telling confession: 'je vivais toujours dans des [...] situations fausses; j'adorais ça.' (p.127) Here is the key to his character, and to that of his cell-mates. Once he has been assured of the falseness of the present situation, his 'human dignity' returns to him, as le Garçon cuttingly remarks, and he insists on his determination to face facts (p.128, 129, 130). Garcin's harping on this theme now, and his subsequent occasional reiteration of it, incline us to think that he 'doth protest too much', and that he is above all anxious to persuade himself that reality has to be faced. This impression is soon reinforced by his obvious alarm at the prospect of 'la vie sans coupure'

(p.130), and his unashamed nostalgia for 'le sommeil douillet' and his self-induced 'rêves simples' (p.131). As the horror of living 'with eyes open' begins to be disclosed, Garcin's true apprehensiveness reasserts itself, culminating in a panicky loss of dignity as he hammers on the door to recall the waiter (p.133).

Poor Garcin is afraid, and - which is worse - he is afraid to admit it. When le Garçon returns, he denies that he called him, anxious to save face before Inès. She, notable for her frank and perceptive insights, soon suggests that he has 'l'air d'avoir peur' (p.135), a charge he promptly and pompously denies. Nevertheless his uncontrollable nervous tic betrays him, and when Inès complains, he as good as confesses: 'Vous n'avez pas peur, vous?' (p.136) This is as close as Garcin will come to acknowledging what he is: a coward. La peur is the outward sign of his inward state, his essence, 'la lâcheté'.²⁰ Hereafter, all he says and does will strengthen the initial impression of his cowardice, confirming a posteriori that, however he may reinterpret his action in life, he was a coward then since he is a coward now.

The first to refer to himself as 'un mort' (p.140) when he brags of his violent death, Garcin is nevertheless not slow to adopt Estelle's euphemism 'absent', and persists in the delusion that he can '[mettre sa] vie en ordre' (pp.135-36, 141). Disregarding Inès's incisive derision - 'Elle est en ordre, ma vie' (p.141) - Garcin indulges in reminiscence of his nights on the paper, unwittingly revealing more of his taste for 'situations fausses', for role-playing: 'J'aimais vivre

au milieu d'hommes en bras de chemise.' (p.141) It is a cruel irony that he should be locked up then with two women who will not let him remove his jacket! But Garcin prefers to put that down to 'le hasard' (p.142) than to see any significance in it. Again, Inès scoffs at his attempt to explain away their situation, and her caustic tongue threatens to strip away another layer of the heroic image behind which Garcin seeks to dissemble his cowardly essence.

Though it is he who advocates an investigation of their lives, Garcin allows Estelle to speak first as though to gauge the reaction of the jury (Inès). Having absolved Estelle without a moment's reflection he proceeds to state his own case, prefacing it with this prejudicial rhetoric: 'Et vous, trouvez-vous que c'est une faute de vivre selon ses principes?' (p.145) His tough, staccato delivery draws the desired response from Estelle, but only further contempt from Inès. Her ruthless perspicacity upsets their game of mutual reassurance and reminds Garcin of his suffering wife: this is another, related aspect of his life of which we have yet to learn the truth. Rather than allow that truth to emerge, Garcin threatens to silence Inès by striking her. Thus she realises the more general truth which explains and encapsulates their situation: 'Le bourreau, c'est chacun de nous pour les deux autres.' (p.147) As we should expect from a coward, Garcin recoils from this unpalatable fact and proposes a tripartite retreat into silence as their only hope.

This attempt at mutual oblivion fails first because Inès cannot satisfy Estelle's need to be wanted by a man, secondly because,

however much they may pretend, they can never efface their very presence to one another (p.153). Reluctantly, Garcin suggests another and more revealing round of confessions, but again his courage in so doing is only apparent for he invites Estelle to begin. When she pleads ignorance, he uses her diffidence as an example against which to offset his own alleged candour: 'Mais je me connais'. (p.154) Garcin's self-deprecation - 'Je ne suis pas très joli' (p.154) - is another rhetorical trick intended to win sympathy. Our suspicion that what follows will be a truth that suits him is confirmed by his impatient dismissal of Inès's typically astute accusation of desertion: 'Laissez ça. Ne parlez jamais de ça. Je suis ici parce que j'ai torturé ma femme. C'est tout.' (p.155) His obvious anxiety in insisting that he knows his crime reminds us of Clytemnestre's denials of Électre's charges of play-acting.²¹ He, like her, endeavours to sustain himself in a false situation, to construct an alternative truth, or half-truth, which is both plausible and, from his point of view, tolerable because it conforms with his comic-book conception of manliness.

As Lorris has noted, Garcin's cruelty to his wife - of which he is more or less proud - is not in itself a form of behaviour which defines Garcin, but rather indicates a deeper, constant attitude, his essence or truth: cowardice.²² Like the typical bully, he made his wife suffer 'parce que c'était facile' (p.155). She was a natural victim not only because her exaggerated respect for him made her vulnerable, but also because her stoic endurance of adversity (p.140)

constituted a challenge, even an affront to his own want of courage. His efforts to upset her emotional balance (p.155), though they were always frustrated, culminated in his installing a mistress in the house as the ultimate insult to his long-suffering wife. He is able to present this outrage as the last word in male boorishness, and claims it as the sole cause of his damnation (p.156). Twice Garcin has purportedly confessed; twice he has fought shy of the truth.

The cowardly cruelty of which he was guilty on earth, Garcin displays again in his ruthless interrogation of Estelle. Ganging up with Inès, he eggs her on to a full avowal of her particular crime, the most heinous of them all: infanticide. So obvious a pleasure does he take in Estelle's discomfiture, that Inès has to 'call him off' (p.160). He then sketches a plan of mutual aid which excludes Estelle, minimises his own vulnerability, and casts him in the most favourable role as the voice of reason and pity. As before, Inès sees through and deflates his delusions (p.163), and bribes him with a promise not to harm him so that he promptly abandons Estelle to the wiles of Inès.

When Garcin next participates it is in the hope that he and Estelle might form a mutually beneficial sexual bond of the sort Inès had tried, and failed, to establish. Appropriately, his physical

violence against Inès (p.169) is his last gesture of machismo before the hitherto concealed truth of his life begins to filter through via his glimpses of the society he had known. In his first contact, he denounces Gomez as 'un beau salaud' (p.170) rather than report what he is saying about him. His anxiety to have Estelle's confidence, however, indicates that he must have committed 'un bien mauvais coup' (p.171). Garcin begins to disclose the details of his case, justifying himself the while: 'Je voulais témoigner, [...] Je comptais y ouvrir un journal pacifiste' (p.171). Estelle, quite incapable of understanding Garcin's concern, indiscreetly describes, in the crudest terms, his conduct as she sees it: 'Tu as bien fait puisque tu ne voulais pas te battre.' (p.171) No wonder Garcin winces. This is far too close to the truth and not, as Inès remarks, what he wants to hear. At last we learn why - if we had not already concluded from his actions in hell - Garcin is so keen to set his life in order: 'Estelle, est-ce que je suis un lâche?' (p.171)

Once Garcin has pronounced the word which describes what he is, it recurs thereafter like a leitmotif, dinning his essence into him. His mistaken supposition that the manner of his death could prove to him that he was not a coward (p.172) in any case backfired since he did not die 'cleanly' as he had hoped.²³ Once that avowal has been made, Inès classifies Garcin - 'Et toi, Estelle? aimes-tu les lâches?' (p.173) - and Estelle gives up any pretence at 'confidence': 'Lâche ou non, [...]' (p.173). The judgment made of him on earth - 'Garcin est un lâche' - takes on the authority of a definitive truth

since neither Inès nor Estelle will contest it, and he (being dead) cannot: 'je leur ai laissé ma vie entre les mains. [...], et ils ont raison puisque je suis mort. [...] Je suis tombé dans le domaine public.' (p.174) Garcin has learnt that when the pour-soi dies, it dies utterly qua subjectivity, only to persist qua object en proie aux autres. The faith of one 'soul' could redeem Garcin from that universal condemnation, but his final effort to find that support in Estelle is scotched by the ever-vigilant Inès: 'Si tu savais ce qu'elle s'en moque ! ' (p.175) As usual she is right, and Estelle's tired concession - 'Même si tu étais un lâche, je t'aimerais, là' (p.175) - cannot begin to satisfy Garcin's need to be believed in.

As he had fled in his earthly life, so Garcin tries to flee in hell from the companions who know him for what he is (p.176). At the same time he pleads for physical torture, which is another form of flight, into the objectification of the body.²⁴ It is ironic, then, that when the door opens Garcin should be too timid to step through it, for even if he is forgotten on earth, he is still a prey to the judgment of Estelle and Inès. The latter especially knows what a coward is (we shall see why shortly): 'Et si tu dis que je suis un lâche, c'est en connaissance de cause, hein? [...]' Je ne pouvais pas te laisser ici, triomphante, avec toutes ces pensées dans ta tête; toutes ces pensées qui me concernent.' (p.178) It would be an act of bravery for Garcin to walk out into the steamy corridors of hell, careless of the reputation he left behind. But cowards are incapable of bravery, and so far from winning Inès's confidence, he merely learns from her

the hard lesson that one is not 'ce qu'on veut', but rather one's acts, 'rien d'autre que ta vie' (p.179). In a last desperate effort to conceal from himself the unpalatable truth, Garcin seeks consolation, and revenge on Inès, by associating with Estelle: 'Ha! lâche! lâche! Va! Va te faire consoler par les femmes.' (p.180) Lovemaking, however, can neither blot out Inès's all-seeing gaze, nor silence her taunts: 'Lâche! Lâche! Lâche! Lâche! En vain tu me fuis, je ne te lâcherai pas.' (p.181) Willy-nilly, Garcin is condemned to be what he was: a coward, 'Pour toujours!' (p.182).

Through this critical exposition of Huis clos, I have been concerned to show that Garcin's behaviour in hell conforms wholly to the essence which he defined in life: he is what he was: 'lâche'.²⁵ By a similar analysis of the conduct of Inès and Estelle, we could show that in death they now are what they made of themselves in life, the sum of their acts. Estelle is monstrously egocentric, even narcissistic. Inès is callous, even sadistic. Indeed, Lecherbonnier has convincingly claimed that each character is instantly classifiable at the moment of his or her entrance.²⁶ I agree fully with Lorris when he writes: 'Huis clos met en scène trois personnes condamnées à être ce qu'elles ont été; leur peine réside, en somme, dans l'éternité de leur passé.'²⁷ However, one perplexing question remains: if it is not chance which has brought this trio together, what is it in their acts which makes them deserving of the same hell? Or, what is the common denominator in the respective 'morts vivantes' led by these characters in the world? I believe the answer we find

in the text is this: moral cowardice, a form of mauvaise foi.

In our investigation of Garcin we saw that his undoubted physical cowardice was accompanied and, as it were, complemented by an equal moral cowardice. In life, so consuming was his urge to be 'un homme, un dur' that he had allowed himself 'mille petites faiblesses parce que tout est permis aux héros' (p.179). Never had he tried to rectify those weaknesses which inexorably defined him. They were among 'toutes les saletés qu'on cache' (p.172) in the hope of deceiving others, and oneself, about oneself: self-deceit is the very definition of mauvaise foi.²⁸ In death, therefore, Garcin necessarily persists in his delusions, and we have seen how he repeatedly shies away from, distorts, and finally tries, by a process of spurious self-justification, to wriggle out of the uncomfortable truth about himself: 'lâche'.

Estelle, though less obviously so, is equally reluctant to face the truth about herself and her situation. She it is who baulks at the word 'mort' and suggests the euphemism 'absent' (p.140). She is the last to avow her worldly crimes, finally confessing fully only under savage interrogation from her companions, after which she exclaims: 'Je suis lâche! Je suis lâche!' (p.160) Indeed she is and was, for she, no less than Garcin, had in life tried to conform to an image, that of ideal femininity. And she, like him, had become entirely dependent upon the judgment of others to feel her being.

Prima facie it is less easy to make out a case of mauvaise foi against Inès. She alone of the three seems to square up uncompromis-

ingly to the essence which her acts have made for her. She alone seems to have no illusions that she can be other than what she was (p.141). However, if we consider closely her words and deeds in hell, we shall find that her lucidity is due not to moral honesty, but to her essential cruelty. She insists upon the irremediability of their situation because it distresses Garcin. Likewise she plays upon Estelle's vanity because it is the easiest way to torment her: 'Moi, je suis méchante: cela veut dire que j'ai besoin de la souffrance des autres pour exister.' (p.157) Inès's mauvaise foi is typical of the sadist: morally, she is as cowardly as Garcin. She, like her companions, needed, and so needs, to be objectified by others as 'bourreau' (p.135), a self-assigned identity which testified to the same fundamental conduct of flight. Consider her terror at the prospect of being cast out of this company in which she can revel in the role of executioner, and the telling exchange with Garcin which follows it, in which she agrees that she knows what it is to be a coward (p.178). Inès, Garcin, and Estelle are three of a kind: cowards who fear and flee from their freedom in mauvaise foi; people who strive to conform to idealised, objective images of themselves; people who, in short, live as though already dead.²⁹ We can now look again, with a new lucidity, at Sartre's preface:

S'ils ont commencé à être lâches, rien ne vient changer le fait qu'ils étaient lâches. C'est pour cela qu'ils sont morts, c'est pour cela, c'est une manière de dire que c'est une mort

vivante que d'être entouré par le souci perpétuel de jugements et d'actions qu'on ne veut pas changer.³⁰

And we can appreciate the chillingly simple logic of this hell: having lived as though dead, Inès, Garcin, and Estelle are fittingly condemned to be dead as though alive. That is the profound sense of their having to be what they were: "dead". Ironically, it is Estelle, the least perceptive of them, who unwittingly pinpoints their failure in earthly life: 'Peut-être n'avons-nous jamais été si vivants.' (p.140) Exactly.

There is a further aspect to the infernal suffering of Sartre's damned, and it is this: their passage to oblivion, or the death of their memory in the world. The self-willed, and relatively independent Inès soon has thoughts of a pact with Garcin when she senses this second death (p.161). Estelle, too, turns quickly to Garcin for consolation (p.166-67). 'Vie tombée dans l'oubli' is one attitude among many which the living may take towards the dead.³¹ But from the point of view of the dead - should they have one, as these three do - to witness one's own consignment to oblivion is not only humiliating (Inès and Estelle see themselves physically replaced) but positively painful, especially when one has led a life given over to the image others have of one. In the case of these three, then, the passage to oblivion makes them all the more dependent on one another. This comes through most strongly in Garcin's ambivalent account of his memory's death. At first he envies Inès and Estelle being forgotten in the

world because he sees himself being immortalised as the proverbial coward by his colleagues: 'lâche comme Garcin' (p.173). A moment later in infernal chronology - months, perhaps years - he is relieved to have 'entered history', yet he seems distressed to have died again. The living must also die, says Estelle; but others will come to immortalise the coward, fears Garcin (p.174). For a moment he does not know whether he would rather be forgotten entirely or remembered as a coward. Yet when that oblivion comes he understands that its effect is to make him wholly dependent on the companions whose very presence is a torment (p.178). There is little hope of salvation through the faith of Inès or Estelle, and we see how the mutual dependence of this trio has been aggravated by the death of their terrestrial memories: 'Ha! c'est à mourir de rire! Nous sommes inséparables.' (p.177) Because these characters are irremediably what they were, and because 'la mort, dans cette pièce, est attente figée dans le présent', there is no imaginable end to the self-service hell of Huis clos: 'Eh bien, continuons.' (p.182) ³²

In Huis clos Sartre has provided a powerful metaphorical framework for the dramatic conflict of life and death. As the characters reflect upon the punishment for their lives, we the reader gradually come to an understanding of it with them: those who lead la vie d'un mort will be condemned to just that.

Huis clos is usually taken to be thoroughly pessimistic. But is Sartre's claim that he sought to 'montrer par l'absurde l'importance

chez nous de la liberté' really far-fetched? I think not. For while it is almost inevitable that Huis clos by its very conception - three dead characters justifiably damned - should have an aura of the macabre and the lugubrious, it does not follow that Sartre is making a statement about the hopelessness of the human condition. On the contrary, Huis clos can surely be interpreted as a kind of moral tale or parable whose image of terrible retribution is intended to have a salutary effect on all who pay heed. The spirit of death may seem to dominate Huis clos, but it is therefore life - physical, and above all existential - which is implicitly asserted as the opposing, positive value.

Chapter 5

Morts sans sépulture

Car le secret d'un homme, ce n'est pas son complexe d'Oedipe ou d'infériorité, c'est la limite même de sa liberté, c'est son pouvoir de résistance aux supplices et à la mort.

'La République du silence', Lettres françaises (1944),
in Situations III, 11 - 14 (p.13).

[...]: ce qui est terrible, ce n'est pas de souffrir ni de mourir, mais de souffrir, mais de mourir en vain.

'Paris sous l'occupation', France libre (London 1945),
in Situations III, 15 - 42 (p.31).

Writing his first post-war play, Sartre, freed from Nazi censorship, quit the mythical mode for the realistic. Wishing to confront his audience with the great conflicting issues which had for five years been the stuff of their daily lives, he produced the first of his only two plays to be set in contemporary France. Oddly, Morts sans sépulture was, because of its very immediacy, a critical and commercial failure. Sartre observed that it was 'trop violent' and called it 'une pièce manquée'.¹ This is regrettable, for though it may be unconvincing on stage, Morts sans sépulture conveys all the tension of high drama when read (especially aloud).² Perhaps this is due to the relative unobtrusiveness of the violence on the written page. But no doubt it also has to do with the fact that the dialogue treats, explicitly, highly charged questions about the value of life and the meaning of death. It does so, moreover, in the context of irony which attains almost to the tragic.

Myth and Situation.

In occupied France death ceased, in one important sense, to be myth: while still an unknowable truth of the human condition, it was not remote or hidden. On the contrary, it was daily an imminent possibility. Of those who lived through the occupation, there were broadly two categories, the resisters and the survivors. It was perhaps inevitable that the latter, especially, should balk at Sartre's re-presentation

of the crimes committed in the name of their survival. The return of 'happy times' renders to men their belief in immortality, of which they have no wish to be disabused.³ The resistants differed from their compatriots in making an active response to their condition as an 'occupied people':

Tout le monde connaît ces malades qu'on nomme 'dépersonnalisés' et qui s'avisent soudain que 'tous les hommes sont morts' parce qu'ils ont cessé de projeter leur avenir au-delà d'eux-mêmes et parce que, du même coup, ils ont cessé de sentir l'avenir des autres. Ce qu'il y avait peut-être de plus pénible, c'est que tous les Parisiens étaient dépersonnalisés. [...] Nous nous regardions et il semblait que nous voyions des morts. Cette déshumanisation, cette pétrification de l'homme étaient si intolérables que beaucoup, pour y échapper, pour recouvrer un avenir se sont jetés dans la Résistance. Étrange avenir, barré par les supplices, la prison, la mort, mais que du moins nous produisions de nos propres mains.⁴

Paradoxically, resistants opt to risk death rather than live the "death" of a petrified future to which the occupier condemns them. So far from 'dying twice', as the collaborator supposes he does, the resistant lives, physically and morally, and if he dies, he dies once in an affirmation of his life, whose 'secret' he has learned in the face of death.⁵

The maquisards of Morts sans sépulture, having made this choice, are now face to face with 'les supplices, la prison, la mort'. Theirs is a situation-limite - 'talk or die' - yet one whose limits seem to vary in the course of the play, modified first by the capture, then by the release of Jean. There are, then, three phases of the situation: (i) before Jean's capture; (ii) during his captivity; (iii) after his release. I shall consider each in turn.

(i) In this phase, the resistants have to choose not between life and death so much as between attitudes towards death, which they take to be inevitable. Lucie's romantic quietism is balanced by Canoris's practical analysis which asserts that they 'died when they ceased to be useful'.⁶ The question is whether, in the little time remaining to them, they can impart a meaning to their lives.

Lucie counsels dignified submission (p.194), drawing strength from her reflexions upon life in general (p.195) and the life of Jean in particular, whose survival means the survival also of the cause (p.191). But Lucie loves Jean, and the affective aspect of her moral fortitude makes it suspect for the others and later colours her response to the changed situation.

Canoris, however, is truly philosophical: since they have no information to trade for their lives (p.193), their situation is greatly simplified: 'Que chacun se débrouille pour ne pas trop souffrir.' (p.197) Saving one's life does not come into it: 'Je vivais pour la cause et j'ai toujours prévu que j'aurais une mort

comme celle-ci.' (p.202) Having freely chosen the risk of death, it matters little how one regards the eventual fact: 'Espère ou désespère: il n'en sortira rien'. (p.202)

For Sorbier and Henri, by contrast, the manner and meaning of their deaths is of great importance. Sorbier, tormented by vivid recollections of the three hundred innocent victims who died as a result of the failure of their mission (pp.188-89), is obsessed by the question 'how?', whereas Henri is preoccupied by the question, 'why?'⁷ Both are convinced of the certainty of their deaths, but neither takes any comfort from the fact that they have nothing to hide (pp.198,203). On the contrary, they see this as depriving their deaths of any purpose: 'Mais je suis volé: je vais souffrir pour rien, je mourrai sans savoir ce que je veux.'(Sorbier, p.198)

Henri's anxiety is more intellectual than Sorbier's. He rejects Lucie's idea that Jean's survival will justify them. Though he concedes that he would like to have someone to remember him (p.203), he asserts that Jean thinks of her only because he loves her, and reminds her how quickly dead comrades are generally forgotten (pp.203-04). His despair is more acute than Sorbier's, for the guilt he feels is not just a response to the failure of their expedition, it is a permanent state of his moral conscience, an existential experience of contingency. A purposeful death would, he had hoped, retrospectively justify his life. The death in prospect being decidedly pointless, he fears the reverse will be true: 'Ma vie n'a été qu'une erreur.' (p.201) Henri had sought to salvage his life: only a death for the cause could do that -

raison de mourir equals raison de vivre. But this is far from being the case as he sees it: 'notre mort n'est utile à personne. [...] A présent nous allons mourir et nous ferons des morts injustifiables.' (p.202)

Of the five prisoners, young François is radically set apart. He alone refuses to believe that death is a fait accompli, protests his innocence, and makes a plea for his life when life does not appear to be an option in the situation. He wonders why they should shed tears for the three hundred victims and shed none for themselves: he was not, unlike his comrades, prepared for death (p.189). He rejects notions of guilt, and of consolation in Jean's survival. In short, he leaves his companions in no doubt that he would welcome some secret, not as a reason to die, but as a barter for his life (p.196).

As in previous plays, the sensible effect of the set reflects the situation-limite of the characters. They are handcuffed and incarcerated within four walls (p.202) where the passing of time is indeterminate (pp.198-99). Outside in the village, 'il n'y a plus que des miliciens, des morts et des pierres' (p.190). Inside, a deathly silence had hung over the still figures surrounded by dead and useless objects: 'Il y a donc homogénéité entre l'humain et l'inhumain.'⁸ The characters themselves are immobile - Lucie is 'morte et calme' (p.190), Henri is asleep - all except for François, whose agitation translates his will to live. The arrival of Jean injects new life into this moribund scene.

(ii) Jean's capture affects the situation of his comrades significantly in that it gives them an option on life, however slight and however morally complex.⁹

Lucie will not entertain the possibility of betraying Jean to save her own life. She knows that the lives of sixty comrades depend upon Jean's return, and, in any case, she does not want life at any price (p.239). There is nothing to gain and everything to lose by a confession, especially in ethical terms: 'Je ne veux pas de cette vie', says Lucie (p.239). But there is also an emotional dimension to Lucie's rejection of this slim option on life. Her romantic musings upon Jean's free life (p.206) are suddenly dispelled by his appearance in their midst, and, like Électre before her, Lucie despairs as her dreams evaporate: 'à présent tout est fini' (p.208). In time, however, she reconverts that despondency into a reason to suffer for Jean's safety: 'tu emporteras dans tes yeux mon dernier visage vivant, tu seras le seul au monde à le connaître. Il ne faudra pas l'oublier. Moi c'est toi. Si tu vis, je vivrai.' (p.213) So Jean's capture changes the situation for Lucie by introducing an alternative of vicarious life only.

For Canoris the situation remains practically unchanged: the cause is still paramount, and the essential point is that the miliciens should not discover Jean's true identity (p.208). His attempts to encourage Sorbier, his own steadfastness, and his insistence that, in any case, they will not be spared (p.239), all confirm that, for Canoris, there is no question of Jean's becoming a barter for their lives.

The same is not so for Sorbier. He is the first to be tortured and he is convinced that he would divulge any information he had (p.209). Hence, when he knows of Jean's whereabouts, he wishes he were dead (p.210). Wracked by the contradiction between his will to die for a reason and his proven cowardice, Sorbier is confronted in this second phase with a horrible choice: his life or Jean's. The possible consequences of his 'cracking' might be scarcely less terrible than the torture of the miliciens, which he knows he cannot endure. If Jean's capture brings a faint possibility of survival for Sorbier, it does so at the price of moral bankruptcy. We are beginning to glimpse the reason for his suicide.

For Henri, by contrast, the fact of having something to hide is a source almost of joy (p.209). Though at first subtly resentful of Jean, who is his rival for the affections of Lucie, Henri is chiefly relieved that Jean's capture answers his question 'pourquoi?': 'je pourrai peut-être me dire que je ne meurs pas pour rien' (p.213). Henri construes the change in their situation as giving him access to a meaningful life through a purposeful death.¹⁰

As before, François's attitude separates him radically from his fellows. He regards Jean as a threat to his relationship with his sister Lucie, which is particularly close, and his resentment is explicit (p.212). Jean's presence, therefore, weakens François's will to resist and reinforces his will to live. The sight of Sorbier's broken body (p.232), and then of Lucie after her humiliation by the miliciens (p.237), both contribute to his sense of injustice that they should

have to suffer for Jean. And when he threatens to denounce Jean (p.238), he is ready to trade moral rectitude for life: 'Je veux de n'importe quelle vie. La honte, ça passe quand la vie est longue.' (p.239) It is ironic that François, who clings so tenaciously to life, should be the first to lose it at the hands of others, and that those assassins should be his comrades.

Jean's capture places him in a situation-limite more complicated than that of his comrades. If, on the one hand, he continues to conceal his identity, he will probably be freed, unharmed, as he eventually is. But his fellows will pay for that freedom by their suffering and, perhaps, their deaths. (By the time of his release, Sorbier and François have both died to save Jean.) 'J'espérais que vous étiez morts' (p.207), these are Jean's first words because he grasps at once the moral ramifications of their mutual dependence. If, on the other hand, he discloses his identity, he will almost certainly forfeit his own life, and perhaps those of the others too. What seems certain is that if he does not escape to pass on the news that their mission has failed, the other partisans expecting to find a safe village will be caught like rats in a trap. Henri twice reminds Jean of his obligation towards the 'soixante qui t'ont fait confiance' (p.240). His unenviable situation is virtually the reverse of the others': he must choose his life and the near-certain death of the five; they must choose their deaths and the near-certain life of Jean, and the sixty, and the cause itself. Theirs is the better part, and Jean intends no irony when he complains that he is the unhappiest of them all (p.238). His impotence to help

them - recalling an earlier powerlessness to save his wife dying in childbirth (p.231) - contrasts with their comforting self-righteousness. His very vitality - 'trop vivant' (p.233) - excludes him from this company of martyrs. The natural order of things is stood on its head: Jean, who will live, is somehow inferior to the morituri. They appear to be masters of their destiny, whereas his autonomy has been neutralised by the impossibility of his situation: 'Vous m'avez exclu, vous avez décidé de ma vie comme de ma mort: froidement.' (p.242) It is again ironic that Jean, who would most willingly give his life, should be constrained to keep it.

(iii) Jean's release signals a third phase in the situation of his three remaining comrades. Impotent though he was, Jean has been able by a clever subterfuge to offer these three their first real option on life - that is, an opportunity to save their own lives without necessarily causing the death of others. The debate between life and death which takes place in this now classic situation-limite is the main action of the play, for it is in this phase that the characters are called upon to make 'la libre décision qui engage une morale et toute une vie'.

Act and Agent

I have made no mention of the miliciens for, as individuals, they

are of no interest. They are mere stereotypes who conspire in the single and unambiguous action of torture, purposing to make objects of their victims: 'Les miliciens s'acharnent à nier la liberté des résistants; ils veulent réduire leur comportement à de pures réactions physiques.' ¹¹ The sadist or torturer aims to assert himself as pure subjectivity - without a pour-autrui dimension for the victim ¹² - while annexing the other's freedom to make of him pure object. ¹³ As we know, such existential murder is an ontological impossibility, destined to resolve itself in the total objectification of the victim (i.e. his death). Such is the case here, and I shall return to it in due course. First, I want to consider Sorbier's suicide, and Canoris's final persuasion of his comrades.

Sorbier commits suicide because he is convinced that he will break under torture and betray Jean. He knows after one session downstairs that this is the likeliest outcome if he does not take some evasive action early on. He does not so much take the easy way out as the only way out. Writing on torture, Sartre has said: 'Il y a des circonstances où il est impossible d'être un homme: on devient un singe ou un mort.' ¹⁴ Sorbier finds himself in such circumstances, and rather than abnegate his will and submit to the living death of the monkey (object), he remains master of himself (subject) and lucidly chooses 'plutôt la mort que ...' as thousands of maquisards had done before him.

Laraque has objected that Sorbier's suicide is more a piece of game-playing than an act of commitment, and he finds it contradictory that he should be cool enough to bid his tormentors 'bonsoir' as he leaps to his

death.¹⁵ I think he overlooks the bravery of Sorbier's last-minute defiance, his moment of triumph in which he banters with Clochet and provokes him to inflict pain in an effort to humiliate him. Only then does Sorbier assert himself in the final gesture, taking his own life despite Clochet's promise of freedom if he talks. His exultant cries - 'J'ai gagné, j'ai gagné!' (p.227) - no doubt suggest game-playing, but the important fact is that he is not wrong: his death inflicts a defeat upon the miliciens, for they have neither learned any information nor reduced him to a living object. But in any case, should we not rather judge Sorbier's act by weighing its consequences than by guessing at its intentions?

The foremost consequence of Sorbier's suicide is that Jean is less likely to be betrayed, and the hand of the resisters is therefore strengthened. Though it might be argued that the miliciens will be all the more determined to break their captives - see Landrieu's reaction (p.228) - that determination is never in doubt anyway, and the alternative to Sorbier's suicide - his talking - would have had far more serious consequences for everybody. Moreover, the resisters themselves do not blame Sorbier for his action. Indeed, his death occasions little comment - save from François and Jean - as though the others had expected it. Perhaps Lucie's wrapping herself in Sorbier's coat after her own ordeal (p.235) is a symbol of his continuing solidarity with the group.

I would conclude that Sorbier's suicide is neither the act of a coward, nor the self-regarding gesture of a poseur, but an affirmation of the will to sustain life even at the cost of his own. The attitude

of Canoris - the first homme engagé in Sartre's theatre - endorses this view. The reassurance he gives Sorbier - that a life cannot be ruined in a single act, that a man is the sum of all his acts, and that 'nous ne sommes pas faits pour vivre toujours aux limites de nous-mêmes' (p.210) - confirms what Garcin had learnt, that the manner or moment of death cannot alone determine the sense of a whole life.¹⁶ Sorbier's many good points compensate for his natural physical cowardice which he does not compound, like Garcin, with moral cowardice. He is realistic about his abilities and limitations, and, when the chips are down, makes the best possible choice. Canoris helps us to see Sorbier as an illustration of the central existentialist dictum which is not: 'Tu n'es rien d'autre que ta mort', but rather: 'Tu n'es rien d'autre que ta vie'.

The murder of François is more difficult to justify than Sorbier's suicide, in part just because it is murder, but also because it involves three agents. Prior to the killing its motives seem clear: François has rejected the consensus that they should remain silent at all costs; he resents Jean and is appalled by the death of Sorbier. In short, he is the weak link in the chain of resistance: he alone professes to prefer life - any life - to the good of the cause or the good opinion of his fellows (p.239). Paradoxically, it is his estimation of the peerless value of life which precipitates François's death.

There hatches a conspiracy, a collective decision between Canoris, Henri, and Lucie to save the cause from François, and François from himself. It is Henri who sums up their reasoning which is both plausible and apparently sincere: 'Il ne faut pas que tu parles, François. Ils

te tueraient tout de même, tu sais. Et tu mourrais dans l'abjection.'

(p.239) Jean's intervention, by contrast, is suspect. He wants to be denounced because he believes that only through suffering can he close the moral gap which divides him from the others. Lucie stands in his way, harsh but practical: 'Il devait mourir demain. [...] Il faut qu'il se taise. Les moyens ne comptent pas.' (p.240) Jean persists till Henri reminds him of the sixty dependent for their lives upon his escape. It is indicative of Jean's immaturity as a leader that he does not at this point step forward and himself take charge of François's execution. (Contrast Goetz's summary disposal of the dissenting chef for the good of the army as a whole.)

Instead he remonstrates with the conspirators, accusing Henri in particular of pride. Henri retorts that Jean did nothing to defend the boy, but he fails to attack Jean's obvious desire to displace the three from their moral pedestal, the 'beau rôle' which he envies. Instead, Henri begins a potentially destructive introspection, questioning this collective deed of which he happened to be the precise agent, and seeking support from the other two. Lucie strives to maintain her wholly practical attitude: 'Il ne fallait pas qu'il parle.' (p.242) Henri, understandably, cannot be so detached and finds it hard to persuade himself of the simple objective necessity of the act. Like Hugo after him, he is unable to divorce the act from the subjective complex of motives and view it in the objective perspective of consequences. Once more it is Canoris who gets the thing into proportion:

Il fallait qu'il meure: s'il avait été plus près de moi, c'est moi qui aurais serré. Quant à ce qui s'est passé dans ta tête ... [...] Ça ne compte pas. Rien ne compte entre ces quatre murs. Il fallait qu'il meure: c'est tout. (p.243)

Here, Canoris anticipates the theory of 'fraternité-terreur' which Sartre would later formulate in the Critique.¹⁷ As a 'groupe assermenté', the resisters have all taken on the same rights and privileges, obligations and risks.¹⁸ The supreme of these is the right of life and death over another member of the group in the name of the group itself. The eventual purpose of the operation of this system of potentially violent relations, is to replace the threat of death facing the group by the promise of life.¹⁹ Canoris clearly considers that, although François protests that he was not aware of the risks, they are nevertheless within their rights to take the ultimate sanction against him for the sake of the cause. For that to be so, they must be justified by the consequences, and what those eventually are depends to a great degree upon them, the agents. This is the fact of which Canoris will try to persuade Lucie and Henri after Jean's release.²⁰

Before we come to that, I want to consider a few pages of dialogue (pp.244-49) which amount to a debate between life and death similar to that which took place between Oreste and Électre, and informed similarly by a unilateral, once mutual, love.²¹ This encounter epitomises the dramatic conflict of values in Morts sans sépulture: concrete realities

versus abstract ideals; the obligation to live versus the temptation to die. Moreover this scene is an important prelude to the fourth tableau because it makes Jean's exclusion definitive, and enables Lucie to expound the attitude against which Canoris will have to prevail.

In her funeral oration for her brother, Lucie comes to the same conclusion as the hero of 'Le Mur', Pablo Ibbieta, before her, viz. that death is absurd, and life, in the light of it, futile (p.244). Jean, hoping to renew contact with Lucie, offers encouragement and support which she rebuffs (p.245). At present she envisages no other outcome than her death, nor is she inclined to. It is that which separates her from Jean and which he cannot understand: 'Nous n'avons plus rien de commun.' (p.245) It is not just that she has suffered where he has not, but that torture has made her other, an object: 'J'étais de pierre' (p.237). Jean's protestations - 'c'est cette autre que j'aime [...]' 'C'est toi que j'aime, Lucie, toi, heureuse ou malheureuse, vivante ou morte,' (p.246) - fall on the deaf ears of one who believes herself about to die, who is in a sense already dead since life has meaning only if it has a future: 'je n'ai plus d'avenir, je n'attends plus que ma mort et je mourrai seule.' (p.246)

The rift between the former lovers widens. Jean's distress at Lucie's indifference prompts an offer to share 'even her death', but she replies with a torrent of feeling in which he has no place. Her love for him has been supplanted by hatred of her torturers, and she feels closer to them than to him (p.247). Sartre has described the phenomenon of complicity between inflictor of violence and victim, more than

once.²² In this case, it spoils any understanding between Jean and the others: they have undergone the objectifying process of torture, he has not; he is alone (p.248). Willy-nilly, Jean is the protagonist and candidate of life: he alone has an open future, and he alone survives. It is fitting then that he should invent the subterfuge of the decoy which gives his fellows their last hope of life: he offers his own life vicariously for his friends - such are the ethical restraints of political reality.

For Lucie, Jean's release reunites the three of them - notice that they huddle together (p.249) - in their responsibility for François's death and their defiance of their captors. Even François is reintegrated into the group in death (p.250), death which is still the only future envisaged by Lucie and Henri, which by the alternate operation of shame and pride, has become for those two almost an end in itself. Why else should they take no account of Jean's plan?

Lucie se haît trop pour vouloir vivre; quand on a allumé en soi le brasier d'une telle honte - car l'orgueil et la honte se recouvrent et se reflètent - on ne peut plus vouloir exister paisiblement, on doit souhaiter la honte et l'orgueil suprêmes: l'anéantissement total de la conscience.²³

For the miliciens, as well as for Lucie and Henri, there is a feeling that this is now a game in which the stakes are heroic martyrdom or abject submission: the actual discovery of information has become

decidedly secondary. This is the mentality that Canoris must combat alone. 'Gagné! Nous avons gagné!' exclaims Lucie when Landrieu offers to spare them if they talk: 'Ce moment nous paie bien des choses. [...] Ce matin vous nous suppliez de vivre. Et c'est non. Non! Il faut que vous finissiez votre affaire.' (p.259) Not for a moment does she consider her option on life. Nor, it seems, does Henri, whose defiant words provoke the sadistic Clochet into urging further interrogation - 'même si c'étaient des martyrs, ça ne me gênerait pas' (p.259). Only by pretending to fear death is Canoris able to win a breathing space in which to persuade his companions that they have no right not to choose life now that it is a real alternative.

Canoris's argument is based on the simple general principle that 'nous n'avons pas le droit de mourir pour rien' (p.263). But he must particularise it if he is to persuade Henri and Lucie of its truth, for both of them are by now sufficiently self-regarding to think that they have that right. Canoris's approach to Henri is twofold: first he hopes to persuade him that some practical good might flow from their continuing to live: 'Il y a des copains à aider.' (p.262) But altruism cuts no ice with Henri, so obsessed is he with his own motives for killing François. Were his conscience clear he might well remain immune to the persuasions of Canoris. But his fear that he killed the boy out of pride alone (p.263) allows Canoris to take his second tack which concentrates upon the individual and subjective disadvantage of dying at such a time:

Écoute, Henri: si tu meurs aujourd'hui, on tire le trait: tu l'as tué par orgueil, c'est fixé, pour toujours. Si tu vis...
 [...] Alors rien n'est arrêté: c'est sur ta vie entière qu'on jugera chacun de tes actes. (Un temps.) Si tu te laisses tuer quand tu peux travailler encore, il n'y aura rien de plus absurde que ta mort. (p.263)

This is one of the clearest statements anywhere in Sartre's literary work of the moral imperative to choose life in any situation where that choice is possible. Whatever the dénouement of Morts sans sépulture, critics generally agree that this is the positive and lasting message of the play.²⁴

If Canoris almost persuades Henri of his duty to others by presenting it as a duty to himself, he has less success with Lucie. Such is her disgust with herself that she considers death and oblivion her only fitting destiny: 'J'ai pris tout le mal sur moi; il faut qu'on me supprime et tout ce mal avec.// Allez-vous-en! Allez vivre, puisque vous pouvez vous accepter.' (p.264) This foretaste of Goetzian self-aggrandisement denotes a pride so overweening that it deafens Lucie both to Canoris's accusations, and to his pleas on behalf of others: 'Je suis sèche, je me sens seule, je ne peux penser qu'à moi.' (p.265) Were it not that a shower of rain reminds Lucie of the natural beauty of the world, her obduracy might have cost them all their lives.²⁵ As it is, she is 'reborn to life',²⁶ and entrusts the moral judgment of

their conduct to Canoris. He unequivocally affirms: 'Nous faisons bien. Il faut vivre.' (p.266)

It is the supreme irony of Morts sans sépulture that at the very moment when they seize their first opportunity of life, the resisters' lives should be snatched from them by the treachery of Clochet. Certain critics seem to think that this twist in the tail somehow invalidates or contradicts Canoris's final moral certitude. Boros, for example, writes: 'Cette cellule hermétiquement close ne s'ouvrira donc que pour projeter ses occupants dans une mort absurde, qui leur arrache toute possibilité de justification.'²⁷ Lorris is more pessimistic yet: 'Henri, Lucie, Canoris meurent au moment où ils acceptent la vie, à l'instant où la mort n'a plus aucun sens. Tous les grands mots d'utilité et de fierté s'effondrent sous les balles des Miliciens dont la victoire apparaît complète.'²⁸ I cannot accept these readings.

The execution of the resisters is dramatically consistent, an admirable coup de théâtre, and need not be seen to have any ulterior significance. Until nearly the last minute, all three miliciens expected to execute their prisoners in any event. Landrieu had decided alone to offer them their lives against strong opposition from his subordinates, one of whom is a sadist, and both of whom had expressed a particular desire to see their victims dead. All this being so, the dénouement is no great surprise. Canoris himself reckoned there was no better than a fifty-fifty chance - 'pile ou face' (p.260) - of Landrieu's keeping his word, yet he had no doubt that it was incumbent upon them to take that chance. The threat of death had been a constant

feature of the resisters' situation-limite, and if it had at times attenuated, it had never disappeared. It is not therefore wholly unexpected when at last it materialises.

Why then should Clochet's unimaginative disposal of the maquisards be thought to wrest the moral victory from them? McCall seems to me to be right when she says: 'The resistance fighters are not deprived of any virtue, stalwart or otherwise, because they give a false confession and are killed nevertheless.'²⁹ Their execution does not alter the fact that they dominated their individual pride and obsessions sufficiently to assert life as a universal value. That their deaths should ensue immediately is indeed ironic, but not indicative that their last act was mistaken or blameworthy. On the contrary, Clochet's double-cross makes a gift of tactical and moral victory to the resisters:

[Clochet] est d'ailleurs trop bête pour comprendre qu'il leur a rendu service. Morts, sans sépulture, ils ont rejoint la cohorte des résistants qui se sont insurgés contre le cours de l'histoire que le nazisme modelait. Les morts ont gagné. La révolte a triomphé de la torture, des tortionnaires; Jean poursuivra la lutte.³⁰

Clochet's complacency (p.268) is unjustified. He is the dupe of his victims, not vice-versa. Having readily believed that Canoris, contrary to all probability, had talked to save his skin, he has stupidly set a seal upon their silence: if and when they discover that 'Jean' is

not Jean, no amount of torture will bludgeon the truth out of these corpses. Moreover, by having the prisoners shot, he does that act which confers upon himself, Landrieu and Fellerin, an immutable objectivity: they are, ad infinitum, torturers and assassins:

Ce que j'étais pour l'autre est figé par la mort de l'autre et je le serai irrémédiablement au passé; [...] La mort de l'autre me constitue comme objet irrémédiable, exactement comme ma propre mort. Ainsi, le triomphe de la haine se transforme, dans son surgissement même, en échec.³¹

By contrast, the dead are, forever, the advocates of life.

If I cannot altogether share Koefoed's enthusiastic assessment of Morts sans sépulture as 'la pièce de Sartre jusqu'ici la mieux réussie, tant du point de vue dramatique que du point de vue du style',³² I certainly endorse his dismissal of the usually shallow critical focus upon its alleged obscenity.³³ It may be true that the abundance and explicitness of the violence in Morts sans sépulture make unreasonable demands upon theatrical convention, and I suggest that it might be better suited to the cinema screen than to the stage. Nevertheless, it is a pity that this aspect should be such a stumbling block for critics, including Sartre himself who has underestimated the play's qualities as a result.³⁴ Whatever its shortcomings, Morts sans sépulture has distinctive merits: Sartre has skilfully wrought a situation whose limits

gradually expand, only to come up short against the ever gratuitous, ever inevitable wall of death (as the infinitely extensible space between two sides of a triangle is abruptly defined by the addition of the third side). In that situation he places characters whose lives, existential and physical, are constantly in question, and whose actions and attitudes are shot through with an almost tragic irony. The crowning paradox is that, by resolving the tension between life and death in the death of his heroes, Sartre 'draws the line' - and so, literally and figuratively, thereby underlines - their final significant act, which is an affirmation of life. Ironically, Canoris's last words to his comrades are all the more authoritative and impressive because they are his last: 'Il faut vivre.' (p.266) Could there be a more fitting epitaph for those who have no headstone?

Chapter 6

La Putain respectueuse

1° Catégories de l'Être.

Objet.

Soi-même comme Autre.

Essentiel qui se révèle inessentiel.

Fatalité.

Tragédie.

Mort, évanouissement.

Héros.

Criminel.

Aimé.

Principe mâle.

2° Catégories du Faire.

Sujet, Conscience.

Soi comme soi-même.

Inessentiel qui se révèle essentiel.

Liberté, volonté.

Comédie.

Vie, volonté de vivre.

Sainte.

Traître.

Amant.

Principe femelle.

Saint Genet, comédien et martyr, p.77.

Une liberté dérobe son univers à une autre liberté quand elle en sait plus sur ce qu'elle voit que la seconde.

Cahiers pour une morale, p.345.

La Putain respectueuse has been widely regarded as a play of uneasy mixtures, both of style - melodrama? burlesque? black comedy? - and of content - philosophy? sociology? political propaganda? Sartre himself intimated that he had reservations about the play, both ideologically and dramatically.¹ While taking account of these opinions, I hope to show that la Putain is informed with that dramatic tension essential to Sartre's theatre which derives from the conflict of life and death. The murder of one negro sets in train an action which culminates in the lynching of a second negro. Superficially, the intrigue consists in the efforts of a third negro (le Nègre) to save his skin. More deeply, questions central to Sartre's thought are raised: is there a right to life? Is any single existence justified a priori? Is an essentialist ethic tenable?

Myth and Situation.

The myth of death in the Sartrean sense is first of all present in la Putain through the blackness of le Nègre:

Mythe douloureux et plein d'espoir, la Négritude, née du Mal et grosse d'un Bien futur, est vivante comme une femme qui naît pour mourir et qui sent sa propre mort dans les plus riches instants de sa vie; [...] ²

Le Nègre, the archetype of his kind, is the object of a conspiracy

which makes death a constant threat: 'Quand des blancs qui ne se connaissent pas se mettent à parler entre eux, il y a un nègre qui va mourir.' ³ 'Object' is the operative word: le Nègre's fate is never really in doubt, and, as we shall see, he is of less interest as an agent than as a measure of the operation of the whites' ethos. ⁴

For the whites, death is a myth in the popular sense of the word, i.e. a virtual unreality. So deeply convinced are they of their right to live, that they appear to believe in their own immortality - (see Fred's confident advance upon the armed Lizzie on page 315). The life of the Clarke family is indivisible from that of the nation itself (p.315). Fred's forebears live on in the renown of their exploits, as will he in his turn, and as his father already does, his human frailty shored up with the buttress of experience (p.298). ⁵ Their complacency about their own immunity to death enables the whites to use the prospect of it as a weapon against others, be they blacks or other outcasts such as Lizzie, without their sensing any reciprocal threat. The myth of death in Sartre's sense has no meaning for the whites.

By contrast, it is articulated fluently through Lizzie who finds herself in a kind of situation-limite. She alone has a choice to make: should she tell the truth or tell lies? The former would threaten her welfare, and perhaps her life - (see Fred's threats on pages 281-83). The latter would condemn, no doubt fatally, a black man whom she knows to be innocent. Most importantly, Lizzie's moral integrity and freedom - her existential life - are at stake. It is her efforts to save that "life", rather than the negro's to save his physical life, which make

the action and dramatic interest of La Putain respectueuse.

The moral dilemma presented in this play finds symbolic echoes in the concrete situation: the action takes place in a confined space where the protagonist is entrapped. Besieged by callers at the door and the window, these accesses offer no exit for Lizzie, nor even any relief: on the two occasions when she opens the window to alleviate the stifling atmosphere (symbolic of the moral pressure she is under) she has quickly to close it again. Moreover, her sequestration has only just begun, for she finally submits to Fred who intends to keep her like a bird in a cage.

Lorris has made useful remarks on what he calls the 'langage chromatique' - the interplay of light and shade - in la Putain.⁶ This is not new in Sartre's theatre, though it has greater prominence in la Putain than elsewhere because all the conventional associations of white and black with good and evil, life and death, are overlaid with the more immediate question of racism and all which that entails in terms of inequality, tension, violence, and conflict. The innocent white walls of Lizzie's room mirror her candour and simplicity. Fred's preference for the cover of darkness to hide his sins is a logical correlate of the equation: 'les nègres, c'est le diable' (p.279). Le Nègre's conviction that it is futile to resist the whites shows that he has been conditioned by the same dogma. He shares Fred's Manichean view that darkness and evil are synonymous, productive of one another, and radically distinct from goodness and light which cannot be touched by them. Only Lizzie is in a position to understand that night and day,

black and white, life and death are two sides of the same coin; above all, that physical life is no warrant of existential life. Unhappily, though she is at one time on the verge of that realisation, Lizzie - like *Électre* - finally recoils from the truth and takes refuge in the living death of the essentialist ethic offered by Fred.

Act and Agent.

Lizzie's signing of a charge of rape against an innocent man is the crucial act of La Putain respectueuse. As such it is unusual in two ways. First, it does not involve the agent in a choice between life and death for herself. Second, though it appears to be charged with potentially terrible consequences, it turns out in fact to be irrelevant: the accused negro escapes and another is indiscriminately lynched in his place. Sartre thus underlines Lizzie's impotence to affect a state of affairs which is totally alien to her, and in which she unwittingly becomes the mediator of the violence inherent in the status quo.

Lizzie's dilemma does demand, however, a choice between "life" and "death". She, after *Électre*, has to choose between autonomy and dependence, freedom and slavery. In la Putain, this option is the focal point and initiates a phase in Sartre's theatre in which, increasingly, heroes will be asked to choose not so much between physical as between existential life and death. Goetz, Kean, Valera, Frantz will all be

less concerned with their being as such than with their mode of being, whereas physical survival was the first consideration for Bariona, Garcin, and the resisters. Creste and Hugo lie somewhere between these two categories, for they both have to decide upon a murder which endangers their physical lives but enhances the existential. In the cases of Kean and Valera - as in the present case of Lizzie - the interplay between the literal and metaphorical levels of the life/death theme is not so marked as in the earlier plays. La Putain respectueuse is the first play to make a feature of existential suicide; it is the only play to leave such an act unresolved. Whereas Goetz, Kean and Valera all find an escape from their living deaths, and Frantz finally dissolves his in death itself, Lizzie follows Électre into the darkness of unconditional surrender to institutionalised authority. If we are to understand Lizzie's act, and perhaps justify, or at least forgive, Lizzie the agent, we must consider the social and political milieu into which she is plunged, and the value (or lack of it) ascribed to acts, in general and in particular, by the prevailing moral climate.

Lizzie's introduction to the violence of the social system of the American South is made as she arrives on the train from New York: she is sexually assaulted, then witnesses the brutal killing of a black bystander. The culprits - two whites in a group of four, all rather the worse for drink - clearly had no scruples in exercising the privileges accorded them by their superior station in the social hierarchy. For Lizzie, as yet untouched by the specious white morality, there is no doubt about what was actually done: 'Les autres[noirs] se sont défendus

comme ils ont pu; à la fin, un blanc a reçu un coup de poing sur l'œil; c'est là qu'il a sorti son revolver et qu'il a tiré. C'est tout.'

(p.287) These events, and especially the murder of the negro, give the impetus to the play's action. Were they, or their interpretation, as straightforward as Lizzie supposes, the stage would be set for a simple thriller. It is soon clear, however, that the facts thus reported by Lizzie are not, so far as Fred is concerned, quite what they seem: 'Il a relevé tes jupes, il a tiré sur un sale nègre, la belle affaire; ce sont des gestes qu'on a sans y penser, ça ne compte pas. Thomas est un chef, voilà ce qui compte.' (p.289) It is the controversy over the moral status of Doing, the tension between act and gesture, the conflict between existentialist and essentialist ethics, implicit in this remark, which sustain the dramatic action of La Putain respectueuse.

If existentialism has any precise meaning, it is that existence precedes essence.⁷ Men do not first of all have a being with which they then act, but to be is to do and to do is to be. In the acts of his life the individual unceasingly creates his essence. There follows the moral principle, enunciated in L'Existentialisme est un humanisme, and illustrated in Huis clos, that a man is only the sum of his acts. Essentialist philosophy, here propounded by the whites, turns the existentialist view on its head, asserting that men have a given being which precedes, to some degree determines, and in any case remains unaffected by, their acts. Moreover, there are various stations of being in life. Fred explicitly claims that he has 'le droit de vivre', like the 'salauds' in the Bouville museum.⁸ The negro, decreed by fate

to occupy the lowest place in the 'natural' order of things, has, by the same token, no a priori right to exist, and lives en sursis by the grace and favour of the ruling class. It follows that what men do is much less important than what they essentially and by nature are.

For Sartre, by contrast, an act changes the world and, simultaneously, the agent in that it contributes to his essence: every act adds to that constantly secreted past which, after death, the individual is. An act done in order to be, however, is a mere gesture, 'un geste'. Thus, the famous role-playing waiter of L'Être et le néant expends himself in endless gestures.⁹ Similarly, Genet was totally given over to gestures in successive efforts to conform to the various identities created for him first by others and then by himself.¹⁰

Lizzie takes the common-sense view that 'c'est le blanc [i.e. Thomas] qui est coupable' (p.238), but she is flatly contradicted by Fred. For the essentialist, guilt is at best a relative concept, at worst a meaningless one. If what one does has no bearing upon one's essence, then all acts are, as Fred argues apropos of Thomas's crimes, 'des gestes'. But in Sartrean terms a being which performs only gestures, a being so total and closed that it is unalterable by action, is "dead". 'Being' belongs to the ontological order of the en-soi, and, for the human reality, it subsumes the category 'Death'.¹¹ Those who live as though they had a given essence are, metaphorically speaking, dead. The drama of la Putain respectueuse consists in Lizzie's attempt to resist ensnarement by the living dead of the white community of the American deep South.

But are the whites alone "dead"? Without the blacks for slaves, they could not be masters. The situation of the blacks is like that of a colonised people who, to judge by le Nègre's impotence, almost connive at their own subjugation. (This has annoyed some critics - notably Laraque - and struck others as 'une réquisitoire contre l'esclave qui refuse de se libérer, se rendant ainsi complice de ses propres meurtriers'.)¹² Le Nègre is the existentially murdered man: he, and all his race, are objects for the whites. Hence, whether a black is actually killed is immaterial: 'Mais c'est un nègre qu'il a tué.' (p.288) One cannot kill an object: 'ce sont des gestes qu'on a sans y penser, ça ne compte pas' (p.289).

The imposed "death" of the blacks and the chosen "death" of the whites are complementary, symbiotic, indivisible, yet diametrically opposed. The obverse face of the essentialist's ethical coin shows that the white, because of what he is - good, innocent - does not act unless his action confirms what he is; the reverse shows that the black, because of what he is - bad, guilty - always acts in confirmation of his essence:

FRED: Thomas est un chef, voilà ce qui compte.

LIZZIE: Ça se peut. Mais le nègre n'a rien fait.

FRED: Un nègre a toujours fait quelque chose. (p.289)

These are the topsy-turvy ethics which tend to make Lizzie responsible for a man's life, forcing her to choose to denounce one or the other to

the detested authorities. Alas, her own moral instincts for justice and truth, which single her out as a vital force in the land of the "dead", will gradually succumb to the sophistries of the whites' ethic.

It is absurd that Fred should attempt to make Lizzie feel guilty, 'mise en position d'agresseur'.¹³ As the witness of one aggression and the victim of another, Lizzie is anything but guilty. But Fred is relying on her dislike of authority, remembering that she is a marginal figure in society, when he tries his moral blackmail: 'c'est ta victime, [...] tu lui prends la vie.' (pp.294,95) Lizzie's morality, though, 'comes from the North', as Fred remarks (p.288), and the notion that she can somehow become an assassin by adhering to the truth is completely foreign to her. Nevertheless, Fred's bullying is no doubt an effective prologue to the more subtle approach of le Sénateur.

The wily politician congratulates Lizzie on her moral rectitude and chides Fred and the policemen for their brutish behaviour. Having thus won her confidence, he then aims once more to make her answerable for a third party, no longer Thomas or le Nègre, but rather 'la mère de cet infortuné Thomas. Une pauvre chère vieille qui va en mourir' (p.296). Understandably, Lizzie is deeply touched to think that an entirely innocent little old lady will be made to suffer. In consequence, she regrets that the truth is not in fact otherwise, and so doing she begins to give away her moral independence. Pressing home his advantage, le Sénateur, in a further rhetorical trick, presumes to read Lizzie's innermost thoughts:- 'Voulez-vous que je vous dise ce qu'il y a dans votre tête?' (p.296) - suggesting that her choice is between the

undying gratitude or the undying hatred of the venerable old mother of Thomas. When Lizzie blames this impossible dilemma on her bracelet - 'C'est toi, saleté, qui est cause de tout' (p.297) - she shows a tendency to determinism, another chink in her moral armour. Lorris has compared the bracelet to the bronze of Huis clos and the statue of Les Mouches.¹⁴ However, Lizzie's superstition ascribes to this totem a power which makes it, more significantly I think, a measure of her vulnerability to the power of objects in general. For if the symbolic bracelet can bring about unhappy situations, cannot other equally potent symbols resolve them? Le Sénateur is such a symbol, a token of white power. Lizzie is increasingly inclined to put her faith in him.

Still, despite her vexation, Lizzie holds to her story, so that le Sénateur has to add sophistry to his play-acting: 'il y a plusieurs espèces de vérité' (p.298). Using the same rhetorical device as before, but with a difference, he tells Lizzie what the whole nation thinks of the situation, and what, by implication, she ought to do. If he is to be believed, all America has the same simple double-standards as the whites of the deep South. Le Nègre's right to life is in question because he lacks birth: '"Il est né au hasard, Dieu sait où [...] : est-ce qu'il mène une vie d'homme? Je ne m'apercevrai même pas de sa mort."' (p.299) For the existentialist, all being is contingent and all human life accidental and unjustifiable: no individual death leaves a gap in the world. But for the essentialist, just as birth denotes gratuitousness in certain cases (e.g. blacks), so in other cases (e.g. whites) it confers necessity: Thomas is '"le descendant d'une de nos

plus vieilles familles, il a fait ses études à Harvard, il est officier - [...] - c'est un chef, [...] Il a le devoir de vivre et toi tu as le devoir de lui conserver la vie." (p.299) Thomas has not only the right, but the duty to live - 'deux mille chômeurs s'il venait à mourir' (p.299) - whereas the negro's death would pass unnoticed. It follows that Thomas in killing a negro, though he did wrong - 'c'est très mal' (p.299) - did nothing, a mere gesture. Lizzie, by contrast, can do something positive for the whole nation - 'j'ai besoin de lui' (p.299) - by assigning the 'right' meaning to the events of the day before. Her choice is prejudiced by the moral imperative explicit in the 'devoir' spoken by the American people. The abstract question of whether she can bear responsibility for condemning a man, and the matter of absolute right and wrong, are no longer at issue: '"c'est très mal. Mais [...]"' (p.299). What matters are the practical problems expressed in the mandate of the whole country: '"il me faut des officiers - il emploie deux mille ouvriers dans son usine - [...] - c'est un chef, un solide rempart contre le communisme, le syndicalisme et les Juifs."' (p.299) Dare Lizzie defy this mandate? Essentialist privilege plus expediency is a powerful combination.

To her credit, Lizzie still hesitates, obliging le Sénateur to warrant the rightness of his counsel in the name of '[la] ville tout entière, avec ses pasteurs et ses curés, avec ses médecins, ses avocats et ses artistes, avec son maire et ses adjoints et ses associations de bienfaisance' (pp.300-01). Nowhere in the theatre do we find so vivid a recollection of the 'salauds' of the 'Musée de Bouville', the dead men

so satisfied of their justified lives and deserved immortality.¹⁵ The personages the Senator enumerates are no less "dead", the self-important role-players of the essentialist world. At last, beguiled by le Sénateur's silken tongue, and a prey to her own sentimentality and moral uncertainty, Lizzie signs.

If, as I have said, Lizzie's existential suicide is the climax of the play, it is important to notice that this is not it. In the first place, this is a gesture which Lizzie performs in order to be acceptable, and not because she is convinced that it is right. In the second place, she has to be forced to sign, according to the stage direction (p.301). Thirdly, she at once sees that she has been duped and calls after le Sénateur to tear the paper up. Thus, even after giving her signature, Lizzie retains a spark of "life" which is not extinguished before the end of the play.

That spark is almost fanned into flame by the anger Lizzie feels at the continuing indifference of the whites. For the second time she is treated as an object to be bought and sold, this time by Thomas's mother whose gift of 100 dollars for having 'done her duty' shows none of the personal interest she had been promised and leaves her still outside the pale. However, despite her initial disappointment and her feeling of having been untrue to herself, Lizzie is still inclined to trust le Sénateur and feels she cannot go back on her statement. Only when the insulting reward is added to a growing realisation that the whites really intend to kill le Nègre, does Lizzie give vent to her indignation at having been used ('roulée', (p.301), 'eue' (p.305)) in an outburst

which criticises a central precept of essentialist ethics: 'Mais c'est l'intention qui compte, n'est-ce pas?' (pp.304-05) This proposition is of course anathema to Sartre for whom intentions are discernible only après-coup; and so it is for Lizzie who is, as it were, instinctively existential in her morality. Sartre ironically underlines this point in le Sénateur's unconsciously humorous reply: 'Vous traversez une crise morale et vous avez besoin de mon appui.' (p.305) His alleged pastoral intentions scarcely veil his patently lecherous designs. As he fondles the passive Lizzie, she seems to be resigned to the role of impotent object. But the appearance of le Nègre causes her spark of "life" to glow for the last time.

Le Nègre's fear of capture and Lizzie's vexation at being still involved, in spite of herself, make for an animated exchange which leads up to her confession of betrayal. Though it alters nothing materially, this is to her credit, and the calm way in which the negro receives the news is, Lizzie finds, to his: 'Tu ne m'étrangles pas? Tu as bon caractère.' (p.307) Lizzie contrasts the gentleness of le Nègre with the violent temper of Fred, yet what she calls his 'bon caractère' is rather a lack of moral fibre. His passivity marks his impotence, his status as object. By comparison, Lizzie is a model of dynamism. She thinks quickly about how they can escape the trap set for them, while le Nègre interjects brief, nervous questions, naïvely trusting to the woman who, on her own admission, is to blame for his present danger. At last she turns her mind to armed resistance: she will retract her statement and tell the truth; le Nègre will support her with the

revolver, 'et, s'ils ne s'en vont pas, tu tireras dedans' (p.309). His faint-hearted, if realistic, objection that 'others will come' prompts the equally unrealistic reply that he should shoot those too. Lizzie's anger is at its height, and it is at the moment when she envisages dying to make the truth known - 'autant crever en nombreuse compagnie' (p.309) - that she is closest to recovering the moral life she had signed away at le Sénateur's insistence.

Unhappily, these last signs of "life" on Lizzie's part more closely resemble the bravado of a dancing Électre than the mature revolt of an Oreste. When le Nègre insists that he cannot shoot whites because they are whites, Lizzie's vision of bloody resistance evaporates - compare Électre's dreams - and she realises that she and the negro are alike, and that cowardice is their common denominator. Its effect is to prevent them both from committing that act which an assertion of the truth would be. Ironically, le Nègre '[qui] a toujours fait quelque chose' has done nothing and can do nothing. Lizzie, who might have changed something, allows herself to be reduced to a similar impotence, and simply stalls for time in the hope that the negro may have the chance to escape. In the interval she reflects upon her confusion and guilt in the face of white notions of right. So long as she remains perplexed, there is some hope that she can save herself. By contrast, le Nègre blandly accepts the anomalous state of things to which he has always been accustomed. When she acquiesces as he does, then she will truly resemble the object he is.

Lizzie is repelled by Fred's tale of the lynching of an innocent

negro, and is understandably alarmed by his apparent association of murder and sex. His uncertainty as to why he wanted to see Lizzie - whether to kill her or rape her - marks a further stage in the process of her total objectification in the eyes of the whites. The connection Fred automatically makes between the mob's victim and the young prostitute is explained by the shared purpose of assassin and sexual sadist: both aim to make objects of others. Hence when Fred looks at the hanged negro, he sees Lizzie and commits a violation which is at once murderous, sexual, futile and gratuitous: 'Je regardais le nègre et je t'ai vue. Je t'ai vue balancer au-dessus des flammes. J'ai tiré.' (p.313) Lizzie will retain her "life" so long as she can refuse this total assimilation with the dead victim of the whites' prejudice.

Though she makes a brave attempt to protect le Nègre, Lizzie is ultimately unable to commit the only act which could change the meaning of her earlier denunciation: she cannot shoot Fred. Though she doubts his inherited right to life, Lizzie, wrongly believing le Nègre to have been shot, loses the will to protest on a general issue of social injustice, once the specific cause of le Nègre has apparently been lost. Yielding to Fred's insistence upon the pointlessness of her own life as compared with the necessity of his own, Lizzie hands over the revolver after a token defiance; only then does Fred tell her that le Nègre escaped. But by now his fate is of little importance: another has died in his place. The sentence of the whites upon the blacks has been carried out, and the relationship of master/slave, subject/object

continues unchanged: the escape of the negro makes no difference to that, and Lizzie accepts the irremediability of what has happened and of her part in it. Her surrender of the gun is like Électre's plea to Jupiter for help.¹⁶ It indicates her submission to, and dependence upon, established authority. As Lizzie submits, thinglike, to Fred's caresses, he describes the way in which he will enshrine her as the object of his whims. Her last reply, one of indifferent assent, is spoken 'avec lassitude' (p.316). Henceforth she will be the plaything of Fred as Électre becomes the plaything of Jupiter. Her objectification is complete.

That this is one of his few plays to close with the emphasis on death is a fact reflected in Sartre's dissatisfaction. Because he considered Lizzie's failure to keep her moral independence depressing, Sartre wrote an alternative ending for use before proletarian audiences.¹⁷ It seems to me, though, that the total philosophical impact depends not only on what eventually happens, but also on the extent of the protagonist's responsibility for it. Électre, for example, cowardly commits existential suicide, though she has every opportunity to follow Oreste on the road to "life". The resitants of Morts sans sépulture, on the other hand, strike a blow for life, physical and existential, by their final choice (their gratuitous execution notwithstanding). Lizzie, certainly, makes a conscious and therefore culpable choice to deny her freedom. Yet there are mitigating circumstances for Lizzie such as there are not for Électre.

Other critics have been harsh on Lizzie, for example Lorris:

Lizzie n'est certainement pas une héroïne selon les critères de la morale sartrienne: elle ne lutte pas pour son authenticité, mais pour son confort; lorsqu'elle s'insurge contre sa faiblesse, c'est par refus d'être dupe [...] Lizzie est la face sombre d'Orléans: partie du même désir d'appartenance à une communauté qui la rejette, elle en reste esclave alors qu'il la transcende. 18

Moreover, he finds her attitude towards le Nègre entirely cynical: 'Lizzie se sert de lui pour se venger des blancs.' 19 Koefoed finds Lizzie guilty not only of inauthenticity, but even of the murder of the negro victim:

Peu de critiques ont compris que la vraie accusée est Lizzie, [...]: 'Coupable de respect envers des préjugés et des idées qu'elle ne comprend ni ne professe.' Le nègre, ce ne sont ni les habitants furieux, ni Clark, ni Fred qui le tuent, mais avant tout Lizzie. Elle est responsable de sa mort parce qu'elle l'a voulue, responsable au même degré que les meurtriers de fait, sauf que sa conduite s'aggrave du fait que sa mauvaise foi est bien plus flagrante que celle des autres. 20

Lizzie, physical assassin as well as existential suicide? Both the above judgments seem to me unjustly severe.

Lorris is right if, in saying that Lizzie is not a heroine, he means that her acts are not offered to us as exemplary. But he is wrong, I think, to rule out any struggle for authenticity on her part. I would say rather that she does fight for her moral independence, but that she finally gives up. To say she fights only for her comfort - having in mind, presumably, her insistent phrase, 'Je ne veux pas d'histoires' - is to neglect her equally oft-repeated assertion that she wants to tell the truth, and is anxious that nobody should suffer on her account. Lizzie consistently evinces concern for le Nègre's well-being, and bears this out in practice. Her reluctance to denounce him in the first part, and her willingness to shelter him in the second, both bring histoires her way, and hardly suggest that her own ease is her chief consideration. Though I would, to some degree, endorse the contrast made with Oreste, the comparison of their initial situations is an over-simplification. 'Désir d'appartenance à une communauté qui la rejette' may be uppermost in Lizzie's mind, but it is secondary for Oreste, who is, above all, anxious to act. Moreover, each seeks a different kind of belonging, Oreste that of sovereign, Lizzie that of marginal. Also, the access open to Oreste invites him to commit an act which, though shocking, can be seen as just and socially desirable. The reverse is true for Lizzie: her acceptability is dependent upon her doing something which is not only intrinsically wrong, but desirable only from the point of view of the corrupt ruling clique in society. Lizzie faces, therefore, a much more intractable conflict of values than does Oreste.

Lastly, it is not clear what Lorris means when he accuses Lizzie of

using le Nègre to revenge herself upon the whites. In the first place, she never prevails upon le Nègre, despite her best efforts, to alter one whit his plans to hide and to flee, to flee and to hide; she has no control at all over him (his every entrance and exit is sudden and surprising); and though her teasing 'refus d'être dupe' is likely to incur the displeasure of the whites, it is hard to see how it can worsen the position of le Nègre. Secondly, what revenge can Lizzie be said to take on the whites? Does Lorris not reproach her, precisely, with having struck no blow against them when he speaks of her weakness and love of comfort?

Koefoed's charge against Lizzie seems harsher still. He makes her the accomplice of the whites in their lynching of the unseen negro on the grounds that 'not to fight murder is to commit it'.²¹ But he is flying in the face of the evidence here. We have already recorded how Lizzie resists making a false deposition, and does so only when her hand is, literally, forced. Moreover, her ignorance of local custom, maintained by the evasiveness of the whites, means that she is not at all certain that she might be a party to murder. Indeed, when it becomes clear in the second tableau that the white mob is intent on negricide, she does her best to ensure the safe conduct of le Nègre - and, so far as we know, she succeeds. When Fred reports: 'Pour ce qu'il y a du nègre, il courait trop vite: je l'ai raté' (p.315), we believe him because he has no reason to lie (Lizzie has been disarmed). Once the mob has been placated by the ritual slaughter of a randomly chosen sacrifice, le Nègre's chances of escape may be good. Could we not

argue then that Lizzie, so far from being an assassin, is instrumental in the rescue of le Nègre? As for the unfortunate victim of the lynch-mob, Lizzie was surely powerless to prevent this outrage? Did her signature on le Sénateur's statement make this event any more likely than it already was? Le Nègre had previously foretold the inevitable conclusion: 'il y a un nègre qui va mourir'. (p.275) With or without Lizzie's deposition, the white conscience would have salved itself in the blood of a black.

I would make three last points in Lizzie's defence: (i) She is in an alien environment whose ethics she does not understand, and which she cannot criticise by reference to any absolute standard: she is disorientated in a moral wilderness. (ii) Unlike every other one of Sartre's heroes, Lizzie is quite alone, finding neither sympathy nor support from either faction; the closest she comes to communion is in the impotence she shares with le Nègre: small wonder that she is ripe for seduction. (iii) She is by profession an object of the desires of men: from professional object to existential object is not so great a step.

Nevertheless, we must surely agree with the majority of critics that la Putain respectueuse is the sombre tale of Lizzie's decline and fall from être-pour-soi-pour-autrui to être-en-soi-pour-autrui(-pour-soi). In the terms of this thesis, Lizzie enters a living death with little practical prospect of doing otherwise, and virtually no prospect of recovery. That is the gloomy aspect of this macabre comedy: the triumph of "death". Another such triumph marks the climax of Sartre's next play, Les Mains sales.

Chapter 7Les Mains sales

L'origine de la responsabilité, c'est ce fait premier que nous réalisons comme une solution de continuité entre les mobiles et l'acte. C'est de cela que nous sommes avant tout responsables: responsables de ce que l'acte ne découle pas naturellement des mobiles.

Les Carnets de la drôle de guerre, p.169

In Les Mains sales the duologue of life and death reaches a new pitch of intensity. The protagonist, Hugo Barine, is the first of only two of Sartre's dramatic heroes to commit both murder and suicide (the second is Frantz von Gerlach). These events are strongly linked, and have a strange unity of cause and effect: the murder begins the suicide; the suicide complements the murder. The victim, Hoederer, is a pragmatist, an advocate of life and action. The assassin, Hugo, is an idealist and partisan of being, whether in its pure abstractness (ideas), or its material density (things). In his suicide, Hugo conceives of uniting the physical and metaphysical planes of death, for he considers that it is only in killing himself - becoming the object un mort - that he finally kills Hoederer - becoming the thing un assassin. In analysing Hugo's life and death struggle with himself, I hope to reveal his moral and philosophical errors.

Myth and Situation.

In time of war, death generally loses its mythical quality to become a present reality, a daily threat. This is especially true for the man of action who risks life (notably his own) in order to take life (the enemy's) with a view to saving life (his compatriots'). For the intellectual, however, working behind the front line on comparatively safe assignments, death can seem as remote and inconceivable as in happier times. Such is the experience of Hugo Barine who, as editor of

the journal of the Parti Prolétarien in war-torn Illyrie, feels excluded from the active resistance in which the Party is engaged; the more so because his paper, which can publish only second-hand news gleaned from B.B.C. broadcasts, is apparently unread by the activists.¹ So acute is Hugo's sense of futility, that he chooses for his Party pseudonym 'Raskolnikoff', the name of Dostoevsky's young intellectual hero who, like Hugo a lonely and separate man, kills. 'Et tu as tué, toi?' (p.37), asks Ivan, one of the executive resisters. 'Non', replies Hugo - and his monosyllable is followed by an eloquent pause. Hugo is anxious to de-mythify the world of action, and in particular to penetrate the mysterious manly world of danger inhabited by Ivan, Louis, and Olga. His insistence that he be entrusted with a mission calling for direct action shows his will to effect a change in the world comparable with Ivan's explosive demolition of bridges. His assassination of Hoederer, and all the preparation for it, is a personal crusade on Hugo's part to realise the 'myths' of mortal danger, action, and death. By his suicide he succeeds rather in mythifying himself - which is to say that he fails. If Hugo explodes the myth of death, he is hoist with his own petard.

More so than earlier protagonists, Hugo is situated, to a significant degree, by his social background, which he regards as having had a determining effect on his life, and as being responsible for the internal contradiction between his native and adopted class allegiances.² Like Oreste, Hugo is deeply impressed by the facticity against which he rebels. But whereas Oreste was brought up in

a vacuum, and ached to live and breathe like other men, Hugo has been raised in the stifling atmosphere of a bourgeois household which has marked him indelibly in the image of the father he resembles. Hugo's revolt is the opposite of Oreste's, and the very height of perversity. His parents' every care was for his health, the sustenance of his life (p.99). His reaction has been to become reckless of that life:

'Olga, je n'ai pas envie de vivre.' (p.44) The negation of the normal will to live implies a rejection of the progenitor. Hugo's contempt for his own existence embraces his father's, and is mingled with it (p.145). Whereas Oreste could reproach his mother with having kept life from him, Hugo reproaches his father for having endowed him with it.

Another important feature of Hugo's situation, which is common with Oreste's, is that it is of his own choosing. Whereas Bariona, Garcin, Canoris, and Lizzie are all subject to external constraints and find themselves compelled to make impossible choices, Oreste and Hugo both elect to play their respective parts: Oreste, self-appointed avenger of Agamemnon; Hugo, self-appointed hit-man for the Party's hardliners. Hugo's situation as Hoederer's secretary is not in the usual sense a Grentzsituation. He chose to be there; he is in little personal danger; he could abandon his post and leave the assassination to his colleagues, just as Oreste could at any time turn his back on Argos. The choice Hugo has to make is between the life and death of Hoederer. It is only as he comes increasingly under the influence of his intended victim, that Hugo's own existential life is called into question. By the end of the play, the association of these two values is so

complete that Hoederer's death entails Hugo's. All along, Hugo's own life is at stake without his being aware.

In Hugo's second situation - that of released convict - he is called upon to opt explicitly between his own life or death. Again, the terrible persuasive powers (i.e. violence) used against previous characters are missing. Thanks to the protection of Olga, Hugo is able to decide for himself the question of his 'recoverability' for the Party. To save his life will require that he accept a U-turn in Party policy. A certain perverse obstinacy, akin to that which first brought him into the Party, will ensure his violent death. How can we account for the fact that Hugo, with a freer hand than any other Sartrean hero, prefers death to life?

The theatrical symbols of life and death, which I have commented upon in other plays, are absent from Les Mains sales. It is true that the action takes place in enclosed spaces (rooms) into which death bursts, finally carrying off the hero. But as the locations are realistic, there is no good reason to postulate extra significance. (Especially as Hugo implies that he felt "dead" in the confines of his prison cell, by comparison with which the spaciousness of an ordinary apartment is dizzying.)³ Symbols and metaphors would be redundant in Les Mains sales, not only because the play is naturalistic, but also because the life/death dialectic is so articulate, both at the level of action and of dialogue, that the mute language of the theatre is rendered unnecessary. The audience throughout anticipates a murder they know will occur, and speculates upon the motives

and the fate of the killer. They hear the words 'mort', 'mourir', etc., repeated more than one hundred times, and contradicted by 'vie', 'vivre', etc., in almost equal number. In one sense, Les Mains sales is a debate in which, finally, the 'Noes' have it.

Act and Agent.

The act and the role of the agent are of paramount interest in Les Mains sales. The main body of the play is a flashback in which Hugo recounts the events leading up to, and the circumstances surrounding, his shooting of Hoederer. He and Olga will try to determine the meaning and motives of that act: 'Un acte ça va trop vite. Il sort de toi brusquement et tu ne sais pas si c'est parce que tu l'as voulu ou parce que tu n'as pas pu le retenir. Le fait est que j'ai tiré ... ' (p.33) We, audience and reader, will make the same investigation as the protagonists, with this difference: eventually we are able to include the fact of Hugo's suicide in our knowledge of him. We are therefore best placed to interpret what he means when he says: 'Je n'ai pas encore tué Hoederer, Olga. Pas encore. C'est à présent que je vais le tuer, et moi avec. ' (p.258)

Except for Lizzie perhaps, no character in Sartre's theatre is as susceptible to the influence of others as Hugo. His relationships with his father, with the Party, with Olga and Jessica, and not least with Hoederer, are all of crucial importance: the first four all

dispose him towards the murder which he at last commits; Hoederer is the only force for restraint. While not contending that Hugo's act is determined as such, I hope to show that the weight of external pressures is very great, and that a kind of fatality operates against him.

Hugo's relations with the Party consist in guilt and inferiority. Guilt, because he joined from conviction rather than need: his high-minded talk of self-respect is so much self-indulgence to the minds of working-class men - Slick and Georges - for whom the Party is food and shelter. Inferiority, because he seems to be in the margin of the group's activity: his journalistic talents are effectively redundant, and he enjoys neither the confidence of his colleagues, nor the prestige accorded to those who perpetrate spectacular acts of resistance. His status in the Party is an incitement to direct action, a spur to him to earn the respect of others and himself. Hugo is, therefore, predisposed to violence.

Hugo's relations with Olga refine upon those which he has with the Party. Though there is a strong bond of affection between them, Olga personifies all the Party's tacit reproaches. Like Louis, she is 'undur', loyal and reliable. Yet she sympathises with the intellectual's dilemma, and though she pretends not to care for Hugo's life (p.28), it is evident from the trouble she takes to save it that she is sincerely fond of him. Indeed, her affection drove her to the single-handed attempt on Hoederer's life, which back-fired in more senses than one: though it re-applied Party pressure on Hugo, it occurred at a moment when - so Hugo later claims - he was about to shoot Hoederer;

it may therefore have prevented the assassination. Ironically, then, by underlining the Party's distrust of him, and disillusioning Hugo about his special rapport with Olga, her untimely bomb made him more open to the advances Hoederer would later make.

Hugo's relations with Jessica are equally important. Just as he is anxious to allay the Party's misgivings, so is he to disprove Jessica's doubts:

JESSICA: Mais pourquoi veux-tu le tuer, un homme que tu ne connais pas?

HUGO: Pour que ma femme me prenne au sérieux. Est-ce que tu me prendras au sérieux? (p.73)

Hugo intends to chastise her mocking scepticism - 'Mon mari adore les tueurs. Il aurait voulu en être un' (p.85) - and thereby convince himself that he can do this act if he so wills. Unfortunately for him, their practice of game-playing tends to prevent his acquiring the dense reality which he feels the prospect of his act should confer: 'Bon Dieu, quand on va tuer un homme, on devrait se sentir lourd comme une pierre. [...] C'est vrai! C'est vrai! C'est vrai que je vais le tuer: [...] Quelle comédie!' (p.120) As Jessica points out, 'si tu veux me convaincre que tu vas devenir un assassin, il faudrait commencer par t'en convaincre toi-même' (p.120). Her scepticism, therefore, is a spur to Hugo's resolve. However, once Jessica begins to take Hugo seriously, she seems to have the opposite

effect upon him:

JESSICA: [...] Ne le tue pas.

HUGO: Tu crois donc que je vais le tuer? (p.133)
[...]

JESSICA: [...] Toi, tu vas tuer un homme.

HUGO: Est-ce que je sais ce que je vais faire? (p.183)

Hugo's self-confidence diminishes as Jessica's belief in him grows. This anomaly ties in with the generally contradictory tenor of their relationship, and hints at the incompatibility which no doubt contributes to the attraction which both Jessica and Hugo feel for Hoederer. It is ironic that Hugo should react adversely to Jessica, who is the most eloquent advocate of life:

Pourquoi m'avez-vous laissée dans l'ignorance, si c'était pour
[...] m'obliger à choisir entre un suicide et un assassinat?
Je ne veux pas choisir: je ne veux pas que tu te laisses
tuer, je ne veux pas que tu le tues. [...] Je ne connais
rien à vos histoires et je m'en lave les mains. Je ne suis
ni oppresseur, ni social-traître, ni révolutionnaire, je n'ai
rien fait, je suis innocente de tout. [...] A présent il
faut que je choisisse. Pour toi et pour moi: c'est ma vie
que je choisis avec la tienne et je ... Oh! mon Dieu! je
ne peux pas. (p.192)

This impassioned plea for life - reminiscent of François's speeches in Morts sans sépulture - founders on the falsity of their relationship: 'Est-ce que tu ne sais pas que notre amour était une comédie? ' (p.193), asks Hugo reproachfully. Jessica has no claim on his attention, whether on the basis of love, or on that of intellectual respect (he scoffs at her ignorance of revolutionary literature). It becomes with him a point of honour - or childish perversity - to do the opposite of what Jessica wants or expects. Thus, by the end of that scene in which she pleads with him to reconsider (fifth tableau), Hugo is able to make the firmest commitment yet to his task: 'Demain matin, je finirai le travail. ' (p.214)

The Party, Olga, and Jessica, are three forces impelling Hugo towards violence in general, and the murder of Hoederer in particular. His other critical relationships are with his father, with himself, and above all with Hoederer. These are interconnected, and it may prove hard to show where one stops and the other begins. For Hoederer is a positive reflection of the negative attitude Hugo has towards his father and himself. It is the relative proximity of the objects of Hugo's affection and hatred which proves dangerous, and finally fatal, for Hoederer and Hugo alike.

We know that Hugo dislikes his father, and that he joined the Party as a revolt, in some measure, against his family background. But once a member, he must prove the reality of his commitment, in order to disprove his father's cynical jibes: ' "Moi aussi, dans mon temps, j'ai fait parti d'un groupe révolutionnaire; j'écrivais dans leur

journal. Ça te passera comme ça m'a passé ..." ' (p.43) Here is another spur to direct action: Hugo's father was a journalist, going through an adolescent phase. Hugo must be different on both counts, distinguishing himself from the father he loathes, yet resembles:

HUGO: Je ne suis pas le fils de mon père.

JESSICA: Comme ça te ferait plaisir, mon abeille. Mais ce n'est pas possible: tu lui ressembles trop.

HUGO: Ce n'est pas vrai! Jessica. Tu trouves que je lui ressemble? (p.68)

I infer that Hugo fears a more than skin-deep resemblance. Whom does he really detest when he complains of having been born? (p.145) His father? His father in himself? Or himself? Hugo's fantasy life as the killer Raskolnikoff is indeed fantasy. In reality, he is weak, insubstantial, unreal - 'Je vis dans un décor' (p.132) - and suffers from all the youthful complexes of Oreste, but aggravated, for he has felt the weighty sur-moi of his father stretched out upon him and crushing the life out of him: ' [La jeunesse] c'est une maladie bourgeoise. (Il rit.) Il y en a beaucoup qui en meurent. '

(p.142) ⁴ Hugo's oft-repeated death-wish expresses equally the will to parricide as to suicide. ⁵ Indeed, we can speculate that the killing of the father might liberate Hugo in the way that Oreste's matricide freed him. In Les Mains sales, Sartre adumbrates the father/son dimension of the Oedipal complex, which he would later

illustrate in Les Séquestrés d'Altona.

If Hugo's situation and personal relationships all orientate him towards violent action, do they not also predispose him to friendship with a man like Hoederer? Here is a character who can satisfy his intellectual and emotional needs. By his pragmatic approach to politics, Hoederer puts Hugo in touch with reality and begins to wean him off his youthful idealism: there are other ways to serve a cause than by becoming an assassin. By his unique gift of trust, Hoederer fills the void in Hugo's sensibility left by the cynicism of his father, Olga's misgivings, and Jessica's scorn. Hugo's affections - repulsed, reduced, or ridiculed elsewhere - are ready to find a new focus when he takes up his post as Hoederer's secretary.

Hugo's first impressions of Hoederer are that he is tough - 'l'air coriace' (p.75) - and a man of the people - 'vulgaire' (p.63). But he insists, when Jessica taunts him, that 'il n'est pas intimidant' (p.62). Hoederer is also, according to Slick, courageous but practically cautious: 'Il n'a pas peur, mais il ne veut pas qu'on le tue.' (p.81) How different a man from his young secretary, who is soft - 'l'air délicat' (p.84) - bourgeois - 'gosse de riches' (p.91) - foolhardy yet 'faible' (p.95), and whose inability to communicate with those of different social and intellectual levels is shown by the quarrel with Slick and Georges, as the arbiter of which Hoederer first appears, the voice of reason, the conciliator, the father-figure and advocate of life:

Mes enfants, vous êtes mal partis. ... Quatre hommes
qui vivent ensemble, ça s'aime ou ça se massacre. Vous
allez me faire le plaisir de vous aimer. (pp.95-96)

Though Hugo tetchily refuses Hoederer's aid, he cannot but be impressed by the subtlety of the latter's equation of hunger with self-respect, and the firmness of his insistence that the room be searched, even when the need for that seems to have passed: 'J'ai confiance en toi, mon petit, mais il faut que tu sois réaliste.' (p.102) This sentence summarises all that Hugo will find most attractive in Hoederer: the confidence, the paternal attitude, the lesson in realism. Jessica remarks that Hugo was 'ému' (p.116) at this moment, and though he nervously denies it, he cannot hide his admiration for this man, his very antithesis:

Bon Dieu, quand on va tuer un homme on devrait se sentir
lourd comme une pierre. Il devrait y avoir du silence dans
ma tête. (Criant.) Du silence! (Un temps.) As-tu vu
comme il est dense? Comme il est vivant? (Un temps.)
C'est vrai! C'est vrai! C'est vrai que je vais le tuer:
dans une semaine il sera couché par terre et mort avec cinq
trous dans la peau. (Un temps.) Quelle comédie! (p.120)

'Comédie' because it is incredible that Hugo, the incorrigible
intellectual who thinks too much - especially about himself (p.111) -

should be able to take the life of so vital and substantial a being:

' Je n'ai pas l'air convaincu, hein? ' (p.120)

As time passes, Hugo's first impressions of Hoederer are reinforced: ' Tout ce qu'il touche a l'air vrai. Il verse le café dans les tasses, je bois, je le regarde boire et je sens que le vrai goût du café est dans sa bouche à lui ' (p.132). By contrast, Hugo's abstractness is the more marked, and his ability to carry out his mission the more doubtful (p.133). And Jessica's continual teasing merely drives Hugo further into the sphere of Hoederer's influence. There is more than a grain of truth in her would-be sarcastic remark: ' Je vous laisse à votre amitié d'hommes. ' (p.137)

In their first scene together, Hugo and Hoederer unexpectedly establish a bond by their mutual discovery of common attitudes to life and to death. In regard to the latter, Hoederer expects to be assassinated; Hugo expects to be the assassin. Anticipating imminent death, Hoederer is not afraid, but 'pressé' (p.140), anxious to get things done; Hugo too is in a hurry, though the early death he expects will probably have more to do with his own death-wish - he is likewise unafraid - than with the work of an assassin. (As we later see, it is both.) Moreover, Hoederer has no ' objection de principe contre l'assassinat politique ' (p.141); clearly, neither has Hugo, though he finds the gap between principle and practice frightening. In regard to the former, Hugo evinces an uncertain wish to reach manhood (p.142), while Hoederer, the man '[qui est] passé directement de l'enfance à l'âge d'homme ' (p.142), is uniquely well placed to help him pass

from the morbidity of adolescent ideals, to the vitality of manly commitment. Though at this stage Hugo rejects that help, the basis has been laid of a common understanding upon which he will later accept it.

This new, fragile, and unspoken rapport between Hugo and Hoederer is soon put to the test: Hugo is outraged by Hoederer's plans to reach an accommodation with le Prince and Karsky. His reaction - 'strictement personnelle' (p.159) (i.e. highly subjective, and not necessarily the Party's) - prompts him to reach for his revolver as Hoederer ushers him out of the room. This is as close as Hugo ever comes to killing Hoederer for political reasons, though even then his blood is up, and his revulsion for Karsky and le Prince is more affective than ideological: 'ce sont les mêmes. Les mêmes qui venaient chez mon père ... [...] ... et ils me poursuivent jusqu'ici.'

(p.158) Ironically, Olga's bomb probably saves Hoederer's life, as well as prompting him to a life-saving gesture towards the potential assassin: 'Il saisit Hugo par les épaules et le jette par terre.'

(p.159) Ironically too, at a time when Hoederer's confidence in Hugo is at its weakest - he excludes him from the continued discussion upstairs - Olga's bomb reaffirms the Party's lack of faith in Hugo, so that by comparison Hoederer's trust seems the rarest of gifts: 'Tu peux penser ce que tu veux de Hoederer, mais c'est un homme qui m'a fait confiance. Tout le monde ne peut pas en dire autant.' (p.164)

The discovery that Olga was personally responsible for the bomb desolates Hugo: 'Et comment veux-tu vivre si personne ne te fait

confidence? [... Olga] était la seule qui croyait un peu en moi.' (p.182)

Hoederer's outstretched hand - now that Olga can no longer help (p.178) - is an invitation to life itself. Hugo now enters the gravest and most protracted crisis of indecision he has yet experienced: 'Est-ce que je sais ce que je vais faire? (p.183) The practical unpleasantness of assassination strikes him as never before: 'il saignera dans ses vêtements. [...] Ici, la mort est une besogne. Les abattoirs c'est ici.' (p.185) He muses again on the unimaginable nature of the event: 'Un meurtre, je dis que c'est abstrait.' (p.186) Were Jessica better equipped intellectually to persuade him that Hoederer's ideas could be right and Louis's wrong, Hugo might be ready to work with Hoederer when the latter next pays him a visit (fifth tableau, scene 3). As it is, what remains of Hugo's ideological reservations drives a wedge between him and Hoederer. There follows a discussion which, though it should be intellectual and dispassionate, spills over into the personal and emotive, demolishing almost entirely the delicate structure of sympathy which had been building up between the two men, so that by the end of the meeting Hugo declares: 'Demain matin, je finirai le travail.' (p.214) This scene marks a turning-point in the relations between Hugo and Hoederer, and a critical stage in the former's evolution towards the act of murder, and it merits close attention.

As both Hoederer and Jessica remark, the two men's brush with death - for Hugo, an unexpected emancipation - could be the cement of a bond between them: 'vous avez frôlé la mort, ça rend plus

conciliant' (p.201). This shared experience is the basis on which Hugo, egged on by Jessica, at last ventures an outright challenge to Hoederer's policy. In a brilliant exposition of his pragmatic thinking - or 'objective social-treachery' in Party jargon - Hoederer traps the younger man into a disquietingly dogmatic statement of his own faith: 'Il n'y a qu'un seul but: c'est de faire triompher nos idées, toutes nos idées et rien qu'elles.' (pp.205-06) Hoederer's withering reply hurts Hugo deeply: 'C'est vrai: tu as des idées, toi. Ça te passera.' (p.206) Hugo's hackles rise as he hears his father's scornful phrase in Hoederer's mouth. The dialogue is no longer one of equality. Hugo protests that he is not alone in having ideas; that others have died for them; and that Hoederer's pact with their killers is a betrayal. This charge evokes from Hoederer a statement which defines him politically and morally - (and which, incidentally, echoes the sentiments of Oreste and the words of Christ: 'Let the dead bury their dead') - : 'Je me fous des morts. Ils sont morts pour le Parti et le Parti peut décider ce qu'il veut. Je fais une politique de vivant, pour les vivants.' (p.206) This credo is the antithesis of Hugo's: he sees the Party as giving one a cause for which to die. Hoederer scoffs at Hugo's naïve conception of political integrity, and the rift between his praxis and the younger man's principles is the more pronounced as their exchanges become more heated and personalised: 'Comme tu as peur de te salir les mains. Eh bien, reste pur!' (pp.208-09) Once more Hugo is being talked down to, and his bourgeois intellectualism is thrown

in his face - but this time by Hoederer, the one man who might have saved him. Defend himself as he may, the more nimble Hoederer forces Hugo to admit that he puts principles before men's lives, so that he sanctions the kind of clerical murder with which he had, only moments earlier, reproached his superiors (p.185). In a petulant outburst, Hugo betrays the highly subjective and theoretical character of his commitment: 'Les hommes? Pourquoi les aimerais-je? Est-ce qu'ils m'aiment?' (p.211) Hoederer's perceptive reply - 'Les hommes, tu les détestes parce que tu te détestes toi-même; ta pureté ressemble à la mort' (p.211) - sums up the difference between the two men: Hoederer, pragmatic activist, is the advocate and architect of life; Hugo, misanthropic idealist, is 'destructeur', the apologist and disciple of death, 'tout juste bon à faire un assassin' (p.212).

On the intellectual plane, Hugo is dominated and humiliated. On the emotional plane he is bereft, having apparently lost the paternal trust and affection Hoederer promised, and rediscovered instead the condescension and scorn of the father he loathes. Little wonder, then, that he seems at last resolved to carry out the assassination (p.214): he now has a personal vendetta to exact, his blood is hot, and if at this moment Hugo shot Hoederer - as Jessica, who steps between them, clearly feels he might - there would be little mystery as to his motive. But in the light of day, things will look different to Hugo: his relationship with Hoederer is not over, but on a new footing.

In their penultimate encounter, shortly before the assassination,

their relationship develops into one of affection, expressed almost explicitly by both parties. When Jessica asks Hoederer: 'Vous avez de l'amitié pour [Hugo], n'est-ce pas?' (p.220), he evades her question - 'pas de sentiment! (p.220) - but he does not say 'no'. Moreover, he stresses that he wants to persuade Hugo, but not to humiliate him. Rather than take the easy way out of the threat he now certainly faces - i.e. by having Hugo disarmed - he elects to take 'cinq minutes de risques' (p.222). He is, in other words, ready to risk his life for Hugo's sake. Once he has taken that chance by turning his back, with impunity, on the armed Hugo, it seems certain that the crisis has passed, and the bond of mutual respect been sealed:

HUGO: Hoederer, j'ai manqué mon coup et je sais à présent que je ne pourrai jamais tirer sur vous parce que ... parce que je tiens à vous. (p.233)

This overt avowal of emotional dependence - (Hugo continues to stress their ideological disagreements) - marks a critical moment: it makes the murder of Hoederer at once less and more likely. The greater a man's love for another, the greater too his vulnerability to betrayal.

Given, then, the final bond of affection and respect between the two men, why does Hugo, when he returns intending to accept Hoederer's offer of collaboration, shoot him instead? Is it because he finds Jessica in Hoederer's arms? And, if so, in what sense is that the cause of his action? Presumably, Hugo's crime lies

somewhere on the spectrum between cold-blooded killing and crime of passion. . He himself cannot be precise. Let us try to be so.

Is the murder of Hoederer committed in cold blood? Is it a pure function of Hugo's will, a kind of acte gratuit? Can it be interpreted in the same way as some critics have seen Oreste's matricide? It is true that on the point of the assassination, Hugo seems quite composed: 'Vous voyez, Hoederer, je vous regarde dans les yeux, et je vise et ma main ne tremble pas et je me fous de ce que vous avez dans la tête.' (p.240) Yet minutes earlier, when challenged to such a dispassionate act, Hugo had failed to respond:

HOEDERER (le lâchant): Simplement pour te prouver qu'on ne peut pas buter un homme de sang-froid à moins d'être un spécialiste.

HUGO: Si je l'ai décidé, je dois pouvoir le faire. (Comme à lui-même, avec une sorte de désespoir.) Je dois pouvoir le faire. (p.229)

Hoederer's experiment would seem to have shown conclusively that Hugo is in fact incapable of such a deed: 'tu vois bien que je t'ai laissé ta chance et que tu n'en as pas profité' (p.230). This is not, of course, to say that when Hugo pulls the trigger, his will is somehow disengaged: automatism and determinism acting alone are quite alien to Sartre's psychology. It is, rather, to say that other and more weighty factors are involved.

One of these, no doubt, is the conflict of ideology. Though Hugo admits to having been out-manoeuvred by Hoederer in their long discussion of principles - the conflict of dialectic and ethic, as Verstraeten calls it ⁶ - he never concedes that he is wrong and Hoederer right. On the contrary, while confessing an emotional attachment to Hoederer, Hugo clings tenaciously to his intellectual independence. And if we suspect that this is more the voice of pride than of conviction speaking, we have only to listen to Hugo after his release from jail: we shall see later how little he espoused Hoederer's pragmatism. Thus when the affective bond evaporates, as for Hugo it does, their ideological differences reassert themselves, albeit tacitly, as justification of the killing.

The same, I think, is true of Hugo's orders from the Party. Orders alone, of course, are not enough - they can neither cause nor enable one to act: 'Si le Parti te commandait de danser sur une corde raide, tu crois que tu pourrais y arriver?' (p.227) But Hugo understands that only après-coup: 'Ça vous laisse tout seul les ordres, à partir d'un certain moment. L'ordre était resté en arrière et je m'avançais seul et j'ai tué tout seul et ... et je ne sais même plus pourquoi.' (p. 21) I infer that, at the time, Hugo's orders were a sort of inspiration, if not an actual imperative. Let us not forget that Hugo 'needs to obey' (p.112): he clings desperately to his instructions, returns to them intermittently as his point of reference, and appears to set them aside only when he switches his allegiance from Louis to Hoederer. When the latter

seems to treat Hugo's submission with cynicism, he must fall back on his former obedience (albeit undeliberately). Only when the deed is done is Hugo freed from the once longed-for tyranny of orders. Thus, he has no psychological difficulty in rebutting Olga's advances which now demand of him respect for orders based on a new policy. Through the charade of an obedient act, Hugo learns that the transference of responsibility from the self to the mandate is a delusion - he taunts Olga: 'Je voudrais que le Parti te commande de tirer sur moi. Pour voir. Rien que pour voir.' (p.21) The fact that she might well be able to, reveals the kind of person she is - 'un dur' - rather than the coercive power of orders.

Is Hugo's act, then, ontologically motivated (as I have argued Creste's matricide to be)? To some degree, yes. Hugo, like Genet, shows signs of being fascinated by acts of extreme violence, not for the sadistic pleasure of the act itself, but for the essential objectivity which the commission of it should confer on the agent:

[...] pour être sadique, Genet s'intéresse beaucoup trop peu à la conscience des autres. Ce n'est pas la mort ressentie qu'il apprécie dans le meurtre: c'est la mort objective et l'acte objectif qui la provoque. Encore l'une et l'autre ne l'intéressent-ils que dans la mesure où ils confèrent l'être de criminel au meurtrier. ⁷

Compare Hugo: 'Bon Dieu, quand on va tuer un homme, on devrait se

sentir lourd comme une pierre' (p.120). And compare Oreste's longing for gravity and thing-like stability. The path each sees ahead of him is stained with blood. Yet there are differences between the two cases. First, the "non-existent" Creste is trying to quit the imaginary world of Philèbe, and enter the real world of Creste. By contrast, Hugo is trying to be the fictional Raskolnikoff. Secondly, Oreste does not see that by embracing the burden which makes him at last be Oreste, he converts his act to a gesture: he belongs to the analytic phase of Sartre's thinking. By the time of Hugo, and even more so of Genet, Sartre's growing dialectic perception has changed the simple linear progress from act to being into a vicious circle which circumscribes those whose foolish aspiration to being is their chief raison d'agir: 'Ainsi par un cercle vicieux propre à toute morale de l'être, on tue pour être criminel, mais il serait vain d'essayer seulement de le devenir si on ne l'était d'avance.' ⁸

The idea of a kind of essential predestination is advanced, for the sake of argument, by Hoederer: 'On est tueur de naissance. Toi, tu réfléchis trop: tu ne pourrais pas.' (p.227) Whether Hoederer believes this - unlikely - is immaterial, for we know that Sartre does not. But for Hugo to hear it from the man he so respects, is deeply wounding. It amounts to an accusation of impotence, and can only sharpen his resentment and strengthen his resolve to become what, by nature, he is not. Jeanson has argued that the intellectual's preoccupation with violence is indeed attributable to problems of the being of the self:

'Un intellectuel [...]; c'est tout juste bon à faire un assassin.' Ce passage à la limite a un triple sens: 1°) le velléitaire, se connaissant comme tel, se propose toujours - par compensation - des actes extrêmes; 2°) celui qui souffre d'être irréalisé cherche à ressentir son être au maximum, et nous avons déjà rencontré chez Oreste ce besoin de conquérir sa réalité en se faisant saisir d'un seul coup par le destin le plus lourd; 3°) celui qui se sent rejeté par les autres imagine les comportements les plus spectaculaires, dans sa hâte de se faire reconnaître par eux. 9

1° and 2° are problems of the être-pour-soi; 3° of the être-pour-autrui.

But though these observations surely apply to Hugo, the ontological motive equally surely does not altogether account for the murder of Hoederer. The crucial element in the nexus of motives behind Hugo's act has yet to be considered. It is the one element which draws the others together, and as it were makes a channel through which they flow. Strangely, it is that aspect of motive which is usually regarded as an oversimplification of Hugo's psychology: passion.

The crime of passion as it is popularly conceived has no meaning for Sartre: 'Car qu'est-ce que c'est la passion? Un jaloux, par exemple, qui essaie de vider un revolver sur son rival, tue-t-il par passion? Non, il tue parce qu'il croit qu'il est dans son droit.' 10 The sexually possessive male has rights; when they are violated, he responds aggressively. Does this describe Hugo? Critics have

no doubt been right to reject the explanation of the conventional crime passionnel (though Laraqe surely goes too far in turning it on its head to ask: 'Hugo, était-il un homosexuel qui s'ignorait? ').¹¹ But they have not all remarked, as has Rabi for example, that there is nevertheless a passion of sorts in Hugo's impulse:

Mais, pour la première fois, devant ce spectacle trivial de Jessica dans les bras du chef, Hugo se sentait une supériorité évidente. Le bon droit était de son côté. Enfin, il se trouvait une raison apparemment valable d'agir. Alors il cède au vertige de l'humiliation et de l'orgueil.¹²

Hugo's 'passion' is this vertiginous mixture of pride and humiliation. For once he has 'le plaisir de voir [Hoederer] déconcerté' (p.240). His sudden moral ascendancy enables him to look Hoederer in the eye and take aim without trembling. It seemed Hoederer had perpetrated a great confidence trick merely in order to get his hands on Jessica: he, not Hugo, had apparently succumbed to an orthodox sexual passion. Truly, Hugo 'tue parce qu'il croit qu'il est dans son droit'. All possible motives - the exercise of the will, the ideological conflict, the obedience to commands, the aspiration to being - surge up in that moment of 'right' and explode in a crime of passion sui generis.

Whether Hugo, in killing Hoederer, also kills the spectre of his father, must remain an open question. I note, though, that the phrase Hugo recalls with scorn in these last moments - '"je te ferai

passer à l'âge d'homme" (p.240) - is the most paternalistic of any uttered by the older man. (Note also that he calls Hugo 'petit' when telling him to hold his fire (p.241).) What is less uncertain is that in killing Hoederer, Hugo casts away his only life-line. His subsequent suicide is, as I have already said, not merely foreshadowed, but even logically entailed by Hoederer's death. The latter's dying attempt to save Hugo - what we might expect from the partisan of life - is necessarily futile. Hugo cannot derive "life" from the destruction of Hoederer's "life"-enhancing confidence: that would amount to a creation ex nihilo, a resuscitation of 'le vieux mythe héraclitéen selon lequel la vie naît de la mort'.¹³ In Verstraeten's terms, when ethic or principle (Hugo) slays dialectic or practice (Hoederer), the former cannot survive: 'Le sacrifice suicidaire de Hugo confirme dans ce cas qu'il n'y avait rien à faire, que les principes sont mortifères: le rêve d'une adolescence magique, et que le réalisme de son père préservait l'essentiel: la vie, sans doute la réussite.'¹⁴ And Sartre's own shorthand account of Hugo's experience also makes explicit the inevitability of his own destruction:

Mon héros est un jeune bourgeois qui, par idéologie, s'est engagé dans un parti prolétarien, mais qui, devant le réalisme exigé par l'action, ne peut se dégager des catégories idéalistes qui, précisément, l'ont poussé à se désolidariser de sa classe. D'où son malaise qui ne peut déboucher que dans la mort.¹⁵

Is there not here a hint of determinism, inimical in general to Sartre's thought? Verstraeten's admirable and more exhaustive analysis answers this seeming problem: 'Plutôt que de tremper dans une violence ambiguë, [Hugo] préfère rester fidèle au mythe de la pureté; il mourra donc, fondamentalement attaché à une vision éthique, c'est-à-dire assigné à l'observance de la Loi.' ¹⁶ The operative word is 'préfère': Hugo's suicide is, of course, a free choice. Nevertheless, it is a choice adumbrated or prefigured by the choice to kill Hoederer. Let us consider briefly how the later choice is made.

With two years' hindsight, the most cogent explanation Hugo can offer of the assassination is this: 'Moi, je vivais depuis longtemps dans la tragédie. C'est pour sauver la tragédie que j'ai tiré.' (p.242) Since then, Hugo has led 'cette drôle de vie perplexe' (p.245), vacuous yet oppressed, suspended and incomplete: the tragedy is saved, but the apotheosis is not yet reached. His crime has become his fate, as surely as Oreste's murder of death's slaves seemed to bring him to "life":

[Mon crime] est devenu mon destin, comprends-tu, il gouverne ma vie du dehors mais je ne peux ni le voir, ni le toucher, il n'est pas à moi, c'est une maladie mortelle qui tue sans faire souffrir. (p.246)

But how could it be the crime itself that is 'killing' Hugo? 'Ce n'est pas le crime commis par Raskolnikoff qui s'incorpore à l'Ego de

celui-ci. Ou plutôt, pour être exact, c'est le crime mais sous une forme condensée, sous la forme d'une meurtrissure.' ¹⁷ This observation about the 'criminal' psychology illuminates Hugo's most telling insight: 'Ce n'est pas mon crime qui me tue, c'est sa mort.' (p.246) Hoederer's death is killing Hugo. Unless something causes him to change his conception of men and the world as mere embodiments of ideas; or causes him to step out of the 'décor' in which he acts out his own tragedy, Hugo's death must follow: '[Hugo] se fascine sur sa propre mort et, à travers son suicide, sent peser sur lui le regard absolu de tous les amateurs de tragédie'. ¹⁸

The logic of tragedy demands Hugo's suicide. The only event which could obviate it would be a change in the Party's ethics, since Hugo has never renounced his idealist stance, nor will he. 'Le Parti a changé sa politique' (p.251), Olga tells him, but not its system of pragmatic values. 'Nous avons peut-être économisé cent mille vies humaines' (p.252), she boasts. But Hugo, who loves men for what they might be (ideas) rather than for what they are, cannot accept this as fair exchange for the death of the fictional Raskolnikoff. He wants to re-adopt his former pseudonym - indicative of his moral and intellectual stagnation - and is loath to accept that 'ce type qui a tué Hoederer est mort' (p.251). If Hugo could quit Raskolnikoff as Creste did Philèbe, he too might find the way to "life". But that false identity is all the subjectivity he has in the context of the Party: 'Je n'arrivais pas à séparer le meurtre de ses motifs.' (p.244) Hugo will not give up his individuality to the collectivity of

history: he refuses to grasp his objectification in the consequences of his act as Sartre insists we must.¹⁹ The Party, by contrast, as the organ and organisation of the working-class is bound to think objectively, as indeed did Hoederer himself: 'Car le prolétariat engagé dans la lutte a besoin de distinguer à chaque instant, pour mener à bien son entreprise, le passé du futur, le réel de l'imaginaire, et la vie de la mort.'²⁰ Since Hugo and the Party are still at odds, they must go their separate ways: 'Le Parti, ça se quitte les pieds devant.' (p.180)

Both Verstraeten and Jeanson have written penetrating analyses of the moral self-delusion and practical futility of Hugo's 'grandiloquent gesture' of suicide, comparing it illuminatingly with Oreste's departure from Argos.²¹ For my part, I have tried to show an inexorable progression from Hugo's killing of the life-spokesman Hoederer, to his virtual suicide which is, for him, a final passing into the identity of Raskolnikoff, i.e. a true annihilation. The logic of this development is borne out by the sense of Hugo's all-but last words: 'Je n'ai pas encore tué Hoederer, Olga. Pas encore. C'est à présent que je vais le tuer, et moi avec.' (p.258) Hugo had not yet killed Hoederer in the sense that he had not yet killed himself, for it was himself he killed in killing Hoederer.

Sartre's remarks on the impossibility of Nietzsche's 'Éternel Retour' cast some additional light on the failure of Hugo Barine:

Nous pouvons enfin tirer la leçon de cette étonnante défaite:
si l'on ne parvient pas à changer une situation inacceptable,

c'est tout un que de la vouloir ou de la refuser [...] Dans le premier cas, on s'acharne à vouloir un désastre qu'on suppose inévitable pour que la mort de l'homme s'identifie avec le triomphe de sa volonté; dans le second, le refus a pour but de détacher l'âme de l'être pour la modeler à la ressemblance des valeurs; [...] ; mourir en refusant c'est s'assurer le triomphe au-delà de la défaite, c'est refiler à l'absolu la consigne de dire non. Les deux conduites ont le même principe: l'homme est impossible. ²²

For today's reader, it seems extraordinary, even perverse, that any critic should have identified Sartre with Hugo, or read into the play a libertarian attack on totalitarianism. Not until Les Séquestrés d'Altona shall we meet again so gloomily stagnant a character as Hugo, whose only evolution is from an original mortifying moral idealism, to a final physical and moral death. On the way he catches brief glimpses of 'la vie dialectique' (Verstraeten's term), but he chooses to kill his mentor. Hugo is impossible, and, extrapolating from the particular to the universal, he concludes that man is impossible too. His words for it are: 'Non récupérable.' (p.258) ²³

As if to dispel any doubt about his disagreement with Hugo on the subject of man, Sartre presents in his next play, Le Diable et le Bon Dieu, a hero whose development from existential death to existential

life is total and empirical. Goetz's assertion of life is as real and resounding as Hugo's posthumous triumph through death is hollow and illusory.

Chapter 8

Le Diable et le bon Dieu

Où la morale est une faribole ou c'est une totalité concrète qui réalise la synthèse du Bien et du Mal. Car le Bien sans le Mal c'est l'Être parménidien, c'est-à-dire la Mort; et le Mal sans le Bien, c'est le Non-Être pur. [...] Reste que cette synthèse, dans la situation historique n'est pas réalisable. Ainsi toute morale qui ne se donne pas explicitement comme impossible aujourd'hui contribue à la mystification et à l'aliénation des hommes.

Saint Genet, comédien et martyr, pp.211, 212.

Life is the victor in Le Diable et le bon Dieu, a play which opens on scenes of devastation and violent death; which unfolds against a backdrop of disease and bloody revolt; and which culminates in two brutal killings. The characters are in the main unscrupulous and vengeful, and fixed in pessimistic world-views. The broad impression given is of a desert of despair unrelieved by the cases of hope to be found in Bariona, Les Mouches, and Les Mains sales. Yet in Le Diable we meet a hero who develops through the negativity of idealism (from which neither Oreste nor Hugo ever emerge) and commits his freedom in a positive cause; who gives up a dehumanising quest for absolutes to accept the relativity of men; and who outgrows a cultivated death-wish to proclaim: 'Tout est changé, je veux vivre!' ¹ Goetz's coming to "life" matches that of Bariona, and, in human terms, surpasses it, for whereas Bariona is inspired by the birth of God, Goetz is inspired by God's death. Goetz's achievement is to throw off the yoke of transcendent law. As Verstraeten puts it:

[Goetz] se trouve acculé au choix décisif: rester fidèle à la positivité vitale [...], ou s'attacher à la logique suicidaire [...] Le choix est ouvert: le développement de la pièce est celui de cette alternative dans le devenir de l'option de Goetz. ²

Faced with the choice between "suicide" and "life", Goetz - by contrast with his predecessor, Hugo - will choose life, physical and existential.

Myth and Situation.

The myth of death permeates the atmosphere of Le Diable et le bon Dieu throughout. In the besieged city of Worms, death is, as always, the inevitable but unacceptable boundary of suffering. A mother grieving for her son's death gets no explanation of it from Heinrich - who, as a priest, should know about such things - and is sorely tempted to end her grief in death (p.21). Heinrich's admonition to believe in God's bounty does not satisfy her, and she turns to the baker/prophet Nasty, who offers a simple explanation:

Il est mort parce que les riches bourgeois de notre ville se sont révoltés contre l'Archevêque, leur très riche seigneur. Quand les riches se font la guerre, ce sont les pauvres qui meurent. (p.23)

This chilling, pithy analysis (foreshadowing certain arguments of the Critique) postulates the misery of the poor as a situation-limite in the fullest sense. As Nasty later remarks: 'Nous autres, nous

n'avons que deux manières de mourir. Ceux qui se résignent meurent de faim, ceux qui ne se résignent pas sont pendus.' (p.82) ³

If death is the only release from suffering, and the highest expression of despair, then life, or resurrection, is the ultimate hope. Religious preaching about the after-life, however, is little consolation to the wretched and starving:

HEINRICH: [...] Femme, ton enfant est au ciel et tu l'y retrouveras. (Heinrich s'agenouille.)

LA FEMME: Oui, Curé, bien sûr. Mais le Ciel, c'est autre chose. (p.22)

Christ himself fed the bodies of those who listened to him, and prayed that his Father's kingdom come. Heinrich's ineptitude allows Nasty - the baker - to assume Christ's role, expressing God's regret for the child's death, and promising no less than heaven on earth:

Il faut d'abord passer le chas d'une aiguille et supporter sept années de malheur et puis le règne de Dieu commencera sur la terre: nos morts nous seront rendus, tout le monde aimera tout le monde, et personne n'aura faim! (p.24)

Needless to say, this Utopia cannot be had easily. Life may be saved, but it will also be taken: 'il faut tuer pour gagner le ciel.' (p.33) The crowd scene recalls Argos as l'Évêque threatens the

people with death and destruction if they do not crave forgiveness (p.30). But Nasty incites the people to revolt - (contrast the ineffective efforts of Électre and Oreste). As the bishop can perform no miracles - (Jupiter's trick) - to discredit Nasty, the starving people readily believe the latter's lies about the former's secret stores of grain: 'Ce vieux vous mange vivants.' (p.33) For Nasty, all men of the Church are assassins of the people, who can purchase only with their blood the right to love one another in the new church, 'la société des hommes' (p.35). The mob-killing of the bishop emphasizes that violence is the medium of resistance: 'Tu inaugures ta société par un massacre' (p.35), charges Heinrich. (Goetz will in time do the same thing.) And implicit in the threat of death is its reciprocity. But Nasty knows that full well:

HEINRICH: Dieu a dit: Celui qui tirera l'épée ...

NASTY: Périra par l'épée ... Eh bien, oui, nous
périrons par l'épée. Tous. Mais nos fils
verront Son Règne sur la terre. (pp.35-36)

The price of life is life itself.

The historical situation of conflict established in the first tableau is sustained behind the main action of the play's year-and-a-day duration by the repeated appearances of the crowd who both inhabit and manifest the situation. In this first scene alone, the people suffer, die, despair, hope anew, rebel, and kill. Subsequently, they

fight and are slain; they slaughter one another in the 'Cité du Soleil'; and they are massacred by the barons in pitched battle. The crowds are a kind of chorus whose commentary is implicit in their misfortunes, and who make up the social/historical, and dramatic/theatrical framework in which the chief characters move and act. ⁴

The second tableau, in Goetz's camp, reinforces the first: an ambience suffused with death. This is created at once when a living cholera victim is stabbed to death to avoid his drowning when his diseased body is dumped in the river, as needs must. As in all wars, life is hard and cheap, and comes a poor second to practical considerations: the epidemic must be controlled - though it is not the only threat to life. Dissension too is rife: 'Si le choléra nous épargne, nous serons égorgés par nos troupes.' (p.43) Whether dissent becomes outright mutiny depends on the leadership given by the reputedly bizarre and widely detested Goetz, whose mistress, Catherine, almost expects him to be assassinated (p.44). It is apt that Goetz's earliest remarks in the play should include a reflection on his vulnerability, and 'l'instant de ma mort' (p.45).

Nevertheless, Goetz is not, strictly speaking, in a single situation- limite. He is rather in a succession of situations, each largely of his own making, and in each of which his life is explicitly in jeopardy. In the first of these - the siege of Worms - , the universal threat of death, which I have discussed above, is made specific in Goetz's case through the plot of Hermann. In the second - the transition from siege to 'Cité ', in which he gives away his lands -

Goetz receives vicious threats from those he is trying to assist (notably Karl, pp.106-07), and suffers actual violence at the hands of his noble peers (p.109). In the third - the 'Cité' itself - Karl warns that because 'la haine, les massacres, le sang des autres sont les aliments nécessaires de votre bonheur' (p.167), Goetz's peasants are bound to become objects of revenge for whichever side wins the civil war. Goetz is therefore in mortal danger too, and he accepts both responsibility and risk: 'Ainsi soit-il.' (p.172) He tempts providence again when he exhorts the peasant army to lay down their arms: they cry out for Goetz's blood (p.192), and only Nasty's intervention saves him (p.193). In the fourth of his situations - his hermit phase - Goetz courts death daily and thinks of it as the only possible release from present torments. Finally - as a leader once more - Goetz, by assuming responsibility for men's lives, implicitly puts his own at risk. Thus, Goetz lives under the constant threat of death without ever actually having to make the life-or-death choice which characterises the situation-limite (except in his last struggle with Heinrich, which I shall discuss later).

More so than his physical life, Goetz's existential life is at stake, originally put in question (like Hugo's) by his facticity, a facticity which has much in common with Genet's, as Sartre sees it. Born a bastard and a social outcast, Goetz's progress through the different ontological phases of existential murder, suicide, martyrdom, and eventual rebirth, closely parallels the moral odyssey of Genet. ⁵ Each is in the first place made by others the pariah,

reviled by 'un mot vertigineux'. This is the original "murder" which each then tries to take upon himself by doing what others expect - Genet as thief and homosexual, Goetz as monster and traitor - as though it were the product of their respective free wills. This is the "suicide" which compounds the "murder": 'I will be as others see me: a force for Evil.' Goetz boasts: 'Curé, je me suis fait moi-même: bâtard, je l'étais de naissance, mais le beau titre de fratricide, je ne le dois qu'à mes mérites.' (p.56) The reaction against their malevolent phase takes each subject through a transition: 'Étrange enfer de la beauté' for Genet; 'la Cité du Soleil' for Goetz. ⁶ These are both essentially aesthetic quests which promise illuminating solutions to the conundrum of their being, but which prove to be false dawns. In the third ontologico-moral stage - "martyrdom" - Genet and Goetz both seek to transcend all being, to annihilate all matter - especially the self qua matter - in order, as poet and ascetic respectively, to create the pure essence which will bear witness to life's impossibility. (Both are, of course, caught in the paradox that they must sustain the self in being in order to be able to testify to its impossibility.) Finally, Genet and Goetz (by contrast to Hugo) grow through their spiritual death to reach a new "birth" of the man initially "slain" by the Other. Goetz's situation, then, is of the broadest possible socio-moral kind. His situation-limite is existential. Verstraeten puts it thus:

En vérité, [Goetz] ne cesse d'être victime, c'est-à-dire

d'entériner la société qui l'a rejeté en assumant les multiples modalités idéologiques qu'elle met à sa disposition. [...] Ses jours sont comptés, le temps de mimer la mort, de la jouer au ralenti, mais destin imparablement suicidaire. C'est ici que les bâtards interviennent, en tout cas ceux qui comme Goetz assument leur bâtardise avec la radicalité des 'désespérados' - l'échéance suicidaire est retardée; les bâtards ont trouvé l'emploi de leur infortune: l'assomption précipitée de ce que sera la vérité essentielle des maîtres, leur figure sublime: la mort. [...] Destruction brouillonne, générosité provocatrice ou consommation ralentie, on le voit, Goetz ne fait qu'actualiser la figure, délibérément prématurée et anticipée, de l'autodestruction suicidaire qui hante la maîtrise féodale. ⁷

By following Goetz through the successive periods of 'destruction, generosity, and restricted consumption', we shall see what 'use' he makes of his 'misfortune', and how he not only 'retards', but in the crucial, existential sense, eventually escapes his 'unstoppably suicidal destiny'.

Act and Agent.

Goetz's capital delusion - which in the end he sheds, having

empirically laid it bare - is that he is a master of his destiny, an embodiment of pure will. Like the young Genet, he believes he is (to pre-empt Georges de Valera's expression) 'fils de ses oeuvres'. The fact is, though, that Goetz's actions are largely determined by circumstances and the characters around him. Lorris speaks of 'une figure centrale dont la conduite dirige les événements et dont les attitudes sont influencées par les décisions d'autres personnages'.⁸ I think we shall find that other characters more than merely 'influence' Goetz, and that his conduct is less responsible for shaping events than Lorris says. Let us then study Goetz's deeds - not yet acts in Sartre's sense - paying special attention to his responses to conditions and characters.

By design, no doubt, we first make Goetz's acquaintance through the opinions of others. He is volatile and capricious (p.17), cruel (p.18), and malevolent (p.19). These unflattering descriptions come from both parties to the conflict in Worms - l'Archevêque for the clergy, Gerlach for the people - and are not mere propaganda. We the audience are bound, therefore, to be prejudiced about Goetz: for us, as for him, his essence precedes his existence. Goetz reinforces our prejudice by the crudity and morbidity of his first words on stage. His paradoxical little epigram - 'il faut bien tuer ce qu'on aime' (p.45), (reminiscent of the ambivalent assimilation of love and death in Genet's personal life)⁹ - discloses his perversity, and sets the tone for all his relationships, whether with Catherine (for whose death he is later responsible), with the peasants of the 'Cité '

(also his victims), with Hilda, or Heinrich, or God, or even himself. In Goetz's every relationship, the medium of love transmutes invariably, mysteriously, almost messianically, into death.

This phenomenon is most evident in Goetz's 'fraternal' relationship with the unhappy priest Heinrich, caught from the first in an insoluble dilemma: should he side with the Church to which he owes obedience, or with the people who command his moral sympathy? The fraternity of Heinrich and Goetz in treachery and bastardy, which Goetz himself points out, has been amply discussed by other critics. Equally interesting is the comparison between Heinrich and Hugo: each is rejected by his class of origin and of adoption; each dies without having progressed significantly towards a solution. If we thus measure Goetz against Hugo, through Heinrich, we can easily see a marked advance in Sartre's practical optimism.

Heinrich's dilemma is at its most acute when he has to decide whether to believe Goetz's promise to spare the inhabitants of Worms (p.48). By letting Goetz into the city he will unleash either 'un massacre' (of the population), or 'quelques meurtres' (p.47) (of the priests). In either case he will have betrayed. Goetz relishes Heinrich's discomfiture and dismisses his excuses about the inevitable horrors of war: 'Hypocrite! Cette nuit tu as pouvoir de vie et de mort sur vingt mille hommes.' (p.50) In fact, Heinrich has no such power, indeed his impotence continuously tortures him (as did Hugo's him). But though he rejects suicide as a way out, he is no more capable than his young intellectual forebear in Les Mains sales of

making and carrying out an effective decision. 'Alors, j'ai changé d'avis: tu n'entreras pas dans la ville' (p.51) - this sounds definite enough, until Goetz points out the impotence at the heart of Heinrich's present power: 'Il ne s'agit pas pour toi de disposer de leur mort ou de leur vie, mais de choisir pour eux entre deux genres de morts.' (p.51) (Compare the initial dilemma of Bariona.) Heinrich's response - 'Tu n'existes pas. Tes paroles sont mortes [...] Je rêve, tout est mort' (p.52) - is typical 'magical' behaviour as Sartre describes it in Esquisse d'une théorie des émotions: the real world is annihilated by abstracting the self from it.¹⁰ This is a sublimation of suicide, adumbrating an eventual Hugo-like death for Heinrich, and anticipating the conduct of Goetz in his ascetic phase.

Goetz's insistence upon the inevitability of Hugo's treachery leads him into a revealing exposition of his metaphysics, which enables us to classify him beside Genet as an essentialist, a subscriber to the ethic of Being or exis, whose logic entails, for the human reality, death. 'On trahit quand on est un traître' (p.54), says Goetz, believing that a pre-existing 'personality' determines our actions. In his description of his sense of exclusion and gratuitousness - compare the orphan boy Genet - Goetz encourages Heinrich to be the pariah society makes of him (p.55), thus implicating him in an existential suicide which he, Goetz, has already committed. We notice that while Oreste and Hugo sought to change their sense of levity and unreality, Goetz delights in his: 'Fais le Mal: tu verras comme on se sent léger.' (p.55) By doing what the world expects,

of his own volition, Goetz has the mistaken impression of defying it, of being his own master: he chooses to be the nobody society excludes, just as Genet chose to be the 'voleur' adults took him for. But there is a vicious circle here which ensnares freedom in a delusion, for acts done for the sake of being rather than of doing are mere gestures.

Lorris is right to point out that, 'la liberté de Goetz est fortement sujette à caution car chacune des décisions qui orientent sa démarche semble lui être soufflée par autrui:- être héros du Mal, c'est consacrer l'idée que se font l'Eglise et le Peuple'.¹¹ In a manner of speaking, Goetz at the start of the play is in an advanced state of existential rigor mortis, while Heinrich is a recent victim of existential murder. Goetz will recover, but Heinrich will not.

The news of Conrad's death, for which Goetz joyously claims responsibility (p.56), encourages his deluded sense of self-determination, though his avowed 'goût du définitif' (p.56), and his imagined consecration in the eyes of God as a latter-day Cain (p.57), are typical attitudes of existential suicide. Goetz revels in his self-image, assured, he feels, partly by his opposition to God - 'le Mal est ma raison d'être' (p.58) - and partly by his role in society - 'je suis militaire, donc je tue' (p.69). An aspect of that image is his perversity, in which he delights when refusing to be classified as a realist by le Banquier, or to act in his own best interests (p.73). But there is a deep contradiction in Goetz's self-analysis between his determinism - 'je ne peux pas être un autre que moi' (p.94) - and his fierce independence of mind - 'Haine et faiblesse, violence, mort,

déplaisir, c'est ce qui vient de l'homme seul; c'est mon seul empire et je suis seul dedans: ce qui s'y passe n'est imputable qu'à moi.' (p.95)

His confusion is considerable: on the one hand he vaunts his moral autonomy, on the other he claims to depend for his being on God alone: 'Je ne daigne avoir affaire qu'à Dieu, les monstres et les saints ne relèvent que de lui.' (pp.56-57) So consumed is Goetz by his dream of immortality (p.87) that he does not realise that it can be bought only at the price of present "death".

Towards the end of the third tableau, Goetz is ready to **raze** Worms, to massacre its citizens, and, for good measure, to torture and kill Heinrich, Nasty, and Catherine. Each of these crimes is quite gratuitous, and therefore, to Goetz's mind, the more purely evil and offensive to God. Why, then, does he change his mind? What accounts for his 'conversion' from Evil to Good?

In the first place, we must be clear that this is not a true conversion. In philosophic terms, we could say that the form or accidents of Goetz's obsession change, but that its essence or substance do not. Monster and Saint are, as Goetz himself has remarked, closely akin: each derives from God; each aspires to abnormality, and to an inhuman immortality which can be obtained only on the strength of a pre-emptive "death". I shall let Sartre expatiate on this important issue:

Le héros et le Saint, au contraire, s'ils veulent mériter
l'approbation sociale, n'ont rien d'autre à faire qu'à

opérer sur eux-mêmes la grande destruction magnifique qui représente l'idéal de leur société. Le héros vient d'abord: [...]. Le Saint intériorise cette mort et la joue au ralenti. [...]. Dans les sociétés aristocratiques, le soldat de carrière est un oisif que la communauté entretient parce qu'il a fait serment de mourir. Il meurt à chaque guerre: s'il survit, c'est hasard ou miracle; en droit, dès sa première bataille il est mort. [...] En acceptant de 'ne plus être au monde' il se place au-dessus de tous les biens; on les lui donne tous, rien n'est assez bon pour lui. Si quelque difficulté intérieure l'écarte de la guerre, il ne peut ressusciter: il faut qu'il continue sa mort par quelque autre moyen. Il arrive donc qu'il choisisse la Sainteté: le Saint, lui aussi, est un mort; dans ce monde il n'est plus au monde. Il ne produit pas, il ne consomme pas, il a commencé par offrir à Dieu ses richesses. Mais cela n'est pas assez: c'est le monde entier qu'il veut offrir; offrir: détruire dans un potlatch magnifique. 12

Reading for 'hero', 'monster/hero', it is easy to see that Goetz's experience is a perfect particular illustration of this ingenious general argument. We may wonder, though, what is the 'interior difficulty' which turns Goetz away from war. It seems to me that it is an (apparently) exterior problem which Goetz interiorises and transmutes.

In an effort to dissuade Goetz from sacking Worms, others argue chiefly that there is absolutely no point in this wanton destruction. Its futility is obvious to all, including Goetz: when Nasty asks (in the words of St Paul) ¹³ whether Goetz intends to continue as 'un vacarme inutile' (p.87), the latter gladly affirms his uselessness to men, because of course, for him, it is the very gratuitousness of the violence he intends which is its greatest attraction. God will suffer through his action, says Goetz: 'Alors, je saurai que je suis un monstre tout à fait pur.' (p.87) However, this external difficulty - difficulty as others see it, though not as Goetz sees it - is interiorised by Goetz as a difficulty when Heinrich points out the banality of his malefactions: 'Voici le visionnaire le plus étrange: l'homme qui se croit seul à faire le Mal.' (p.96) Goetz's claim to be different because he 'does Evil for Evil's sake' is repudiated on the ground that motives are irrelevant since it is established 'qu'on ne peut faire que le Mal' (p.96). Heinrich's forceful exposition of this thesis - 'Le monde est iniquité; si tu l'acceptes, tu es complice, si tu le changes, tu es bourreau' (p.97) - convinces Goetz of a real exterior problem - Evil is inherent in the human condition - which, by interiorising, he transmutes into an equally real 'difficulté intérieure': hubris. Goetz's Satanic pride ensures the logical progression from monstrous/heroic "death" to inhuman/saintly "death": 'tu m'apprends que le Bien est impossible, je parie donc que je ferai le Bien: c'est encore la meilleure manière d'être seul. J'étais criminel, je me change: je retourne ma veste et je parie d'être un saint.' (pp.98-99)

The coat may be turned inside out, but the wearer is unchanged.

There are a number of paradoxes in Goetz's pseudo-conversion which reflect the contradictions we have so far noted in his character. On the one hand, he freely takes up the challenge to do the impossible; on the other, he tosses a coin in order to make providence (God) responsible for his decision. Then again, he cheats, becoming once more responsible for his choice himself; but he does not admit his trickery, preferring providence still to bear the onus so far as others are concerned ... except that Catherine is not deceived. Moreover, Goetz is in one sense simply doing again what others expect of him, inasmuch as 'devenir un saint, c'est relever le défi d'Heinrich'.¹⁴ In short, though Goetz thinks he is making a pure and free exercise of his will in opting to do the impossible in preference to the futile, he is in fact winding up more tightly the bonds which bind him in his living death.

Goetz's first deed is done: seemingly good, but in fact a deceit - 'Bien' comes into the world through 'Mal'; apparently free, yet a predictable response to Heinrich's challenge and Nasty's pressure; seemingly a conversion, but in fact the logical progression of a single mad obsession from the impossible pursuit of one ideal to the equally impossible pursuit of another. This is an 'acte' as Goetz likes them: 'à facettes. Est-il bon? Est-il mauvais? La raison s'y perd' (p.88). What is certain, though, is that the purpose of it is to be, to fix an essence: such acts are merely gestures. Furthermore, only the consequences of an act can characterise it morally; its

intentions are abstract. It is telling, therefore, that Heinrich - who believes intentions matter (p.101) - should envy Goetz his new-found purity: 'Tu leur rends la liberté, tu leur rends la vie et l'espoir. Mais à moi, chien, à moi que tu as contraint de trahir, rendras-tu la pureté?' (p.100) This is, of course, an illusion: Goetz, the mass-murderer, has not magically become Goetz, the fount of life and hope. Subsequent events - consequences - will show Goetz's saintly acts, when viewed in the perspective of history, to be indistinguishable from his monstrous ones.

In his new role, Goetz dispenses love which is not reciprocated. Karl, a more radical revolutionary than Nasty, threatens death to the former noble who dares to call him brother (pp.106-07). The Baron Schulheim - whom Goetz also calls brother - calls Goetz in return an assassin for having reduced him and all the nobles to a choice between 'la ruine [...] et la mort' (p.109). That he should be thus reviled by both parties to the conflict pleases Goetz, for isolation tends to confirm saintliness. His over-simplified analysis of the world's ills calls for a solution which is made possible by his wealth, his position, and above all by his newly-won sanctity: 'Je livre la bataille du Bien et je prétends la gagner tout de suite et sans effusion de sang.' (p.111) It is soon clear that the new Goetz is virtually indistinguishable from the old. Just as in his resolve to destroy Worms for Evil's sake, Goetz had turned a deaf ear to the persuasive, practical arguments of le Banquier, so now in his haste to do Good, he refuses to listen to Nasty's realistic objections. He

sees the grand gesture as within his grasp: 'Trente mille paysans meurent de faim, et je me ruine pour soulager leur misère' (p.112). When Nasty insists that his plans to save them can only result in their massacre, Goetz impatiently dismisses his misgivings: 'Je ne ferai pas le Bien à la petite semaine. [...] Je ne serai pas modeste.' (p.115) Like so many of Sartre's characters, Goetz crève d'orgueil. Laraque compares his attitude with Hugo's: '[Goetz] fera le bien "dût le monde en périr" tout comme Hugo était prêt à faire sauter le monde pour les principes.'¹⁵ More striking, perhaps, is a comparison with Oreste, determined to act, 'dussé-je tuer ma propre mère'.¹⁶ Oreste persuaded himself that the act he sought for his own sake would benefit others, though he never made that benefit materialise. Goetz likewise makes much of 'saving' the 'victims' of Nasty's proposed seven year delay (p.116), but scarcely attempts to disguise the underlying egocentricity of his ambition: 'Moi, je dis que le Bien est possible, tous les jours, à toute heure, en ce moment même: je serai celui qui fait le Bien tout de suite. [...] Je serai témoin, martyr et tentation.' (pp.116,117) The consequences of Goetz's 'acts' are for him secondary: they are willed - but no more - to be beneficial, irrespective of the realities of the situation. Exis still dominates his thinking. Nasty promises to kill him if needs be.¹⁷

Goetz's aspiration to fraternity with all men is further disappointed when the peasants recoil from his advances (p.120) and refuse him any authority (p.121). It is a fine irony that the self-appointed life-giver, Goetz, should have to compete with the

indulgence-selling monk Tetzl, whose technique is to concentrate the superstitious and conservative peasant mind rather on death than on life: 'Toujours travailler, c'est bel et bon, mais des fois, on s'appuie sur sa bêche, on regarde au loin et on se dit: "Qu'est-ce qui va m'arriver après la mort?" ' (p.123) More concerned about the here-after than the here-and-now, the peasants deride Goetz's offer of God's kingdom on earth, preferring to part with their mites for the sake of their own, and their late relatives', immortal souls. Even when Goetz acts out his love in a kiss for the leper, the leper ridicules him by preferring a free indulgence from Tetzl. Were Goetz not so blinded by pride, this episode alone should show him that the doing of Good as such is impossible: what counts are consequences. Here he succeeds only in exacerbating the peasants' natural hostility towards him (p.129).

Nothing daunted, Goetz is quick to grasp the first opportunity to do a real act of charity, afforded by Heinrich's announcement of Catherine's imminent death, for which he holds Goetz responsible: 'Sa maladie mortelle, c'est toi. ' (p.111) Goetz takes this to mean that Catherine has got a fatal disease through his abuse of her, and denies the charge made against his former self: 'je ne reconnais pas les fautes de l'année dernière. ' (p.134) His erroneous assumption that he need make no amends in this life for sins which will be expiated in the next (p.134), discloses a damning double orientation towards death: the alleged death of the wicked Goetz, the presumed saint: 'Deux [Goetz], oui. Un vivant qui fait le Bien, et un mort qui faisait le Mal. ' (p.134) In Sartrean terms, of course, Goetz remains "dead"

so long as his ethics can be subsumed under 'Being'. Heinrich tries to point out to Goetz the glaring superficiality of his conversion:

HEINRICH: Et tu as enterré tes péchés avec le mort?

GOETZ: Oui.

HEINRICH: Parfait. Seulement ce n'est pas le mort qui est en train d'assassiner la petite, c'est le beau Goetz tout pur qui s'est voué à l'amour.

GOETZ: Tu mens! C'est le Goetz malfaisant qui a commis le crime.

HEINRICH: Ce n'était pas un crime. En la souillant tu lui as donné beaucoup plus que tu ne possédais toi-même: l'amour.

[...] Elle en meurt. (p.134)

'Love', so-called, can kill. This is a parable in the best biblical manner, its moral: 'Observe the spirit of the law before the letter'. (Christ never tires of telling this to the Pharisees.) In abandoning Catherine because a Saint could not 'live with a whore', Goetz infringed the rule of love he pretended to incarnate.¹⁸ Catherine's agony is the first specific and direct result of Goetz's 'goodness': the writing is on the wall, and were it not for his pride, Goetz might yet avoid the catastrophe of the 'Cité du Soleil'. But immodesty forbids: 'Si tu l'avais gardée, tu la sauvais peut-être et toi avec elle. Mais quoi? Sauver une âme, une seule? Un Goetz peut-il s'abaisser à cela? On avait de plus grands projets.' (p.134) The fact that Goetz piously

refrains from striking the gloating Heinrich when he refuses to reveal Catherine's whereabouts, is further evidence that he regards his own saintliness more highly than he does the dying girl.

When Goetz at last finds Catherine lying in a church amongst sick and dying peasants, he seems to begin to see through his imposture:

[Catherine est] ici, malade, couchée sur la pierre. Par ma faute. [...] Par ma faute ... Rien, je sonne creux. Tu veux de la honte, je n'en ai pas. C'est l'orgueil qui suinte de toutes mes plaies: depuis trente-cinq ans je crève d'orgueil, c'est ma façon de mourir de honte. Il faudra changer ça. (p.141)

Here Goetz appears to become conscious of his moral stagnation, and of the fact that his pretended change of life has actually changed nothing. But at this important moment of lucidity, Goetz, rather than assume the burden of his freedom, asks God to relieve him of it, to dehumanise him: 'Ote-moi la pensée! Ote-la! Fais que je m'oublie! Change-moi en insecte!' (p.141) Here Goetz prays to be objectified in the eyes of the absolute Other, God. In much the same way, Hugo had sought to be an assassin for the Party. As Hoederer helped him to see his mistake, so Hilda helps Goetz.

Hilda appears as a sort of social-worker, cast in the same mould as Sarah in L'Age de raison. 'Du parti des hommes' (p.146), she doubts not only God's goodness, but even his very existence. The

daughter of a wealthy miller, she had left a vocation to the religious life in order to devote herself to the welfare of the starving poor. Hearing of her, Goetz is intrigued that she should have found love and respect where he has been reviled, though their background - wealth - and present way of life - self-denial - are similar. One of the peasants explains that 'elle est aimable' (p.147). By contrast with this pure and grateful affection, Goetz exercises a predominantly sexual fascination: 'une femme ne pouvait te voir sans t'aimer' (p.149), Hilda tells him, blaming him for Catherine's agony, and rejecting, as did Heinrich, the defence that some former and different Goetz was the culprit. Goetz can neither escape the consequences of his evil phase, nor determine those of his holy one: 'C'est gagné ou perdu d'avance; le temps et l'effort n'y font rien. (Brusquement.) Dieu ne peut pas vouloir ça, c'est injuste. Autant dire qu'il y a des gens qui naissent damnés.' (p.150) The temptation is strong to believe in pre-destination, and thus in human impotence: but that is just another form of bad faith. So long as Goetz remains obsessed by the need of the peasants' love, he will fail to achieve any improvements in the concrete situation through practical action. Hilda, by contrast, has so immersed herself in the plight of the poor that she enjoys a near empathy with them, unhindered by endless questions about her identity:

Moi, je sens mon corps à peine, je ne sais pas où ma vie
commence ni où elle finit et je ne réponds pas toujours
quand on m'appelle, tant ça m'étonne, parfois, d'avoir un nom.

Mais je souffre dans tous les corps, on me frappe sur toutes les joues, je meurs de toutes les morts; toutes les femmes que tu as prises de force, tu les as violées dans ma chair. (p.152)

But Goetz does not learn from this Hoederer-like lesson in the setting-aside of one's subjectivity. Instead, he conceives the idea of winning the peasants' love from Hilda. In other words he proposes to use her as a means to gain the people's affection, itself a means to the end of consecrating himself as that finished - or "dead" - entity, 'Saint'.

The curious episode of Catherine's agony shows Goetz for the second time resorting to trickery in order for 'God's will' to be done. Catherine is tormented by visions of hell and - like Électre taunted by the Érinnyes - seeks help in divine intervention. Heinrich and Nasty each in turn refuse to minister to her, the first because he sees no hope of redemption, the second because he deals only with the living (p.155). Goetz, however - with more compassion, more guilt, and more ingenuity because of his greater desire to appear effective - promises to absolve Catherine by taking her sins upon himself: such is the role of the scapegoat, the sacrificial lamb, of Christ crucified. Again, the life/death dialogue concerning Goetz's moral character is translated in familiar Christian terms on both the literal and figurative levels. The living Goetz proposes to give eternal life to the dying Catherine: 'Ton Âme sera pure comme au jour de ta naissance.' (p.157) The means to this rebirth of salvation will be Goetz's suffering of

Christ's wounds, themselves the symbols of bodily death: 'Es-tu mort pour les hommes, oui ou non? [...] Il faut recommencer à mourir.' (pp.157-58) By taking on those ambiguous marks - signs of death and resurrection alike - Goetz hopes both to let Catherine die in peace, and to acquire for himself the life of the saint by thus capturing the affection of the peasants. Indeed, so impressed are they by the miracle of the stigmata that Goetz almost swoons with pain and delight: 'Ils sont à moi. Enfin.' (p.159) But just as he had done for his original conversion, Goetz has once again counterfeited God's will, inflicting his own wounds as he had once turned the dice. His misinterpretation of God's silence - which, for Sartre, betokens God's non-existence - keeps Goetz in thrall to a false concept - the Absolute - and vitiates his relationship with his fellow men. It is both apt and ironical that Catherine, who had seen Goetz fix the dice, should insist, with her dying breath, that it is his blood, not Christ's, which Goetz has shed to save her. In his effort to give eternal life to Catherine and gain existential life for himself, Goetz in fact enters further into the realm of necro-morality which contains his quest for Being.

In the 'Cité du Soleil', Goetz's action appears to consist in inactivity. He merely repeats the trick of the stigmata each day in order to retain the respect of the peasants engaged on building their community of pure love. They are understandably angered by Karl's contention that 'la haine, les massacres, le sang des autres sont les aliments nécessaires de votre bonheur' (p.167). They cannot

comprehend the paradox that their Christian charity should fuel violence and culminate in a bloody catastrophe. L'Instructeur's canting sermon may seem to take account of the real contradictions inherent in their situation, but in fact he merely plays rhetorically on the double register of life and death in the manner of Goetz:

Nous baisérons la main qui nous frappe, nous mourrons en priant pour ceux qui nous tuent. Tant que nous vivons nous avons la ressource de nous faire périr, mais quand nous serons morts nous nous installerons dans vos âmes et nos voix résonneront dans vos oreilles. (p.170)

This 'leçon' betrays a total disconnection from reality: '[se] faire périr' is hardly an efficient resource, and the idea that one has any power to change things after death is quite aberrant - (witness Garcin's experience!). Such dangerous idealism is the teaching of Goetz, whose authority is seen as infallible. Indeed, in the 'Cité' Goetz seems to have attained that pure, unalloyed state of being peculiar to God. He is sustained in his quasi-divinity by the peasants' devotion which he commands by his miraculous tricks, and his indomitable will to do Good. When Karl is told that their idyll will endure 'autant que Dieu voudra' (p.167), his sighing 'Hélas!' implies that for 'Dieu' he reads 'Goetz'.

Having achieved such status, Goetz can afford coolly to evade the awkward questions Karl raises: he condescendingly sends him packing

with 'des vivres et le baiser de paix' (p.172). He is complacent in face of Karl's threat that 'tout ceci finira par un massacre': 'Ainsi soit-il' (p.172), says Goetz, in a typically pious formula of resignation and passivity. More likely to spur him to action is Hilda's announcement that she intends to leave, and there follows a brief but important scene in which the opposing ethics of praxis (Hilda) and exis (Goetz) dispute and disclose their respective shortcomings.

For Hilda, '[le malheur] c'est ma vie' (p.174). Her misfortune is that of the doer who becomes redundant when the doing is done - hence the need (in the Trotskyist or Maoist versions of Marxian theory, for example) for the continuous revolution. The happiness enjoyed by the dispossessed once they have been repossessed is a sort of animal satisfaction which tends to dehumanise them: 'Ils bêlent' (p.175), says Hilda of the peasants, speaking also of their 'bonheur de brebis' (p.175) with implicit contempt.¹⁹ Since her 'love' for the poor diminishes in proportion as their lot improves, she is forced to question her motives: 'Il faut que je sois un monstre: [...] Est-ce que je suis méchante?' (p.175) As Goetz has found, the monster's solitude is much the same as the saint's: 'Plus ils m'aiment et plus je suis seul.' (p.175) Only a marriage of Goetz's idealist will to Good with Hilda's practical will to Change could satisfy them both. This realisation is implicit in Goetz's enlightened self-reproach: 'J'ai fait les gestes de l'amour, mais l'amour n'est pas venu' (p.176). After this, they follow together a way to existential life.

In the next stage on that way, however, Goetz uses Hilda as an alibi for inertia. Invited by Nasty to lead the peasant army in a pitched battle against the barons, Goetz still recoils from the prospect of having to 'gaspiller les vies' (p.179) in order to save others. Persuasive as Nasty's arguments are to the mind of Goetz the former soldier, he cannot overlook that his hard-won purity is at stake: is he truly God's butcher as Nasty is his prophet? The stasis of sainthood makes him unable to take the decision to enter the realm of practical revolt; cowardly, he defers to Hilda, making her his reluctant accomplice in this latest sin of omission: 'Pourquoi me donnes-tu puissance de vie et de mort sur mes frères? [...] Ah! tu as gagné: [...] Je te défends de verser le sang.' (p.180) Though Goetz appears anxious to participate in this decision, it is evident that he has, as he did with Karl, evaded the issue. Indeed, his next question - 'Et nous en porterons les conséquences ensemble?' (p.180) - is a moral emergency exit. His advice to the massed peasants not to fight because they cannot win is a counsel of passivity, an inversion of the Oresteian exhortation to the Argives, but stamped with the same mark of the grand, egocentric, and futile gesture: 'Je descends parmi les hommes pour sauver la paix.' (p.182) Only gods go down among men.

Goetz's performance is very much that of the saint and prophet, if not quite that of a god. His vision of the 'danse macabre' (p.186) of jangling skeletons, and the miracle of his stigmata, serve to frighten and fascinate the superstitious minds of the massed peasants, so distracting them from the reality of the concrete situation in which he,

Goetz, is a traitor. But he is playing a dangerous game, for Karl too can resort to trickery if needs be: he enters a trance, and, speaking with the voice of God, he exhorts the peasants to revenge themselves upon the nobles, so that they are soon baying after Goetz's blood. Goetz scorns the people and turns away in a gesture again reminiscent of Creste. The experiment of brotherly love is drawing to a bitter end, and Goetz prefers to blame its failure upon the shortcomings of others, rather than upon his own cherished delusion that absolute goals can be achieved in relative circumstances. It is because he remains blind to that error that Nasty closes the scene remarking: 'C'est vrai, Goetz: tu n'as rien vu.' (p.193)

The metaphor of Goetz's blindness is echoed in his soliloquy - 'Seigneur, je viens, je marche dans ta nuit' (p.195) - a powerful invocation to God to possess him wholly. Goetz's renewed pride in his solitude and despised rejection by men, culminates in a prayer for light which is, nevertheless, an admission of misplaced optimism and continuing delusion: 'Sois béni de me donner ta lumière: je vais voir clair.' (p.196) This heralds a second false dawn for Goetz, a new 'conversion' which, like the first, will leave him existentially dead, as before: 'il faut me pendre ou faire le Bien' (p.194). Goetz does not yet appreciate that by persisting in his vain endeavour, he is indeed stifling himself.

Having repulsed Heinrich, Karl, and Nasty, only Hilda remains to try and open the eyes of Goetz, and for that reason alone did she struggle to survive the holocaust which engulfed the 'Cité du Soleil'

in Goetz's absence:

La mort, ça m'était égal, mais je voulais te revoir. [...]
Tu es là: un peu de chair usée, rugueuse, misérable, une vie -
une pauvre vie. C'est cette chair et cette vie que j'aime.
On ne peut aimer que sur terre et contre Dieu. (p.197)

Hilda, the apologist of life, hopes to save Goetz's life, in more senses than one, through her love. But only here and now, she insists, is such a relationship possible: 'Nous n'irons pas au Ciel, Goetz, et même si nous y entrions tous les deux, nous n'aurions pas d'yeux pour nous voir, pas de mains pour nous toucher.' (p.197) This describes exactly the experience of Ève and Pierre in Les Jeux sont faits. Like Sartre, Hilda conceives the after-life as an effective annihilation. For Goetz, however, following a perverse, negative theology, it is precisely that annihilation which is to be sought as if it were a plenitude, a perfect density of being:

La nuit, c'est toi [Seigneur], hein? La nuit, l'absence déchirante de tout! Car tu es celui qui est présent dans l'universelle absence, celui qu'on entend quand tout est silence, celui qu'on voit quand on ne voit plus rien. (p.195)

That nothingness is to be achieved by annihilating the man in oneself, for he is wicked: 'Je détruirai l'homme puisque tu l'as créé pour

qu'il soit détruit.' (p.198)

In this final scene of the ninth tableau, the dialogue of life and death reaches a high point. Hilda's remorse for the death of the peasants in the 'Cité' clearly stems from an ethic which holds life as the primary value: this is, for Sartre, the spontaneous (not to say natural) law of the existent individual.²⁰ 'Sans moi ils vivraient encore.' (p.198) Goetz is not disposed to join in this breast-beating. In God's great design, men are mere puppets: 'Nous ne sommes rien, nous ne pouvons rien sur rien. L'homme rêve qu'il agit, mais c'est Dieu qui mène.' (p.198) It is true that Goetz has not yet acted in the Sartrean sense, but he is wrong to conclude, therefore, that men are impotent and incapable of action. The explanation is rather that he takes, and has always taken, the point of view of death upon his own life, trying to see it as a closed and finished entity, an object, be it monster or saint. Having necessarily failed in that attempt, he proposes to go one stage further, to anticipate his own death by living as a dead man:

Je n'aurai d'yeux que pour la terre et les pierres. [...],
je tourmenterai ce corps par la faim, le froid, et le fouet:
à petit feu, à tout petit feu. Je détruirai l'homme[...].
(p.198)

This is the final tourniquet in the ever-diminishing spiral of the essentialist ethic, exis. Goetz had, in his own words, already

buried himself once: the Goetz of Evil "died" to bring forth the Goetz of Good, but the new "life" was indistinguishable from the old, as he now admits. The moment of "martyrdom" has come, when "suicide" compounds the original "murder" perpetrated by the Other on the outcast: 'Mes sujets sont morts' - they can therefore no longer guarantee Goetz's saintliness - 'et moi, le vif, je meurs au monde et je passerai le reste de ma vie à méditer sur la mort.' (pp.198-99) Goetz assigns himself another impossible task, namely to contemplate the non-existent - death - while approaching it in a gradual self-annihilation. He is mistaken in supposing that he is sufficiently "alive" to be able to "die" to the world, other than in the merely literal and physical sense of the body. Morally, or existentially, he has always been dead. Ironically, then, he is right to tell Hilda: 'Va chercher ailleurs la misère et la vie.' (p.199) He can offer her misery, but not life. While a spark remains, however, Hilda chooses to stay, believing apparently that where there is life, there is hope. Indeed, her tenacity may save Goetz from actual suicide, and so make possible the final and decisive - life-winning - confrontation with Heinrich.

When the time comes, however, Hilda is afraid to leave Goetz to Heinrich's mercy. She tries at first to turn the priest away: 'Celui qui t'a offensé n'est plus: il est mort au monde.' (p.202) She too, for argument's sake, contends that the original Goetz has "died". But Goetz and Heinrich are two of a kind, and the latter knows only too well that neither of them has really changed. Both of

them have always been, and remain, mesmerised by the look of the absolute Other; even Hilda's love has failed to divert Goetz from that obsession: 'Hilda, la seconde, tente de réaliser avec lui [Goetz] des rapports humains; mais elle échoue parce qu'il tue l'homme en lui, n'étant en rapport qu'avec Dieu.'²¹ However, she buys a little time for Goetz during which we see how he has enacted his plan of "martyrdom", and to what extent he has become dependent upon Hilda, the advocate of life, for his continued existence.

Time stands still in the world of the hermit, as it did in the hell of Huis clos: 'Tu es une horloge arrêtée qui dit toujours la même heure.' (p.205) Day follows day with monotonous sameness, and Goetz's self-imposed exercises of self-mortification - 'dying of thirst' (p.205), 'dying of desire' (p.207) - stop short of death itself only through the good offices of Hilda: 'Dieu te souhaite maniaque et gâteaux, mais non point mort. Donc, il faut boire.' (p.206) Goetz responds by trying to degrade Hilda, thus using her as a means to debase himself: 'Il parle à la femme comme Claudel', notes Sartre: '"Si tu m'aimes, torture-moi."' ²² Like Jessica with Hugo, Hilda refuses to play Goetz's game once the stakes are so high: life itself. And Goetz acknowledges that she alone is responsible for the vestige of humanity he retains: 'Tant que tu resteras près de moi, je ne me sentirai pas tout à fait immonde.' (p.208) Hilda's love is freedom and life, unimpaired by the gaze of God, and undismayed by the supposed sinfulness of the flesh:

HILDA, violemment: [...] C'est dans ton âme qu'est la laideur et la saleté de la chair. [...] Chaque jour tu ressembles un peu plus au cadavre que tu seras et je t'aime toujours. Si tu meurs, je me coucherai contre toi et je resterai là jusqu'à la fin, sans manger ni boire, tu pourriras entre mes bras et je t'aimerai charogne: car l'on n'aime rien si l'on n'aime pas tout. (pp.209-10)

The love in which Hilda has such confidence is quite different from the futile exercise of mutual appropriation described in L'Être et le néant, or the eternal triangle of Huis clos. Nor does it bear any relation to the ostentatious gesture of Goetz embracing the leper. Hilda's love seeks neither to objectify the beloved, nor to win the applause of an audience; it is akin rather to the ideal of disinterested love which transcends the accidents of the corporeal and focuses upon the essentially human. Its source is in life as the supreme value, and that is why the death-obsessed Goetz is unable to reciprocate it although it remains his last contact with this world: 'Oui, je te fouetterai, sale moine, je te fouetterai, parce que tu as ruiné notre amour.' (p.210)

When Heinrich returns, he announces Goetz's imminent death at the hands of those peasants who have survived the massacre of Nasty's army by the barons, a holocaust of 25,000 souls for which Goetz is to be held responsible. Goetz's philosophic response: 'Nous sommes nés pour mourir' (p.212), bespeaks an effort at detachment belied by his

initial outburst: 'Il ne fallait pas la livrer, cette bataille. Les imbéciles! Ils auraient dû ...' (p.212). This instinctive, practical reaction augurs well for his recovery from his chosen quietism. At first, though, he seems determined to make that recovery impossible: at Heinrich's behest he dismisses Hilda, who alone would plead for his life - 'Tu n'as pas le droit de te faire tuer' (p.212) - and then prosecutes himself in the unfolding 'procès'. Paradoxically, it is his self-accusation which allows Goetz to see the validity of the prosecution's case, and arrive at a fruitful judgment. (Contrast Hugo's blindness in this regard, resulting in his death.)

'Tu es à demi-mort' (p.215), says Heinrich despondently; but that is Goetz's good fortune, for it is the "living" half which will prosecute the "dead": 'La moitié de moi-même est ta complice contre l'autre moitié. Va, fouille-moi jusqu'à l'être puisque c'est mon être qui est en cause.' (p.214) With a sudden and startling lucidity, Goetz proceeds to attack his will to Being, 'l'intention'. His 'gifts' are now perceived as 'feuilles mortes', his 'good deeds' as 'cadavres' (p.216); these metaphors of death precede the capital observation: 'Je n'ai pas agi: j'ai fait des gestes.' (p.216) Goetz's life has been a living death, viewed from the privileged but illusory point of totality. Practical consequences were unimportant so long as the aspiration to be was satisfied:

GOETZ: J'ai voulu que ma bonté soit plus dévastatrice
que mes vices.

HEINRICH: Et tu y as réussi: vingt-cinq mille cadavres! En un jour de vertu tu as fait plus de morts qu'en trente-cinq années de malice. [...]
 GOETZ, [...]: monstre ou saint, je m'en foutais, je voulais être inhumain. (p.217) ²³

Goetz's 'conversion' to Good is seen for the sham it was, and he confesses his guilt before God. His execution by the peasants will be a just retribution and a fitting culmination to the judicial process:

GOETZ: Tu es sûr qu'ils veulent me tuer, au moins?

HEINRICH: sûr.

GOETZ: Les braves gens. Je leur tendrai le cou et tout finira: bon débarras pour tout le monde. (p.218)

Goetz is eager for death. Why does he not therefore die?

If Goetz failed to go beyond this stage of his development, he would finally be no more advanced morally than preceding heroes, and indeed would appear retarded by comparison with Bariona or Oreste. For he is here on the verge of translating existential into physical death in the mistaken belief that he will thereby salvage his life. Garcin, Sorbier, and Hugo had each made the same error of viewing violent death as an expiation of impotence, a mitigation of cowardice, and a consecration of the self in Being. Each had pretended to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat, and all were equally deluded.

Lucie and Henri, by contrast, were privileged to have the counsel of Canoris that only life can amend life. Oddly enough, Heinrich's pessimism has much the same effect on Goetz as had Canoris's optimism on his unfortunate comrades.

Heinrich inadvertently helps Goetz to save himself by overdoing the mental torture to which he is determined to subject him. Death, which appears as a total release, is too easy an option; death ends nothing, and hell changes nothing: one simply is: 'La mort, c'est un attrape nigauds pour les familles; pour le défunt, tout continue.' (p.219) Heinrich is exacting a strictly personal vendetta. His family likeness to Goetz, their fraternity in bastardy and treachery, have been a source of bitterness for him since Goetz claimed to have escaped the impasse in which both found themselves. Were he able, as judge, to invoke a system of absolute values to which they both subscribed, he would surely succeed in humiliating Goetz as he wants to. But, instead, he depicts an indifferent deity, the very opposite of that which Goetz had always envisaged, for whom the activities of men were of the greatest possible moment - hence God's supposed discomfiture when Goetz did Evil and delight when he did Good. Heinrich's insistence that 'tu ne comptes pas. [...], meurs de privations ou de voluptés: Dieu s'en fout' (p.220), is intended to draw Goetz into his (Heinrich's) own despair. But his proposition that 'L'homme est néant' (p.220), contradicts his assertion that men are responsible for their actions: 'Les ordres que tu prétends recevoir, c'est toi qui te les envoies.' (p.220) Goetz's earlier sleights-of-hand bear out this

fact. Goetz's divine orders are even less imperative - more abstract - than Hugo's orders from the Party, of which he remarked: 'Ça vous laisse tout seul, les ordres, à partir d'un certain moment.' ²⁴ In the final analysis, man is free: Oreste had already shown this. But how can freedom be an essential quality of the 'nothingness' which Heinrich postulates? ²⁵ Goetz is quick to point out Heinrich's error, and his own:

Je me demandais à chaque minute ce que je pouvais être aux yeux de Dieu. A présent, je connais la réponse: rien. [...]

Il n'y avait que moi: j'ai décidé seul du Mal; seul, j'ai inventé le Bien. [...] Si Dieu existe, l'homme est néant; si l'homme existe ... [...] Heinrich, je vais te faire connaître une espièglerie considérable: Dieu n'existe pas. (pp.220-21)

The theology is problematic, but the reasoning is logical in terms of the way in which Heinrich and Goetz have hitherto regarded God and man. Indeed, Goetz might well have reached this conclusion sooner, when met by God's silence, were it not for the tenacity of his ambition to feel the absolute look upon him. But now, far from sharing in Heinrich's despair, he exults at the discovery of God's non-existence, borrowing a famous phrase of Pascal's 'Mémorial': 'Il n'existe pas. Joie, pleurs de joie! Alléluia! Fou! Ne frappe pas: je nous délivre. Plus de Ciel, plus d'Enfer: rien que

la Terre.' (p.221)

Heinrich's death is at hand, and it is significant because it occasions not only Goetz's first act of violence, but also his first act tout court. Does this mean that Sartre equates action with violence? Some critics have said as much, but that seems to me an over-simplified interpretation of events, and I intend to show why. ²⁶

The crucial feature of Goetz's killing of Heinrich, which critics have rather overlooked, is that it is committed in self-defence. ²⁷ As such, it is unique among the killings represented in Sartre's theatre. It has none of the gratuitousness of Oreste's matricide, of the miliciens' execution of the resisters, of the whites' lynching of a negro, of Hugo's homicide and suicide. On the contrary, it is, in broadly accepted moral terms, a justified response to a lethal attack: 'Parbleu, si l'un de nous doit mourir, autant que ce soit toi!' (p.223)

Prima facie, this is an open-and-shut case of self-defence. But it is significant on more than one level; its practical consequences and ethical implications are complex. Heinrich first attacks Goetz when he announces God's non-existence. He cannot bear to hear this, for it makes judges of his equals, men, who have already rejected and condemned them both: 'Si Dieu n'existe pas, plus moyen d'échapper aux hommes. [...] Notre Père qui êtes aux cieux, j'aime mieux être jugé par un être infini que par mes égaux.' (pp.221-22) Heinrich's sin is hubris. Like Goetz, he had always set himself above others: above his fellows in the Church, above the mass of the people. But whereas Goetz experimented to solve the dilemmas of his contradictions

and his solitude, Heinrich settled for despair and the company of the Devil. Unlike Heinrich, Goetz has learnt something from his experiences and acquired a certain moral strength which permits him to face impassively the death of God. He can take leave of his pride and be confident of finding a place among men and a new beginning:

GOETZ: [...] Je recommence tout.

HEINRICH, (sursautant): Tu recommences quoi?

GOETZ: La vie.

HEINRICH: Ce serait trop commode. (Il se jette sur lui.)

Tu ne recommenceras pas. Fini: c'est aujourd'hui qu'il faut tirer le trait.

GOETZ: Laisse-moi, Heinrich, laisse-moi. Tout est changé, je veux vivre. (p.222)

The word which prompts Heinrich's assault is 'la vie'. He - spokesman of the Law, accomplice of the Devil - has been resigned to his own living death for at least a year and a day. He cannot tolerate that Goetz, his brother, his alter-ego, should find life in a godless universe where he, Heinrich, cannot: 'Quelle chance que tu veuilles vivre: tu crèveras dans le désespoir!' (p.222) At first Goetz tries simply to shrug off his assailant; but he soon has to meet force with like force, for there is so much at stake.

Goetz struggles to save not only his physical but also his existential life. On the one hand, he is no longer ready to give

himself up to the vengeance of the peasants as he was moments before. On the other hand, the exclamation, 'Je veux vivre! ', does not just mean that Goetz does not want to die, but - more importantly - that he has not yet "lived" in the Sartrean sense: 'Car on ne meurt à la loi morale, forme supérieure de toute idéologie, que pour naître à la liberté.' ²⁸ This, then, is another and final "suicide" for Goetz: now he definitively kills that 'possession by the absolute' which had assured his enduring existential necrosis: 'Killing Heinrich, the reductive mirror image of his servitude, Goetz kills himself - that part of himself which depended on an absolute to guarantee the reality of his own existence.' ²⁹ This is a "suicide" which the agent survives to bring himself forth in new "life". What I call 'existential' death and rebirth, Laraque calls 'mental', but the theory is much the same:

Goetz, en s'affranchissant de la notion du bien, commet son second suicide mental. En effet, tout changement radical de la personnalité ne représente-t-il pas la fin d'une essence et la naissance d'une autre? Nous l'appelons mental pour l'opposer au suicide physique qui termine la vie, exprime le refus absolu sans nécessairement impliquer une nouvelle essence. ³⁰

In Goetz's case the 'new essence' in question is in fact human existence, or life in its fullest sense, the 'prise de conscience' of

freedom, the ascent from the ethical plane of Being, exis, Death, to that of Action, praxis, Life: Goetz settles the choice he had faced between (in Verstraeten's terms) 'l'idéal moral [ou] la logique suicidaire' on the one hand, and 'la vie dialectique [ou] la positivité vitale' on the other. 31

Goetz's access to the realm of freedom and responsibility is akin to what I have earlier called the 'coming to "life" ' of Oreste or Bariona. However, it differs in two important respects. First, Goetz is the only one of these three heroes to have undergone a complete ethical experience: Oreste became voluntarily involved in a situation which he failed ultimately to change, never outgrowing the egocentrism of his motives; Bariona mistakenly thought of suicide as an effectual form of revolt before seeing the need for more active resistance. Only Goetz, sharing Oreste's rootlessness, and Bariona's 'solitude de chef', proves empirically to his own - and, Sartre hopes, our - satisfaction that there are no transcendent values, just the exigencies of historical situations. That is why an understanding of Le Diable et le bon Dieu is crucial for an understanding of Sartre: 'dans Le Diable et le bon Dieu se reflète toute son évolution idéologique', writes Simone de Beauvoir. 32 Secondly, Goetz's killing of Heinrich has none of the mythical connotations of Jesus's birth or Oreste's matricide, the central events of Bariona and Les Mouches respectively. On the contrary, it is an altogether necessary response to a brutal reality: 'tuer pour vivre ou être tué '. 33 Thus, although we will agree that 'la mort de Heinrich symbolise la

répudiation de la morale, de l'éthique féodale', ³⁴ we would be wrong to regard Goetz's 'legicide' (if I may call it that) as merely symbolic. Goetz's act - killing Heinrich - is unique in Sartre's theatre because it is what it signifies, signifiant and signifié. It is self-referential, or reflexive, not only in so far as Goetz puts an end to his former self as well as to Heinrich, but also in the sense that this act is the first demonstration of the practical morality it inaugurates by ending the reign of Being. In other words, Goetz does not slay Heinrich in order simply to proclaim his liberation from the petrifying look of the Other, but because the situation demands it: if he does not kill Heinrich, Heinrich will kill him. ³⁵

The irrevocability of Goetz's act pleases him, for it seems to assure the truth and reality of the change which has taken place, as against the falsehood and trickery of former 'conversions': 'La comédie du Bien s'est terminée par un assassinat; tant mieux, je ne pourrai plus revenir en arrière.' (p.223) Goetz's ethical education is not quite complete, however, for he has yet to decide how to commit his freedom, how to live his "life".

He begins by risking his life in a confrontation with the peasant soldiers. It is right that he should, both because the death of Heinrich implies a reciprocal threat which he has to assume, and because putting his own life in jeopardy is the only means he has of asserting its value: 'C'est toujours face à un risque de mort que le héros sartrien définit sa qualité humaine.' ³⁶

The risk is well calculated: the peasants are perplexed by the

changed Goetz, and instead of killing him they bring him before Nasty who, in uneasy alliance with Karl, is at the head of the rebels. Goetz's first speeches resound with echoes from those of Oreste, Jean, and Hugo: equally explicit are the will to belong, to share in the violence and participate in the suffering, and yet to avoid responsibility for one's fellows. For a moment it seems that Goetz too will tread the individualistic, self-regarding road to 'salvation' through action, leaving the historical situation unchanged. Nasty, however, has too clear an idea of Goetz's ability to let that happen:

GOETZ: [...] Je ne suis pas né pour commander. Je veux obéir.

NASTY: Parfait! Eh bien, je te donne l'ordre de te mettre à notre tête. Obéis.

GOETZ: Nasty, je suis résigné à tuer, je me ferai tuer s'il le faut; mais je n'enverrai personne à la mort: à présent je sais ce que c'est que de mourir. Il n'y a rien, Nasty, rien: nous n'avons que notre vie. (p.229)

Goetz's reluctance to lead is based on an understanding of life's value learned from his own experience of "death", and reinforced by Heinrich's dying words. Ironically, that same valorization of life will lead him to accept the command offered; the alternative is a catastrophic débâcle ensuing from a loss of confidence among the captains, and fear and dissent in the ranks. Goetz is eventually

persuaded by practical arithmetic, a statistical trade-off, the lesser of two evils beyond Good and Evil, what Verstraeten calls 'la comptabilité funèbre de la violence' :

Ainsi naît un dialecticien, c'est-à-dire un leader révolutionnaire: en assumant la guerre et la violence Goetz condamne les paysans à vingt-cinq mille morts; s'il les abandonnait à la répression des féodaux, il y en aurait cent mille. 37

Without irony, we can say that Goetz's acceptance of the generalship, his resignation to continuing solitude when he had fervently desired to 'vivre avec tous', is an unequivocal affirmation of life as the supreme value which can alone require and justify a subordination of the self: this act of modesty is the one step no previous hero had taken. In Goetz's case, it is aptly accompanied by an access of sympathy for the tireless Nasty who has had to be hitherto the inspiration of the revolt. Goetz agrees to become the torch-bearer, as it were, rather than let the flame die: 'Mais toi, si tu souffres, la dernière chandelle s'éteint: c'est la nuit. Je prends le commandement de l'armée.' (p.231) Having joined the revolution in an act of deicide, 38 Goetz naturally concedes, at last, that means are dictated by their ends, not by transcendent laws:

C'est là que l'histoire se dévoile, car l'histoire n'est dialectique que dans la mesure où elle ménage en son sein

ces rencontres de contradiction dont l'alternative réside entre la mort et la vie, la barbarie et le socialisme. C'est dire encore que dans la comptabilité funèbre de la violence il existe toujours une action possible s'inscrivant dans un avenir de réconciliation dont l'anticipation assure en tout cas à la violence révolutionnaire une dimension éthique qu'abdique la violence existante. 39

The eruption of History authorises the choice of the lesser evil, the compromise, the calculated risk. Seen in this light, Goetz's abrupt killing of the Chef needs no exoneration (though it led many critics into ' l'énorme erreur de croire que Goetz, [...], retournait au Mal'.) 40 The debunking of so-called 'absolute' standards ushers in the code of the useful and the necessary before the Good (not to be confused with the general good):

'Ou la morale est une faribole, ou c'est une totalité concrète qui réalise la synthèse du Bien et du Mal. Car le Bien sans le Mal, c'est l'Être parméni[^]dien, c'est-à-dire la Mort; et le Mal sans le Bien, c'est le Non-Être pur. [...] ' (Saint Genet, p.177).

C'est à la lumière de ce texte qu'il faut comprendre la signification du meurtre auquel Goetz se décide à la fin de la pièce et par lequel il commence la moralisation

pratique d'un monde où règne la violence et la lutte des
classes: [...] ⁴¹

It is surprising that Laraqe has called Goetz's first exercise of the leader's discipline '[un] meurtre inutile'. ⁴² Goetz's stabbing of le Chef is no less legitimate than his killing of Heinrich: after all, le Chef mutinies: 'Je crèverais plutôt [que de t'obéir]' (p.232). Goetz has to dispose of this man, not only to make an example of him and stamp his own authority upon the army, but also because such recalcitrance in an officer would be a terrible liability in conflict: of such stuff are traitors made - and Goetz should know. His execution of le Chef - for that is what it is - no less than the dispatch of Heinrich, is an act of self-defence. We could paraphrase Goetz's thinking thus: 'Since you would rather die than obey me, then die, for it is in the interests of the majority that I should be obeyed.' Here there is no taste for gratuitous brutality, nor any return to former days of evil-doing. On the contrary, this necessary act demonstrates solidarity with the men whose cause Goetz has finally espoused, but from whom he will remain forever separated by rank: 'Goetz est un aventurier dont l'échec ne fera jamais un militant, mais qui s'alliera au militant jusqu'à la mort.' ⁴³ The violence authorised by his position, and necessitated for discipline's sake, is the only possible channel of communication between Goetz and the men in his charge:

La solidarité mécanique des aventuriers et des militaires engendre le rêve éternel de réaliser par la destruction une union indissoluble: 'Le plus court chemin d'un coeur à l'autre, c'est l'épée ', dit le féodal Claudel. Et Malraux s'exprime à peu près dans les mêmes termes. Puisque la mort qu'ils donnent unit des frères d'armes à l'ennemi plus étroitement que la camaraderie militaire ne fait entre eux, chacun nourrit en secret le désir de tourner ses armes contre les autres. 44

For Goetz, this 'secret desire' not only could, but may have to be realised in the line of his duty as leader: 'Allons, Nasty, je serai bourreau et boucher. [...] Je leur ferai horreur puisque je n'ai pas d'autre manière de les aimer, [...], je resterai seul [...], puisque je n'ai pas d'autre manière d'être avec tous. ' (p.233) It is not, I think, paradoxical to argue that Goetz's taking of the Chef's life is an assertion of the value of life: the group's right to life is defended, and a moral principle is upheld in its practical entailment:

Par la souveraineté, le groupe s'aliène à un seul homme pour éviter de s'aliéner à l'ensemble matériel et humain; chacun éprouve, en effet, son aliénation comme vie (comme vie d'un Autre à travers sa propre vie), au lieu de l'éprouver comme une mort (comme réification de toutes ses relations). 45

Goetz's execution of le Chef signifies a personal and public triumph of Life over Death.

Lastly, let us note that Goetz's final act differs from those of previous heroes in that it is a beginning, not an end: 'il commence la moralisation pratique d'un monde', writes Contat, and the operative word is 'commence'.⁴⁶ Goetz himself stresses this aspect: 'Voilà le règne de l'homme qui commence. Eau début.' (p.233) In one sense, the death of Heinrich was a conclusion: 'La comédie du Bien s'est terminée' (p.223). As such, it is comparable to Hugo's assassination of Hoederer and his subsequent suicide, to Creste's matricide, and to the execution of the resisters in Morts sans sépulture: in each of these cases the death, or the act producing it, appeared as a wall, an end in itself, a terminus ad quem. But, as we have seen, the killing of Heinrich is also prospective, pregnant, promissory of a future, a means to an end, a terminus a quo. In killing the Chef, Goetz at once enacts and projects himself into the future; and he is alone among Sartre's heroes so to launch himself into the future he is offered, with all its imponderable risks and insoluble contradictions: 'J'ai fait faire à Goetz ce que je ne pouvais pas faire.'⁴⁷

What does Goetz's future hold? 'HILDA, riant : Dans un an , voyons, nous serons tous morts.' (p.230) It may seem perverse to call such a prospect 'life-affirming'. But Hilda is only stating a real possibility, and it is precisely in order to make that possibility less probable that Goetz finally assumes command. No doubt the future

holds violence and death: but death is there and then; life is here and now. If Goetz is ready to take life and risk his own, it is because life is that precious possession whose true worth can only be measured when we are prepared to lose it in order to save it. 48

Creste shouldered the burden of his past, but could not take his eyes off it; the resisters died having chosen life retro- rather than pro-spectively; Hugo, given the option of a future, opted out; Bariona, it is true, dared to hope: but the source of his strength was God's birth, whereas Goetz survives God's death. In short, Goetz alone embraces Life in its solitary fullness, undertaking to defend it to the death.

Goetz embodies the total ethical experience. He traverses every phase of existential death, only just stopping short of death itself. Then the "dead" man kills, and "dies", only to revive, vibrant with life, and ready to commit his freedom in a future-oriented cause. So complete is the life/death dialectic in Le Diable et le bon Dieu that it can be seen to comprehend and transcend all Sartre's previous statements in the theatre, and indeed to illustrate, as Simone de Beauvoir tells us, 'toute son évolution idéologique. [...]

le chemin parcouru par Sartre de l'attitude anarchiste à l'engagement.' 49

Chapter 9Kean

Pour nous l'image représente un certain type de conscience absolument indépendant du type perceptif et, corrélativement, un type d'existence sui generis pour ses objets.

L'Imaginaire, p.183

Mais rappelez-vous donc que l'acteur ne laisse rien après lui, qu'il ne vit que pendant sa vie, que sa mémoire s'en va avec la génération à laquelle il appartient, et qu'il tombe du jour dans la nuit ... du trône dans le néant ...

Alexandre Dumas, Kean, ou Désordre et génie, Act II, scene 4.

I must be gone and live, or stay and die.

William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, Act III, scene 5
(Romeo).

Kean is arguably the most untypical of Sartre's plays. It is an adaptation, though not from classical sources like Les Mouches and Les Troyennes. It improves upon the original Romantic melodrama of Alexandre Dumas whereas the plays taken from Antiquity have lost much of the theatricality of their models by Sophocles and Euripides.¹ Kean is a comedy revealing a humour, a charm, and a whimsicality one would not have expected from the author of Les Mouches, Huis clos, or Morts sans sépulture.² It is set in a time and place - Georgian England - neither immediate nor remote, and deals with no sinister political or social events. The hero has no political aspirations and is not devoted to any grand cause. Physical violence is notable by its absence (though there is some in Dumas), and the death of the body, whether as threat or event, does not figure. This silence on the literal level of the life/death dialogue makes Kean unique in Sartre's theatre, and ideal for the study of the metaphor of life and death which, in various forms, is ubiquitous in the play.³ Figures of speech evoking life and death range from the most banal of amorous clichés, to highly charged expressions of existential identity. If Sartre owes many of the former to Dumas, the latter are decidedly his own. It is with this Sartrean metaphorical language of existence that I shall be chiefly concerned in this chapter.⁴

Myth and Situation.

According to Lorris: ' L'oeuvre précédente de Sartre était en partie

une présentation de l'aspect théâtral de la vie: gestes histrioniques, attitudes héroïques. Avec Kean, il forge directement le mythe de l'acteur.' ⁵ What is the 'myth of the actor' ? And how - if Lorris is right - does that connect with Sartre's avowed intention to treat, among others, the 'myth of death' in his plays?

' L'acteur', said Sartre in 1953, ' c'est l'opposé du comédien qui, lorsqu'il a fini de travailler, redevient un homme comme les autres, alors que l'acteur "se joue lui-même" à toutes les secondes'. ⁶ With this in mind we can easily assent to some of the epithets applied to Kean 'acteur', for example, 'illusion d'homme [...] mirage' (p.54), 'rien' (p.86). In ontological terms, the role-player and the existentially dead man are closely akin. Like the notorious 'garçon de café' of L'Être et le néant, Kean gives up his freedom in an all-absorbing self-projection into the imaginary: 'Je joue à être ce que je suis.' (p.86) This statement can be readily translated into the metaphor of life and death: 'sais-tu ce que je suis? La victime de Shakespeare: je me crève pour qu'il revive' (p.117). Death qua threat to existential life of the individual is deeply rooted in the person of the 'acteur' whose modus vivendi presupposes the death - or at least the suspension - of that essentially human attribute, free determination. Kean, 'acteur', is an illusion, a mirage, a phantasm: he is unreal. As a man, consequently, he is caught in a life and death struggle for identity: 'Mais pourquoi ne suis-je rien? ' (p.82) Kean re-poses Hamlet's ontological question: 'Être ou ne pas être.' (p.86) ⁷

Hamlet's question is about Being and, strictly speaking, it is rather being than life which the actor lacks. He is, after all, a dynamic person whose business is to breathe life into the dead, to give being to the non-existent. Certainly that is how Éléna sees him: '[les auteurs morts] se renouvellent chaque fois qu'ils sont joués par des acteurs nouveaux. [...] L'homme que j'ai vu hier était Hamlet en personne.' (p.43) And Kean does not disagree (apropos of Romeo): 'Voilà vingt ans que je l'empêche de mourir.' (p.73) The actor's dilemma is that his very act of creation brings his own existence into question: 'Est-ce qu'il y a un Kean?' (Éléna, p.43) Unlike God and the simple artisan, whose creations testify to their existence, the actor surrenders his life that the non-existent might live. To begin with, Romeo, Hamlet, Othello, are mere figments of the dramatist's imagination, characters whose essence - contrary to the natural order of things - precedes their existence. The actor's existence is absorbed into that essence: identity crisis is an occupational hazard for the animate 'analogon', 'existant à peine' (p.127) in Kean's own words. ⁸ This remark, and others Kean makes, echo the complaints of the youthful and anxious 'Philèbe', and like him, Kean's development is not so much a revival from the "dead" as a birth to "life" from a pre-natal limbo where existence is entirely problematical.

Like Creste too, Kean is the product and - to his way of thinking - the victim of an original situation which was none of his making. The bastard son of a madman and a near-prostitute, he is a natural social outcast whose wretched childhood created the will to escape, even, as a

last resort, by suicide. ⁹ Again like Oreste and Hugo, Kean is obsessed with his childhood, although more explicitly than either of his forebears; and he is more inclined to blame his early circumstances for his later dilemma. Kean's 'basse naissance', which he takes to be the cause of his ostracism, can aptly be expressed both as 'low birth' and 'no birth', so permitting a link between social identity and ontological security or existential identity: 'c'est un damné, fou d'orgueil, qui enrage de n'être pas né' (Amy, p.46). Kean also assimilates 'good birth' to 'birth' tout court: 'Toi [Éléna], tu es née fille; lui [le Prince de Galles], il est trop bien né; moi trop mal: [...] Je risquais la mort parce que je n'étais pas né.' (pp.173, 178)

Just as Oreste's wandering student life - his acquaintance with the world more as theory than fact - did nothing to cure his ante-natal non-existence - 'je vis en l'air [...] j'existe à peine', etc. - so Kean's work as an actor fails to advance him towards the "life" of which his lack of 'birth' has deprived him. He is uncertain where the fault for this fact lies, other than that it is not his. On the one hand he declares that 'on est acteur comme on est prince: de naissance' (p.90). On the other, he blames 'les hommes sérieux [qui] ont besoin d'illusion: entre deux maquignonnages, ils aiment à croire qu'on peut vivre et mourir pour autre chose que du fromage. Que font-ils? Ils prennent un enfant et le changent en trompe-l'oeil.' (p.79) This accusation is repeated when Kean is on the threshold of existential life: others are held responsible for the fact that he 'does not really exist, but only pretends' (p.150).

Clearly one's social beginnings and the historical moment determine one's life within very broad limits. As Oreste, Garcin, Hugo, Goetz, were oriented this or that way by their facticity, so Kean has had to come to terms with his humble and irregular origins. But equally clearly he typifies the bad faith of the determinist when he implies time and again that there was never an alternative to his flight into an imaginary world. No doubt it is true to some extent that the patronage of the Prince of Wales has made Kean public property 'jusque dans [sa] vie privée' (p.72). But it does not follow that he is only what others have made of him: 'Qui suis-je sinon celui que vous avez fait de moi?' (p.79) Public adulation or 'gloire' is not really a form of summary execution depriving the victim of all self-creativity, as Kean seems to believe: '[...] permission de [m']abattre à vue, sans sommation et comme un chien: la gloire, c'est ça' (p.89). Goetz's bad faith is comparable with Lizzie's and le Nègre's in that he presumes his impotence in the face of circumstances. What Kean has to learn is the lesson of Saint Genet, namely that we are neither altogether what we make of ourselves nor - even less - what others make of us, but rather a compound of the two: 'A présent, il faut vivre; au pilori, le cou dans un carcan, il faut encore vivre: nous ne sommes pas des mottes de terre glaise et l'important n'est pas ce qu'on fait de nous mais ce que nous faisons nous-même de ce qu'on a fait de nous.' 10

Kean's accession to "life" is, like Creste's, the realisation of the power to act, to alter circumstances, to create oneself in spite

of, and in collusion with, one's situation. Paradoxically, Kean's profession - which is the institutionalization and sacralization of the fictive - also provides, as Lorris has noted, the key to reality:

Kean est aliéné de naissance et par profession, exactement comme Goetz, mais sa profession est en même temps le moyen qu'il possède de se libérer de cette aliénation, car jouer c'est exprimer les réalités de la vie. ¹¹

By the practice of his art in his situation, Kean discovers the truth enunciated by Sartre in various essays, and implied in all his literary work, namely that 'le salut se fait sur cette terre, qu'il est de l'homme entier par l'homme entier et que l'art est une méditation de la vie, non de la mort'. ¹²

Act and Agent.

Kean himself makes the most succinct statement of his seeming inability to act, in a phrase not unfamiliar to other Sartrean heroes: 'les situations fausses, j'en vis' (p.55). ¹³ Taken literally, this is an accurate, if unusual, description of the actor's living. Taken in the light of Sartre's metaphor, though, it is a contradiction in terms: a "living" cannot be made from 'false situations', for they are the framework of gestures, and gestures - as we have seen in the

case of Goetz - belong in the ethical category of exis, along with Death. Only by a real act will Kean be enabled to break out of his imaginary world and become a "living" man.

The action of the play begins at a moment when Kean is beginning to be conscious of, and frustrated by, the gulf separating the actor (socially acceptable) from the man (socially non-existent). This is evident from a remark he makes in a letter to the Comte de Koefffeld: 'Malheureusement, l'on ne peut inviter le comédien sans l'homme' (p.50). Those who patronise him see only the former at the expense of the latter; for example, his 'parole d'honneur' is worthless: 'Madame de Koefffeld elle-même n'a pas su voir l'honneur de l'homme derrière les extravagances de l'acteur.' (p.57) The Prince de Galles, with an improbable psychoanalytic expertise, observes that Kean's sense of unreality is reaching a crisis: 'C'est nous, c'est nous que tu poursuis en Éléna, nous les vrais hommes. (Il rit.) C'est nous que tu veux posséder!' (p.31) Kean does not deny it: 'Et quand cela serait?' (p.31) His 'love' for Éléna is both the pretext and the catalyst of his aspiration to reality, the force of which he confides to the Prince:

Un trompe-l'oeil, une fantasmagorie, voilà ce qu'ils ont fait de Kean. [...] A part cela, rien. Ah! si: une gloire nationale. Mais à la condition que je ne m'avise pas d'exister pour de vrai. [...] Voilà vingt ans que je fais des gestes pour vous plaire; comprenez-vous que je puisse vouloir faire des actes? (p.79)

2: Kean

Since Kean's existence is imaginary, it is poignant that he should declare himself ready to give up his 'life' for Éléna (p.80). He has no 'life' to give, and there is a profound truth in the Prince's remark: 'pour te sauver il faudrait qu'elle veuille se perdre' (p.81). He is speaking in social terms, but in ontological terms too he is right: if Kean is to be saved by love it will have to be that of a woman ready to give her "life" for him - ('and greater love hath no man'). Anna is that woman, and it is her love, combined with Kean's anger at Éléna's infidelity, and his frustration with his pseudo-existence, which lead him to commit his vital act.

Kean's meeting with Anna, like Oreste's with Électre and Goetz's with Hilda, is both fortuitous and decisive, for it occurs at a critical moment. Kean is at the height of his disillusion and cynicism over his profession, and replies brutally to Anna's ingenuous ambition to act 'pour gagner ma vie' (p.90):

On ne joue pas pour gagner sa vie. On joue pour mentir, pour se mentir, pour être ce qu'on ne peut pas être parce qu'on en a assez d'être ce qu'on est. On joue pour ne pas se connaître et parce qu'on se connaît trop. On joue les héros parce qu'on est lâche et les saints parce qu'on est méchant; on joue les assassins parce qu'on meurt d'envie de tuer son prochain, on joue parce qu'on est menteur de naissance. (p.91)

Anna's innocence is the antidote to Kean's philosophic dyspepsia.

Their relationship, like Oreste's with Électre and Goetz's with Hilda, is one of mutual aid: Kean's skill will help Anna to act, her simplicity will put him in touch with reality. As Lorris notes, she is the only character fitted to do so: '[Anna] est la moins fondamentalement actrice de tous [les personnages], mais de par sa décision de faire du théâtre elle fournit, précisément, le modèle de l'individu dissociant l'être du paraître.' ¹⁴ Although Kean fears that Anna 'tombe mal' (p.92), in fact elle tombe à propos: at a time when he 'lives by grand sentiments but dies from women' - to translate his own pun (p.92) - Anna offers, though Kean does not yet know it, "life".

'Rester et mourir! C'est idiot! (Il rit.)' (p.96). When Kean scoffs at Romeo's fateful words he perhaps senses that they could apply to him: Kean, the star-crossed lover entombed within the four walls of his dressing-room. ¹⁵ At first he conceives of the way out as the way back, a return to his roots as a saltimbanco. Here he can be of real use to the troupe which will 'die of hunger' (p.99) without Kean's help. Here he can rediscover pride and self-respect, as well as more simple pleasures: 'J'ai bon vin, bonne table, crédit ouvert et inépuisable. Et puis j'ai des amis.' (p.101) Above all, in this company Kean can find anew a sense of reality, of being alive:

Des amis qui m'aiment à me faire oublier ... le monde entier.
 Pour eux, je suis un homme, comprends-tu, et ils le croient
 si fort qu'ils finiront par m'en persuader. Allons,

Salomon, viens te mettre à table, je change de vie. (p.101)

Encouraging as this return to basics may be, Kean is wrong to conceive of the satisfaction of the senses as the kind of life he needs: 'Savez-vous pourquoi je suis ici ? Pour boire et pour manger. Ça c'est vivre. J'ai le droit de vivre, non?' (p.103) Kean has indeed the right to life; but 'man does not live by bread alone'. With Anna's help he will gradually realise that he should seek rather the life of existential freedom than of the five senses. 16

Anna herself had, it appears, been close to death (p.104), and it was Kean who, unwittingly, gave her the will to live, first by fascinating her with his performance, then by seeming to need help: 'je me suis dit: cet homme a besoin d'une femme' (p.105). Whether Anna's story is strictly accurate is unimportant. (We know it is exaggerated in at least one particular - 'j'avais fauté' - later denied by Salomon.) For it is essentially true: she sees Kean as her mission, her raison d'être: 'Vous avez besoin d'une femme [...] : pour mettre un peu d'ordre dans ta vie. [...] l'ordre, ce serait ma partie; le génie ce serait la vôtre.' (p.106) Anna envisages a relationship of mutual help in a Baudelairean utopia: order and beauty, 'le calme, le luxe ... [...] la volupté ...' (p.106) Their relationship is almost spiritual, and metaphorically fraternal (giving another point of comparison with that of Oreste and Électre). 17

The confidence which Anna's devotion gives to Kean is soon evident in a contretemps he has with Lord Mewill, a sort of rehearsal

of the decisive attack on the Prince of Wales: Kean threatens and insults a noble before an audience who cheer him roundly - (the audience at Drury Lane will not be so enthusiastic). The importance of this experience is that he begins to feel the blood running in his veins; at the thought of punching Mewill on the nose, Kean exclaims: 'je me sens vivre' (p.108). But he does not have to resort to violence. With the skill of his tongue alone he easily gets the better of Mewill, scorning his contemptible deceit and defending the honour of his own name. So doing, Kean begins to emerge from his imaginary world, and is aptly applauded by the chant: 'Vive Monsieur Kean!' (p.111)

The fact that Anna is the source of this new vitality is stressed in the scene of the rehearsal (IV, 1). When Salomon tells her she puts 'trop de force' into her lines, she rejoins: 'C'est que j'en ai' (p.114). She rejects his suggestion that Desdemona was 'une victime, une martyre': 'Le martyre, c'est pour les laides: il faut bien leur laisser quelque chose.' (p.115) Equally, she scoffs at Mistress Macleish's method of playing the role:

SALOMON: [...] Eh bien, elle a toujours joué Desdémone en douceur; dès que le rideau se lève, vous croiriez qu'elle est morte.

ANNA: Cette vieille peau! Elle joue doucement parce qu'elle a peur de tomber en poussière. Je suis jeune, moi, j'ai du sang! (p.115)

Anna hopes in due course to transfuse, so to speak, her young blood to Kean, whose 'sister' she has become. This epithet did not escape Anna's notice, and it is significant for it is (according to Salomon) unusual, or even unique, in Kean's terminology. 18

By contrast with Anna's vibrant confidence, Kean's despondent vagaries in the following scene indicate the enormity of the task facing her. If Desdemona is Othello's victim, Kean is Shakespeare's: 'je me crève pour qu'il revive, le vieux vampire!' (p.117) His life seems near to ruin and he doubts whether 'a little order' will suffice, as Anna hopes, to salvage it. He contemplates rather some grand gesture, bringing about, as he puts it, 'order through nothingness':

[...] je foudrai le feu au théâtre! L'ordre par le vide: voilà mon affaire. Le feu au théâtre et Kean périra dans les flammes. Quelle apothéose! Bon Dieu, j'ai mal au crâne! (p.118)

There are both pathos and bathos in the moment when Kean's apocalyptic vision gives way to a crashing headache: the apotheosis which awaits him is more that of the clown than of the hero; his headache is a reminder of the banality of the real, in the context of which his demonstration of 'how one dies' (p.120) seems all the more absurd.

Hitherto, Kean's only point of contact with reality seemed to be his passion for Éléna, occasioning his one spontaneous outburst (pp. 74-75). In fact, the sincerity of this affection is brought into

question by the rapidity with which it subsequently evaporates.

Nevertheless, Lorris, for example, sees Kean's feelings for Éléna as an important stage on his way to authentic affection for Anna:

L'avantage de Kean sur les autres héros sartriens est que, sous son apparence d'acteur, il peut obtenir que sa souffrance soit admise par autrui. De plus, il la vit: l'amour de Kean pour Éléna est réel, 'vécu', et, comme tel, 'indisable' autrement que par personne interposée; [...] 19

To what extent this is so is shown in IV, 5, a scene of amorous despit which Sartre has greatly expanded from Dumas's IV, 4, and sharpened up by having Éléna catch Kean in what appears to be flagrante delicto with Anna (but is, in fact, the last Act of Othello). In the ensuing dialogue the terminology of life and death, prominent in exchanges between Kean and Anna, is muted and employed in the idiom of the romantic cliché (see pages 121-23).²⁰ The one, admittedly ambiguous, exception is this ultimatum of Kean's: 'Savez-vous que je me suis mis tout entier dans mon amour: il faut qu'il réussisse ou que je crève.' (p.127) For Kean to make Éléna thus answerable for his potential 'death' is less hysterical than it may at first seem: eventually it is her flirtation with the Prince of Wales which provokes the "suicide" of the mythical Kean and precipitates the birth of the real man.

However, Kean is able to rise to Éléna's challenge thanks only to

the courage which Anna gives him. When he decides that he must not go on stage with Anna, if he is to save his passion with Éléna, Anna reminds him that he must keep his word to Old Bob's troupe (p.139) for whom it has value whereas, we recall, it is meaningless for his noble patrons. For the companions of his youth, with whom alone he experiences a sense of reality, Kean was and is a man. Implicitly reminded of the fact by Anna, he is easily persuaded to go on stage after all. When Kean calls for his sword, he does so in the first person: 'Avec quoi veux-tu que je me tue?' (p.139, my emphasis). This is apt, for it is he, rather than Desdemona or Othello, who will "die" before the audience. 21

Life and death, and their incompatibility, are the leitmotifs of Othello's address to the sleeping Desdemona:

Si la mort pouvait te prendre toute vive et te garder chaude et blanche comme le sommeil, je t'aurais tuée pour mieux t'aimer. [...] (Il s'approche du flambeau.) [...] (Il souffle.) Morte! Hélas, toi, je pourrais te rallumer si j'en avais envie. Mais l'autre flamme, celle qui tiédit sa tendre chair, si je l'éteins, c'est fini. (pp.141-42)

One cannot be at once living and dead: this is the lesson Kean has gradually been learning. As the dialogue proceeds, wandering at times wildly from Shakespeare's text, the theme of life and death recurs insistently: Othello threatens repeatedly to kill his

unfaithful wife, she swears her innocence upon her life. In terms of Sartre's metaphor, it is Kean who is striving for "life", and Anna inadvertently assists his struggle by stumbling over her lines, so breaking the theatrical illusion and disclosing the real elements of the situation, namely: while Kean (as Othello) is acting out his jealous anger towards Anna (as Desdemona), that rage is in fact directed towards the flirtatious couple - Éléna and the Prince of Wales - in a prominent loge. Kean's threat: 'Quand on m'offense, je tue' (p.147), is delivered 'tourné vers la loge', and marks his final break with the character of Othello. Pretence is put away, but ambiguity remains: who will be killed? Sartre has not taken this line from either Dumas or Shakespeare, and its pathos and ambivalence - which are surely intended - are heightened by the context of Anna's ridiculous efforts to bring Kean back into the fictional framework - (she goes so far as to offer him the pillow!).

The killing which ensues is not that of Desdemona by Othello but rather, as Gore has noted, Kean's 'suicide as an actor'.²² To begin with, though, it might be an attempt at actual suicide:

Vous avez payé pour voir du sang et vous voulez voir du sang: c'est ça? Du sang de poulet, bien entendu. Qu'est-ce que vous diriez si je vous montrais du sang d'homme? (Il avance vers la loge en essayant de dégainer; le pommeau de l'épée lui reste dans la main avec un minuscule tronçon de lame.
[...]) (p.148)

Whether Kean intends to kill himself, or merely inflict a wound à la Goetz, is not clear. However, it is apposite that his theatrical gesture should be thwarted by the very theatricality of the prop; the sword for which he had impatiently called could never serve to kill or wound: it is a toy belonging in the realm of fantasy, like Kean himself.

Though Kean has quit the role of Othello, he does not instantaneously enter the real world. Indeed, he is at first simply the more conscious of his non-existence: 'Prince de Galles, tu as de la chance; si j'étais vrai tu n'en mènerais pas large.' (p.149) And the more Kean tries to express Othello's anger on his own account, the less articulate, and so the less convincing, he becomes:

(Se frappant la poitrine.) Cet homme n'est pas dangereux. C'est à tort qu'on prenait Othello pour un grand cocu royal. Je suis un co... co... un... co... co...mique. (Rires. Au Prince de Galles.) Eh bien, Monseigneur, je vous l'avais prèdit: pour une fois qu'il me prend une vraie colère, c'est l'emboîtement. (p.149)

Kean is certainly genuinely angry, but his anger is not the same as Othello's - jealousy is the least part of it. Only when he rounds on the audience does he vent his true grievance and, at the same time, rediscover his momentarily lost fluency:

Je vous connais tous, mais c'est la première fois que je vous vois ces gueules d'assassins. [...] Vous veniez ici chaque soir [...], mais dites donc: qui applaudissiez-vous? [...]

'Notre grand Kean, notre cher Kean, notre Kean national.' Eh bien le voilà, votre Kean! (Il tire un mouchoir de sa poche et se frotte le visage. Des traces livides apparaissent.)

Oui, voilà l'homme. Regardez-le. Vous n'applaudissez pas? (Sifflets.) C'est curieux, tout de même: vous n'aimez que ce qui est faux. [...] Kean est mort en bas âge. (Rires.)

Taisez-vous donc, assassins, c'est vous qui l'avez tué! [...]

(Silence effrayé du public.) Voilà! C'est parfait: du calme, un silence de mort. [...]: il n'y a personne en scène. Personne. [...]: je n'existe pas vraiment, je fais semblant. (pp.149-50)

The vituperative power and dynamic delivery of this speech are both considerable, and that is as it should be, for Kean here does a deed whose antecedents are violent acts of murder: his "suicide" is the moral and existential equivalent of Oreste's matricide, Hugo's parricide - (Hoederer: 'father') - and Goetz's fratricide - (Heinrich: 'brother'). Lorris writes:

Ce tableau est l'instant de vérité de toute pièce sartrienne: les insultes que le comédien adresse au Prince correspondent au crime d'Oreste, à la révolte tardive de Lizzie; Kean y

risque sa carrière et sa liberté, sa fausse liberté. 23

In fact there is more certainty than risk in Kean's assault on his public. Having affirmed, publicly, the nothingness of Kean and held his audience to blame for the destruction of the man and the creation of the phantasm, the illusion is irrevocably smashed and there can be no return into the imaginary as Kean supposes (p.150). His relations with the Other are placed on a new and more realistic footing (as were Oreste's, Hugo's, Goetz's after their apotheoses): like his forebears, he has to learn a new way of dealing with Autrui, and Autrui with him. Just as Genet seized the 'murder weapon' of 'les justes' - language - and used it against them in his poetry, so Kean has confounded illusion and reality to the point where his audience - who, as it were, bring the actor into being - can never again treat him as the translucent figure through whom Shakespeare's heroes become visible: he has begun to take on the opacity of a real man.

Whether Kean's "suicide" should be considered a gesture or an act depends upon his manner of assuming its consequences. The Prince of Wales, predictably, congratulates him on an admirable performance (p.151). Lorris, less predictably, is not much more generous. 24

It seems to me that Kean almost repeats Goetz's mistake of passing from one imaginary identity to another - that of M. Edmond in this case - but is saved just in time by the intervention of the life-proponent, Anna.

The morning after his outburst, Kean is clearly delighted at what

he has done: a new name symbolises a new start in life, and the prospect of being sent to prison indicates that at last he is being taken seriously: ' S'ils me mettent en prison, c'est qu'ils me tiennent pour un homme. Je préfère ça. ' (p.155) (Compare Goetz's pleasure at the thought of being executed by the peasant army.) He feels his days as Hamlet - prevaricating, impotent - are over, and those of Fortinbras - decisive, effectual - have begun: ' C'est vrai, c'est vrai que je suis un homme fini. ' (p.157) There is a deliberate double meaning in this utterance: Kean's career is over, Kean is 'finished'; and his successor, M. Edmond, is a 'finite' man, that is, an ordinary human being such as his illusory parent could never have been.

But there is something disturbing in Kean's comparison of his new self with another fictional character. He says of Fortinbras and M. Edmond: '[ils] sont de la même espèce: ils sont ce qu'ils sont et disent ce qui est' (p.156). Only the en-soi - the dead - 'is what it is'. If this is the result of Kean's revolt then it was, as Lorris says, no act but a gesture in the same class as Goetz's fake conversion. Kean is fortunate that Salomon draws his attention to the renewed posturing: 'Tu as raison, parbleu: je voulais faire un geste.' (p.157) Kean implies that this lapse was inevitable, so conditioned is he to strike attitudes 'pour toutes les heures, pour toutes les saisons, pour tous les âges de la vie' (p.157). He resolves to strive against this inbred tendency, confident that the actor's gestures are dead: 'Plus morts que des branches mortes: je les ai tous tués d'un coup, hier soir.' (p.157) It is ironic that the act by which Kean

slew the gestures of the imaginary man should itself be suspect as a gesture. If he continues to play-act, albeit a new role, he cannot be said to have acted. His dilemma is that acting is all he knows: it is, literally, his life. He decides that henceforth his skill must be employed, paradoxically, in the acquisition of the natural: 'Il faut être simple.' (p.157) Paradoxically again, to be 'simple' will be 'hard': 'Ah! cabotin, tu as la vie dure.' (p.157) But at least he has "life".

Like previous heroes, Kean finds the question: 'Act or gesture?', exceedingly difficult to answer. Hugo, we recall, had pondered it for two years in prison without reaching any conclusion. He compared the shooting of Hoederer with the motion of trigger-pulling performed by an actor on stage and wondered what distinguished the former from the latter; could they both be acts without agents: 'Moi, là-dedans, qu'est-ce que je deviens?'²⁵ The problem is more acute for Kean, a professional actor whose deed, unlike Hugo's, has left no tangible trace: there is no corpse, no right to vindicate, no reputation to rehabilitate, no cause to die for. Kean's deliberations on the subject with Salomon echo Hugo's with Olga, but are perhaps still more bewildering and unsatisfactory.

'Était-ce un geste ou un acte?' (p.158), asks Kean. The question is the right one, but his method of inquiry is suspect inasmuch as he appears to have a prejudice in favour of 'geste', as though he were afraid of the terrible consequences of 'acte'. 'Je me prenais pour Othello' (p.158) - this relieves him of the responsibility for his insults to the Prince perhaps, but it does not begin to account for the

attack on the audience which I quoted above. On the other hand, Kean's eruption cannot be regarded as an act just because 'il a ruiné ma vie' (p.158), as he puts it. Garcin, Hugo, Goetz, all learnt that grave consequences do not suffice to make acts and agents. Motives, intention, volition - the will, above all, to assume the consequences, whatever they are - these too have to be considered. Surely an act cannot be committed inadvertently?

Est-ce que je l'ai voulu, ce crime? ou l'ai-je rêvé? Ai-je voulu risquer ma fortune et ma vie? [...] Allons, c'était un suicide pour rire. Mais on avait chargé le pistolet et le grand Kean s'est tué pour de bon! (p.158)

This initial conclusion is a compromise: Kean is saying that he performed a gesture which accidentally got out of hand and became, by virtue of its gravity, an act. This surely will not do.

To Kean's credit, he does not let the matter rest there. In order, it appears, to contradict Salomon who is too ready to assent to Kean's speculative solutions, he converts his regret - 'si seulement je pouvais revenir en arrière' (p.158) - into a tardy assumption of total responsibility: 'Si je pouvais revenir en arrière, ce serait pour refaire sciemment ce que j'ai fait à l'aveuglette'. (p.158) He wishes now that he had grasped the full significance of the event - "suicide" and "rebirth" - at the time of its happening:

Si l'on doit se perdre, que ce soit du moins au grand jour.
Moi j'ai vécu et je suis mort dans les ténèbres. Mais quand
donc fera-t-il jour? (Un temps.) Tu vois, je suis passé
d'un monde à l'autre; me voici du côté des souffleurs et des
marchands de fromage: et je n'y vois pas plus clair. (pp.158-59)

Like any new-born, Kean has first to grope and stumble his way in the
real world. The process of normalization may be long, and his sight
dim, but he can at least look forward to the day when, pride and shame
set aside, he will be the typical Sartrean hero: 'n'importe qui' (p.159).

Kean wonders, though, if some vestige of his former self does not
remain in the form of his passion for Éléna: 'Voilà tout ce qui me
reste de Kean: une passion folle et sans espoir.' (pp.159-60) The folly
and hopelessness of that passion are Kean's best safeguards against it.
But for him to be practically aware of them, the influence of Anna -
bringer of order and "life" - is indispensable. Her sudden announce-
ment of her intended departure from England prompts a spontaneous gasp
of shock from Kean - 'Ah! tu ...' (p.161) - which betrays the affection
he feels for her under his feigned indifference. Further analysis of
his 'geste/acte' - a post-mortem, we could say - ensues, during which
the ambiguous 'homme fini' is repeated and reinforced by Kean's
unwitting pun: 'l'improvisation de la fin' (p.161) - 'end' of scene
and 'end' of Kean. Anna, probing for the truth, is puzzled by Kean's
'envie de tout casser' (p.161). In an attempt to clarify his meaning,
Kean compares his former life to a dream from which he has awakened:

Tu te pinces et tu te réveilles: hier soir je me suis pincé.
Un joli suicide, non? La gloire et l'amour, c'étaient des
boniments, mais la prison, crois-moi, ce sera du vrai. (pp.161-62)

Seductive as this line of thought is, it is still the wrong one. Hugo learnt that being really punished for what one has done does not make one's deed any more an 'act' than it would have been if committed with impunity. Indeed, Oreste's experience tends rather to indicate the contrary. The truth about reality is that it is mundane, fortuitous, contingent: consequences do not flow from events with a narrative logic, nor will they be forced. Neither of them would have suspected, for example, that Anna's début might be spotted and approved by a correspondent of the New York Theatre (so she says). The disparity between actual reality, and the still essentially theatrical conception Kean has of reality, is neatly brought out by their juxtaposition in this phrase: 'Il a eu le toupet de trouver bonne pendant que j'agonisais sur la scène! Cet homme n'a pas de coeur.' (p.162) This reveals that he is still inclined to regard his 'suicide' as a performance for whose serious results he is not responsible. He therefore blames them on Anna, accusing her twice of having ruined his life 'par caprice' (p.164), and of abandoning him to his fate. This is not only unjust but also ironical, for Anna is both his "life" and his fate. Kean's obvious concern for her future (p.162) belies his insistence that he 'has no room for her in his life' (p.163), and presages his discovery of his true feelings.

The artificiality of his feelings for Éléna - and of hers for him - becomes apparent in their final interview (V,6), a much expanded revision of the same scene in Dumas. Sartre's stage direction draws attention to Kean's posturing: 'Kean prend une glace et change de visage en s'y regardant.' (p.164) In the dialogue which follows, the idiom of life and death is trivialised as before, occurring on the level of cliché:

ÉLÉNA: Et mon mari?
KEAN: Je m'incline devant sa douleur future.
ÉLÉNA: Il en mourra.
KEAN: Si ce n'est lui, ce sera moi. Autant sauver le plus jeune.
ÉLÉNA: Et plus tard, quand nous aurons retrouvé la raison, comment supporterez-vous d'avoir causé sa mort?
KEAN: Allégrement.
ÉLÉNA: Et s'il vous tuait d'abord?
KEAN: Hypothèse improbable.
ÉLÉNA: Ah! qu'en savez-vous?
KEAN: Trop myope. (p.166)

The bantering manner of this exchange, and the facetiousness of Kean's replies, both suggest that he is hardly taking the scene seriously. As Éléna's performance becomes more histrionic and her speech more theatrical and extravagant - talk of infanticide, the ruination of her

own life - so Kean is momentarily reminded of the stage, and in particular of the typical dialogue of lovers, and the pretence of their relationship is suddenly clear:

KEAN: [...] Eh! parbleu, Madame, vous attendiez
 la réplique.
ÉLÉNA: Comment osez-vous ...?
KEAN: Eh! Je n'ose rien: je ne joue plus, voilà tout.
 Pouce! Rideau! (pp.167-68)

When Kean stops playing - and play-acting - he can begin to live. The decision taken here, therefore, completes the 'suicide' of the night before.

It is ironic that Éléna should try to wound Kean with the barb: 'J'avais eu la folie de vous prendre pour un homme et ce n'est pas votre faute si vous n'êtes qu'un acteur.' (p.169) Ironical, because Kean has never been nearer to manhood than at this moment as he resists Éléna's temptation to go on playing a part. And it is fitting that his first act as a man should be to expose the imposture of his interlocutor, which he does by offering her a life of obscurity at his side in order to test the sincerity of her 'love' - a test which she fails: 'Vous voyez bien que c'était de la comédie.' (p.170) Éléna objects that 'le mot est un peu dur', and prefers 'la coquetterie' (p.171). Nevertheless, it is the mot juste, as Kean insists in the admirable existential psychoanalysis which his newfound lucidity empowers him to

make: Countess, Prince and Actor were all in the same existential situation:

Beauté, royauté, génie: un seul et même mirage. [...]
 Nous vivons tous trois de l'amour des autres et nous sommes
 tous trois incapables d'aimer. [...] Trois reflets:
 chacun des trois croit à la vérité des deux autres: voilà la
 comédie. (p.173)

Éléna points out that if they had been characters in Shakespeare they would all have been dead long ago, the victims, respectively, of duel, murder, and suicide. But as it is, the only one to have "died" is Kean:

ÉLÉNA: Je n'oublierai jamais qu'il s'est tué pour moi.
 KEAN: Pour vous? Hum!
 ÉLÉNA: Chut! chut! C'est pour moi qu'il s'est tué.
 D'ailleurs, qu'en savez-vous, bijoutier, et qu'est-ce
 que vous pouvez comprendre à l'amour?
 KEAN: C'est que j'ai recueilli son dernier soupir.
 ÉLÉNA: Et qu'a-t-il dit avant de mourir?
 KEAN (gentiment): Eh bien, qu'il mourait pour vous. [...]
 ÉLÉNA: [...] Que dois-je souhaiter à M. Edmond? D'être
 passionnément aimé?
 KEAN: [...] Souhaite-moi plutôt d'aimer, ça me changera. (p.174)

In fact, of course, Kean's "suicide" was for Kean, not for Éléna, but his generosity is encouraging - as indeed, and more so, is his desire to love rather than to be loved, i.e., to become active subject after all these years as passive object.

Having established the "death" of Kean to Éléna, he has now to do the same for her husband. This is not so easy, for the Count has a pedestrian intellect and for him the complexities of ontological insecurity are beyond comprehension. Kean patiently tries to explain his metamorphosis to Koefeld, using as well as the analogy of 'birth', that of 'coming-of-age', both of which are familiar from the discussion of Oreste's enlightenment:

Monsieur, c'est inutile: je ne peux pas me battre avec vous.
Ce sont les enfants qui se battent. Et les nobles. Et je
me suis aperçu cette nuit que je n'étais plus des uns et que
je ne serai jamais des autres. Bien sûr, j'ai donné quelques
coups d'épée, dans ma vie: mais c'était encore de la comédie.
Je risquais la mort parce que je n'étais pas né. [...]
Mais la comédie est finie: Monsieur Edmond ne se battra pas.
(p.178)

Understandably, the Count is unappeased, and his insistence on knowing the identity of Kean's veiled visitor gives Anna the ideal opportunity to save Kean quite literally.

To do so, she is ready to sully her spotless reputation, and it is

only when Kean sees her selflessness that he appreciates her love for him. He responds to that love by choosing exile with Anna and Salomon in preference to the vaingloriousness of duels and prison walls. Kean's realisation that these two are 'mes deux seuls, mes deux vrais amis!' (p.185), signals the abandonment of the last trace of role-playing: M. Edmond, obscure Dutch jeweller, remains the figment he was, and Kean the man - Comédien, not acteur - is "born" at last. Rightly, Kean has the last word, breaking the theatrical illusion by drawing attention to it, and so opening the perspective on reality:

LE PRINCE [...]: Et vous, Monsieur Kean, vous êtes un ingrat!

KEAN (allant vers lui): Ah, Monseigneur, le beau mot de théâtre. Ce sera si vous voulez bien le mot de la fin. (p.185) 26

In Romeo's phrase, Kean elects to 'be gone and live', and the refrain of Hamlet falls silent. 27

Sartre's Kean is a character haunted by the dead, chief among whom is the historical Edmund Kean. As such, he feels a powerful impulse to discover a vitality which is not artificial. He eventually does so in an accession to "life" which, despite the play's tone of facetiousness, is surely no less willed and admired by Sartre than that of the more solemn Bariona, Oreste, or Goetz. I see Kean, therefore, as a new

mode of illustration rather than as a trivialisation of the life/death theme in Sartre's theatre. I would note though that Kean's individualism relates him more closely to Oreste than to Goetz, crucial differences being the presence of Anna and a realistic prospect of the future. So I discern a less exact correspondence between thematic and chronological progression than Lorris.²⁸ Nevertheless, Kean does precede a not dissimilar character whose own existential rebirth has, like Goetz's, a practical and political dimension absent from the futures of either Oreste or Kean. If Kean is a burlesque of Les Mouches, Nekrassov is a burlesque of Le Diable et le bon Dieu.

Nekrassov

L'envers de la transcendance: l'échappement. Je transcende
tout et tout ce que je fais m'échappe.

Cahiers pour une morale, p.57

It is possibly not inappropriate to ask whether the potentially lugubrious terms of our present theme are suited to the discussion of Nekrassov, a play which Sartre himself called a 'farceful satire'.¹ To speak of its hero as one has done of Bariona or Goetz, Creste or Hugo, might be to place an undue emphasis on the protagonist of a comedy intended to satirise 'la structure même de la société'.² Nevertheless, Nekrassov does lend itself to our thematic study on two counts: first, among the many Sartrean themes we find satirised in Nekrassov, is that of the conflict between life and death. The fact that it occurs ironically does not preclude its analysis, though it must affect the analyst's approach. Secondly, the strong family likeness which Georges bears to others of Sartre's heroes demands our attention, even if that resemblance seems at first unsuitable in the context.³ In any case, it will be both interesting and instructive to see how Sartre treats with levity the central question of his theatre which, hitherto, has hardly seemed the ideal comic source.⁴

Myth and Situation.

Sartre has said that in Nekrassov he sought to 'aborder la réalité sociale sans mythes'.⁵ Thus he chose to set the play in contemporary France in order to make his satirical intent absolutely clear.⁶ It does not follow that the myth of death, in the sense in which he understood the term 'myth', is absent.⁷ On the contrary, it is

present always in the ironic mode, the play opening somewhat unusually on an attempted suicide by the hero, thwarted by the intervention of two social misfits ('clochards') whose meditations upon life and death set the tone which prevails thereafter: it is comic, irreverent, facetious, ironic, and, above all, self-parodying.

That tone is reinforced by the entrance of Georges who berates the clochards for having rescued him in spite of himself, so violating his 'dernière volonté'.⁸ In an exchange of comic banter during which Sartre seems to satirise an aspect of his own theory of the act,⁹ his hero reveals some of his ruling prejudices, for example: 'C'est contre nature, le suicide! [...] Ton intérêt, c'était que je meure. [...], personne n'a jamais rendu service à personne. [...] Je suis fils de mes oeuvres!' etc., (pp.22,23,24,25). At the same time, he locates the myth of death firmly in the comic register by, for example, imputing absurdly malicious motives to the clochards: 'Votre suprême jouissance, c'est de faire manquer leur mort à ceux qui ont manqué leur vie' (p.26); by waxing nonsensically lyrico-philosophical: 'Ah! la vie est une partie de poker où la paire de sept bat le carré pointu' (p.26); or by juxtaposing a redundant commonplace concern with the vision of his own death: 'Que de temps perdu! Je devrais être mort depuis dix minutes.' (p.27) In addition, Georges argues that one should have 'raisons de vivre' not 'raisons de mourir' as the clochard assumes; he tries to persuade them to join him in a suicide pact: 'à trois, la mort devient une partie de plaisir' (p.29). And he responds to their innocent common-sense - 'On vit ... C'est comme ça. [...]

Mais pourquoi mourir?' (p.29) - with an expatiation on the human condition whose opening metaphor has obviously been chosen with an eye to the comic effect it would have on a theatre audience:

La vie, c'est une panique dans un théâtre en feu. Tout le monde cherche la sortie, personne ne la trouve, tout le monde cogne sur tout le monde. Malheur à ceux qui tombent: ils sont piétinés sur-le-champ. [...] Sautons, camarades: l'unique différence entre l'homme et la bête, c'est qu'il peut se donner la mort et qu'elle ne le peut pas. (Il essaie d'entraîner le clochard.) (p.29)

After this diatribe, Sartre crowns the comic action of this fast and furious scene by allowing Georges to make a rapid and total volte-face: he decides against suicide and becomes tenacious of his life; at the same time, the clochards, afraid of being implicated when the police arrive, now begin to encourage him to jump back into the water from which they have just rescued him ... whereupon Valera accuses them of infanticide! 'Je suis votre enfant. [...] A vous de protéger le fils que vous avez mis au monde contre son gré!' (p.32) Reluctantly they play the roles of mother and father in his impromptu charade. But by the end of scene 3, it is the clochards who despair of life - for they must otherwise be fugitives - and hurl themselves into the river, only to be fished out in their turn by the police.

The flippant tone of the clochards' attitudes to life is later

echoed in the more macabre reflections of two different non-entities, Sibilot and Goblet, whose mediocrity seems to them a destiny:

SIBILOT: On s'aperçoit qu'on va bientôt mourir et que le provisoire était du définitif.

GOBLET: Nous mourrons comme nous avons vécu: en 1925. (p.119)

Sibilot's use of the exact terms in which Sartre at one point discusses death in L'Être et le néant hints again at a deliberate self-parody.¹⁰

It seems to me self-evident that the inaptness and inconsistency of Georges's reflections; the anomalous logicality and banality of the clochards; and the maudlin self-pity of Sibilot and Goblet's, are all intended to locate the life/death theme firmly in the comic register. It is sustained there throughout, partly by isolated moments of pseudo-danger - Mouton's assassination attempt upon Georges (p.249), Demidoff's misinterpretation of Valera's attempted escape as attempted suicide (p.261)¹¹ - but mainly by the pervasive presence of the newspaper's sensationalist policy. For the president of Soir à Paris, death is the very essence of news (pp.70-73), just as, in the popular mind, it is the essence of tragedy. If there are not enough deaths in natural disasters, wars, or crimes, then the paper must do its part to make its readers go in fear of their lives: 'Donnez-nous peur de vivre plus encore que de mourir' (p.73), Mouton instructs Palotin. A climate of terror must be created, the myth of death diffused through the myth-making machine which the propagandist newspaper is. For

Mouton, it is a measure of the paper's ineffectiveness that 90% of the public, according to a recent survey, 'croient qu'ils mourront dans leurs lits, comme au moyen âge!' (p.71) Later, when depression sets in among the conseil d'administration, the morning after the party, the paper's failure to generate widespread alarm is taken to indicate the death throes of a great institution:

CHARIVET [...] Nous mourrons dans notre lit! [...]

BERGERAT: Il n'y a plus d'avenir. Demain, c'est l'exécution capitale: [...] (p.297)

Jules is called upon to give up his 'life' (i.e. his post) for his 'child' (i.e. the paper) since no less a sacrifice can save it. Frustration is vented in the cry: 'A mort, le Valera!' (p.302) Mouton designates Jules as the sacrificial lamb, and he goes, bitterly scorning Sibilot: 'Arrière, Judas! Va te pendre!' (p.306) This language in these mouths is preposterous, hysterical, ridiculous. We are far removed here from the metaphors of death used by Bariona, Oreste, or Goetz.

Not least, the myth of death intrudes into the action through the saga of the 'Futurs Fusillés', another of Valera's jokes, a total fabrication designed both to flatter his hosts - honoured to be thought worthy of execution when the Revolution comes - and to give himself some sort of credentials. But the threat posed by this list, like that of the 'perfectly ordinary suitcase', is entirely spurious and

imaginary; and those terms describe well the myth of death in the play as a whole. In each of Sartre's previous plays we have seen the myth of death embedded in the situation as a very real threat to the existential or physical life of the protagonists. But in Nekrassov, this familiar theme is satirised or ironised by the deliberate superficiality and flippancy of its treatment. As Lorris puts it: 'Dès la première scène, la pièce s'installe dans l'univers de la fantaisie grinçante.' ¹² The myth of death is ironic in that it is not what it appears to be; no threat is ever real: 'Sartre nous projette dans un univers où tout est possible; [...].' ¹³ This is right: everything is possible, but nothing is actual. Moreover, possibility takes the form here of the fantastic. The probability of a whole nation's being duped by a confidence trickster is as great (or small) as the trickster's committing suicide, being assassinated, or maturing into a committed political animal with a new lease of existential life. It is as unthinkable that Georges (or anyone) should be physically hurt as that the Keystone Cops should be wounded in the course of their duty. It is equally inconceivable that metaphysical questions of ontological identity or existential life should command much attention. In short, it seems to me that Sartre, by deliberately dismantling 'le mécanisme au moyen duquel on forge les mythes', ¹⁴ has so undercut the life/death theme that we can take seriously nothing which pertains to it.

The first effect achieved by an ironical treatment of this central theme is to falsify the situations of which it is normally a crucial element, namely the situations-limites of Sartre's dramatic universe.

As Lorris rightly points out, Sartre has added to the satire of his philosophy, a satire of 'son esthétique dramatique en créant des fausses mises en situation résultant d'une logique poussée aux confins de l'absurde'.¹⁵ Superficially, Nekrassov conforms to 'la formule du théâtre de situation. Trois personnages, Georges, Palotin, Sibilot, doivent inventer leur issue.'¹⁶ Sartre endorses this view, but with a subtle alteration: 'Ce sont les institutions, les structures qui déterminent les hommes. J'ai montré mes personnages victimes d'une situation plutôt que d'un caractère.'¹⁷ Up to a point, this is the familiar conception of Sartre's théâtre de situations. But the words 'déterminent' and 'victimes' bring a new emphasis. Hitherto, situations have always appeared escapable by resort to free action. It is implicit here that the author of Nekrassov may consider the achievement of Goetz unrepeatable.

In most of Sartre's plays the general situation is massive and overbearing, beyond the control of any single character, and such as to constrain and pressurise the protagonists into the making of life-changing decisions. Broadly speaking, it takes only three forms: (i) War and occupation (Bariona, Les Mouches, Morts sans sépulture, Les Troyennes); (ii) War and revolution (Les Mains sales, le Diable et le bon Dieu); (iii) the exertion of the violence inherent in the social hierarchy (La Putain respectueuse, Kean).¹⁸ Nekrassov fits none of these categories except, as we might expect, ironically: the War is Cold War, i.e. no war; the Revolution is equally non-existent, a figment of the right-wing imagination; the downward violence of the

social pyramid is reversed as men of power - politicians, policemen, journalists - become the victims of a vagabond. The ideological climate is capitalistic, the prevailing politics right-wing, and the concomitant economic forces combine to prompt Mouton's demand that the paper's anti-communist stance be strengthened in a bid to boost flagging sales. The involvement of Georges and Sibilot is made possible only by the ludicrous coincidence of the former's taking refuge in the latter's apartment and persuading him, most improbably, to back a hare-brained scheme of mutual aid. As Véronique later observes, the situation gets out of hand and threatens, like some Frankenstein's monster, to destroy its creators. The fact remains though that Palotin, Sibilot, and Georges de Valera are chiefly responsible for the invention of the particular situation from which they have to 'invent' their various ways out.

Above all, missing from these situations is the crucial element of the situation-limite, namely, the threat or possibility of death. Let us consider the dilemma of each of the protagonists in turn. Palotin has to choose between his livelihood and ... what? His integrity? But he has none, there is never any question of it: no danger of an existential death in this case. As for livelihood, it is not life itself, though in this looking-glass world - where people have reduced themselves to nothing more nor less than their social roles (e.g. politicians, policemen, journalists, etc.) - the loss of it is perhaps the only real harm which can befall a character. Nevertheless, given the dominant comic register of the play, Palotin's plight is more

likely to move us to laughter than to tears.

For Sibilot too, livelihood is at stake. He is quick to equate this with life itself, but we have no cause to suppose that he would enact his suicide threat (p.109); indeed, the atmosphere of fantasy and farce suggests that all such incogruous attempts are bound, like Valera's, to be thwarted. However, Sibilot does have something to lose, namely a naïve faith in humanity (p.79). When that humanistic creed is threatened, he is cast into a morbid despair: 'Véronique! Sais-tu ce qui est en train de mourir? L'Homme: [...] Ma vie n'a été qu'un long enterrement, [...] Crevons tous ensemble et vive la guerre!' (pp.107,109) These sentiments echo the disillusionment of Heinrich, that he cannot be loyal to two conflicting causes, Man and the Paper. Yet his personal apocalypse has none of the tragic connotations of Heinrich's, his complaints none of Heinrich's poignancy, both because we think that his cherished beliefs about 'man' are delusions, and because we see no danger of his being physically hurt. Sibilot is a weak character: in moments of stress he faints (p.145); in a moment of intoxication he betrays Georges (p.268). It is right that he should become the victim of a situation which he reluctantly helped to create, and entirely in keeping with comic irony that he should come to an undeserved 'happy ending' as Soir à Paris's new editor. 19

As for Georges, it is in his original situation that he resembles Sartre's other heroes:

Sais-tu que j'ai porté longtemps du poison dans le chaton d'une bague? Quelle légèreté: j'étais mort d'avance, je planais au-dessus de l'entreprise humaine et je la considérais avec un détachement d'artiste. Et quelle fierté! Ma mort et ma naissance, j'aurai tout tiré de moi; fils de mes oeuvres, je suis mon propre parricide. (p.29)

Goetz's boasts echo through this speech. And again:

J'ai donc le temps de me présenter: orphelin de père et de mère, acculé depuis l'enfance à choisir entre le génie ou la mort, je n'ai pas eu de mérite à choisir le génie. Je suis génial, Monsieur, comme vous êtes honnête. (p.116)

Here the strongest reminiscence is of Kean, but the familiar characteristics apply more widely: the social pariah, cast out as a child, gratuitous, thrown back on his own resources, proudly disdaining the crowd while at the same time becoming as others see him; in thrall to a deterministic view of human behaviour, despite a contradictory claim to be the author of his own destiny. Kean and Goetz, and their prototype Genet, bear all these traits, which are in some part shared by earlier heroes too (e.g. Hugo, Lizzie, Garcin, Oreste). Above all, perhaps, Sartre's favourite metaphorical idiom - existential choice couched in terms of life and death - has a very familiar ring. If we were to take any of this half as seriously as we do in the case of,

say, Goetz, Oreste, or even Kean, Valera would indeed be an incongruous hero for a comedy, and Lorris would be right to speak of 'rupture de ton', if not of 'tragi-comédie'. 20

However, as I have tried to show, everything in atmosphere, action, and dialogue indicates that we should smile at Georges de Valera's situation. Consider his attempted suicide. We should infer that his present situation is so intolerable that he would exchange it for the non-situation (or situation-limite par excellence) of death. Be that as it may, the fact, and the manner, of Valera's failure are the first and most explicit indications of his inability to control the situations which he appears to create. He cannot inflict death upon himself, even when it seems to figure as an option in his dilemma, perhaps because his conception of it, like everything else he has to do with, is so trivial: 'La mort ou cinq ans de taule? Voilà la question.' (p.31) This dilemma is unlikely to arouse our pity. Why should five years imprisonment - no doubt merited - seem a fate worse than death? Valera's plight pales into insignificance contrasted with those facing Bariona, Hugo, or Goetz. It is probable that Sartre has here appended Hamlet's famous phrase - 'that is the question' - in order to heighten the bathos, the comic anticlimax of Valera's pseudo-situation-limite. 21

Fittingly, this crisis is resolved neither by prison nor by death, but by the implausibly successful ruse of Valera's genius.

Georges de Valera's successive situations are not only inherently false - the situations of comedy - but they are in addition falsified by other characters who always seem to exercise greater influence over

circumstances than he, despite his repeated claims to be 'fils de mes oeuvres'. When, for example, he finds himself alone with Véronique (III, 1) he remarks: 'C'est une situation fausse' (p.87). Things are not as they seem, nor are they ever for Georges de Valera:

Charmante soirée! Je dois la vie à un clochard qui a du goût pour les actes gratuits et la liberté à une révolutionnaire qui a le culte du genre humain: il faut que nous soyons dans la semaine de bonté! (Un temps.) Vous devez être contente: [...] Vous avez fait de moi un objet, le malheureux objet de votre philanthropie. (pp.99-100)

Even when Georges himself creates a new situation - by adopting the identity of Nekrassov - things soon get out of hand and he is once again the victim of circumstances which he purports to control:

'Rassure-moi, Sibilot: ce n'est pas moi qu'on aime, ce n'est pas moi qu'on déteste; je ne suis qu'une image?' (p.229) In the hands of the newspaper and the police, Georges becomes a means to the end of increased circulation, to the end of oppressing the working-class and reaffirming the status quo. And in all this he achieves none of the independence of spirit or autonomy of action to which he repeatedly and self-deludingly lays claim. The situation of Nekrassov is typical of farce in which the biter is bitten, the manipulator is manipulated, the subject is made the object.

If, as I have argued, the myth of death in Nekrassov is a parody

of itself, and the situations it permeates radically false, we may wonder whether it is reasonable to speak of the characters of this farce as 'agents', and of their deeds as 'acts'. I think we may, with the caveat that we are dealing in the ironic mode and should therefore be circumspect in our argumentation.

Act and Agent.

It is significant that the eponymous hero of this play does not, to all intents and purposes, exist. Sartre might have chosen any number of titles - for example, Valera, or Soir à Paris, to suggest only two possibilities - but he decided to name it for a character who takes life only through an impersonation, and who makes no appearance or intervention; of whom we know nothing, save his official function, and one caricaturish physical feature (he wears an eye-patch). A character, in short, whose identity is, to say the least, mysterious, and whose very being is effectively notional. As such, the real Nekrassov is less substantial than the dramatic heroes incarnated by Kean. We learn a great deal about Hamlet, for example, from all he says and does, irrespective of who interprets the role. Indeed, there is an important sense in which we know Hamlet in his totality, for his entire life is contained in Shakespeare's play. In considering the character of Nekrassov's impersonator, therefore, we should bear in mind that he operates at one remove further from reality than

the actor Kean: Georges de Valera has no script to follow, nor any known identity to emulate. He has to improvise at every moment, not just playing the part of Nekrassov, but inventing it as well:

GEORGES: Journaliste?

VÉRONIQUE: Voilà. Et vous?

GEORGES: Moi? Ce qui m'attirerait plutôt, ce sont les carrières artistiques.

VÉRONIQUE: Qu'est-ce que vous faites?

GEORGES: Dans la vie? Je parle. (pp.86-87)

Valera's constant creation entails a constant annihilation - of himself. But what and where is that 'self'? As a con-man he lives by his wits, making things and people - himself above all - appear as they are not. Moreover, he is so good at it that he has become a living legend, 'l'escroc genial' - compare Kean, 'la gloire nationale' - spoken of with awe and admiration by journalists and detectives alike. Kean suffered the same stigma of 'genius' and the accompanying anguish of mercurial identity, but he was lucid enough to perceive that his talent had become the obstacle to 'real' life as he had once known it in the 'troupe du vieux Bob'. Valera's stage, however, is, proverbially, 'all the world': play-acting is both the means of his livelihood and the only way of life he has ever known. He has never known the distinction between performance and life which Kean recalls from his days as a saltimbanco. From time to time, it is true, Valera's

'unreality' seems to pain him, but there is no evidence of a personal crisis on the scale of Kean's, nor of any striving for the social and psychological emancipation which Kean seeks. For Georges, the changing situation is always a battle of wits, always a game. More so than Kean, he is a professional falsifier, and his every deed can be classed as a gesture.

Valera's failed suicide stands as a sort of signpost at the very opening of the play, a monument to his ineffectuality in the field of action. He allows this would-be 'act' to be 'stolen' from him by the clochards. They first of all reduce it to a trivial spectacle by commentating upon it like radio announcers on some sporting event: 'Il se penche, il regarde la lune dans l'eau. L'eau coule, la lune ne coule pas. [...] Ça y est! Ça y est! (Bruit de plongeon.) Fièremment plongé, hein?' (p.17) Valera's death leap is manifested as a 'splashing sound' heard off. It belongs to the realm of the commonplace: 'C'est la saison à présent' (p.16), grunts the clochard who sees it initially as a welcome opportunity to improve his wardrobe. This trivialisation of Valera's 'act' becomes outright interference when the clochard feels bound to throw Valera the rope 'parce qu'il nage' (p.19). Having shown some equivocation in the execution of his project - he neatly folds his clothes like a man going for a dip, and then, perhaps just instinctively, starts to swim - Georges easily succumbs to the repeated temptation offered by the life-saving clochards. His first, and most striking, attempt to commit a definitive act comes to nought.

It is both logical and comical that Valera should be angry with the tramps for their 'kindness' which, as he puts it, thoughtlessly contradicted his 'last wishes'. In the ensuing banter it emerges that Georges sees himself more as the exponent of his nature - 'mes bas instincts' (p.23) - than as a free agent; and, further, that he has certain associated prejudices about human nature in general - chiefly the Rochefoucauldian conviction that men are always and only motivated by self-interest - which make it impossible for him to comprehend the clochards' 'acte gratuit'. The rigidity and over-simplicity of his ideas put him intellectually on a par with le Banquier in Le Diable et le bon Dieu, or the Prince of Wales in Kean. It is no surprise, therefore, that he should contradict himself by insisting on his moral independence in a manner reminiscent of the early Goetz:

GEORGES: [...] Ote-moi d'un doute: t'imaginerais-tu, par hasard, que je te dois la vie? (Il le secoue.) Réponds!

LE CLOCHARD: Non, Monsieur, non!

GEORGES: A qui est-elle, ma vie?

LE CLOCHARD: Elle est à vous. Entièrement à vous.

GEORGES, lâchant le clochard: Oui, vieillard, elle est à moi; je ne la dois à personne, pas même à mes parents qui furent victimes d'une erreur de calcul. Qui m'a nourri, élevé? Qui a consolé mes premiers chagrins? Qui m'a protégé contre les dangers du monde? Moi! Moi seul! C'est à moi seul

que je dois mes comptes. Je suis fils de mes oeuvres! (pp.24-25)

Georges confuses his physical life - which he undeniably does owe to the clochards - with his existential life, of which he claims to be the sole author. His indiscriminate mixture of literal considerations and figurative propositions points at a parody by Sartre of the powerful life/death metaphor which has so important a part in all his plays. ²²

This impression is reinforced by the sudden reversal of Valera's attitudes: the will to suicide is transformed into a tenacious grasp on life; the proud claim to self-reliant orphanhood gives way to an absurd charade in which he becomes the clochards' son. This volte-face is accounted for by Valera's genius at work, responding to new circumstances like some automaton. The effect of all this is not to discredit or invalidate the life/death metaphor as such, but rather to neutralise it in respect of Georges, and, indeed, of the play as a whole; it is located firmly in the comic register. Georges cannot take his life because he does not possess it - no more does any clown. His every deed is intended for an audience and has the stamp of the melodramatic gesture. When he escapes from Goblet at the end of the first tableau, nothing is changed. And the suicide bid of the clochards is no more likely to succeed than was Valera's.

Tableau two establishes the plot and the dramatic framework which Georges will shortly enter. It also introduces the pathetic Sibilot, and indicates how the establishment regards Valera - 'C'est le Génie du Siècle' (Jules, p.61) - and Sibilot's subversive daughter,

Véronique - 'elle est progressiste' (Sibilot, p.47). Though she does not become involved in the ludicrous action - in a sense, because she does not - Véronique (the 'true image') is a character of some importance: she tries in due course to exert a positive influence upon Georges, in a way reminiscent of the earnest ministries of earlier heroines from Sarah (Bariona) to Anna (Kean), and yet which seems incongruous in the crazy world of Nekrassov.

When Georges and Véronique first meet (III, 1), the former's behaviour very much suggests that he is more a collection of reflex responses than a free human agent. He automatically raises his hands in surrender, an especially ridiculous gesture as Véronique is unarmed and, apparently, unperturbed. He repeatedly sneezes because, he says, of 'Un rhume! Unique et ridicule vestige d'un acte manqué' (p.88). He lets Véronique blow his nose for him rather than lower his hands, and does so at last only when she raises hers - but he raises his again as soon as the doorbell announces Goblet's arrival! This absurd conduct is that of a stock character programmed for a part in a melodramatic roman policier. One is inevitably reminded of Bergson's description of the vaudevillean comic process as 'une mécanisation de la vie'.²³ Fittingly, what Georges does in the world is distinctly ephemeral: 'Je travaille avec la langue. [...] Dans la vie? Je parle.' (pp.85, 86)²⁴ As a non-doer, Georges is strictly an object, the plaything of some obscure providence: 'Femme, vous êtes par nature mon destin.' (p.93) He inquires, pathetically, what Véronique intends to 'do' with him (p.91). The passivity implicit in such speeches

elicits a response of crushing contempt from Véronique, which leaves us in no doubt that she inhabits a different ethical world from Valera's , one in which what matters is what people do, not what happens to them:

De vous? Que puis-je faire? Êtes-vous une guitare pour que je vous pince? Une mandoline pour que je vous gratte? Un clou pour que je vous tape sur la tête? [...] Alors, rien. Je n'ai que faire de vous. (p.91)

This being so, it is ironic that Georges, once saved from the clutches of Goblet, should complain of having been made 'le malheureux objet de votre philanthropie' (p.100). Véronique points out that he would be all the more an object 'dans le panier à salade' (p.100). But that eventuality would distress Georges less, for it would confirm his view of the world as ordered into the best of all possible social hierarchies. Like the malevolent Goetz, Georges de Valera, 'escroc génial', is in fact a buttress of the status quo:

Regardez-vous, regardez-moi et dites lequel de nous a le droit d'être mécontent! Eh bien! je ne le suis pas. Pas du tout: jamais je ne me suis plaint; de ma vie je n'ai manifesté. Au seuil de la prison, de la mort, j'accepte le monde; vous avez vingt ans, vous êtes libre, et vous le refusez. (Soupçonneux.) Vous êtes rouge, en somme. (p.99)

In respect of Georges, the operative word is 'j'accepte', and of Véronique, 'libre'. Georges's inactivity makes him a moral non-entity, virtually a thing. The words 'vie' and 'mort', normally loaded with ethical value by Sartre, remain firmly literal, just as they are when Georges shortly after complains: 'Ce n'est pas tout de sauver les gens, ma petite: il faut leur donner le moyen de vivre.' (p.100) Here, Georges has in mind strictly material assistance, and the ruse he hatches in order to secure it is to exploit his public face as 'master-crook' in an interview for Véronique's newspaper: hardly an act! His conclusion, when she refuses, that her paper is 'progressiste' (p.102) is just the sort of formulistic, 'establishment' thinking one expects of him (of a kind with the deduction that she is 'red'). Draped incongruously in a red blanket, Georges cuts a ridiculous figure and is hardly a serious candidate for any moral succour which Véronique might have to offer.

Nevertheless, perhaps to demonstrate her anti-establishment attitudes, Véronique prefers not to betray Valera. In the course of a marvellously comic scene (III, 4) - Sibilot preoccupied with the world's injustice and on the brink of despair, his daughter paying no attention and trying to get a word in edgeways - Véronique reveals Valera's presence in the bedroom, but instructs her father not to turn him in. He, improbably, accedes to this request on condition that he is left in peace to find an answer to Palotin's ultimatum. Disturbed, however, by Valera's uncontrollable sneezing - a typical device of farce - Sibilot summons the police to arrest an intruder. Georges's genuine

delight at the 'normality' of this reaction disconcerts the cynical journalist. And for the second time in one evening, Valera's genius is employed to extricate him from a seemingly hopeless situation. He begins by establishing Sibilot's 'normality', beyond any reasonable doubt, in a ludicrous personality test:

GEORGES: [...] Si je vous disais que j'ai tenté de me tuer, tout à l'heure, pour échapper à mes poursuivants?....

SIBILOT: N'essayez pas de m'attendrir!

GEORGES: Parfait! Et si je tirais de mes loques un sachet de poudre, si j'en avalais le contenu, si je tombais mort à vos pieds?....

SIBILOT: Eh bien?

GEORGES: Que diriez-vous?

SIBILOT: Je dirais: 'Le misérable s'est fait justice.'

GEORGES: Paisible certitude d'une conscience sans reproches! On voit, Monsieur, que vous n'avez jamais douté du Bien.... (p.112)

Georges is satisfied that Sibilot values his principles more highly than life itself, and that awkward social facts are subordinated to a rigid moral code recognizing absolute right and wrong. Here is the Sartrean honnête homme, the caricatured representative of les justes, whose forebears are the salauds of La Nausée and the whites of La Putain respectueuse. Georges is relieved because it is only with

such fixed world-views that he can deal confidently. By contrast, the unpredictable conduct of the tramps and of Véronique was confusing. With Sibilot he has the chance to win someone's confidence, the thing he does best - whereby, indeed, he makes his living. He puts Sibilot at his ease by persuading him that they belong, morally and politically speaking, to the same caste:

[...] vous l'honnêteté même, et moi le crime, par-dessus tous les vices et toutes les vertus, nous nous donnons la main, nous condamnons ensemble les juifs, les communistes et les idées subversives? Il faut que notre accord ait une signification profonde. [...] : nous respectons tous les deux la propriété privée. [...] La conclusion pratique que je tire de tout cela, c'est que nous avons le devoir, vous et moi, de travailler ensemble. (pp.14-15)

Valera's conclusion, if scarcely logical, has a plausible ring and promises an answer to their respective dilemmas. The alliance of genius with honesty, of mercurial brilliance with substantial banality, could not fail, Georges argues, to produce 'une pensée nouvelle [qui] s'imposerait à l'univers' (p.116).

From a scene full of mutual commiseration and homespun philosophy (III, 7), Sibilot emerges sufficiently convinced by Goblet of Valera's genius to want to strike a bargain with him; and he does so finally entirely on Georges's terms (III, 8). As the curtain falls on

Georges poised to expound his plan to the attentive Sibilot - a classic melodramatic moment - we are delighted to have seen Georges at work, and are even pleased with his achievement. ²⁵ But we do not feel we have witnessed an act, other than in the theatrical sense of 'performance'. An instinct for self-preservation, as well as sheer pleasure in his work, have motivated Georges to dream up this ruse, but the freedom he is defending is legalistic, having little relation to the liberty which previous heroes (including Kean) strove after. Repeatedly, it is Valera's ethereal or non-existent quality - his genius - which is stressed, whether by himself or others. He exploits that genius not to project an act which, by changing the world or himself, might shatter his original false situation, but rather to create a new and greater false situation in which he will play the central and fantastical part.

With the président du conseil pressing Jules for a sensational news story, Valera's plan is most opportune: 'Vous avez grand besoin que je sois Nekrassov' (p.147), he observes. The scheme gets off to a slow start, however, because of Sibilot's scruples, because he fears, in his mediocrity, the magnitude of the lie proposed. He plays down the importance of his defector - 'un tout petit fonctionnaire' (p.140) - and occasions some amusing perorations by Palotin on the theme: 'Résultat: baisse générale sur le Kravchenko' (p.141). He sees no news value in Sibilot's little fish, and expresses a scorn for Valera's flight to freedom which seems quite justified: 'Ah! Monsieur a franchi le Rideau de Fer. Ah! Monsieur a choisi la liberté! Eh bien! fais-lui donner une soupe et envoie-le, de ma part, à l'Armée du

Salut.' (p.141) Sibilot is ready to let the whole thing drop, so Georges is forced to intervene himself, '[maniant] si bien notre belle langue' (p.142). To his silver-tongued rhetoric he adds histrionic gestures - 'Il plonge sous la table et se promène à quatre pattes' (p.143) - urgent, mysterious questions - 'Pas de magnétophone caché? Pas de micro?' (p.143) - and enigmatic threats: 'Si je parle, vous serez en danger de mort.' (p.143)

This mortal danger, which Georges alleges, regenerates the death theme in its ironic mode. It is his trump card, for it sends a frisson of fear and excitement through Jules's colleagues which at once adds to the drama, the newsworthiness, and the apparent authenticity of the stranger's identity. Yet just as that identity is 'proved' by nothing (pp. 145-48), so the aura of danger is pure invention, a nothingness which Valera exploits to maximum advantage in order to fascinate his gullible audience. He harps on the subject of death: 'Le véritable Nekrassov a tué cent dix-huit personnes de sa propre main! [...] je vous ferai mourir de peur', etc. (p.146, 147). His ace of trumps is the 'liste des futurs fusillés', which both appeals to the morbid strain in the right-wing mentality, and flatters its vanity. (It also enables the farcical 'Enchanté - Exécuté' exchanges in the fourth tableau, scene 4.) The editorial board's, and especially Palotin's, delight at the thought of being shot (p.154) caricatures the erroneous attitude towards death taken at various times by previous heroes from Bariona to Goetz. Their excitement prompts Georges to exaggerate absurdly his fanciful claims about the impending Soviet invasion - 'cent

mille morts par jour', etc. (p.169). By the end of the tableau, Georges has succeeded in creating a wholly false situation. This is not the work of a Sartrean 'agent', for the world has not been changed, but rather abstracted, subverted, sublimated. Only in such a world could a man be insulted - as Mouton is - by his exclusion from a list of those condemned to death!

The comic fantasy is checked somewhat in the fifth tableau by the reappearance of Véronique, who reflects to Georges a 'true image' of himself. ²⁶ Because of this, and because it imparts a new impetus to the intrigue, this act, and especially Véronique's scene (V, 7), is crucial. Lorris has commented upon it as follows:

Ce tableau est placé sous le signe de la haine, de la peur, de la délation, du crime; la comédie n'est plus un jeu badin, elle met en jeu des convictions, des vies mêmes. Georges sent son être lui échapper; il est dévoré par sa nouvelle identité; celle-ci est menacée à son tour: [...] Il se trouve dans la position de Goetz, contraint à devenir méchant pour préserver son existence. Le seul intérêt de la scène qui l'oppose à Véronique est de le faire prendre conscience de cette nécessité: [...] On ne peut que déplorer le ton trop sérieux de ce tableau V, mais il ne faudrait pas en conclure qu'il se détache complètement de la satire. ²⁷

The above remarks about identity, and the comparison drawn between

Georges and Goetz, seems uncontroversial. But even though he accords the scene a degree of satirical continuity, is Lorris right to insist upon its general discordance? Lives are perhaps at stake, and that is perhaps anomalous in a comic context. But are they really in any greater danger than, for example, Anna Damby in the role of Desdemona? I doubt it.

The scenes preceding Valera's encounter with Véronique explicitly raise the problem of existential identity, but still facetiously. Abusive phone calls make Georges wonder: 'Qui est un salaud? Pas moi, Georges de Valera, qui n'ai jamais été communiste et ne trahis personne. Pas Nekrassov, qui se soigne en Crimée sans penser à mal.' (p.179) In fact, Georges revels in this loss of identity: as a con-man it is his stock-in-trade. He boasts of it to the faint-hearted Sibilot in the fifth tableau, scene 4, and delights in a witty and spurious demonstration that he is at least as much Nekrassov as Sibilot is Sibilot. Georges's ability to subvert normality, and disregard reality and truth, is intact at this stage.

The first incursion of harsh fact into Valera's imaginary domain is made by Mme Castagnié who blames Nekrassov (rightly, in a sense) for her dismissal from the staff of Soir à Paris. Georges appears genuinely upset and sympathetic, and is keen to dispel any suspicion of malice on his part: 'M'attaquer aux pauvres, moi? Ce serait la première fois de ma vie.' (p.197) And he is amazed by the hatred which the newspaper clique and their like can display. But to stress this as the theme of the tableau, as Lorris does, is to neglect a number of

points of attenuation which stem from the nature of the play as farce.

The chief of these is that the hatred of buffoons like Mouton and Palotin is no more frightening than the misanthropy of an Alceste, or the unpaternal behaviour of an Orgon or an Harpagon: in the long term, the vices of imbeciles are innocuous. Second is Valera's declaration: 'La haine est une passion que je n'éprouve pas moi-même.' (pp.198-99) So long as the protagonist remains essentially innocent, there is little reason to suppose that this comedy will come to other than its appropriate happy ending. Third is Valera's real concern that his exhilarating power will be corrupted and degraded by the double-dealing of the journalists. In short, he is less concerned about the possible 'real' consequences of his 'acts' than by the erosion of his so-called freedom. His ridiculous vision of the re-instatement of the sacked staff leaves us in no doubt that he still dwells in the realm of fantasy (p.199).

It falls to Véronique to try to put Georges in touch with reality: her sincerity and humourlessness fit her well for the part, and she is clearly eager to show him the error of his ways. As such, she recalls Molière's raisonneurs, and she seems to me no more out of place than Chrysalde in L'École des femmes, or Philinte in Le Misanthrope. And like those voix de raison, who have often been held to express in part Molière's own social attitudes, so Véronique echoes at times some of Sartre's own rallying cries.²⁸ Even so, we surely do not even begin to take seriously her accusation that Georges is effectively a murderer. (Indeed, the flippant way she speaks of despairing workers 'drinking themselves to death or opening the gas tap' (p.207) makes one wonder

if she takes these ideas quite seriously herself.) The dominant tone of facetiousness is sustained by Valera's attitude in choosing to be criminal before dupe: 'Le choix sera vite fait: vive le crime! [...]' Bon ou méchant, je m'en moque. Le Bien et le Mal, je prends tout sur moi: je suis responsable de tout.' (p.209) These sentiments are exactly the same as Goetz's when he is similarly chided by Nasty; and like Goetz, Georges is only an impostor of evil. His defiant cry: 'Désespérons Billancourt!' (p.211), is more a claim to a perverse autonomy - 'Je fais toujours le contraire de ce qu'on attend de moi' (p.211) - than a serious assertion of wicked intent; likewise his ludicrous boast to the anonymous phone-caller that 'mes prochaines révélations provoqueront des suicides en chaîne' (p.211). Valera's méchanceté takes the form of petulant, puerile naughtiness, exemplified by his kicking the heads off flowers at the end of the tableau. Thus, the tone of the play, in spite of Véronique, remains decidedly satirical and comic. Georges's every deed is unmistakable gesture, and he is no more the assassin of the poor than he is 'fils de ses oeuvres'. His preoccupation with establishing the fiction of Nekrassov, and manipulating the situation instead of being manipulated by it, may be silly, wrong-headed, even cowardly, but it is surely not wicked. In short, it seems to me that Lorris lets Véronique's gravity numb his sense of humour.

At Mme Bounoumi's society-cum-politics party (sixth tableau), farce reaches a new level of chaos at which the theme of the life/death dichotomy continues to be subverted. The famous dictum of

Huis clos - 'Tu n'es rien d'autre que ta vie' - is, according to Demidoff, the stick with which the unhappy Mouton should beat himself: 'Ma vie témoigne pour moi. Je n'ai fait que les combattre [les communistes]. [...] Ma vie serait truquée de bout en bout? (Signe d'assentiment de Demidoff)' (pp.222, 224). Later in the same conversation, Demidoff's cruel condemnation of Mouton - 'Vous êtes un communiste objectif' (p.224) - is an ironic echo of the hardline Party thinking which made of Hoederer 'un traître objectif'. Valera's crisis mounts as he seeks Sibilot's re-assurance that he is only 'une image' (p.229). This turns upside down the anxiety of Kean who had been, rightly, concerned to acquire the substantiality of which his profession and social status deprived him. Sartre also parodies - surprisingly, perhaps, in a play of anti-right-wing sentiment - the historical dialectic: Demidoff, the traitor, is allowed to ramble on at some length about his place in history and the judgment which it will pass upon him. His drunken peroration - climaxing in the cry: 'Vive le processus historique!' (p.267) - prefigures in parts the more serious preoccupations of Frantz von Gerlach: 'J'ai tort, Mesdames et Messieurs, tort devant les siècles futurs. Levez vos verres, je me sens seul.' (p.267) (These lines would not be out of place in the scene of Frantz's birthday party.) Demidoff looks to the 'process of history' to save him from an obscure death and give him immortality; Frantz testifies before the tribunal of the thirtieth century for the same reasons. The vanity of this hope is brought out in Nekrassov when Demidoff absurdly greets Baudouin and Chapuis thus: 'Voilà l'Histoire!' (p.269)

Bathos crowns ridicule as the two agents ignore Demidoff and pursue Georges de Valera instead.

The already established inversion of normal attitudes to life and death, in literal terms, is restated. Palotin gleefully founds the 'Club des Futurs Fusillés' whose paradoxical rallying cry is: 'Vivent les F.F.!' (p.220); and whose members insult Mouton by wishing him 'long life!' The same spirit of mock-heroic complacency informs the exclamation: 'Mourons pour le miracle grec!' (p.235), prompted by Nekrassov's Malrauxesque exhortation to defend European civilisation. In fact, of course, the guests' romantic conception of death is far removed from an understanding of the real thing, as their terrified response to Goblet's gunshots at the end of the act reveals. Other moments of slapstick in the tableau underscore the harmlessness of violence in the context of farce. For example, Mouton attempts to kill himself and Georges: 'Remerciez-moi, messieurs: je débarrasse la terre d'une canaille et d'un communiste objectif!' (p.249) But he is disarmed by Baudouin and Chapuis who had warned Valera of the threat, although they had done nothing to forestall it - doubtless because an assassin's gunshots in pantomime are no more lethal than the customary rubber hammer! Or again, Sartre parodies the widely held analysis of suicide as 'flight' (which he shares), when Demidoff construes Valera's efforts to escape from the party as an attempt at suicide by the militant leader of the newly-formed Bolshevik-Bolshevik Party. In his patronising reassurance of the young hero, there are echoes of the many wise words spoken to Hugo Barine by Hoederer and Olga: 'Le suicide, on y songe

les trois premiers mois. Ensuite, tu verras, on s'y fait. J'ai passé par là.' (p.261)

Though suicide is now far from Valera's mind, flight, both physical and moral, is very much on it. He does not become 'méchant', as Véronique (and Lorris) feared he would; in fact, he makes a commendable effort to get his 'victims' at the newspaper reinstated. When that fails, and Georges sees that the situation is beyond his control, it is time to revert to the Protean identity of the master-crook - and that, too, implies flight: 'Nekrassov, adieu! [...] Vive Georges de Valera! [...], Nekrassov étant mort, Georges de Valera va filer à l'anglaise.' (p.260) Nekrassov has come to "birth" and "died" again; Valera has "died" and "revived"; but we have yet to see the "birth" of a man. At this point, Georges is no further on than Kean was when he shed Hamlet's robes and became 'himself' again; nor will he be till he slays the 'genius' of Valera. Nekrassov's "death" is no act, for it merely indicates a return to the original comédie. As with Goetz after his conversion to Good, the situation is superficially different, but the 'agent' is still an 'actor'. 29

By contrast with Lorris, it seems to me that the seventh tableau, rather than the fifth, comes perilously near to adopting an inappropriately solemn and polemical tone; and this is due less to the wonted gravity of Véronique, than to the uncharacteristic, and short-lived, gravity of Georges. This third encounter, whose outward circumstances closely match those of their first (as Georges points out), is the single occasion on which his hitherto egocentric conscience begins

to contemplate the possible objective consequences of his game-playing. Specifically, he becomes concerned for the fate of Véronique's colleagues, the journalists Duval and Maistre, whose arrest and inevitable conviction are, according to Baudouin and Chapuis, imminent. However, his warning to them goes unheeded, as Véronique had smugly predicted, for that is not the way of a militant: 'Duval tient à sa peau, mais il n'y pense pas tous les jours. Il a son Parti, son activité, ses lecteurs: s'il veut sauver tout ce qu'il est, il faut qu'il reste.'

(p.280) Georges's fears for the journalists are less altruistic than they first appear. He is clearly afraid that he might be captured and tortured by the 'Défense du Territoire': 'Je suis trop artiste pour avoir du courage physique' (p.276) - (note the typically essentialist formulation). On the other hand, he does not wish to appear 'une donneuse'. His pride - '[dont]il crève' (p.277), like all Sartre's earlier heroes - insists that he find some solution. '[Nekrassov] est mort' (p.273), but so too is Valera's 'star' (p.275), his genius. This dilemma, which in any other Sartrean drama would require an act from the hero, prompts in this case, first of all, a gesture of pseudo-altruism, namely the failed phone call to Duval: we note that Véronique dials the number for Valera and then has to vouch for his identity - no wonder he feels humiliated when he is taken for a 'provocateur': 'C'était la première fois de ma vie que je voulais rendre service. Ce sera tres certainement la dernière.' (p.279) Next, there comes an outburst of self-pitying despair, delivered in the best melodramatic style:

Je devrais me tuer sous tes yeux et souiller de sang ton parquet. Tu as de la chance que je n'en aie plus le courage. ³⁰ [...] Je ne comprends plus rien à rien. J'avais ma petite philosophie, elle m'aidait à vivre: j'ai tout perdu, même mes principes. Ah! je n'aurais jamais dû faire de politique! (p.282)

Thirdly, the present impasse calls forth a new ruse from Valera's miraculously resuscitated genius: he will tell the true story of his career as Nekrassov to Véronique's newspaper, and thereby have the last laugh himself: 'Vous m'embêtez avec vos martyrs: s'il en faut un, pourquoi pas moi? [...] J'ai fini par gagner: [...]; peut-être que mon étoile n'est pas morte.' (p.284)

In some ways, Valera's situation here is comparable to Hugo's after his release from prison. Enmeshed in a political imbroglio partly of his own making, he has lost all autonomy and identity - 'manoeuvré comme un enfant!' (p.281) - and has to invent a way out which will enable him to salvage some self-respect, the loss of which he feels - despite his facetiousness, and shows of insouciant bravado - just as acutely as Hugo before him: 'Mais moi, bande de salauds, moi, qu'est-ce que je deviens dans tout cela?' (p.281). ³¹ Valera's solution is as self-regarding and as futile as Hugo's, yet it is, in keeping with the overall tone of the play, a parody of the latter's. Not for Georges the heroics of self-immolation: suicide is no more real an option now than on page one. He prefers a seemingly daring,

but perfectly safe, leap through the nearest window, while the faithful and ludicrous Demidoff fights off all his pursuers single-handed. ³² And note that Véronique, the counterpart of Olga in this comparison, flees with Valera, apparently sucked into the madness of the mercurial genius's make-believe world.

It seems to me a structural weakness that the play's final focus should settle as it does on Soir à Paris, having concentrated throughout on Georges de Valera. Lorris has criticised this shift as producing an imbalance between the two 'postulats comiques', as he calls them. ³³ I think he is on firmer ground here than when he complains of 'rupture de ton' and 'tendance à la surexplication' of the scenes involving Véronique, ³⁴ for she, despite all her pious hectoring, makes no visible impression on the wayward Georges. Nevertheless, tableau eight, structurally out of place though it may be, is modally important for it establishes beyond doubt, visually, verbally, and in terms of action, that this has been a comedy. Nothing has changed: the paper and its problems are the same; the world returns to the safe, if dull, Cold War; the editor of Soir à Paris changes only in name - Sibilot replaces Falotin but conducts himself identically. We can be assured, therefore, that Georges de Valera too is unaltered. He will resume the guise of the master-crook, the youthful voyou, a role to which, like the young Genet, he both aspires and is condemned. In Valera's case, however, there is no hint of the man to be "born" in maturity. ³⁵ Not a single act is undertaken by this phantasm for whom the mere glimpse of reality is too dreary and grim to behold. Not for him the

dirty hands of Oreste, Hoederer, or Goetz; nor even the will to "live" of the rejuvenated Kean. Georges de Valera prefers to take refuge in his own legend as the 'escroc génial'. He is the non-agent par excellence in Sartre's theatre.

It is hoped that the foregoing analysis of Nekrassov will have thrown some light on this remark of Sartre's: 'Mais, ici et maintenant, le théâtre doit être plus utile par son aspect négatif, c'est-à-dire par la satire.'³⁶ Nekrassov is a thorough-going satire, a negative critique of bourgeois right-wing attitudes, and of certain militant leftist tendencies too. Above all, it satirises many of Sartre's own cherished themes, not least the dialectic of life and death. Nekrassov may boast no corpses, but neither can it boast a single "living" soul: every character is a ruthless caricature, hilarious but implausible. The life-enhancing optimism of Le Diable et le bon Dieu and Kean is mocked at, though not destroyed, in Nekrassov. In Sartre's next play, Les Séquestrés d'Altona, it is indeed destroyed.

Chapter 11

Les Séquestrés d'Altona

En vain tenterions-nous de devenir notre propre historien:
l'historien lui-même est créature historique. Nous devons
nous contenter de faire notre histoire à l'aveuglette, [...];
nous sommes dedans.

'La Nationalisation de la littérature', Les Temps modernes, 2
(1945), in Situations II, 33-53 (p.42).

Toute morale suppose la fin de l'Histoire (ou plutôt la fin de
l'Histoire et l'apparition du règne de la morale). Mais la fin
de l'Histoire est aussi la mort.

Cahiers pour une morale, p.149.

Much of value has been written about Les Séquestrés d'Altona, but it is so rich and complex a work that it readily bears further consideration. Les Séquestrés marks a definitive break in Sartre's theatrical presentation of certain favourite themes. Freedom, action, and commitment; guilt and judgment, good and evil, about all of which previous plays seemed to make clear statements, are here called into question and their ethical contradictions laid bare.¹ In the terms of this present inquiry we can say that Les Séquestrés d'Altona is the first, and the last, of Sartre's wholly original plays to be life-denying; the only one in which powerful forces of death gain an apparently irrevocable victory over insipid forces of life. As the two protagonists plunge to their death, leaving three other characters to their different sorts of living death, there is no hint of the final will to action of, say, Goetz, much less of the cheery optimism of Kean. Lorris writes: 'Oreste était au début de sa vie; Franz est au bout de la sienne. Dans Les Mouches l'homme naissait à l'existence; dans Les Séquestrés d'Altona, "L'homme est mort et je suis son témoin", affirme Frantz (II,1).'² Why should the predominantly life-enhancing thrust of the Sartrean drama have undergone this reversal?

Myth and Situation.

Sartre stressed more than usually the mythic aspect of Les Séquestrés because he wanted to discourage purely political readings of it: 'Il

ne s'agit pas d'une pièce politique, notez-le, mais d'un sujet d'actualité vis-à-vis duquel j'ai tenu à garder mes distances, pour le dépasser et réserver ainsi la part du mythe.' ³ At the same time he emphasised the allegory it presents of modern man: 'Il s'agit au contraire surtout de montrer comment vit l'homme d'aujourd'hui, comment il se débrouille dans la situation où il se trouve. [...], l'homme adulte d'aujourd'hui - [...] - est forcément témoin ou complice.' ⁴

For the allegory to work as such - for the play to pose what Sartre calls 'la question principale: qu'as-tu fait de ta vie?' ⁵ - Sartre thought it essential that distances be created between: the author and his thought; his thought and his subject; his thought and his characters; his characters and his audience. Only distance permits and validates the discussion of general and eternally important questions. To create distance is both the function and definition of mythic theatre, which is the only theatre possible. ⁶ The playwright 'mythifies' character by transcending individual psychologies to expose intimate, yet universal contradictions. ⁷ He also mythifies historical events in order to come to grips with general questions arising out of specific circumstances. Among the 'myths' Sartre names are complicity, violence, impotence, and social conditioning. ⁸ These are myths in the Sartrean sense of being profoundly true, but abstract elements of daily life, intangible and, up to a point, ineffable. The greatest of such 'myths' is death, and in no earlier play is it more pervasively present.

The tone and mood of Les Séquestrés d'Altona, both theatrical and philosophic, are set by the dominant presence of Frantz von Gerlach and

11: Les Séquestrés d'Altona.

old Gerlach, le Père. These two characters identify intimately with each other in what amounts to a negative symbiosis: they share rather death than life.⁹ The moribundity of Gerlach is matched by the living death - a legal and existential death - of Frantz. Their eventual suicide is less the culmination of a universally shared fatedness to die, than the consummation - almost conjugal - of an event which occurred thirteen years previously for Frantz, and about ten years before for his father.¹⁰

The condition of existential death is not confined to the father and elder son of this ill-starred family, all of whose members are in a sense "dead" and representative of our 'partie morte'.¹¹ 'Cette famille a perdu ses raisons de vivre', observes Leni, 'mais elle a gardé ses bonnes habitudes' (p.19). The Gerlach family persists as a matter of course: 'Tout existant naît sans raison, se prolonge par faiblesse et meurt par rencontre.'¹² Gerlach's 'mort industrielle' (p.20) - his euphemism for suicide - will tidy things up (his forte), and ensure the smooth continuation of the status quo. But it will not put any "life" into the family: that is as impossible as that something should come out of nothing.

Leni most wholly shares in the existential death of father and son. So closely does she identify with Frantz that she has an incestuous relationship with him which thrives in his falsified world, to which her continual lies make an invaluable contribution. For her too, creative life is already at an end - 'je mourrai, je suis déjà morte' (p.92) - and History will pass its verdict on her unalterable past. It is no

surprise that she eventually replaces the dead Frantz, '[qui] ne voulait pas vivre' (p.221), as Altona's principal séquestrée: her final self-incarceration is the logical development of her life to date, the outward sign of her inner stagnation.

Johanna too establishes a relationship with Frantz which depends largely on a common aspect of death:

JOHANNA: [...] Vous êtes mort.

FRANTZ: Pour vous servir. La mort est le miroir de la mort.
Ma grandeur reflète votre beauté.

JOHANNA: C'est aux vivants que je voulais plaire.

FRANTZ: Aux foules éreintées qui rêvent de mourir? Vous leur montriez le visage pur et tranquille de l'Éternel Repos. Les cinémas sont des cimetières, chère amie. (p.119)

The rapport between Johanna, a fading star, and Frantz, a tarnished hero, is so reminiscent of that between Estelle and Garcin that it is almost as though the former are quite as "dead" as their predecessors.

Despite some initial signs of vitality - 'Je tâche de vivre. [...] Mon frère ne sera pas mon destin' (p.37) - Werner is stamped, more so than his wife, with the family imprint of premature "death". He alone appears weak, ready to obey merely to please his father, although he realises that his legacy is one of unalloyed impotence: 'vous avez eu d'abord la précaution de me transformer en pot de fleurs.' (p.23)

11: Les Séquestrés d'Altona

Werner gives in to pressure to take the oath; but Johanna refuses, calling his capitulation 'la mise à mort' (p.59), a "death" sentence for a couple whose marriage Leni already describes as '[un] enterrement' (p.38). Werner's willingness to take on the role which should have been Frantz's, stultifies him as a character, and is comparable to Leni's identification with Frantz. In a sense, the existentially dead Frantz steadily becomes, as his father predicted, the inescapable destiny of them all (p.36). It makes sense, therefore, to speak of Frantz and Gerlach's suicide as the highest expression of family unity, both the symbol of, and the signal for, a collective self-immolation. ¹³

Death is present in Les Séquestrés d'Altona not only passively as a common characteristic of the family members. It is also the dynamic force informing the whole nexus of relationships within the family in the form of threat. This threat is not the mutual 'menace de mort' holding between individuals in the world of scarcity (as described in the Critique); it is rather the given inter-personal enmity which Sartre postulated in L'Être et le néant. No doubt, the ritual swearing on the Bible offers a literal example of the 'groupe assermenté'. ¹⁴ But this particular group does not cohere: the oath is coerced (Werner); or refused (Johanna); or not taken seriously (Leni). There is no hope of its committing constructive acts as the pledged group aspires to do. The bond of 'fraternité-terreur' is - ironically, considering this is a family - minus the 'fraternité'. The danger of death is posed by individual to individual in a 'pure' opposition of freedoms: a struggle for life; a struggle to the death.

The contingent source of the death threat is Gerlach's cancer. Through him, the threat is diffused - in a figurative sense - to each member of the family, except for - so it at first appears - Frantz, 'le dernier des vrais von Gerlach ... [...] le dernier monstre' (p.35). For le Père, the survival of his elder and favourite son symbolises the perpetuation of the family, though it is in fact Werner's sons who will inherit the business eventually. There is a paradox here, for Frantz - incarcerated for thirteen years in his bedroom - is, in effect, already dead. Yet it is for him that Gerlach is prepared to 'sacrifice' (p.29) his other children and their posterity. He does so by offering them an impossible choice between remaining at Altona as Frantz's guardians, or facing the legal consequences - in the event of Frantz's actual death - of having been accomplices to his crimes, falsified his death certificate, and connived at his imprisonment (pp.33-35). However, as each of them is drawn into Gerlach's elaborate plan to arrange an audience with the beloved Frantz, Johanna and Leni find themselves implicated - the former unwittingly, the latter less so - in what amounts to a conspiracy to persuade Frantz not only to see his father, but also to share his suicide. Thus, Frantz's apparent exemption from the figurative death threat is gradually transformed into his inclusion, with and through his father, in the real death threat.

Werner, the most passive character, is readiest to swear his life away, partly because Gerlach has convinced him from the day of his birth that it is worthless (pp.35-37); and partly because he sees an

opportunity to spite both Frantz and Johanna. By committing himself and his wife to spend the rest of their lives in the house at Altona, Werner will complete the entombment to which Johanna was condemned by her marriage. Johanna, for her part, is more inquisitive of Gerlach's right to rob her of her future: 'Je voudrais savoir pourquoi vous disposez de ma vie?' (p.25) His reply that he has power only over Werner's life, 'parce qu'elle m'appartient' (p.25), at once makes clear his proprietorial attitude towards his children's lives, and brutally ignores Johanna's presentation of her conjugal life as one life and not two. In spite of his weakness - attributable to an almost obsessive love for his father - Werner has become indispensable to Johanna, so that she had reluctantly followed him to Altona eighteen months before (p.26). Knowing this, Gerlach exploits her dependence on her marriage to reach Frantz through her. Though theoretically ready to see Frantz dead - 'Le mieux serait de vous supprimer' (p.100) - Johanna is surprised when he tells her: 'On en veut à ma vie, Madame, je le sais; vous êtes l'outil d'un assassin.' (p.103) As she gradually becomes fascinated by Frantz, Johanna sees that his suspicions are well-founded, and rebukes Gerlach for having thus used her to embody a threat she did not intend (pp.135-36). But by then he is able to offer to trade Werner's life and freedom for Frantz's, and Johanna reluctantly finds herself in the position of a 'tueur à gages' (p.138). When Frantz kills himself it is she who, thanks to Gerlach's manipulation, feels the greatest burden of guilt.

Her responsibility, however, is shared in almost equal measure by

Leni, similarly a victim of Gerlach's machinations. Gerlach is especially clever and subtle in his manipulation of Leni, for she is, like him, extremely strong-willed, and appears at first to be Frantz's only defence against the real world - and yet to be a sufficient defence. Gerlach's method of breaching Leni's fortifications around Frantz is to send in Johanna as a kind of Trojan horse, knowing that Leni's jealousy will be so fierce as to make her an accomplice of the enemy within. Her violent reactions are directed initially against Johanna, whom she obliquely threatens to kill (p.60). They then veer towards her father as she begins to understand his tactics, and she then threatens him too (pp.66, 128). Finally, Leni's revenge focuses on Frantz himself once it seems that the only way to possess him wholly is to precipitate his death: 'Mort ou vif, il est juste que tu m'appartiennes puisque je suis la seule à t'aimer tel que tu es.' (p.191) Thus Leni, no less than Johanna, involuntarily becomes a channel for Gerlach's threat to Frantz. Hence the justice of the women's mutual accusations:

JOHANNA, dure et crispée: Vous l'avez tué!

LENI, 'aussi dure: Et vous? (Un temps.) Qu'est-ce cela peut faire: il ne voulait pas vivre. (p.221)

The father's diffusion of the death threat he faces, through every member of the family, has the effect of placing them all in the most extreme of situations-limites: in so far as they have a choice at all,

they have to choose between two sorts of living death. Leni, like her father, favours the status quo, in which she guarantees Frantz's madness and alienation; the only alternative is to replace him altogether, which at last she has to do. Werner has no effective choice because of his father's domination. He has to become the supporter of the status quo, his father's insurance that 'ma mort, à present, c'est ma vie qui continue, sans que je sois dedans' (p.39). Even Johanna, who appears at first to have a choice between "life" and "death" - she can escape back to Hamburg with Werner, or remain at Altona as Frantz's guardian - even she sees her options dissolve as she falls progressively under Frantz's spell and discovers that 'leurs deux "folies" sont au fond pareilles'.¹⁵ By the end of the play her decision to stay at Altona bears little resemblance to a 'choice'.¹⁶

These 'extreme situations' all stem from the father's and they are his bequest to the family. It is he who has, most literally, to choose between two sorts of death: suicide now, or death 'from natural causes' in the near future. From the outset he makes it clear that he intends the former: 'Une mort industrielle', he calls it, 'la Nature pour la dernière fois rectifiée' (p.20). It gradually becomes clear that Frantz will be embraced by this suicide, and for a number of reasons.¹⁷

First, Gerlach's strategy of transferring the threat facing him to Frantz, via Leni, Werner, and Johanna, '[fait de] chacun le destin de chacun',¹⁸ effecting a sinister family unity through the elimination of plurality: the dead are unified in their anonymity, solidifiés,

not solidarisés - (see Huis clos) - in their objectité, indistinguishable as individuals except in so far as the living distinguish among them. ¹⁹

Secondly, the relationship between Gerlach and Frantz, a kind of symbiosis, necessitates the simultaneity of their deaths. I have already noted that their respective afflictions of impotence date from about the same time. Now that his living death is approaching its consummation, Gerlach - with whom, Sartre asserts, Frantz enjoys ' [son]seul rapport humain' ²⁰ - seeks to save Frantz, out of love, from the "death" of perpetual flight to which he has condemned himself. ²¹

Paradoxically, then, the archetypal expression of hatred (i.e. murder) is here inverted in a parody of the ultimate test of love (i.e. the sacrifice of one's life for another). For Frantz too, as we shall later see, hatred and love are conflated so that his suicide appears to him as much the murder of his father as an Isaac-like submission to his father's will.

Thirdly, Frantz is condemned by natural as well as civil law. The ancient rule of primogenitur, automatically respected in a family with dynastic pretensions, makes Frantz the father's principal heir, and the inheritance is death. That explains why Frantz has always been an impotent object, 'un mort vivant'. ²² The choice which confronts him - a choice between existential and physical death - is not suddenly thrust upon him by the imminence of Gerlach's demise: it has always been his as his birthright. As a young man he first risked death by breaking the law. ²³ He next did so by going to war: 'Il courait après la

11: Les Séquestrés d'Altona

mort: pas de chance, elle courait plus vite que lui.' (p.56) And again he did so after the war when he assaulted an American soldier. But each of these risks was neutralised by the intervention of the father safeguarding his posterity. Frantz's auto-sequestration is for him the only viable means of becoming his own man, of being what he is, seemingly through his own volition: "dead". In this sense, then, Frantz was born to "death", 'voué [...] à l'impuissance' (p.216), in the way that other men may be born to wealth or greatness. His suicide 'abolishes' his birth. 24

So far I have been concerned with the situation of the individual members of the family in relation to the family unit. But that is by no means the extent of their situation. We can envisage three concentric circles with Gerlach and Frantz at their centre: the innermost is the family Gerlach; the second is post-war Western (and especially German) society; and the third and greatest, whose circumference is undiscoverable, is History itself.

Altona, like Argos, is a curious island of depression and self-destructive retrospection set amid the prosperous industrial towns of post-war West Germany. Yet its citizens, Sartre suggests, are less to blame for their moral bankruptcy than were their Hellenic antecedents:

Je n'ai pas voulu seulement mettre en scène des caractères, mais suggérer que des circonstances objectives conditionnent la formation et le comportement de tel ou tel individu, à un moment donné. 25

The two salient characteristics of this society are, i): the cultural and religious legacy of Lutheranism; ii): the social and economic legacy of defeat. The former accounts for an insatiable thirst for absolutes, and a view of life as predetermined, coupled with an exaggerated (and quasi-contradictory) sense of guilt demanding the active expiation of sin: 'ce prophète nous a rendus fous d'orgueil.' (p.49)

Pride is the first of the deadly sins, bringing about the fall of Lucifer and of Adam. ²⁶ Its concomitant is despair. Frantz's self-imposed isolation and eventual suicide express, respectively, pride and despair.

The latter - i.e. the socio-economic consequences of defeat - are intolerable to Frantz because they are the opposite of what they should, in logic and justice, be. Post-war Germany is thriving, and this unexpected result of having lost the war retroactively makes the war itself appear futile: if 'loser wins', then winning is pointless. Specifically, Frantz's own total commitment to victory, which manifested itself in brutality, is invalidated. He has learned a hard lesson, viz. that 'l'homme adulte d'aujourd'hui - [...] - est forcément témoin ou complice'. ²⁷ Further, Frantz knows that the accomplice is also a witness, and that the witness, by his usual acquiescence, is also an accomplice. The victim is the indispensable Other without whom there can be neither accomplice nor witness. But the victim too is a witness (though often considered unreliable if he has survived!). This trio is unified in the person of the martyr: he is the victim who bears witness by complicity in his own sacrifice. ²⁸ It is the role of

martyr that Frantz assigns to himself (p.86): the scene parodying the Last Supper (IV, 8) leaves no doubt about his Messianic delusions. However, in order to be the witness of his society, of his century, of his defunct species, he must pretend that Germany has indeed met its deserved Armageddon. He must, in other words, play Fortune at her own game - 'qui perd gagne' - and try to transform his personal defeat into a triumph by refusing the truth of Germany's remarkable economic recovery. Actual suicide is the ineluctable coronation of Frantz's martyrdom: it is both the only possible expiation of Germany's (and his own) sins, and the only enduring way to refuse to believe that a dynamic industrial giant has arisen from the ashes of the Allied bombing:

Frantz est un produit fini dans un monde en processus de transformation. Le suicide final des séquestrés est l'acte de décès d'un milieu enfermé dans un moment historique qui ne correspond plus aux conditions actuelles. 29

The historical moment of Les Séquestrés d'Altona is a detailed illustration of what Lorris calls Sartre's 'last myth', History itself - or rather, 'la toute-puissance de l'Histoire'. 30 In the broadest sense, History is the situation of Frantz von Gerlach. His time and place determine his being in all its impotence and passivity:

Ici, les personnages sont tout le temps commandés, tenus par le passé comme ils le sont les uns par les autres. C'est à cause

du passé, du leur, de celui de tous, qu'ils agissent d'une certaine façon. Comme dans la vie réelle. ³¹

Frantz's despairing comment: 'La guerre, on ne la fait pas: c'est elle qui nous fait' (p.173), encapsulates a deterministic view of History which directly contradicts Sartre's early optimism. ³² Given this degree of human frailty in the face of historical forces, Frantz's life-long efforts to reverse or deny the tide of History, albeit finally by the creation of a total fiction, amount perhaps to a kind of action. He is 'mad', no doubt. ³³ But the enormity of his self-assigned task, and his devotion to it, command a certain admiration. It is, at least in part, his defiant individuality which so attracts Johanna. Nevertheless, the dominion of History is depicted as complete: 'elle use les hommes qu'elle emploie et les tue sous elle comme des chevaux.' ³⁴ So complete is it, in fact, that Frantz becomes the victim even of the counter-History which he himself creates; his existence is a living death whose inevitable outcome is death proper:

Les Gerlach ont mais ne font pas, et ne faisaient pas, ne sont pas. [...] L'Histoire fait l'homme et se joue de lui, et c'est parce qu'il pressent le divorce de l'homme et de l'Histoire que Frantz essaie d'arrêter le temps historique, plonge l'Allemagne dans un coma interminable, rêve éveillé dont il ne sort que pour mourir: ³⁵

Yet neither Frantz's living death, nor his suicide, can ever be vindicated, useful, or meaningful, for his historical situation may explain, but it cannot justify them: 'Mais l'Histoire récupère tout sauf la mort: [...].' 36

Act and Agent.

An act, for Sartre, is a deed tending to change the world and the agent who commits it. At the centre of Les Séquestrés d'Altona is a man obsessed with failed attempts to act, whose obsession culminates and exorcises itself in a final 'act' of self-destruction. He is surrounded by four other 'agents' manqués. If Les Mains sales was Sartre's Hamlet, Les Séquestrés d'Altona is, in one sense, his Bérénice: no-one does anything.

Werner cannot hope to be an 'agent'. He is a worse case of inherited impotence than his brother. Leni is manipulated by her father and acts out of self-interest: far from seeking to change the world, she is dedicated to its remaining the same. Only Johanna appears to have the spirit demanded of an agent. But her career as an actress makes her suspect: she is conditioned to play roles, and that is exactly what she does as the (at first) unwitting instrument of Gerlach's strategy, her rebelliousness curbed initially by the fascination she feels for Frantz; next by her instinctive moral repugnance for the terrible truth about his war service. More than what Johanna

does, it is what she does not, or cannot, do that contributes to Frantz's suicide.

Gerlach is a man who has acted in his life, a 'self-made man' both in the classic capitalist sense, and in the sense that he is fils de ses oeuvres (to borrow a term from Goetz and Georges de Valera). But he is, precisely, made: he no longer becomes, he is; he no longer does, he has. He has power, wealth, status, everything except the potential to do. The mere puppet of the business, his death should change nothing, for he is already "dead". The scheme of manipulation which he begins to operate is hardly an 'act': it is a dying man's self-interested project to maintain the status quo.

Sartre describes Frantz as: 'un homme voué à l'impuissance par la puissance de son père.' ³⁷ But though he appears to be engaged in what I would call the 'anti-action' of the madman, he nevertheless retains some potential to act, and that is why, to a great extent, his father wants to destroy him, to render his impotence permanent. It is our sense of Frantz's potential which imparts impetus and direction to the drama. As we experience with Frantz three moments in his past when he had tried to act momentarily - in matters of life and death - we wonder, as he does, whether it might not yet be possible to commit an act of some kind; and, if so, what kind of act it could be. Those moments are (in chronological order): i) the episode of the Rabbi; ii) the episode of torture; iii) the episode of the amorous G.I. The crucial one is the second, and for reasons of drama it is the last to be recalled. I shall consider them in their order of theatrical presentation.

The cinematic 'flashback' technique essayed in Les Mains sales is much exploited in Les Séquestrés d'Altona. The first of six occurs in Act I, scene 2 (pp.41-44). It shows Frantz and Gerlach listening to the radio's announcement of the Nuremberg tribunal's judgment against Goering. Gerlach remembers this as the one occasion on which Frantz had a more than monosyllabic dialogue with him, yet which preceded the moment of his self-imprisonment. It reveals the opposed attitudes of father and son to their respective roles in the lately lost war. Frantz sees himself as the accomplice of Nazism: 'Je suis Goering. S'ils le pendent, c'est moi le pendu.' (p.44) Yet his only guilt is to have lost, to feel guilty arraigned before the victors. Gerlach, on the other hand, is Goering's 'victim' (p.43). He claims only to have tolerated the Nazis because there was no option, and Frantz's attitude baffles him: 'Je n'y ai rien compris.' (p.44) He cannot say whether Frantz thought all Germans guilty or all Germans innocent. Leni, once the flashback has faded out, offers this illumination: 'Les innocents avaient vingt ans, c'étaient les soldats; les coupables en avaient cinquante, c'étaient leurs pères.' (p.45) Why the attitudes of father and son should diverge so diametrically, and why in particular Frantz should have blamed the older generation while exonerating his own, becomes clearer as the tales of his failed exploits are told.

The first of these is illustrated in the second flashback (I, 2, pp.47-53). Ostensibly, Frantz committed an act of unselfish human kindness, sheltering a Rabbi escaped from a concentration camp, and risking his own life in doing so. ³⁸ However, his motivation is more

complex than simple philanthropy. In the first place, the camp from which the Jew had escaped was on Gerlach's land, sold off to the authorities for that very purpose. Frantz censures his father for this cynical piece of business: only the conviction that he could not have acted otherwise would make him excuse Gerlach, who refuses, nonetheless, to tell that lie. Frantz, it seems, is less concerned to save the Rabbi's life than to risk his own as an expiation of his father's crime:

LE PÈRE: [...] Pourquoi l'as-tu mis dans ta
chambre? Pour me racheter? (Un silence.)
Réponds: c'est pour moi.
FRANTZ: C'est pour nous. Vous, c'est moi. (p.51)

Frantz deliberately courts danger, refusing to abandon the Rabbi, as his father tells him, and staying with him till the S.S. arrive. But Gerlach makes a phone call and settles the affair: the arresting officer reluctantly has to agree that Frantz's capital offence is merely 'une étourderie' (p.52). What Gerlach was unable to prevent, however, since he had not foreseen it, was the brutal murder of the Rabbi, before Frantz's eyes, at the hands of the S.S. Gerlach's intervention, therefore, not only spared Frantz, but stood his act of charity and expiation on its head: the Rabbi's life was exchanged for Frantz's, whereas Frantz had intended the reverse, apparently. I say 'apparently' because it is incredible

that Frantz should have expected any other response from his father than that which he got. It is as though he took fright when the supposed treachery of Fritz (their Nazi chauffeur) threatened to turn Frantz's philanthropy into catastrophe. Johanna makes a perspicacious analysis of the affair:

C'était un petit puritain, une victime de Luther, qui voulait payer de son sang les terrains que vous aviez vendus. (Elle se retourne vers le Père.) Vous avez tout annulé. Il n'est resté qu'un jeu pour gosse de riches. Avec danger de mort, bien sûr: mais pour le partenaire ... il a compris qu'on lui permettait tout parce qu'il ne comptait pour rien.

LE PÈRE, illuminé, la désignant: Voilà la femme qu'il lui fallait. [...] Elle a compris du premier coup.

(A Johanna.) N'est-ce pas? J'aurais dû transiger pour deux ans de prison. Quelle gaffe! Tout valait mieux que l'impunité. (pp.55-56)

Johanna then goes on to observe, with equal astuteness, that Frantz's enlistment - the condition of his impunity - simply offered him further opportunity to indulge his death-wish. She calls his twelve decorations for bravery: 'Douze échecs de plus. Il courait après la mort, pas de chance: elle courait plus vite que lui.' (p.56)

There is another aspect of this incident which Johanna does not comment on, yet which is relevant to Frantz's later crimes: this is

his contempt for the Rabbi, for the prisoners en masse, and, by implication, for the common run of mankind. This mépris is revealed in Frantz's disdainful description of the prisoners' suffering (p.47), and in what his father calls his 'Pharisaic hand-washing' (p.48). Gerlach tells him that his contempt for the prisoners and his censoriousness towards Germany's leaders - both stemming from a mistaken belief in 'la dignité humaine' (p.49) - account for his impotence. Gerlach's 'gaffe' was to have thrust impotence upon Frantz while making him believe that he had chosen it (p.49). What a humiliating and paradoxical freedom, to have the power to choose only impotence! In his war career, Frantz would attempt to defy his father by expressing his contempt for men through the exercise of power. But those efforts would all tend to confirm the impotence originally established by the saga of the fugitive Rabbi.

The next episode recalled concerns Frantz's brawl with a G.I. after the Allied occupation of Germany. Gerlach recounts how Leni used to amuse herself by inviting the attentions of soldiers billeted with them in order to watch their reaction when, having engaged their interest, she would declare herself a Nazi 'en les traitant de sales juifs' (p.56). This tasteless pleasantry had got out of hand one day when the mocked-at G.I. tried to rape her. She and Frantz between them overpowered him, and Frantz was sentenced to be deported. Those are the bald facts of the incident. But it contains a number of subtle details which are important for our understanding of Frantz:

- i) Frantz was a war hero, decorated a dozen times, who had to suffer

the ignominy of having his house filled with triumphant enemy soldiers who appeared to make free with his sister's favours;

ii) gallantly, he went to his sister's aid, but was then over-powered by his adversary ('le type avait le dessus', p.57);

iii) it was Leni who then rescued Frantz, and put the soldier in hospital for six weeks;

iv) Gerlach tells us that, 'Naturellement, Frantz a tout pris sur lui' (p.57). Naturally! How else could he salvage any pride, any conviction of having done something?

v) Gerlach, as he had done in the case of the Rabbi, 'settled' everything: once again Frantz's 'act' was dismissed as mere stupidity thanks to his father's contacts in high places;

vi) as in 1941, Frantz's feelings came a poor second to the prosperity of the business ('il y avait de gros intérêts en jeu', p.58);

vii) as before, the grave, and possibly fatal, consequences of Frantz's 'act' were diluted by his father's interference: exile is less glamorous than execution;

viii) whereas the 'exile' of 1941 had sent Frantz into action, the proposed exile of 1947 held out the prospect of futility. All these details underscore Frantz's fundamental impotence, the harder for him to bear because he had so recently tasted seemingly total power.

There is logic, then, in his having chosen to maintain the illusion of purposefulness (as witness of mankind), in preference to the useless slow death of a refugee in Argentina. His self-isolation is as much an attempt to free himself from his father's domination as was his experiment

with power during the war. What form did that experiment take?

In Act II, scene 2, Leni urges Frantz to shed his shame over their incest: '(Aux Crabes.) Il me désire sans m'aimer, il crève de honte, [...], à Frantz]: Tu seras invulnérable si tu oses déclarer: "J'ai fait ce que j'ai voulu et je veux ce que j'ai fait."' (p.92) But why does Frantz - who, like all Sartre's heroes, is also 'dying of pride' - feel shame? ³⁹ Not, he says, on account of their illicit sex. Is he then ashamed for Germany's defeat? No doubt that is significant, but he seems chiefly preoccupied with a personal burden: 'Qu'est-ce que j'ai fait, Leni? [...] Non, Leni, ce n'est pas de l'inceste que tu parlais. (Un temps.) Qu'est-ce que j'ai fait?' (p.92) There is perhaps shame attached to having been the sole survivor of his battalion, but there is no suggestion that this torments Frantz. ⁴⁰ Leni's refusal to answer his insistent question hints at some dark secret they share. Because she withholds the truth which they both know, their relationship begins to falter. She underestimates both the gravity of his crimes and the potency of his conscience:

[Leni] ne voit pas du tout que ce n'est absolument pas la même chose de revendiquer son inceste dans une famille déjà pas mal détruite, à une époque où la moralité est très assouplie, ou de revendiquer tranquillement le fait d'avoir fait souffrir des hommes jusqu'à la mort. ⁴¹

This misunderstanding on Leni's part increases the rival Johanna's

chances of gaining influence with Frantz.

We are left to infer from this scene (II, 1) that Frantz's act is unnameable, and although we might guess at it, Sartre deliberately keeps us in suspense. He feeds our anticipation with another brief flashback (II, 3) in which Frantz is seen issuing enigmatic orders regarding certain captive partisans. In this instance the angry reluctance of the Feldwebel, and Frantz's terrified reaction on 'awakening' (II, 4), again suggest some terrible event, and that suggestion is strengthened by Frantz's later soliloquy before the 'crabs': 'Le Mal, Messieurs les Magistrats, le Mal, c'était l'unique matériau. On le travaillait dans nos raffineries. Le Bien, c'était le produit fini. Résultat: le Bien tournait mal. Et n'allez pas croire que le Mal tournait bien.' (p.96)

The play's fifth flashback again evokes Frantz's war experience but still does not disclose any crime on his part. On the contrary, its purpose is to show that his sins were rather of omission than of commission. The context of this particular evocation is crucial, for the rifts between Leni and Frantz, and Werner and Johanna (on account of the former's submission to the father - III, 4), have combined to foster sympathy between Frantz and his sister-in-law. This relationship is very like that of Estelle and Garcin in which the salient features of the partners - 'star' and 'hero' - require, more so than most, appreciation by others. Thus a mutual dependency soon develops, but it is a fragile one. We recall that Estelle's feelings for Garcin altered drastically when she learned that he was not quite the hero he seemed.

For Estelle and Garcin, life is out of the question since they are

both dead. Similarly, Frantz and Johanna are, in their different ways, "dead" and "dying" respectively, so it is apposite that their mutual aid should express itself in terms of giving "life". This begins with Johanna's gift to Frantz of a wrist-watch:

FRANTZ: [...] Pour chasser le temps de cette chambre, il m'a fallu cinq années; pour l'y ramener vous n'avez eu besoin que d'un instant. [...] Je trouve ce cadeau suspect. [...] Je me demande seulement pourquoi vous me l'avez fait.

JOHANNA: Puisque je vis encore, autant que vous viviez.

FRANTZ: Qu'est-ce que c'est, vivre? Vous attendre?(pp.153-54)

Frantz is beginning to depend on Johanna, at the same time becoming jealous of Werner, as Werner already is of him. A hellish ménage à trois seems to Johanna the probable result: 'Nous allons souffrir l'Enfer. [...] Werner, vous et moi.' (p.156) She is determined to avoid that if she can, and transmits Gerlach's request to see Frantz. Having done so, however, she realises that this meeting might well entail Frantz's death, and she therefore refuses to let him reply. In spite of herself, Johanna's fascination with Frantz begins to dominate her instinctive hatred of him:

JOHANNA (petit rire, regard encore chargé de haine):

Figurez-vous que j'avais envie de vous tuer.

FRANTZ (très aimable): Oh! Depuis longtemps?

JOHANNA: Depuis cinq minutes.

FRANTZ: Et c'est déjà fini? [...] : moi, l'envie de vous tuer me dure toute la nuit. (p.160)

This hatred, arising from the threat each poses to the other's 'conjugal' relationship, resolves into an alliance of sorts, a 'complicity' (p.163) whose effect is immediate: 'il faut vivre' (p.163), says Frantz. But how can he escape the murderous vengeance of Leni? He has no wish to die:

JOHANNA: Cela vous ennuerait de mourir?

FRANTZ: Franchement, oui. (Geste au plafond.) Je n'ai pas trouvé les mots qu'ils peuvent comprendre. Et vous?

JOHANNA: Je n'aimerais pas que Werner reste seul.

FRANTZ (petit rire, en conclusion): Nous ne pouvons ni mourir, ni vivre.

JOHANNA (même jeu): Ni nous voir ni nous quitter.

FRANTZ: Nous sommes drôlement coincés. (pp.163-64)

The only way out of this impasse seems to Frantz to be suicide, 'un chemin qu'on ne barre jamais, vu qu'il est impraticable' (p.164). But Johanna pleads for their lives: 'Nous avons été heureux.' (p.165) Frantz doubts that Leni would let them live, but Johanna is confident that she can deal with the threat from that quarter: 'Leni, je me charge d'elle. S'il faut tirer, je tirerai la première.' (p.165)

Their pact is made: Johanna joins in Frantz's madness - 'c'est ma cage. J'y tourne en rond' (p.165) - and Frantz becomes her accomplice, 'parce que je tiens à vous' (p.166). Nevertheless, Johanna represents a truth which threatens Frantz unless he learns to love her more than the falsehoods which he addresses to the Crabs in the vain hope of reversing History. He knows in his heart that men will judge his times, and that is what he cannot bear to think of (compare Heinrich). In desperation, he begs Johanna to be his judge, and so to guarantee his existence (compare Garcin and Estelle). Because the Crabs never respond, he cannot tell whether he has a tribunal at all:

Une pyramide de silence au-dessus de ma tête, un millénaire
qui se taît: ça me tue. Et s'ils m'ignorent? S'ils m'ont
oublié? Qu'est-ce que je deviens, moi, sans tribunal? [...]
Une vie qui n'est pas sanctionnée, la terre la boit. [...] :
vous me ferez oublier les siècles, je vivrai. (p.169)

Johanna is, to say the least, reluctant, seeing no place for judgment in love, and fearing a mutual degradation. But Frantz insists that she hear and believe his confession:

J'ai eu peur. Vous étiez dans mes bras, je vous désirais,
j'allais vivre ... [...] Je vous dirai ma vie; mais ne vous
attendez pas à de grandes scélératesses. Oh, non: même pas

cela. Savez-vous ce que je me reproche: je n'ai rien fait.

(La lumière baisse lentement.) Rien! Rien, jamais! (p.172)

I have taken care to give the context of the next flashback because of its great importance for Frantz: it is literally a matter of life or death. Johanna can save him if she acquits him. If not, the sentence must be death. Frantz's self-reproach that he 'did nothing' is ambiguous. On the one hand, he wants Johanna to think him innocent of any atrocity, whereas he is guilty. On the other hand, his plea alludes, albeit obliquely, to the impotence to which he was, ab initio, condemned by his father.

By contrast, the sense of the following scene (IV, 3) is unequivocal. The mutilated German woman argues that whatever Frantz may have done, it was effectively nothing in that it was insufficient to assure victory: 'chaque fois que tu épargnais la vie d'un ennemi, fût-il au berceau, tu prenais une des nôtres; [...] Le coupable, c'est toi! Dieu ne te jugera pas sur tes actes, mais sur ce que tu n'as pas osé faire: sur les crimes qu'il fallait commettre et que tu n'as pas commis!' (p.176) The point of this recollection - which may not be one, but rather 'un rêve. [...] un cauchemar' (p.177): again, Frantz is ambiguous about it - the point of it is to prime Johanna to regard the eventual revelation of his crimes in the perspective of total war, that is, one in which honour and mercifulness are assimilable to irresponsibility and cowardice. Frantz presses Johanna to share this view for it is the only one which can mitigate or even justify the crimes of those on trial

at Nuremberg. ⁴² Johanna will not be persuaded: 'Un soldat, c'est un homme.' (p.178) She could not love Frantz if he were guilty of such acts and so, like Garcin, he modifies his confession a little.

Frantz's confession starts with an account of an episode on the Russian front (IV, 5). He and another lieutenant, Klages, and an N.C.O., Heinrich, are cut off from their lines by partisans. Klages ('fils d'un pasteur; un idéaliste, dans les nuages', p.179) cannot assert his authority over Heinrich ('les pieds sur terre, [...] cent pour cent nazi', p.179) who has captured two Russian peasants and is threatening to torture them. Only Frantz commands the respect of both colleagues, and therefore only he can decide the captives' fate: 'Frantz a un pouvoir de vie et de mort sur les populations. Puissance enivrante et provisoire!' ⁴³ Frantz is depicted as a hard man with no fond illusions about human dignity - 'Le respect de l'homme, je m'en moque' (p.180) - for whom the exhilarating power of life and death, war's gift, has meant a liberation from his paternally imposed impotence: '(Revenant à Klages.) La guerre passe par toi. En la refusant tu te condamnes à l'impuissance: tu as vendu ton âme pour rien, moraliste. La mienne, je la ferai payer.' (p.182) Frantz's attitude here is that of the final Goetz, Klages's that of the wretched priest Heinrich. Frantz rebukes him for his bad faith in an implicit reaffirmation of the basic Sartrean dogma that men are only the sum of their acts:

(Revenant à Johanna): C'était le champion de la restriction mentale; Klages condamnait les nazis dans son âme pour se

cachez qu'il les servait dans son corps.

JOHANNA: Il ne les servait pas!

FRANTZ (à Johanna): Allez! Vous êtes de la même espèce.

Ses mains les servaient, sa voix les servait. Il disait à

Dieu: 'Je ne veux pas ce que je fais!' mais il le faisait.

(pp.181-82)

By contrast, Frantz himself had welcomed the war as a pretext for action:

La guerre était mon destin et je l'ai voulue de toute mon âme.

J'agissais, enfin! Je réinventais les ordres; j'étais d'accord avec moi.

JOHANNA: Agir, c'est tuer?

FRANTZ (à Johanna): C'est agir. Écrire son nom.

KLAGES: Sur quoi?

FRANTZ (à Klages): Sur ce qui se trouve là. (p.182)

This attitude is much like Mathieu's, firing from the church tower on the enemy below to avenge his lost illusions. ⁴⁴ Like Oreste, Hugo, and Goetz, Frantz came to identify action with murderous violence: other acts could not make the desired impact. While frankly admitting this to Johanna, Frantz manages so to present things as to make it seem that his guilt (such as it is) lies in having apparently prevented the torture of the prisoners (V, 6), and having therefore failed to do all he could have done to defend his own men: 'Je n'ai pas tout fait pour

les empêcher de mourir.' (p.185) 'Le premier chef d'accusation', therefore, is not that he committed atrocities but, on the contrary, that he did not do so when he ought to have done: 'Celui qui ne fait pas tout ne fait rien: je n'ai rien fait. Celui qui n'a rien fait n'est personne. Personne? (Se désignant comme à l'appel.) Présent!' (p.186) As before, this claim is ambivalent. It is true that Frantz did whatever he did largely in response to external pressures:

J'ai essayé, en même temps que je montrais le crime de Frantz, de montrer le crime comme presque inévitable. Il y a un bref instant de liberté mais en fait tout concourait à conduire Frantz à son acte. 45

It is not true inasmuch as he did do whatever he did. It is in this false sense - that he literally did not commit any crime - that Johanna understands and believes Frantz: 'Je vous acquitte.' (p.186) Leni makes it her business to enlighten Johanna further.

The cake Leni brings Frantz (IV, 8) bears his name in pink sugar: 'Plus joli mais moins flatteur que l'airain' (p.188), he enigmatically remarks, alluding perhaps to the transience and consumability of sugar as compared with the durability of bronze. Leni's threat is to reveal Frantz's abuse of power to Johanna, and this is a mortal threat, for if Johanna believes Leni rather than Frantz, it will be the death of him. He offers Leni the shortcut of the revolver, but she is too confident

of her case. Besides, she does not want him dead, and a martyr, so long as she can maintain his living death. For his part, Frantz eschews the use of the gun against her because he glimpses the possibility of a new life through the redemptive love and trust of Johanna:

Hier, j'aurais fait un massacre. Aujourd'hui, j'entrevois une chance. Une chance sur cent pour qu'elle m'accepte. (Remettant le revolver dans le tiroir.) Si tu es encore vivante, Leni, c'est que j'ai décidé de courir cette chance jusqu'au bout. (p.191)

Alas for Frantz, however, his one chance in a hundred does not come up. Although conscious that they have been used by Gerlach to engineer Frantz's surrender, the two women cannot resist contriving a situation in which the whole truth about the incident on the Russian front has to be disclosed. In her jealousy, Leni offers to supply the epilogue to Frantz's account. He tries to silence her, but succeeds only in arousing Johanna's curiosity:

JOHANNA: Je veux savoir la fin de l'histoire.

FRANTZ: L'histoire n'en a pas: tout le monde est mort, sauf moi. [...]

JOHANNA: [...]! Vous n'avez rien fait, n'est-ce pas?

FRANTZ (c'est presque un grognement): Rien.

JOHANNA (avec violence): Mais dites-le, il faut que je vous

entende! Dites: je n'ai rien fait!

FRANTZ (d'une voix égarée): Je n'ai rien fait.

JOHANNA (elle le regarde avec une sorte de terreur et se met à crier): Ha! (Elle étouffe son cri.) Je ne vous reconnais plus.

FRANTZ (s'obstinant): Je n'ai rien fait.

LENI: Tu as laissé faire. (pp.195-96)

As Leni points out, Frantz's crime was not to have done, but to have allowed to be done. His abuse of power consists in his not having exerted it. Once more, his plea 'je n'ai rien fait' is ironic and ambivalent: at the height of his power, he made a virtue of impotence. Only subsequently, so it seems, might he have been guilty of torture with his own hands, '[mais] c'est le premier pas qui coûte' (p.196), as the relentless Leni observes. Frantz offers to explain - 'je dirai la vérité entière, Johanna, je vous aime plus que ma vie' (p.196) - but though he is pleading for his life, Johanna cannot overcome her revulsion for his crimes: '(avec une sorte de haine): Vous avez torturé! Vous!' (p.196) Frantz does not deny it. Johanna's loss of faith in him is a sentence of death.⁴⁶ He accordingly agrees to meet his father within the hour, having nothing left to lose. Whether or not we can forgive Frantz's crimes, can we understand them?

Sartre holds that there are certain acts which can never be justified: 'La morale, la politique, plus rien n'est simple. Il y a cependant des actes inacceptables.'⁴⁷ Torture is the archetype of

such acts: 'La torture représente l'acte radical qui ne peut être aboli que par le suicide de celui qui l'a commis.' ⁴⁸ Fascism has a distinctive taste for torture: it makes of a man either 'a monkey or a corpse'. ⁴⁹ As a mode of conduct, torture exhibits the same vice as sadism: the torturer and the sadist both seek to make objects of their victims without, however, depriving them of their subjectivity. This endeavour is logically, and especially ontologically, impossible: en-soi and pour-soi can never be made to coincide. Frantz may claim to have 'chang[é] l'homme en vermine de son vivant' (p.207, his emphasis), but he is deluding himself for it cannot be done: men cannot be transformed into vermin or monkeys and yet remain men. The radical conversion to object has finally to be effected through murder. Torture, like sadism, 'se solde par un échec'. To objectify his victim, the torturer must make him a corpse; but how can he torture a corpse? And how can he avert the reciprocal objectifying effect of the victim's death, in which event, 'L'impuissance change de bord'? ⁵⁰ Suicide is the fitting punishment for torture because the torturer is thereby reified as he intended his victim to be.

I have already noted that Sartre sees Frantz's crime as largely conditioned by his situation. ⁵¹ Frantz himself had a sense of fatedness: 'Sur toutes les routes il y a des crimes. Des crimes préfabriqués qui n'attendent que leur criminel. Le vrai soldat passe et s'en charge.' (pp.177-78) ⁵² Nevertheless, Sartre accords, as he must, 'un bref instant de liberté', ⁵³ what Frantz calls 'une minute d'indépendance' (p.217). If there was truly a moment of choice,

what was Frantz's motivation?

We can, I think, dismiss - as Johanna does - the explanation implied by the episode of the wounded woman. It is incredible that Frantz should have tortured partisans, when his position seemed hopeless, merely to save the skins of Klages and Heinrich, both of whom he obviously despised. It is equally unlikely that he was particularly influenced by their shortage of rations and the consequent pressure to surrender. After all, there is agreement that Frantz went to war looking for death. Would he have stooped to torture for fear of hunger? ⁵⁴ Equally unsatisfactory is the account he first gives to his father:

FRANTZ: C'est tout. Les partisans nous harcelaient;
ils avaient la complicité du village: j'ai tenté de faire
parler les villageois. (Un silence. Sec et nerveux.)
Toujours la même histoire.

LE PÈRE, (lourd et lent mais inexpressif): Toujours. (p.204)

As Gerlach's desultory reply suggests, it is hard to believe that torture can be regarded as 'just one of those things', which is rather what Frantz's words imply.

The truth of the matter begins to emerge in the course of the long conversation between father and son: 'je suis tortionnaire parce que vous êtes dénonciateur' (p.204), says Frantz. This encapsulates his case well, though it requires, no doubt, some enlargement:

FRANTZ: [...] Je choisis les vivants et les morts: toi, va te faire tuer! toi, reste ici! [...] J'ai le pouvoir suprême. [...] ! J'irai jusqu'au bout. Au bout du pouvoir! (Au Père, brusquement.) Savez-vous pourquoi?

LE PÈRE: Oui.

FRANTZ, (un peu décontenancé): Ah?

LE PÈRE: Une fois dans ta vie, tu as connu l'impuissance.

FRANTZ (criant et riant): Le vieil Hindenburg a toute sa tête: vive lui! Oui, je l'ai connue. (pp.205-06)

If this explains the aspect of conditioning in Frantz's crimes, it does not yet account for his 'bref instant de liberté'.

Frantz recalls that moment of choice in his long speech in Act V, scene 1. He remembers being held by four soldiers as the Rabbi was shot. From his sense of impotence there arose an unexpected reaction: 'Le rabbin saignait et je découvrais, au coeur de mon impuissance, je ne sais quel assentiment.' (p.206) That assent, I contend, stemmed from Frantz's glimpsing in this horrible event his own possibility to become independent of his father by acting inhumanely. He reverses the experience of Goetz, whose disillusionment led him from Evil to Good. The war offers Frantz the ideal opportunity to do evil if he wills it: it becomes one of his possibilities. Thus, when pinned down on the Russian front by partisans, torture - spuriously legitimised as necessary - is the option which offers to the impotent a taste of supreme power. The memory of his double impotence - restrained, and therefore

unable either to save the Rabbi, or to assist in his murder (i.e. to act upon his assent) - prompted Frantz to the act which alone could efface that memory. That is how things seem. But let us consider carefully Frantz's final evocation of the events:

FRANTZ: [...] Plus de vivres; mes soldats rôdaient autour de la grange. (Revivant le passé.) Quatre bons Allemands m'écraseront contre le sol et mes hommes à moi saigneront les prisonniers à blanc. Non! Je ne retomberai jamais dans l'abjecte impuissance. Je le jure. Il fait noir. L'horreur est encore enchaînée.... je les prendrai de vitesse: si quelqu'un la déchaîne, ce sera moi. Je revendiquerai le mal, je manifesterai mon pouvoir par la singularité d'un acte inoubliable: changer l'homme en vermine de son vivant; je m'occuperai seul des prisonniers, je les précipiterai dans l'abjection: ils parleront. Le pouvoir est un abîme dont je vois le fond; cela ne suffit pas de choisir les morts futurs; par un canif et un briquet, je déciderai du règne humain. (Égaré.) Fascinant! Les souverains vont en Enfer, c'est leur gloire: j'irai. (Il demeure halluciné sur le devant de la scène.) LE PÈRE (tranquillement): Ils ont parlé? FRANTZ (arraché à ses souvenirs): Hein, quoi? (Un temps.) Non. (Un temps.) Morts avant. LE PÈRE: Qui perd gagne. (pp.206-07)

Frantz was determined that he should not again suffer the ignominy he had known as he watched the Rabbi die. At first he imagined himself restrained and impotent while the soldiers 'bleed the prisoners white'. But why should he have feared that might happen? If, as he claims, he was in charge; if he alone was respected and obeyed because he treated his men as 'tas de merde' (p.181), why should he have feared that they would restrain him and torture their captives if he had ordered them not to do so? One can only infer that Frantz's authority was distinctly shaky, more so even than Klages's. His fear was that even if he ordered decent treatment of the prisoners, his orders would be defied. The only sure way to command the obedience of his men was to issue the orders they wanted to hear. Thus at the very zenith of his power - or the illusion of it - Frantz was haunted by impotence. Whereas in the first instance of torture Frantz did not act but allowed others (namely Heinrich) to do so, in this second case he acted - desperately, extravagantly - to compensate for his inability to prevent others from doing so. Rather than risk a mutiny which could only result in his humiliation, Frantz took the initiative, 'unleashing terror' in the performance of his 'acte inoubliable: changer l'homme en vermine de son vivant'. This is the impossible act par excellence, futile, self-deluding, self-defeating. How can one decide the 'reign of man' with a 'penknife and a lighter'? The bathos of these lines is almost comic. How apt that Frantz's victims should have died without talking: their deaths confirm the redundancy of the act and reify the agent. They have the last laugh: 'le règne humain, ce sont eux qui en ont décidé' (p.207).

(The same could be said of the 'morts sans sépulture'.) It appears from this analysis that Frantz's 'minute d'indépendance' was in fact less free and more conditioned than he cares to think. Can the same be said of his suicide?

There are several senses in which Frantz's suicide might be called inevitable. Most obviously, Johanna, his lifeline, abandons him;⁵⁵ and his symbiotic relationship with his father means that his own death is entailed by Gerlach's.⁵⁶ Most critics focus to some degree on the fatedness of Frantz's death. Dort calls it the 'conclusion logique et tragique' of his and his father's 'prise de conscience'.⁵⁷ Contat sees Frantz's suicide as the natural consequence of 'l'échec de l'inutilité de toute sa vie'.⁵⁸ According to Boros, death is the only possible exit from total incarceration.⁵⁹ Laraque detects an ineluctability too, though he views it in the historical perspective of the class struggle.⁶⁰ Fields sees Frantz's suicide as the logical conclusion of 'le projet de sa vie, qui était la grandeur'.⁶¹ And Cohn speaks of it as the only feasible atonement for 'crimes beyond the possibility of redemption'.⁶² Sartre himself stressed that Frantz's relationship with his father so conditioned his freedom as to make his choice of death an inescapable one:

Ce que son père va lui expliquer, c'est qu'au fond il ne pouvait rien faire d'autre que ce qu'il a fait, et qu'il était par conséquent aussi impuissant dans le mal que dans le bien. A partir de là, Frantz ne peut rien choisir d'autre

que la mort. 63

(Contat, as usual in his excellent study, concurs with Sartre here.) 64
Do the above opinions, which all tend to interpret Frantz's suicide as, to a greater or lesser extent, predetermined, give a complete picture of the event? Do they take account of the fact that moments before their joint suicide, son and father both aver that they do not want to die ('just yet' in Gerlach's case) (pp.217, 218)? How and why do Frantz and his father release their hold on life in the course of their final meeting? Is there really an element of choice, of freedom in Frantz's suicide? Is it, in that sense, his only 'act'?

The one clear purpose in Frantz's eventually agreeing to meet his father is to shock him by divulging his crimes, to boast of his 'independence'. He is evidently surprised by Gerlach's impassive reception of his news, so he follows it with a further confession: 'J'ai prétendu que je m'enfermais pour ne pas assister à l'agonie de l'Allemagne c'est faux. J'ai souhaité la mort de mon pays et je me séquestrais pour n'être pas témoin de sa résurrection.' (p.208) But Gerlach is still unmoved, and Frantz, frustrated by his refusal to pass judgment, threatens to lock himself away again. He seems to have recovered from Johanna's rejection, and now seeks his father's acceptance. But when that too is withheld, he senses an air of fatal defeat:

FRANTZ: [...] Ah, je n'aurais pas dû vous revoir! Je m'en doutais! Je m'en doutais!

LE PÈRE: De quoi?

FRANTZ: De ce qui m'arriverait.

LE PÈRE: Il ne t'arrive rien.

FRANTZ: Pas encore. (p.209)

This foreboding is engendered by Frantz's discovery that his confessions have taught his father nothing he did not already know. He is by turns 'stupéfait, violent, décontenancé' (p.210) as he instead discovers that his father had learned of his exploits from two would-be blackmailers, survivors taken prisoner by the Russians at Smolensk; that he silenced them - (it is implied that he had them killed); and that he then registered Frantz's death in order, for the third time in his son's life, to 'settle matters' (this time, definitively).

This unexpected information is a terrible blow for Frantz. For thirteen years he has nourished his spirit with the memory of those few moments of independence. He now finds that, as always, his father had intervened to tidy up the consequences, yet again stealing his acts from him. Moreover, Gerlach is scarcely even alarmed, as though he had expected that Frantz would become the 'butcher of Smolensk' (or anywhere); as though Frantz's 'bref instant de liberté' was in fact a conditioned response to his situation. Frantz resists that deduction, and fights off a sudden access of emotion for fear of surrendering his last shreds of autonomy to his father's voracious appetite for 'settling things':

FRANTZ: [...] vous êtes trop impérieux pour n'avoir pas

envie de la régler à votre façon.

LE PÈRE (ironie sombre): Impérieux! Cela m'a bien passé.

(Un temps. Il rit pour lui seul, égayé mais sinistre. Puis

il se retourne sur Frantz. Avec une grande douceur,

implacable.) Mais pour cette affaire, oui: je la réglerai.(p.212)

This is a scarcely veiled threat, an invitation to suicide. ⁶⁵ Frantz understands implicitly and refuses, telling his father to 'go to the devil' in an unwitting and ironic prefiguration of the 'Teufelsbrück'. He mounts the stairs towards the haven of his room, but he does not get there.

Gerlach harps on Germany's recovery and the consequent criminality of those who (as Frantz puts it) 'aimaient assez le pays pour sacrifier leur honneur militaire à la victoire' (p.213). Because the new Germany is strong, Frantz the torturer is no different from the convicts of Nuremberg:

LE PÈRE: [...] A présent, tu sais tout: comment pourrais-tu te reprendre à tes comedies?

FRANTZ: Et comment pourrais-je m'en déprendre? Il faut que l'Allemagne crève ou que je sois un criminel de droit commun.

LE PÈRE: Exact.

FRANTZ: Alors? (Il regarde le Père, brusquement.) Je ne veux pas mourir. (p.214)

Frantz's pride - a family trait, an inheritance - cannot accept the status

of common criminal. He prefers Germany's death to his own. But his father takes even the last scrap of his pride:

FRANTZ: [...] Je ne veux pas mourir.

LE PÈRE (tranquillement): Pourquoi pas?

FRANTZ: C'est bien à vous de le demander. Vous avez écrit votre nom.

LE PÈRE: Si tu savais comme je m'en fous!

FRANTZ: Vous mentez, Père: vous vouliez faire des bateaux et vous les avez faits.

LE PÈRE: Je les faisais pour toi.

FRANTZ: Tiens! Je croyais que vous m'aviez fait pour eux. De toute façon, ils sont là. Mort, vous serez une flotte.

Et moi? Qu'est-ce que je laisserai?

LE PÈRE: Rien.

FRANTZ (avec égarement): Voilà pourquoi je vivrai cent ans. Je n'ai que ma vie, moi. (Hagard.) Je n'ai qu'elle! On ne me la prendra pas. Croyez que je la déteste, mais je la préfère à rien.

LE PÈRE: Ta vie, ta mort, de toute façon, c'est rien. Tu n'es rien, tu ne fais rien, tu n'as rien fait, tu ne peux rien faire. (p.214)

In the foregoing excerpt the 'falsehoods' of Frantz's fantasy and the 'truths' of Gerlach's reality collide and intermingle. On the one hand,

Gerlach is dishonest when he feigns indifference to his worldly achievements: if he really had no interest in posterity, he would hardly have gone to such lengths to assure his succession through Werner. On the other hand, Frantz, although right to be tenacious of life, deceives himself in thinking that his 'vie de séquestré' is really a meaningful life. Instead of proposing to live only at the expense of Germany's new life, he should aim to participate in that life. With his radically negative attitude, Frantz is virtually 'nothing'.

Gerlach next stresses his identity with his son, claiming to be no less impotent than he:

Mon pauvre petit! Je voulais que tu mènes l'Entreprise après moi. C'est elle qui mène. Elle choisit ses hommes. Moi, elle m'a éliminé: je possède, mais je ne commande plus. Et toi, petit prince, elle t'a refusé du premier instant: qu'a-t-elle besoin d'un prince? Elle forme et recrute elle-même ses gérants. (Frantz descend les marches lentement pendant que le Père parle.) Je t'avais donné tous les mérites et mon âpre goût du pouvoir, cela n'a pas servi. Quel dommage! Pour agir tu prenais les plus gros risques et, tu vois, elle transformait en gestes tous tes actes. Ton tourment a fini par te pousser au crime et jusque dans le crime elle t'annule: elle s'engraisse de ta défaite. (p.215)

We notice that Gerlach alleges that they are both equally victims of

the business, as if he were not the Frankenstein who created the monster. Seduced by this show of empathy, Frantz begins to descend the stairs. The explicit and definitive statement of his impotence is about to be made, and he does, after all, hear it with a certain relief:

FRANTZ (avec un sourire): J'étais voué?

LE PÈRE: Oui.

FRANTZ: A l'impuissance?

LE PÈRE: Oui.

FRANTZ: Au crime.

LE PÈRE: Oui.

FRANTZ: Par vous?

LE PÈRE: Par mes passions que j'ai mises en toi. Dis à ton tribunal de Crabes que je suis seul coupable - et de tout.

FRANTZ (même sourire): Voilà ce que je voulais vous entendre dire. (Il descend les marches et se trouve de plain-pied avec le Père.) Alors j'accepte. (p.216)

Now that his death is certain - 'à partir de là Frantz ne peut rien choisir d'autre que la mort' - all Frantz can do is to choose its time and place, which he does promptly and decisively. There is then, as Sartre has pointed out, paradoxically wrapped up in this apparently conditioned suicide, a moment of freedom in which Frantz gains his independence of his father, and which makes it his first and last act.

Frantz chooses to execute a sentence which he had long since passed

upon himself, being his only judge - (the crabs, Johanna, Gerlach having in their different ways failed him as judges):

J'ai vécu treize ans avec un revolver chargé dans mon tiroir.

Savez-vous pourquoi je ne me suis pas tué? Je me disais: ce qui est fait restera fait. (p.217)

Seeing now that his past is not his to assume, Frantz moves with alacrity both to draw the logical conclusion of his nullity, and to carry out his suspended sentence. 66

Also, for the first time in his life, Frantz is not doing exactly what his father wants or expects. Their roles are reversed as compared with the beginning of the scene, and it is now Frantz who disconcerts his father:

FRANTZ: [...] Alors j'accepte.

LE PÈRE: Quoi?

FRANTZ: Ce que vous attendez de moi. (Un temps.)

Une seule condition, tous les deux, tout de suite.

LE PÈRE (brusquement décontenancé): Tout de suite?

FRANTZ: Oui.

LE PÈRE (voix enrouée): Tu veux dire aujourd'hui?

FRANTZ: Je veux dire: à l'instant. (Un silence.)

C'est ce que vous vouliez?

LE PÈRE (il tousse): Pas.... si tôt.

11: Les Séquestrés d'Altona

FRANTZ: Pourquoi pas?

LE PÈRE: Je viens de te retrouver.

FRANTZ: Vous n'avez retrouvé personne. Même pas vous. (p.216)

Frantz cleverly turns his father's arguments against him: if it is true that Frantz has never done anything, then he is indeed nobody. The brutal rigour and simplicity of this analysis give Frantz an initiative which he has never before held, and of which he is tenacious despite - or, possibly, because of - his father's evident emotion ('voix enrouée [...] il tousse'). This expresses itself further in personal and philosophic reflections which mark the closest bond yet between father and son:

LE PÈRE: [...] Ma mort enveloppera la tienne et, finalement, je serai seul à mourir. [...] C'est drôle, une vie qui éclate sous un ciel vide. Ça.... ça ne veut rien dire. (Un temps.) Je n'aurai pas de juge. (Un temps.) Tu sais, moi non plus, je ne m'aimais pas.

FRANTZ (posant la main sur le bras du Père): Cela me regardait.

LE PÈRE (même jeu): Enfin, voilà. Je suis l'ombre d'un nuage; une averse et le soleil éclairera la place où j'ai vécu. Je m'en fous: qui gagne perd. L'Entreprise qui nous écrase, je l'ai faite. Il n'y a rien à regretter. (p.218)

Gerlach's acceptance of the suddenness of his death is explained by his

wish to prove the unity of father and son which Frantz had disputed:

'Tant que nous vivrons, nous serons deux.' (p.217) This challenge to Gerlach's egotism - one might almost call it solipsism - reinforced by reminiscences of childhood exploits in fast cars, secures Frantz's Pyrrhic victory: his father succumbs to his pressure for urgency with an inversion of the familiar 'qui perd gagne' motto on his lips.

Equally significant as any of this is the fact that, in order to win his small, but crucial, victory, Frantz dominates his own instinct to live:

Je me disais: ce qui est fait restera fait. (Un temps.
Profondément sincère.) Cela n'arrange rien de mourir: cela
ne m'arrange pas. J'aurais voulu.... vous allez rire:
j'aurais voulu n'être jamais né. (p.217)

We notice that Sartre makes a point of Frantz's sincerity. This is no pose or pretence, but the most fundamental reproach he can make to his father: that of having given him life. (Oreste made the same reproach to Clytemnestre.) To wish he had not been born is futile, but it is understandable, and is not the same thing as wishing to die. Death cannot abolish birth, nor even life: it simply reifies them. ⁶⁷

Nevertheless, suicide is as close as Frantz can get to rejecting his father's unwanted gift of life (a life of sorts), and to punishing him for the additional imposition of impotence (the taking away of "life"). By making a show of willing his death, Frantz can at last break his

father's stranglehold.

Notwithstanding these signs of independence and conscious volition on Frantz's part, his suicide must surely be the sterile gesture which suicide always is.⁶⁸ How then can Sartre speak of 'une libération véritable' in this connection?⁶⁹ Father and son are both, no doubt, released from the misery of impotence and superfluousness. But each must then pass into the domain of the Other and, like all the dead, be radically objectified. How can this be a 'real liberation'?

The answer, I think, is to be found in the martyric aspect of Frantz's life and death. In spite of his posturing, Sartre sees him as a true witness of his time: 'Frantz, quand il meurt, ce bourreau, c'est nous, c'est moi'.⁷⁰ And not of his time alone, but of Man too, sacrificed on the altar of History in the ritual dialectic of the Act: the agent changed by the world which he changes.⁷¹ This is nothing new, but it has never before appeared to Sartre so inexorable and intractable a process: Frantz's death is a testimony to the impossibility of life. It is this bearing of witness, this martyrdom which, in spite of everything, imparts value to Frantz's death:

Hantée par les âmes de ses vaincus, la société triomphante ne se fermera jamais: elle est trouée. La mort a sauvé les valeurs en manifestant avec éclat qu'elles sont irréductibles: cette irréductibilité demeure, à l'ordinaire, purement logique; elle ennuie. Par l'échec, elle s'humanise et devient tragédie. Inversement, les valeurs sauvent la mort et la naissance même

du vaincu: par l'effet bien connu de l'illusion rétrospective, la défaite terminale nous paraît être le sens et la fin suprême de cette vie perdue; on naît pour perdre, on se voue dès l'enfance à l'échec. Du coup, la mort est un achèvement: délivrée de son aspect accidentel, elle devient l'acte d'une subjectivité qui se résorbe dans la valeur qu'elle a posée. De ces deux néants, l'un s'incarne dans l'autre: l'absence historique et datée du martyr, du communard fusillé symbolise l'absence éternelle des valeurs; celle-ci devient l'âme, celle-là le corps glorieux. Par l'échec la valeur s'historialise sans cesser d'être éternelle; [...] Ainsi le vaincu s'arrache à la contingence originelle et devient valeur-sujet.⁷²

In the light of the foregoing we can view Frantz as snatching from the jaws of ontological and existential defeat (i.e. his death, which is the eventual objectification of the object which he prematurely was in life), a vestige of subjectivity, of existential life, for his suicide transforms his native 'échec' into an assertion of irreducible value (originally expressed in the rescue of the Rabbi). But this is a subversion of the value which Sartre has hitherto postulated above all, that of life itself. Frantz's victory is in the mode of 'qui perd gagne', but that is a perplexing dogma of moral defeat: if the loser wins, then the winner loses; if in losing the loser wins, then he is also the winner and therefore also loses. In other words, to say 'qui perd gagne' is the same as to say 'qui perd perd'. If there is

a winner, it must be History. But without men, History is nothing, and that is why the tribunal never replies: 'Hein, quoi?' (p.223). The rest is silence.

Any glimmer of hope in the denouement of Les Séquestrés d'Altona is so faint and cryptic that it is, with the best will possible, hard to avoid Verstraeten's conclusion: '[Avec Les Séquestrés d'Altona] Pour la première fois dans le théâtre sartrien, une pièce s'achève sans perspective positive.'⁷³ Sartre's own comments strongly support this view: 'Je n'ai voulu montrer que le négatif. Ces gens-là ne peuvent pas se renouveler. C'est la déconfiture, le "crépuscule des dieux".'⁷⁴ Virtually all other critics take this line.⁷⁵ The best known of these, Lucien Goldmann, writes:

With Les Séquestrés d'Altona, Sartre found himself at an impasse. Individualism, commitment, the moral, the political, everything was cast in doubt. Frantz and the Father, similar and opposed to one another in life, are reunited in their common suicide. All that remains of Sartre, even if all the values he had defended were revealed to be questionable, is the writer.⁷⁶

While I agree with Goldmann's general conclusion that Les Séquestrés d'Altona is a major watershed in Sartre's career, I cannot share his

reasons for reaching it.

It seems to me that Sartre's purpose in Les Séquestrés d'Altona is much the same as in the contemporaneous Critique de la raison dialectique, namely to attempt to salvage the concrete individual from the abstract mass of Marxian historical theory.⁷⁷ Though he questions earlier values, he does so precisely in order to vindicate them, if only by implication: the tragedy of Frantz is that of Man himself when individualism, commitment, and morality are crushed in the march of History.⁷⁸ Sartre's 'mistake' (if I may call it that) has been to leave this all too implicit. Scarcely any hint of hope counters the overwhelming vision of despair. Frantz's brief moments of problematic liberty do not provide sufficient signs of existential life to modify the overall impression of a triumph of death, literal and metaphorical.

Yet the Critique, as it stands, is a hopeful work: the individual refinds his sovereignty through the group and exchanges "death" for "life".⁷⁹ History can be mastered through a proper understanding of the dialectic. Why then should Les Séquestrés d'Altona emit such an air of pessimism? I suspect that Frantz's échec is that of the dramatic genre, and in this sense Les Séquestrés is a companion piece to Sartre's autobiographical adieu to letters, Les Mots. It is the first of his plays, or of any of his literary works, to reveal the inability of literature to fulfil the mandate he gave it in Situations II, and especially in his essays on the theatre:

Plongez des hommes dans ces situations universelles et extrêmes

qui ne leur laissent qu'un couple d'issues, faites qu'en choisissant l'issue ils se choisissent eux-mêmes: vous avez gagné, la pièce est bonne. 80

Frantz's impotence is also the impotence of the genre.

Sartre never returned to the theatre in a wholly creative or original role. His last dramatic work was to be an adaptation of Euripides's Trojan Women. The choice, both of form and of source, was apt: having depicted the death of an individual, a family, a whole stratum of society in Les Séquestrés d'Altona, Sartre went on to show in Les Troyennes the death throes of an entire society, and of a whole civilisation.

Chapter 12

Les Troyennes

Je pense que l'espoir fait partie de l'homme; l'action humaine est transcendante, c'est-à-dire qu'elle vise toujours un objet futur à partir du présent où nous la concevons et où nous tentons de la réaliser; elle met sa fin, sa réalisation dans l'avenir; et, dans la manière d'agir, il y a l'espoir, c'est-à-dire le fait même de poser une fin comme devant être réalisée.

' L'Espoir, maintenant ...' , (i), p.19.

HÉCUBE

Ma fille, que dis-tu?

Tu le sais bien, pourtant: la mort c'est le vide;

Dans la vie la plus misérable

il reste au moins l'espoir.

Les Troyennes, p.69.

[...] mais cet espoir, il faut le fonder.

' L'Espoir, maintenant ... ' (iii), p.60.

One could justifiably take the view that Les Troyennes is not one of Sartre's plays. Gallimard publish it under the name of Euripides, adding in italics on the cover (not on the spine) 'Adaptation de Jean-Paul Sartre'.¹ Certainly, most of the critics who have dealt with the play at all have tended to regard it as an adaptation, and of these, Lorris is the most thorough and interesting. Laraque, on the other hand, considers Les Troyennes as very much one of Sartre's works and makes an illuminating comparison of themes and styles in Sartre's first and last plays.²

Les Troyennes is demonstrably an adaptation, and very much more so than Kean or Les Mouches. At the same time, it is distinctly Sartrean in its preoccupations and themes. No doubt the lyric poetry of the dialogue is due chiefly to Euripides. But we do not suppose that Sartre had set himself the penum of translating Greek poetry. Far from wishing to restate what Euripides had had to say to his contemporaries in fifth-century (B.C.) Athens, Sartre found in his verse a medium for expressing himself to his own contemporaries in twentieth-century Paris. I shall focus, then, upon the themes of Les Troyennes as though they were purely Sartrean themes, and regardless of whether or how Euripides had treated them first. For if Sartre repeats Euripides at all, it is because he has chosen to do so. And if his Greek forebear found ways of formulating certain ideas with which Sartre is implicitly satisfied, it indicates only that certain great questions are eternal - war, love, faith, honour, glory, violence - and have been framed and reframed throughout twenty-five centuries of western civilisation. All

of these are subsumed under the single question which Sartre's theatre characteristically asks: 'life or death?'

Myth and Situation.

Death is ubiquitous in Les Troyennes. Troy itself is dead - 'flammes et flocons noirs,/ ce qui fut Troie' (p.13) - and its remaining inhabitants are mere survivors who give themselves over in the present to dirge-like lamentations over their past and future misfortunes. These three time zones are pervaded by death. The past provokes mourning for the massacre of the Trojan men in general, and of Priam and Hector in particular. In the present occur the executions of Polyxène and Astyanax, the first reported and lamented in scene seven, the second in scene eleven. And in the future will happen the various deaths foreseen by the clairvoyant Cassandre in scene five: that of Agamemnon (p.47); her own (p.48); Clytemnestre's at the hands of Orestes (p.49); Hécube's in Troy (p.52); and that of the Atrides' dynasty in their internecine family strife (p.55). Added to these is Hécube's prediction of annihilation through oblivion for those Greeks who have already died, and of the same fate for those who have survived:

Pas de tombeaux pour les Grecs,

[...] Ici, la vermine vous ronge; chez vous, l'oubli.

Oubliés. Ha! Anéantis.

Quant aux vivants, Apollon m'a dit ce que font leurs épouses,
 [...] (pp.49-50)

Even the distant future of posterity is closed off by the fact of death: Astyanax, the only hope for the resurrection of Troy and 'le destin de notre famille' (p.73), as Hécube puts it, is murdered by the Greeks precisely in order to snuff out any such hopes. 'Ici, sur cette terre morte, [Astyanax est] mort sans avoir vécu' (p.118), and consequently the future for the Trojan women is literally hopeless. This being so, they are themselves in a sense "dead".

Hope is a projection of the future, and where there is no hope, there is no prospect of action; and where there is no prospect of action, there is no "life". Lorris writes: 'Dans l'impossibilité d'agir, devant un futur qu'elle n'a pas choisi, Hécube est morte, aussi morte que l'était Garcin.'³ The same could be said of all the Trojan women, though whether it is always true is open to question, for hope is one of the central issues discussed. For the time being, however, let us follow Lorris and draw the logical conclusion of the absence of hope, which is that there is neither choice nor, properly speaking, a situation: 'Aucune option n'est offerte dans Les Troyennes, tragédie qui rejette par son sujet même toute possibilité de mise en situation.'⁴ The Trojan Women would appear to agree with this analysis when they speak of themselves as already dead:

Il était minuit, [...]
 lorsque,
 [...] le cri de mort
 dévala.
 [...] Les Grecs, sortis de leur cachette,
 égorgeaient nos hommes et tous nos enfants mâles.
 Notre dernier jour de bonheur s'achevait,
 le premier jour de notre mort commençait. (p.62)

In so far as it is true that there is 'une absence totale de liberté d'action: [...] tous les personnages[étant]tenus captifs dans l'attente de leur destin', ⁵ there is indeed no situation, or situation-limite in the Sartrean sense. Viewed in a different light, however, there is a situation - or even more than one - just as there are in the not dissimilar scenarios of Huis clos and Morts sans sépulture.

Let us consider the thesis that there are three concentric situations in Les Troyennes. Their common centre is Captivity or Victimization. Caught in the first and innermost circle are the Trojan women, dominated by the Greeks: this is the circle of the here-and-now. Caught in the second circle are the Greeks: this sphere is dominated by the gods and in it all men are subject to their decrees. In this case, the death sentence passed by Poseidon and Pallas makes victims of Trojans and Greeks alike: this is the circle of the immediate future. In the third and outermost circle, which cannot be

circumscribed, gods as well as men are caught and doomed. Gods may abandon men (scene 9), but in doing so they annihilate themselves as there are only men. Hécube predicts the demise of the gods (scene 11), and Sartre too asserts it in his 'Préface' (p.8). This last circle is the circle of posterity, and it is dominated by History. The pessimistic message of Les Séquestrés d'Altona - that men are in peril of being the playthings of History and that it will, literally, be the death of them - is reaffirmed by Les Troyennes in its explosion of all myths. In a final promise of apocalypse, Poseidon joins Trojans and Greeks in what Sartre calls 'cette mort commune qui est la leçon de la tragédie' ('Préface', p.8).

If we were to accept Lorris's view that there is no place for choice or free action anywhere in Les Troyennes - except perhaps, he says, for Talthybios (though I would rather except Ménélas)⁶ - then we should have to omit the usual second part of the chapter, for if there is no action there can be no agents. I would argue rather that there is - as there always must be, even in the most limited situation⁷ - one option open to the Trojan women which becomes the subject of a lengthy debate between Hécube and Andromaque: they can choose whether or not to hope.

Act and Agent.

Broadly speaking, Sartre's dramatic heroes fall into two groups: those who triumph over despair and choose hope, "live" - Bariona, Oreste,

Canoris, Goetz, Kean, Valera; while those who succumb to despair and abandon hope, "die" - Garcin, Lizzie, Hugo, Frantz. In Les Troyennes, Hécube and the Trojan women fluctuate between hope and despair according as the prospect of the future seems to them more or less bleak.

For the most part, the action of Les Troyennes is in the past: Troy has been sacked. Blame for this catastrophe cannot easily be apportioned. Andromaque blames Hécube for not having slain Paris as the gods had commanded her (scene 7). Hécube blames Hélène for having seduced Paris (scene 10). And Hélène in turn blames the gods, specifically Aphrodite, for having beguiled her. Though they could draw up a hierarchy of guilt and innocence which would vindicate Andromaque completely, find Hécube guilty of (unwitting) complicity, and Hélène of knowingly aiding and abetting, still there is nothing to be gained by such a procedure so long as it does not assist the women to act in the only way they can, namely by taking one attitude rather than another towards their situation. In fact, their recriminations are sterile.

Cassandre alone seems to hold out hope of future action. In her rambling tirade she sees herself as the agent of vengeance, bringing death - 'Je suis la mort' (p.55) - to Agamemnon, and disarray to the house of Atreus. Significantly, she bears a torch whose flame is 'vive et sacrée' (p.45). Yet, significantly too, she is regarded as mad by all her compatriots. Even to conceive of action in their present circumstances seems to be lunacy.

Of all the characters, only Ménélas appears to dispose of the freedom necessary to commit an act. (Talthybios is just a messenger

12: Les Troyennes

carrying out his duties on pain of punishment.) The act which he appears to be resolved to do is the execution of the faithless Hélène (scene 10). In this he is urged on by Hécube who thereby finds a vicarious form of action:

C'est ton devoir.

Pour toutes les autres, ton acte aura force de loi:

la mort pour la femme adultère. (p.105)

Though she cannot persuade him to do the deed here and now, she seems to have warned him successfully against the wiles of the famous beauty. Yet the penultimate scene reveals that Ménélas, despite his promise to be separated from Hélène, lest he give in to her pleading, has embarked her on his boat. He too, it would appear, is incapable of any sort of act, even an act of resolve. Hécube's curses -

Bon voyage, Hélène,

Bon retour

Et crève en route!

[...] Et toi, Ménélas, cocu magnifique,

crève aussi! (p.114)

- although they are realised, are not in any sense acts. They merely express wishes which coincide with those of the gods.

But can we rightly speak of an absence of action when Polyxène and

Astyanax are put to death in the course of the play? The salient feature of these two moments is that they are acts without agents. Both victims are killed by unseen, faceless guards. These are not acts but phenomena, events reported by a witness, not the doer. They belong, in other words, to the realm of 'myth and situation' rather than that of 'act and agent'. They are comparable with the death of Garcin's wife or the suicide of Inès's lover.

All action in Les Troyennes is firmly rooted in the past. What matters in the present is the attitude towards it of those who suffer its consequences. Crucial to that attitude is the question whether the death of the Trojan men has been worthwhile, whether their sacrifice has been an heroic martyrdom or a futile massacre. As their opinion on this question varies, so the disposition of the women changes from inconsolable despair to defiant hope, and back again. Most prominent in these mental victories and defeats is Hécube, whose efforts to seize and hold on to hope amount to the only action of an otherwise static play.

To begin with, Hécube's tone is unequivocally despairing (scene 3):

Fallait-il massacrer mon peuple?

[...] Veuves troyennes, vierges de Troie, fiancées des morts,

[...] gémissons sur notre sort.

[...] Je ne sais qu'une chose

le pire est sûr.

(A elle-même.)

Esclave.

[...] Vieillard piteuse,

plus morte que vive,
inutile frelon dans une ruche étrangère,
à quoi puis-je servir. (pp.27,29)

She emphasises death and futility, present and future. Her lead is followed by the women:

UNE FEMME

Déracinée,
arrachée à l'Asie,
il me faudra vivre et mourir en Europe.
Cela veut dire: en enfer. (pp.30-31)

The prospect is of hell itself: despair is as total as for the characters of Huis clos. In this context, it is unsurprising that Talthybios should fear an attempt at mass suicide when he sees what he takes to be the burning tent of Cassandre (scene 4):

Vite! Allez voir si les Troyennes
n'essaient pas de se faire brûler vives.
Je comprends qu'un coeur libre
n'accepte pas facilement le malheur,
mais je ne veux pas de suicide! Compris?
Et surtout pas de torches vivantes.
Ce serait trop commode pour elles

et c'est moi qui aurais les ennuis. (p.41)

As Hécube will shortly after discover, suicide is not a realistic option for the living dead (scene 6):

CORYPHÉE

Hécube!

Elle est tombée sans un cri. L'abandonnerez-vous?

C'est encore la Reine.

Relevez-la.

(Des femmes la relèvent.)

HÉCUBE

Je ne souhaitais pas votre aide

et je ne vous remercie pas.

Je voulais épouser la terre étroitement

et me confondre avec son inconscience inerte.

Car nous sommes inertes, comprenez-vous?

Nous ne pouvons plus rien

sauf attendre et subir.

Inertes mais, hélas, conscientes. (p.59)

The living dead of Huis clos also found it impossible to kill themselves or each other since they were already dead, though condemned to remain conscious.

In the interim (scene 5) Cassandre has uttered hopeful sentiments,

but, being thought mad, she has not succeeded in encouraging her fellows. Her predictions of dire consequences for the Greeks, her promises of vengeance, and her assurances about the heroism of the Trojan dead -

C'est ce que vous appelez, je crois, gagner la guerre?

Nous, nous l'avons perdue

mais je n'en ai pas honte.

Il n'est pas un de nos morts

qui ne soit tombé sur notre sol

en défendant notre ville.

[...] Remercie les Grecs!

Hector était modeste et doux.

C'est eux qui en ont fait un héros malgré lui. (pp.50, 51)

- as distinct from the futile stupidity of the Greeks -

Gloire aux défenseurs de la patrie.

Mais les autres, les conquérants,

Ceux qui font une sale guerre et qui en meurent,

leur mort est plus bête encore que leur vie. (p.51)

- these assurances seem to have fallen upon deaf ears. Hécube's attempt at 'suicide by despair', as we could call it, is followed by long lamentations for the lost joys of Troy.

It is the challenge of having to console a woman even more grief-

stricken than herself - namely Andromaque - which prompts in Hécube the first signs of hope; these then grow in strength as she tries to counter the dire pessimism of the younger widow (scene 7). At the same time, she has to defend herself against the charge that her failure to slay Paris in his youth is at the root of Troy's misery. And she has also to come to terms with the news of Polyxène's death which Andromaque brings. These combined demands evoke an impressive show of moral strength:

[Polyxène] égorgée sur une tombe.

[...] Mort infâme!

ANDROMAQUE

Infâme, non.

Elle est morte, c'est tout,
plus heureuse que moi qui vis.

HÉCUBE

Ma fille, que dis-tu?

Tu le sais bien, pourtant: la mort c'est le vide;

Dans la vie la plus misérable

il reste au moins l'espoir.

(p.69)

The proverbial lesson 'where there's life, there's hope' is Hécube's response to the black despair of Andromaque who is, we should not forget, the custodian of Troy's only hope, Astyanax. Commenting on this exchange, Lorris notes: 'Face à la vieille reine, Andromaque retrouve

dans sa révolte le vocabulaire des personnages existentialistes.' 8
This seems to me questionable, for the utterances I recognise as
'existentialist' are rather those of Hécube. No doubt Andromaque's
evocation of death corresponds to Sartre's understanding of it, but
Hécube's looking to the future is more characteristic of the optimism
one associates with the stronger characters of Sartrean existentialism:
Andromaque's attitude is that of the losers in Sartre's theatre:

Quelle rage de vivre!

Tu sais bien que tu as tout perdu;

[...] Non. Plus d'espoir. Tant mieux.

[...] La mort, c'est le vide, oui.

Le vide: le calme éternel.

Écoute: Polyxène n'est jamais née.

Morte, elle ignore tout,

[...] Elle ne sait plus qu'elle a souffert:

elle ne l'a jamais su.

Moi, je souffre et je le sais.

[...] Menteuse! La vie, c'est l'espoir, dis-tu?

Eh bien, regarde-moi, je vis et l'espoir est mort

car je sais ce qui m'attend. (pp.69-70,71)

Resonances here are of Hugo and Frantz. By contrast, Hécube tries to
inspire the breath of life which those characters briefly receive from
Hoederer and Johanna:

Hector est mort, ma fille,
tes pleurs ne le feront pas revivre.
Oublie-le.
[...], tâche de plaire à ton nouveau mari.
[...] Fais-le pour ton fils,
[...], pour qu'un jour, par lui ou par ses fils,
cette ville morte renaisse et nous venge.
Le destin de notre famille est dans tes mains. (pp.72-73)

Hécube speaks in terms of rebirth and resurrection. Hope is the prerequisite of action.

However, this high-point of hope is very brief, for Talthybios's announcement of the Greeks' decision to kill Astyanax (scene 8) dashes all hopes that the young Trojan might one day avenge his father and his city. Andromaque's complaints momentarily take on a Macbethian flavour:

J'étais fière, quand je t'allaitais.
Si j'avais su, j'aurais mieux aimé t'étouffer sur l'instant
de mes mains
en t'embrassant. (p.81) 9

These are offset by the quasi-apologetic mutterings of the unfortunate messenger, whose words nevertheless contain, in flippant form, one of the chief morals of the play:

Mission vraiment désagréable!

On aurait pu me l'épargner.

J'ai un coeur, moi.

Enfin, c'est la guerre. (p.82)

War has no room for the faint-hearted. Proverbially, all in it is 'fair', even the murder of innocent children. Indeed, Sartre wants to say that it is predominantly the innocent who suffer in war and that, however it may seem, there are never any winners. This is a poetic reiteration of one of the chief themes of Les Séquestrés d'Altona.

The taking of Astyanax seems to end all hope for the Trojan women:

L'Aube est horriblement belle

et les Dieux nous ont abandonnés. (p.88)

For Hécube, however, there is one last possible consolation, and that is the due punishment of Hélène. This may offer no promise for the future, but it will at least seem to set the present to rights:

Pour ses beaux yeux de mort

les hommes n'ont pas fini de s'entre-tuer,

ni les villes de brûler.

[...] Chienne, tu sais bien qu'ils sont morts

par ta faute

comme tous nos hommes.

Moi, hélas, je suis vivante

et voici mon témoignage: (pp.95, 104)

Life is once more a burden for Hécube, but while she has breath in her she can at least denounce Hélène, which seems a just and proper thing to do. She fears, though, that a lover's heart never changes and doubts whether Ménélas will really put Hélène to death when he gets to Athens. (This fear proves to be well-founded.)

In the penultimate scene (scene 11) the women's morale is dealt successive blows. First they watch Hélène board ship, contrary to Ménélas's promise:

HÉCUBE

L'amertume de nos morts

ne sera pas adoucie.

Ils [...] savent, à présent, qu'ils sont morts pour rien.

LE CHOEUR

[...] , nos hommes sont morts pour rien,

Hélène s'embarque,

[...] Toi que j'aimais,

mon homme, père de mes fils,

tu rôderas parmi ces pierres,

inquiet, solitaire,

glacé par l'angoisse des morts sans tombeau.

[...] Cher époux, tu as souffert
 et tu souffres encore
 pour rien, mon cher mort, pour rien! (pp.112, 113)

The impunity of Héléne emphasises the futility of the Trojan deaths: 'Le crime paie' (pp.113, 114) is the refrain of the last desperate railing against the gods.¹⁰ Next, they see the corpse of Astyanax, visible proof of the impossibility of hope. Hécube's mourning for the child suggests a final abandonment of hope:

Tu es mort sans avoir vécu.
 [...]! Tant de soucis, tant de soins
 pour rien, toujours pour rien!
 [...]? Tu étais bien malade et je t'ai guéri,
 t'épargnant une mort de hasard
 pour te réserver à cette mort ignoble!
 [...] Il faut qu'un homme soit fou pour se dire heureux
 avant le dernier moment de son dernier jour. (p.119)

This last couplet is an axiom from Greek literature to which Sartre refers more than once in L'Être et le néant.¹¹ Here it bears the full weight of Hécube's despair as she contemplates the dead hope of the Trojan people. Her final words over the body, which have the feel of a lullaby, indicate rather resignation than hope; we know already from her conversation with Andromaque that she envisages only the void

beyond death.

A foretaste of that void fills the last moments of the play:
Hécube predicts, even wills both her own death and that of the gods.
If there is immortality, it is found only in the tales men tell:

[...] nous mourons, vaincus par une ignoble ruse.

Dans deux mille ans encore
notre nom sera dans toutes les bouches;
on reconnaîtra notre gloire
et votre stupide injustice
Et vous n'y pourrez rien
car vous serez morts depuis longtemps,
Olympiens,
comme nous.

[...] O Dieux sourds!

Sourds, non. Mauvais.

A quoi bon les invoquer?

Hâtez-vous, vieilles jambes,

Je mettrai ma gloire à mourir ici:

Ma patrie en feu sera mon bûcher! (pp.121, 122)

In fact, even that small consolation is denied, and as Troy is 'rayée du nombre des cités vivantes' (p.123), Hécube is dragged away to slavery with the other Trojan women, defiant in a sense, but without hope.

In the final scene (scene 12), which is entirely original, Sartre

shows Poseidon keeping his contract with Pallas, sparing the Trojan women the indignities of 'exil et esclavage' (p.125) to which they feel themselves destined. He uses the occasion to make an envoi, addressed to 'mortels imbéciles' (p.130) which spells out - as does Frantz's last tape - the futility of violence and war, and the inevitability of self-destruction if Frantz's pessimistic equation - ('un et un font un', or 'homo homini lupus', in the Hobbesian phrase preferred by Sartre in the Critique) - ¹² is not mastered by a higher reason. Poseidon delivers this terrible warning in a marvellous dying cadence which looks as impressive as it sounds, not least because the word 'FIN' appears in bold print at the foot of the text:

A présent vous allez payer.
Faites la guerre, mortels imbéciles,
ravagez les champs et les villes,
violez les temples, les tombes,
et torturez les vaincus.
Vous en crèverez.

Tous.

FIN

Its shape is that of a mushroom cloud.

The gist of Les Troyennes is no less grim or pessimistic than that of Les Séquestrés d'Altona, but it is more precise. In the earlier,

12: Les Troyennes

wholly original play, Sartre was at pains to make a point about man as the victim of History where he is not its master, whether in war or in peace. In Les Troyennes he is, like Euripides, more concerned to stress the specific dangers of war, and especially of imperialist expansion, though viewed still in the perspective of the historical dialectic. On this subject, there is little one can usefully add to the remarks Sartre makes in the 'Préface'. While referring the reader to that, I shall quote from an earlier text of Sartre's in which he adumbrated the themes so effectively treated in this final play:

A la prochaine [guerre], la terre peut sauter: [...] Pourtant, il fallait bien qu'un jour l'humanité fût mise en possession de sa mort. Jusqu'ici elle poursuivait une vie qui lui venait on ne sait d'où et n'avait même pas le pouvoir de refuser son propre suicide faute de disposer des moyens qui lui eussent permis de l'accomplir. [...] Après la mort de Dieu, voici qu'on annonce la mort de l'homme. Désormais ma liberté est plus pure: cet acte que je fais aujourd'hui, ni Dieu ni homme n'en seront les témoins perpétuels. [...] Il n'y a plus d'espèce humaine. La communauté qui s'est faite gardienne de la bombe atomique est au-dessus du règne naturel car elle est responsable de sa vie et de sa mort: il faudra qu'à chaque jour, à chaque minute elle consente à vivre. [...] Ainsi, au moment où elle finit cette guerre, la boucle est bouclée, en chacun de nous l'humanité découvre sa mort possible, assume

sa vie et sa mort. 13

Once hope is taken away from the human enterprise, 'fin' can no longer mean 'end' qua 'objective', project, "life"; it can only mean 'end' qua 'completion', totalisation, "death". Though Sartre did not return to the live medium of the theatre, he continued to hope that men could choose to hope. 14

Conclusion

C'est ce qui dupe les gens: un homme, c'est toujours un conteur d'histoires, il vit entouré de ses histoires et des histoires d'autrui, il voit tout ce qui lui arrive à travers elles; et il cherche à vivre sa vie comme s'il la racontait.

Mais il faut choisir: vivre ou raconter.

La Nausée, p.62.

A la fin de la vie le choix originel s'est inscrit dans la réalité, le tout s'est réalisé. Mais il faut ajouter que la réalisation du tout est, en même temps, sa suppression: l'écrivain est devenu ce qu'il était dans la mort. Tel qu'en lui-même enfin l'éternité le change. D'autre part la mort soutient un double rapport d'immanence et d'extériorité avec l'homme. Elle est son extériorité puisque c'est le dehors qui décide que la vie est finie. Ainsi le hasard décide de l'aboutissement de la dialectique, la vie s'atteint elle-même dans la mort. Et la mort est négation du sens de cette vie. Ainsi la dialectique existe dans la mesure où l'existence est elle-même totalité. Mais elle n'est pas dans la mesure où elle est sur le mode de n'être pas. Il y a dialectique enfin sur le plan du dépassement de la situation (négation qui dépasse en conservant).

Cahiers pour une morale, p.478.

Oui, la bêtise consiste à vouloir conclure.

Gustave Flaubert, lettre a Louis Bouilhet, 4 septembre 1850.

Conclusion.

Remembering Sartre's last illness, Michel Sicard records:

'Il avait pris en horreur la cuisine de l'hôpital, se faisant apporter du thé de l'extérieur, comme une attention extrême à la vraie vie, avant de prendre congé, méprisant encore une fois les morts-vivants.'¹ Whatever the veracity of this reminiscence, it has the satisfying ring of poetic truth: Sartre reserving his dying breath for one final denunciation of the determinists, the cowards, the self-righteous, the salauds, the existentially dead who had been the object of his scorn for the greater part of his mature career, in his theatre as elsewhere. It was to these, and indeed to all Others, that he became a 'prey' in April 1980, when his death plunged his life irrevocably into the 'public domain'. Paradoxically, however, it is that very fate which has prevented his life's acquiring the density of things, becoming the 'totalised totality' which a human existence is in death. Indeed, Sartre has seemed in some ways more alive in the five years since 1980 than he did in the five years preceding, a period during which, as Simone de Beauvoir recalls, he often felt he had himself become 'un mort-vivant'.²

It was to be expected that Sartre's death would precipitate a torrent of secondary material. There have been many books and articles, ranging from the weightily academic to the frivolously gossipy, and from the

Conclusion.

unabashedly hagiographical to the frankly vindictive.³ Of such stuff are the 'dreams' of immortality made, and thus is realised the 'neurosis' of a once young and naïve writer who aspired to literary glory.⁴

Generally of greater interest to the sartrologue are Sartre's posthumous works. It is the rare privilege of the artist who lives on beyond death - becoming, in a more positive sense, un mort-vivant - that he continues to produce, and Sartre's 'output' since 1980 has been nothing short of prolific. Whereas his semi-blindness had prevented him from writing throughout the seventies, Sartre's death has enabled him - or, rather, his executors on his behalf - to publish a number of important texts to date. It is fitting that the first of these should have been the 'Pléïade' edition of the Oeuvres romanesques. Sartre had for some years resisted consecration by what he feared as the 'pierre tombale' of the 'Pléïade', being reluctant to enter, before his time, into the pantheon of the glorious and dead. It is ironic that the project to which he eventually assented in life, should have been accomplished only after his death.⁵

This publication, and those which have followed are, among other things, reminders of a feature common to a number of Sartre's works, namely that they are unfinished. The fragments of the proposed fourth volume of Les Chemins

Conclusion.

de la liberté in Oeuvres romanesques, and the Cahiers pour une morale, are perhaps the plainest evidence of tasks undertaken yet unfulfilled. But there are also references in the Carnets de la drôle de guerre and the Lettres au Castor to other projects which did not come to fruition. Le Scénario Freud is a case in point, never reaching the screen in the form Sartre had envisaged. We know that L'Idiot de la famille was to comprise at least one further volume, as indeed was the Critique de la raison dialectique.⁶

These facts emphasise, by contrast, one salient feature of Sartre's work for the theatre: its completeness. Not only is each play a finished entity, but the whole body of his dramatic production has a cogency and a coherence which set it apart from his work in other genres. I have striven to show in this study that all Sartre's plays deal centrally with the most fundamental and all-encompassing of themes imaginable: that of the conflict between life and death, a polemic which informs every aspect of human experience, and which lends itself particularly well to theatrical illustration. The consistency and the persistence of this theme in Sartre's philosophic perception and dramatic transposition of the human reality are underlined by the knowledge that one of his very first essays in the genre - J'aurai un bel enterrement - and one of the last projects he contemplated for the theatre - 'Alceste' - both drew their

Conclusion.

intrinsic impetus from the hero's reaction to the prospect of his own death.⁷

The theatre is also a privileged genre within the impressive range which Sartre covered because of its unique ability to be at once literary and philosophic. As a young man, Sartre had conceived the theatre as 'un genre un peu inférieur', although he had felt an attraction for it from an early age.⁸ However, his experience over twenty years, beginning with the seductive, if peculiar, success of Bariona, led him to assert in 1960 that 'le théâtre est philosophique et que la philosophie est dramatique', because both are concerned with 'l'homme en acte (c'est-à-dire l'homme tout simplement)'. The man in question, '- qui est à la fois un agent et un acteur - [...] produit et joue son drame, en vivant les contradictions de sa situation jusqu'à l'éclatement de sa personne ou jusqu'à la solution de ses conflits.'⁹ This dual identity of the theatre makes it the unifying bond in Sartre's otherwise potentially disparate oeuvre, for it reconciles the primacy of literature - 'il y a une hiérarchie, et la hiérarchie c'est la philosophie en second et la littérature en premier' - with the essentially philosophic content of all his work.¹⁰ The theatre alone gets round the perceived impossibility for philosophy to express itself in literary form.¹¹ Moreover, it has the unique capacity of bringing ideas to life: theatre is the

Conclusion.

live and living medium par excellence.¹² It is natural, therefore, that the theatre should have so attracted a philosophically-inclined artist who had learned to 'wager on life' and to 'write for the living'; a vital and creative mind which admired Romeo and Juliet or Hamlet as 'des oeuvres qui semblent écrites d'hier'.¹³

In the light of the foregoing, we might wonder why Sartre abandoned the theatre during the last fifteen years of his life, devoting the most precious of them - those when his eyesight still enabled him to write - to a monumental (but incomplete) study of the archetypal mort-vivant, Gustave Flaubert? When Simone de Beauvoir asked Sartre this very question in 1974, he cited three reasons: (i) old age; (ii) the eclipse of 'le théâtre d'auteur'; (iii) the inevitability of the bourgeois audience.¹⁴ He blamed the first of these for his inability to impart the 'urgency' which is the dynamic motor of drama: 'Tandis qu'on ne peut pas écrire une pièce sans qu'il y ait d'urgence. Et vous la retrouvez en vous-même, cette urgence, parce que ce sera celle des spectateurs. Ils vivront dans l'imaginaire un moment d'urgence.'¹⁵ It is evident from Simone de Beauvoir's rejoinder that she was not much convinced by this: could not old age, and the implied proximity of death, be, on the contrary, an ideal source of urgency? To this objection, Sartre weakly concedes: 'Oui, mais j'ai rien à

Conclusion.

dire au théâtre pour l'instant.' ¹⁶ The decline of 'le théâtre d'auteur' is an explanation put into Sartre's mind by Simone de Beauvoir, and one upon which he readily seizes: 'Oui; mon théâtre devient une chose passée. Si je faisais une pièce maintenant - ce que je ne ferai pas [my emphasis] - je lui donnerais une autre forme pour qu'elle soit d'accord avec ce qu'on tente aujourd'hui.' ¹⁷ There is here a detectable alacrity (not to say 'urgency') on Sartre's part in consigning his plays to literary history, and an almost indecent tone of definitiveness in his renunciation of any further project for the theatre. ¹⁸ The third cause - or pretext? - is again suggested by Simone de Beauvoir: though tacitly assenting, Sartre hardly bothers to pursue it, but reminisces briefly, and somewhat desultorily, about a couple of occasions when plays of his - Nekrassov and La Putain - were performed before 'des gens des grandes usines, des faubourgs parisiens'. ¹⁹ In short, Sartre's 'answer' to Simone de Beauvoir's question, and ours, merely begs it.

To judge by Sartre's public statements, his break with the theatre was relatively sudden. In 1970 he claimed to be still writing plays, and to retain his belief in their power as 'myths': 'L'auteur dramatique présente aux hommes l'eidos de leur existence quotidienne; il leur montre leur propre vie comme s'ils la voyaient de l'extérieur.' ²⁰ In 1971, he felt he 'ought' to write a play, but he did not 'want' to,

Conclusion.

'alors cela me barbe...' ²¹ And by 1974, as we have just seen, his resolve to quit the theatre appeared firm and final. However, I think it is clear from our foregoing study of the plays that Sartre's disillusionment with the genre was a much more lengthy and gradual process than these few utterances imply.

To answer more satisfactorily the question why Sartre left the theatre, we need to look at his motives for entering it in the first place. Again, Simone de Beauvoir is more eloquent on the subject than Sartre himself:

Puis, c'était un genre littéraire qui vous convenait très bien, parce qu'il y a des héros dans les pièces: vous aviez eu une enfance qui a donné une grande importance aux héros comme Pardaillan et d'autres, non que je veuille dire que Goetz ressemble à Pardaillan, mais il y avait cette idée du héros, de l'homme qui fait des actes assez extraordinaires - pas dans toutes vos pièces, bien sûr, mais il y a beaucoup de ça. ²²

Sartre's own recollections reinforce these assertions:

Une des oeuvres héroïques que j'avais écrites à onze ans, à douze ans, s'appelait 'Götz [sic] von

Conclusion.

Berlichingen' et, par conséquent, annonce Le Diable et le bon Dieu. Götz était un héros remarquable; il battait les gens, il faisait régner la terreur mais en même temps il voulait le bien.²³

Sartre's theatre is an heroic theatre, and it is not, I think, an oversimplification to say that he abandoned the genre because he ran out of heroes, or - more exactly - because he ceased to believe in them.

It is significant that both Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir recall Goetz as the prototype, the archetypal hero, the character of whom Sartre once wrote: 'J'ai fait faire à Goetz ce que je ne pouvais pas faire.'²⁴ Goetz is the epitome of the Sartrean hero, who reconciles and resolves his contradictions while transcending the limits of his situation; who acts to change the world in equal proportion as the world changes him; who interacts with History and survives. Goetz's predecessors merely mark stages on the way to this consummate, dialectical superman.²⁵ Bariona, the hero of Sartre's first and, in some ways, most satisfying play (from his point of view),²⁶ learned to exercise his freedom not in some futile and self-immolating gesture of defiance, but in a positive and life-affirming resistance which accepted the situation only in so far as it was susceptible to being changed and transcended by action.

Conclusion.

Bariona is Goetz's closest existential precursor. By contrast, Oreste realised his freedom, grasped it and used it, but then petrified it like some blunt instrument, cherishing his act as a burden of identity instead of developing its consequences by renewing and re-committing his moral independence with continuing effect. Canoris, on the other hand, accepted the option of life because he cared more strongly for what could still be done than for what they could, purposelessly, be, namely dead heroes. However, he fell victim to History, the first such, entrapped and done to death by circumstances beyond his control - historical circumstances which his mythological forebears had not had to contend with, since mythology imposes no constraints once the gods have been overthrown. Hoederer similarly expounded views which unequivocally valued Action and change more highly than Being and stasis, and he acted accordingly, investing, like Bariona and Canoris, in a future which was envisaged as different and better than the present, and which was to be brought about by the politics of pragmatism, compromise, and realism, and not by the mortifying imposition of absolute ideals and the pursuit of impossible goals. But he too found death, a victim jointly of the immaturity of a neurotic bourgeois intellectual (a product of his class), and of a dogmatic and inflexible Party machine (a product of the class system): another

Conclusion.

victim, in short, of History.

These early heroes struggle to have life, physical and existential; to accept that gap in their being which is freedom, and to assume responsibility for it and for its unpredictable consequences. They are prepared to act upon being in the mode of being not what they are, in order to create themselves, to become themselves. Set over against these existentially living heroes are the existentially dead, motivated primarily by the desire to close that gap at the heart of their being, to bring about the coincidence of pour-soi and en-soi, to achieve that identity which occurs 'naturally' only in death: Électre, so consumed by her passion to embody vengeance that when vengeance is wrought she turns to find another equally substantive being, the embodiment of remorse; Garcin, Inès, Estelle, each obsessed to be in life - hero, persecutor, beauty, respectively - such that each is condemned to live out their essence eternally, to reap the harvest of their life-long moral cowardice; Hugo, so focused upon his ambition to be someone - Raskolnikoff, or Julien Sorel, or Rastignac, or Muichkine, or... anyone ²⁷ - that he remains at last blind to the one opportunity he has to assent to life in all its imponderable complexity, its harrowing moral and practical uncertainty; and Lizzie, too eager to please, to be a life-sized doll, to realise that although her dimensions are drawn from life,

Conclusion.

she becomes eventually a nature morte.

This long-running confrontation between the "living" and the "dead", in which the former appear to have the upper hand until History begins to take a part, reaches its apogée in Le Diable et le bon Dieu - Sartre's favourite play ²⁸ - in which the existentially dead (including, and especially, Goetz) predominate until the moment of the hero's final (and real) apocalyptic 'conversion': God is dead, the Law is a chimera, there are no absolutes, there are only men: 'Il y a cette guerre à faire et je la ferai.' ²⁹ Goetz survives his mania to be, as none of his predecessors had done, and as Heinrich, his brother in "death", fails to do. He suppresses all contradictions, and most particularly that between "death" and "life", although their confluence is embedded in his personal experience. ³⁰ He is incredibly fortunate, sited at a moment in history which empowers him, freely, to obey and yet to command; to risk and deal out death, and yet to value and save life; to espouse a cause without becoming enslaved to an ideology; to transcend Good and Evil, so that there is no question of doing the latter that the former might follow, but only of responding to the exigences of the concrete situation in the here-and-now; to lead men while remaining one of them, at once individual and group-member; to become that enviable and elusive simultaneity, a man above and among others, un chef and n'importe qui. ³¹

Conclusion.

In short, Goetz enters absolutely into the realm of the relative: he becomes that nothingness at the heart of his being - his freedom - without either striding off into the sunset, in the style of Oreste, nor yet simply disappearing in a puff of smoke. Goetz's final 'conversion' is by far the most impressive, and the most miraculous, of his several tricks.

After 1951, the Sartrean dramatic hero enters an irreversible decline. Kean and Valera are poor, parodic successors to Bariona, Oreste, and, above all, Goetz. No doubt their 'hearts are in the right place',³² and in their inconsequential ways they struggle, more or less, to salvage existential life from the chaos created by their bright, but superficial ideas, and their frightening talent for falsification. Their shallow assaults on the establishment, which not only leave it intact, but actually shore it up, are pitiable, ironic reflections of Bariona's just resistance against his colonialist masters, or Goetz's peasant revolt against feudal tyranny. And by the end of the fifties, it is quite clear that Sartre has lost all faith in - illusions about? - the hero, without whom the theatre is for him an empty space, a medium without life.

The post-war, cold-war, no-war world of the fifties was very much more complex morally than that of the Nazi-ravaged Europe of the previous decade, in which ethical questions

Conclusion.

could be framed in unambiguous terms and elicit simple (though never easy) answers: 'Jamais nous n'avons été plus libres que sous l'occupation allemande.' ³³ This is not Sartre gratuitously indulging a Gallic taste for paradox. It is no mere coincidence that those heroes who most convincingly and successfully accede to existential life - Bariona, Oreste, Goetz - do so in the face of an unmistakably 'wicked' enemy. However, once Hitler's demonic experiment to revalue all values had thankfully been thwarted, and the world divided itself instead between two equally plausible, equally self-righteous, equally powerful, and yet radically opposed value systems, the individual's potential either to change the historical situation, or to achieve any personal fulfilment, became profoundly problematic as moral dilemmas became increasingly intricate, and moral choices commensurately less straightforward. Les Séquestrés d'Altona is designed to provoke 'le sentiment de l'ambiguïté de notre temps. La morale, la politique, plus rien n'est simple.' ³⁴ It is impossible to be the hero in such an uncertain moral climate: 'dans cette pièce [Les Séquestrés] j'ai essayé de démystifier l'héroïsme (militaire) en montrant le lien qui l'unit à la violence inconditionnée.' ³⁵ It is not only 'military' heroism, but heroism tout court which Sartre is both demystifying and bidding farewell to. When Frantz eats his chocolate

Conclusion.

decorations, he swallows so many of Sartre's illusions. The theatre is still the forum in which our contradictions are laid bare, but our 'hero' no longer knows how to resolve them. At best, he dissolves them by shutting them out, or by prattling about them incessantly - or by eating them. He dies unreconciled, a victim of his father, of the war, of Hitler, of Luther, of History - a victim, that is to say an object, a thing: Frantz von Gerlach is a terminal case of impotence. He typifies existential death in the same degree as Goetz exemplifies existential life.³⁶ Les Séquestrés d'Altona illustrates, in one sense, 'le crépuscule des dieux', and in another, related sense, le crépuscule des héros.³⁷

Sartre's hero became extinct partly because of the march of History, but partly too because he is, by his nature, impossible: for he is, ideally, n'importe qui. But a hero must be quelqu'un.³⁸ Only Goetz succeeds in becoming this amazing Janus bifrons, and he does so in one of Sartre's artfully wrought myths. Sartre himself, engaging though his modesty is, could never seriously dissimulate his own greatness behind disarming claims to be no better than 'n'importe qui'.³⁹ There is an intractable paradox at the heart of Sartre's ethic: the hero is he who lives his existence on its given, contingent terms, who not only accepts but, so to speak, inhabits the gap in consciousness,

Conclusion.

who makes a virtue of being not what he is. But men instinctively know that it is ontologically impossible to be one's nothingness, for that is to be personne. Hence the 'futile passion' to close, fill, or bridge the gap, to be quelqu'un, to which the only alternative appears to be annihilation.

By 1960, Sartre had come to understand that, if his conception of the hero as n'importe qui was not in fact false, it was no longer possible to illustrate it convincingly in the theatre. The common man as hero, performing impossible feats like the 'Götz' of the eleven-year old's imagination (or even the Goetz of the forty-five year old's), could not be embodied save in the form of parodic subversion (Valera), or of ironic self-destruction (Frantz). 'Qui perd gagne' becomes the circular motto of the 'nobody'-hero, unable at last to resolve his contradictions other than in death, which is no resolution. Sartre, however, did not therefore lose his avowed 'passion de comprendre les hommes', but he no longer viewed the theatre as a suitable genre in which to pursue that understanding. ⁴⁰

Instead, Sartre turned to biography - 'que peut-on savoir d'un homme aujourd'hui?'⁴¹ - and increasingly, as his sight failed, to oral autobiography. Whether, in time, his dramatic essays on man, forming as they do a uniquely

Conclusion.

complete and coherent corpus within a corpus, will be held to be as perceptive, or as illuminating, or as valuable as his essays in other genres, must remain a matter for speculation of the kind which is not called for here. We can be sure, though, that they will always remain more accessible and, for many, more edifying, than the greater part of his work.

For the present, I shall be content to observe that the majority of Sartre's plays do indeed propound an argument for life in its fullest sense; and that the violent acts they portray can indeed be accounted for both in terms of the dramatic development as a whole, and (more especially) in terms of the ontological and moral - or 'existential' - life of the agent. Beyond this reaffirmation of my principal thesis, I shall not venture to conclude, for that would be foolish.

- 1 By 'Sartre's plays' I mean those eleven works for the theatre which have been published in their entirety. I shall discuss them in chronological order which, Sartre says, 'dans une perspective dialectique, est toujours le plus significatif', (Questions de Méthode, p.9.)
- 2 See, for example, mention of the Épiphanisme manifesto under André Billy, 'Où Sartre est invité à se suicider', in Robert Wilcocks, Jean-Paul Sartre: A Bibliography of International Criticism, pp.438-39; Maurice Cranston, 'Sartre and Violence: A Philosopher's Commitment to a Pledge', p.21; Walter Kaufmann, 'Existentialism and Death', p.39; B.E.O'Mahony, 'Martin Heidegger's Existential Analysis of Death', p.58; Edgar Wind, 'Blood, Iron, and Intuition', p.57.
- 3 'Ainsi, dans son caractère le plus immédiat et le plus superficiel, l'expérience critique de la totalisation est la vie même du chercheur en tant qu'elle se critique elle-même réflexivement. [...] Mais il ne s'agit pas, ici, de questionner la conscience sur elle-même: l'objet qu'elle doit se donner est précisément la vie, c'est-à-dire l'être objectif du chercheur, dans le monde des Autres en tant que cet être se totalise depuis sa naissance et se totalisera jusqu'à la mort. [...] A partir de là, sa compréhension [i.e. the individual's] de sa propre vie doit aller jusqu'à nier la détermination singulière de celle-ci pour en chercher l'intelligibilité dialectique dans l'aventure humaine tout entière.' (Critique de la raison dialectique, p.142. Further references in this chapter appear in parentheses in the body of the text.) See also Julien Benda, Tradition de l'existentialisme, ou les Philosophes de la vie, p.11; Serge Gauthier, André Malraux et la mort, p.34; and Edgar Morin, L'Homme et la mort dans l'histoire, p.293.
- 4 See, for example, Marc Beigbeder, 'Théâtre philosophique? II-Sartre', p.937; Marie-Denise Boros, Un Séquestré: l'homme sartrien, pp.185, 205; Ruby Cohn, Currents in Contemporary Drama, pp.26, 132; Franck Laraque, La Révolte dans le théâtre de Sartre, p.113; Christine Mohanty, 'Bariona, the Germination of Sartrean Theater', p.1096; Pierre-Henri Simon, Théâtre et destin, pp.173-74. Harold Hobson rightly remarks that Sartre's heroes 'are men engaged in the constant struggle to have life', but then adds, on the same page: 'His good is other people's wickedness, his courage, other people's perversity' (The French Theatre of Today: An English View, p.108). Rhannon Goldthorpe succinctly observes: 'Sartre's plays are often thought to owe their success not so much to verbal subtlety as to long-tried (and sometimes meretricious?) effects associated with the threat of violent physical action and its attendant suspense;' (Sartre: Literature and Theory, p.110).

- 5 Only in Kean is this theme found exclusively on the level of metaphor.
- 6 '[...] dans les romans et les oeuvres dramatiques, la lecture est une totalisation (comme la vie du lecteur). A partir de la double totalisation qui s'opère par l'Histoire et comme sa propre vie singulière le lecteur aborde l'oeuvre comme totalité à retotaliser dans sa singularité propre.' (CRD, p.159, footnote 1) Any such enterprise is, of necessity, partial and incomplete.
- 7 See L'Être et le néant, p.630. Further references in this chapter appear in parentheses in the body of the text.
- 8 See La Transcendance de l'Ego, pp.26-37, and EN, pp.196-218.
- 9 What follows is virtually a précis of my article, 'Sartre's Theories on Death, Murder, and Suicide'. See EN, pp.156-60, 612-33.
- 10 Sartre's conclusion against Heidegger is stated specifically on page 630 of L'Être et le néant, though the whole of his argument in 'Ma Mort' is a repudiation of his German master. He is at pains not only to stress the facticity of death, but also its separateness from finitude and, therefore, from freedom. He also dissociates himself from the Heideggerian concept of 'authenticity' as defined by the individual's attitude towards his own mortality (EN, p.651).
- 11 For a discussion of Sartre's application of this metaphor to the life of Tintoretto, see my article, 'Sartre tuant Saint Georges'.
- 12 In order to avoid the tiresome repetition of adjectives, I shall at times refer to "life" and "death" thus on the metaphorical level, in order to distinguish them from life and death on the literal level. I trust that the use of double inverted commas will prevent any confusion with quotations, which appear in single inverted commas.
See Francis Jeanson, Sartre, pp.27-30, for a useful account of the way in which Sartre's formal analysis of death as a contingent phenomenon translates into a metaphorical language descriptive of certain kinds of 'mort vivante' (p.29).
- 13 See L'Existentialisme est un humanisme, pp.80-86.
- 14 Baudelaire, pp.219-20.

- 15 Unlike Sartre himself, who had harboured the same neurosis: 'J'y mis une véritable frénésie: je choisis pour avenir un passé de grand mort et j'essayai de vivre à l'envers. Entre neuf et dix ans, je devins tout à fait posthume.' (Les Mots, p.165)
- 16 Réflexions sur la question juive, pp.59-60.
- 17 Réflexions sur la question juive, p.108.
- 18 See Saint Genet, comédien et martyr, pp.9-10. Further references in this chapter appear in parentheses in the body of the text.
- 19 Compare Sartre's 'recovery': 'Je vois clair, je suis désabusé, je connais mes vraies taches, je mérite sûrement un prix de civisme; depuis à peu près dix ans je suis un homme qui s'éveille, guéri d'une longue, amère et douce folie' (Les Mots, p.211).
- 20 'Forgers of Myths: The Young Playwrights of France', Theatre Arts, 30 (1946), retranslated in Un Théâtre de situations, 55-67 (p.62). Second and later references in this chapter, to this and other articles and interviews in TS, appear in parentheses in the body of the text.
- 21 Freud cited by Kaufmann, 'Existentialism and Death', p.48.
- 22 'La République du silence', Lettres françaises, 20 (1944), in Situations III, 11-14 (p.12).
- 23 'Mythe et réalité du théâtre', Le Point, 7 (1967), in TS, 169-94 (p.192).
- 24 See 'Deux heures avec Sartre', L'Express, 17 septembre 1959, reprinted as 'L'Auteur, l'oeuvre et le public' in TS, 91-103 (p.100).
- 25 'Brecht et les classiques', Hommage international à Bertolt Brecht, programme du Théâtre des Nations, 4-21 avril 1957, in TS, 81-84 (p.83).
- 26 'Théâtre et cinéma', Notes pour une conférence donnée le 6 mai 1958 au Sanatorium de Bouffémont, in TS, 85-90 (p.88).
- 27 Extract from L'Idiot de la famille I, reprinted as 'L'Acteur' in TS, 195-207 (p.197).
- 28 'Pour un théâtre de situations', La Rue, 12 (1947), in TS, 19-21 (p.20). Compare: 'Pour remplacer le théâtre de caractères nous voulons un théâtre de situations; notre but est d'explorer toutes les situations qui sont les plus communes à l'expérience humaine, celles qui se présentent au moins une fois dans la plupart des vies.' (TS, p.59)

- 29 Compare: 'En certaines situations, il n'y a place que pour une alternative dont l'un des termes est la mort. Il faut faire en sorte que l'homme puisse, en toute circonstance, choisir la vie.' ('Présentation', Les Temps modernes, 1 (1945), in Situations II, 9-30, (p.28))
- 30 See Roger Garaudy, Literature of the Graveyard, p.15, and Gaulupeau, p.34.
- 31 See Kaufmann, 'Existentialism and Death', p.39. Jeanson interprets death as 'la contingence sous sa forme la plus radicale' (Sartre, p.163). Boros emphasises its inescapability, calling it 'la séquestration la plus impensable' (p.39).
- 32 What follows summarises pages 350-56 of my article, 'Sartre's Theories on Death, Murder, and Suicide'. 'Praxis' can be assimilated to action provided it is understood that it is that action which has 'un point de départ réflexif', and which reveals or 'unveils' its meaning in the situation which it changes: 'prise de conscience' does not precede action, it is a moment of it (Questions de méthode, p.30, footnote 1).
- 33 See especially 'Livre II, Section A' of CRD, pp.381-552.
- 34 L'Existentialisme est un humanisme, pp.21-22.
- 35 Interview with Madeleine Chapsal in Les Écrivains en personne, Julliard (Paris, 1960), reprinted as 'Les Écrivains en personne' in Situations IX, 9-39 (pp.12-13). Compare: 'Il n'y a pas d'autre image au théâtre que l'image de l'acte, et si l'on veut savoir ce que c'est que le théâtre, il faut se demander ce que c'est qu'un acte, parce que le théâtre représente l'acte et il ne peut rien représenter d'autre.' ('Théâtre épique et théâtre dramatique', conférence donnée à la Sorbonne, 1960, in TS, 104-51 (p.119))
- 36 Morin, for example, has emphasised the tragic dimension of violence; Laraque, the political; Boros, the sociological; Simon, the historical; Cohn, the ethical. I believe Guicharnaud is right to consider violence as, first and foremost, action tout court, and I note in passing his assertion that Sartre's (and Camus's) dramatic heroes 'love life [and] have no particular desire to die,' (Modern French Theatre from Giraudoux to Beckett, pp.138-39).
- 37 Situations III, p.12.
- 38 Christina Howells, 'Sartre and Freud', p.174.

Bariona: Notes 1-11

- 1 Bariona, ou le Fils du tonnerre, in Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka, Les Écrits de Sartre, 565-633 (p.572): further references in this chapter appear in parentheses in the body of the text.
The play was composed and performed in a prisoner-of-war camp in 1940, and received its first, and limited publication, in 1962 (see ES, pp.372-75).
- 2 'Portrait du colonisé', (précédé du 'Portrait du colonisateur'), Les Temps modernes, 137-138 (1957), in Situations V, 49-56 (p.54).
- 3 'Portrait du colonisé', in Situations V, p.55.
- 4 'Une Victoire', L'Express, 350 (1958), in Situations V, 72-88 (p.86).
- 5 'Portrait du colonisé', in Situations V, p.55.
- 6 See CRD, p.209.
- 7 'Préface', in Frantz Fanon, Les Damnés de la terre, Maspéro (Paris, 1961), reprinted in Situations V, 167-93 (p.179).
- 8 'Les Damnés de la terre', in Situations V, p.178.
- 9 These Greek terms are increasingly employed by Sartre in his later work, in preference to Être and Faire respectively. For a concise, contrastive definition of these French categories, see SG, p.77.
- 10 Sartre draws attention to the meaning of the name with a little jeu de mots: 'Il a pourtant la tête solide, le Père Pierre' (p.590). Note also that Bariona is Bar-Jonah, son of Jonah, i.e. Simon, the disciple whom Christ called Peter, the 'rock'.
- 11 Compare also Sartre's defence of baptism in the Critique: 'le baptême est une façon de créer la liberté dans l'individu commun', etc., (CRD, p.491, footnote 1).

- 12 Compare Bariona's 'vieille croûte de la terre' (p.607), with Mathieu's 'la croûte d'un astre mort' (Le Sursis, p.297). 'Vermine' recurs in Sartre's work as a symbol of the dehumanised man, i.e. of the man who is "dead" qua man. Consider, for instance, Frantz's efforts to change men into 'living vermin' (Les Séquestrés d'Altona, p.207). See also SG, p.10, for a reference to Kafka's hero, Gregor Samsa.
- 13 Bariona is shut out from the light of the stable because in his unbelief he is, as he puts it, following the way of a finite - i.e. dying - world, while his fellows have chosen '[le] monde qui commence' (p.603), i.e. the nascent world.
- 14 For a useful comparison of Bariona and Les Troyennes, see Laraque, pp.222-23.
- 15 'Portrait du colonisé', in Situations V, p.56.
- 16 Contrast Oreste's dictum: 'la vie humaine commence de l'autre côté du désespoir' (Les Mouches, p.114).
- 17 Bernard J. Quinn, 'The Politics of Despair versus the Politics of Hope: A Look at Bariona, Sartre's first pièce engagée', p.100.
- 18 Most rebels in Sartre's theatre express their resistance in action which is usually frenetic and sometimes violent. The extreme quietism proposed by Bariona has no comparison, except perhaps in certain attitudes expressed by Lucie in Morts sans sépulture, and in the listlessness of Mathieu in L'Age de raison. Interestingly, Mathieu and Bariona are the only two of Sartre's characters to contemplate abortion: inertia entails eventually the cessation of all vital processes.
- 19 Quinn, pp.100-01.
- 20 Mohanty, p.1105.
- 21 Laraque, pp.58, 60.
- 22 'Les Damnés de la terre', in Situations V, p.181.
- 23 'La révolte se caractérise par un certain messianisme, une confiance dans la fatalité ou la providence, un désir d'affronter la mort. Tournée vers la mort elle rêve du rétablissement du passé qui a précédé la situation intenable qu'elle veut abolir.' (Laraque, p.48)

Bariona: Notes 24-32

- 24 See Chapter 1 of this thesis, the section 'Three Examples of Existential Death', especially the final paragraph on Jean Genet. Note that here Bariona speaks of founding a new religion, 'la religion du néant' (p.581).
- 25 Sartre calls Genet's experience 'le drame liturgique' (SG, p.10), and assimilates it to a religious rite. Martyrdom has, of course, almost exclusively religious connotations. Bariona will later speak of 'les mains martyrisées' of crucified Sion (p.614).
- 26 Like the sadist, the colonialist wants his victims simultaneously dead and alive: the actual death of the victim necessarily thwarts that aim.
- 27 'Unnatural' because contrary, first, to the ontological law that being has an inherent tendency to perpetuate its being (EN, p.519; CRD, p.255), and secondly to the intellectual-cum-emotional conviction that the immortality of the species in some way compensates for the mortality of the individual. Compare Boris's reflections on the subject in Le Sursis (p.223), with Sartre's own in On a raison de se révolter (p.190).
- 28 See CRD, pp.447-51, 597-603.
- 29 Let us not forget that Lélius is a thinly disguised Nazi Gauleiter, whom Sartre sought to mock. The villains of his plays - the salauds - are often less than subtle, and sometimes frankly stupid: the staff of Soir à Paris in Nekrassov are the most obvious, if not the most representative, examples.
- 30 Note that the other Sarah in Sartre's fiction (L'Age de raison), shares the big-heartedness of Bariona's spouse, but takes a more modern, utilitarian view of life. If the theism of Bariona's Sarah plays a part in her struggle for the unborn's right to live, the humanism of the twentieth-century Sarah makes her Mathieu's accomplice in his attempts to procure an abortion for Marcelle, although for her too, 'la vie humaine était sacrée' (L'Age de raison, p.45).
- 31 Thure Stenström, 'Jean-Paul Sartre's First Play', p.185.
- 32 Sartre quoted by Paul-Louis Mignon, L'Avant-Scène Théâtre, 402/403 (1968), in TS, p.221.

- 33 'La violence avorteuse qui s'exerce à la fois sur le ventre d'une femme et sur une vie, c'est celle de la société bourgeoise' (CRD, p.726).
- 34 See Mohanty, p.1103.
- 35 Mohanty, p.1103.
- 36 Macbeth, II, 3.
- 37 Mohanty, Quinn, and Stenström have all commented usefully on this aspect of Bariona.
- 38 Christ, of course, is the Good Shepherd.
- 39 See CRD, pp.676-77.
- 40 Sartre has stigmatised the attitude: 'I didn't ask to be born', as 'une façon naïve de mettre l'accent sur notre facticité' (EN, p.641).
- 41 Laraque, p.61.
- 42 'Les Damnés de la terre', in Situations V, p.185.
- 43 Laraque, p.66.
- 44 Compare, for example, the fanaticism of the High Priest, Joad, in Racine's Athalie, IV, 3.
- 45 'Car, en ce premier temps de la révolte, il faut tuer: abattre un Européen, c'est faire d'une pierre deux coups, supprimer en même temps un oppresseur et un opprimé: restent un homme mort et un homme libre; le survivant, pour la première fois, sent un sol national sous la plante de ses pieds.' ('Les Damnés de la terre', in Situations V, p.183)
- 46 Quinn, p.104.

- 1 Les Mouches, in Theatre I, 7-121 (p.56). Further references in this chapter appear in parentheses in the body of the text.
- 2 Lucien Goldmann, 'The Theatre of Sartre', p.106.
- 3 Maurice Cranston, Sartre, p.31.
- 4 T. Spoerri, 'The Structure of Existence: The Flies', p.58.
- 5 Boros, p.211.
- 6 Compare Daniel's reflection about the self-conscious homosexual: 'Les pédérastes qui se vantent ou qui s'affichent ou simplement qui consentent [...] ce sont des morts; ils se sont tués à force d'avoir honte. Je ne veux pas de cette mort-là.' (L'Age de raison, p.312)
- 7 There is much symbolism of colours in Les Mouches. See Hastings, 'Symbolism in the Adaptation of the Greek Myth by Modern French Dramatists'.
- 8 Consider Sartre's remark: 'Il n'y a pas d'esprits. Pas plus qu'il n'y a d'âmes. Cela, nous le savons déjà' (CRD, p.527).
- 9 SG, p.86.
- 10 Keith Gore, Sartre: 'La Nausée' and 'Les Mouches', pp.55, 56.
- 11 La Force des Choses, p.32.
- 12 SG, pp.551, 552.
- 13 Macbeth, I, 4. One must admit, though, that Égisthe 'messily takes too long to die'! (Goldthorpe, Sartre: Literature and Theory, p.78).
- 14 Robert Lorris, Sartre dramaturge, pp.41-42.
- 15 'Philebus means "lover of youth". In the case of Orestes [sic] we are dealing with an educated, abstract, "absent" adolescence.' (Robert Champigny, Stages on Sartre's Way, 1938-52, p.86) The name 'Philebe' can be construed more broadly as 'lover of life' in the sense of one who values equally reason and sentiment (see Grand Larousse encyclopédique, 8 (1963), p.409). Démétrios is probably an ironic pseudonym: Demeter is the goddess associated with 'le thème de l'immortalité de la race, puis de l'individu' (Grand Larousse encyclopédique, 3 (1960), p.902), whereas Jupiter, in Sartre's version, is the god of death. It is not inconceivable, of course, that Sartre could also have had in mind any of the following: Démétrios le Thaumaturge; Démétrios l'Épicurien; Démétrios de Skepsis; Démétrios le Cynique (see again GLe, 3 (1960), p.902).

- 16 'La mort n'est pas une absence' (EN, p.325).
- 17 P.Royle, 'The Ontological Significance of Les Mouches', pp.45-46.
- 18 EN, p.556.
- 19 Compare the experience of Mathieu Delarue: 'Il avait appuyé sur la gâchette et, pour une fois, quelque chose était arrivé. Quelque chose de définitif, pensa-t-il en riant de plus belle.' (La Mort dans l'âme, p.187)
- 20 Consider Érostrate's attitude towards his project of gratuitously murdering a number of public figures: '[Mon crime] s'emparerait de moi, bouleverserait ma laideur trop humaine ... un crime, ça coupe en deux la vie de celui qui le commet. Il devait y avoir des moments où on souhaiterait revenir en arrière, mais il est là, derrière vous, il vous barre le passage, ce minéral étincelant.' ('Érostrate', in Le Mur, 77-97 (p.90)) Compare Sartre's explanation of Genet's avowed admiration for murderers: 's'il admire tant de criminels, s'il regrette de n'oser tuer, c'est que d'un même coup le meurtre change la victime en chose et l'assassin en objet [...] commettre un crime c'est faire exister par avance son objectivité pour les policiers.' (SG, p.86)
- 21 Consider Sartre's remark: 'Oreste est libre pour le crime et par-delà le crime: je l'ai montré en proie à la liberté comme Oedipe est en proie à son destin. Il se débat sous cette poigne de fer, mais il faudra bien qu'il tue pour finir, et qu'il charge son meurtre sur ses épaules et qu'il le passe sur l'autre rive. Car la liberté n'est pas je ne sais quel pouvoir abstrait de survoler la condition humaine: c'est l'engagement le plus absurde et le plus inexorable.' ('Prière d'insérer de l'édition en volume (1943)', in ES, p.88)
- 22 Dorothy McCall, The Theatre of Jean-Paul Sartre, p.18.
- 23 See L'Existentialisme est un humanisme, p.84.
- 24 Compare: 'puisque l'être se subordonne le faire, puisqu'on tue pour être criminel et parce qu'on l'est déjà, le criminel que je serai, que je suis de toute éternité, suscite en moi un meurtre qui se choisit ses prétextes. Dès lors, l'acte devient esthétique: c'est une finalité sans fin. L'assassin tue pour manifester le crime qui est déjà plus qu'à demi dans les choses mais qui n'apparaît qu'à ses yeux d'assassin: [...] ? La victime est pur prétexte pour faire un geste dont la beauté se suffit.' (SG, pp.115-16)

Les Mouches: Notes 25-36

- 25 Ida Petazzoni Cases, ed., Les Mouches, p.94.
- 26 Sartre speaking in an interview entitled 'Wir alle sind Luthers Opfer', Der Spiegel, 11 May 1960, translated as 'Nous sommes tous des victimes de Luther', in TS, 333-35 (pp.349-50). Sartre advances this as the opinion of certain psychoanalysts which seems to him 'dans une grande mesure juste' (TS, p.349).
- 27 Henri Rabi, 'Les Thèmes majeurs du théâtre de Sartre', p.434; Hugh Dickinson, Myth on the Modern Stage, p.239.
- 28 Oleg Koefoed, 'L'Oeuvre littéraire de Jean-Paul Sartre. Essai d'interprétation', p.63.
- 29 Gore, 'La Nausée' and 'Les Mouches', p.60.
- 30 See, for example, Ruby Cohn, 'Four Stages of the Absurdist Hero', p.201; Champigny, Stages on Sartre's Way, p.94; Laraque, pp.79-80. Pierre Verstraeten, by contrast, rightly insists on the ontological (as well as the historical) dimension of the play (see Violence et éthique, pp.27-28).
- 31 Dickinson, p.239.
- 32 Dickinson, p.225. Philip Thody has persuasively observed that if Sartre 'had invented the story of a son who killed his mother and then proclaimed that it was his duty to do so, no-one would have believed it' (Jean-Paul Sartre: A Literary and Political Study, p.71).
- 33 Interview in Comoedia, 24 avril 1943, in TS, 223-25 (p.224).
- 34 Particularly Aeschylus's version, in which Clytemnestre herself strikes the blow which kills Agamemnon, and Oreste has the duty of the vendetta to exact blood for blood.
- 35 Compare: 'Par ce geste [i.e. the matricide], qu'on ne peut isoler de ses réactions, [Oreste] établit l'harmonie d'un rythme qui dépasse en portée la notion du bien et du mal. Mais son acte restera stérile s'il n'est pas total et définitif, s'il doit, par exemple, entraîner l'acceptation du remords, sentiment qui n'est qu'un retour en arrière puisqu'il équivaut à un enchaînement avec le passé' (TS, p.224).
- 36 Morin, p.164. Michel Leiris has made much the same point, see 'Oreste et la Cité', pp.74-75.

Les Mouches: Notes 37-43

- 37 Royle, however, insists that the matricide is criminal (see 'Ontological Significance', pp.45-46), and so doing disagrees not only with Oreste, but with Sartre also: 'J'y disais aux Français: vous n'avez pas à vous repentir, même ceux qui en un sens sont devenus des meurtriers; vous devez assumer vos actes même s'ils ont causé la mort d'innocents.' ('Discussion autour des Mouches', Verger, 5 (1948), extracts in TS, 229-34 (p.232))
- 38 McCall, p.17.
- 39 Macbeth, II, 3.
- 40 For Sartre's remarks on Les Mouches dating from 1943-44, see TS, pp.223-25. In 1948, Sartre could still say of Oreste: 'Il va le premier sur la voie de la libération, au moment même où les masses peuvent et doivent prendre conscience d'elles-mêmes; il est celui qui par son acte leur montre le premier la route.' (TS, p.234)
- 41 See, for example, Gore, 'La Nausée' and 'Les Mouches', p.62, and Cases, p.159.
- 42 See Sartre, un film, pp.98-101, and 'Autoportrait à soixante-dix ans', Le Nouvel Observateur, 23, 30 juin, 7 juillet 1975, in Situations X, 133-226 (pp.176-80).
- 43 Royle, 'Ontological Significance', p.50.

Huis clos: Notes 1-11

- 1 To be precise, the third best-known (after Les Mains sales and La Putain respectueuse), according to the modest 'market research' carried out on the subject (see my article, 'Connaissez-vous Sartre?', p.338).
- 2 Huis clos, in Theatre I, 122-82 (pp.182, 179, 174, respectively). Further references in this chapter appear in parentheses in the body of the text.
- 3 Peter Royle's book, Sartre, l'enfer et la liberté: étude de 'Huis clos' et des 'Mouches', is especially worth consulting, for it contains valuable discussion of the many connections to be made between Huis clos and the theory of L'Être et le néant.
- 4 'Préface pour l'enregistrement de Huis clos sur disque par la Deutsche Gramophon Gesellschaft' (1965), in TS, 237-40 (p.239).
- 5 Jeanson, for example, writes: 'On remarquera en premier lieu que tous les caractères par quoi se définit le fait d'"être morts", d'être "en enfer", sont directement applicables à cette mort vivante à quoi se condamnent les hommes lorsqu'ils renient leur propre liberté et s'efforcent de nier celle de leurs semblables. [...] Huis clos, ne serait-ce pas le drame de tous ceux qui vivent une vie close, repliée sur soi, tout entièrement préoccupée de soi et retournée contre soi, une vie toujours sur la défensive à l'égard d'autrui et par là totalement livrée au regard d'autrui?' (Sartre, pp.26, 29) Contat writes: 'Huis clos, c'était la tragédie ontologique de l'individu dont la mort transforme la vie en destin, ou, plutôt, qui choisit de vivre la mort-vivante d'un destin en reniant, dans la mauvaise foi, sa liberté.' (Explication des 'Séquestrés d'Altona', p.14) See also Boros, p.234; Edith Kern, 'Abandon Hope, All Ye...', pp.59-60; and Laraque, p.173.
- 6 See EN, pp.615-33, especially p.624.
- 7 Royle, Sartre, l'enfer et la liberté, p.105. For the next mention of Royle in this paragraph, see L'Enfer et la liberté, p.43.
- 8 Interview with Der Spiegel, in TS, p.352.
- 9 ES, p.100. See also Bernard Lecherbonnier, 'Huis clos': Sartre, p.54.
- 10 'Première Préface de Bajazet.'
- 11 EN, p.625.

Huis clos: Notes 12-25

- 12 Jeanson, Sartre, p.27.
- 13 EN, p.624. The section entitled 'Ma Mort' covers pages 615-33.
- 14 Jeanson, Sartre, p.27. The next quotation is from the same place.
- 15 The foregoing quotation is from Marie-Denise Boros, pp.61-62. She uses the phrase 'mort ontologique' where I would prefer 'existential death'. It is, of course, the case that the metaphorical death to which we both refer implies some change in the ontological condition of the "dead" individual - (see Sartre's discussion of oppression in Cahiers pour une morale, pp.338-47, especially p.341). Nevertheless, there is still 'being' - albeit of the en-soi kind - on the part of the metaphorically dead person, and it seems to me, therefore, not quite apposite to speak of 'ontological death' in this way. I note that Lorris also prefers the term 'existential' when, for example, he speaks of Frantz as 'supprimé existentiellement par son père' (Sartre dramaturge, p.278).
- 16 See Michael Issacharoff, 'L'Espace et le regard dans Huis clos', pp.23-24.
- 17 Lorris, p.68.
- 18 Lorris, pp.71, 62.
- 19 EN, p.164.
- 20 See Royle, Sartre, l'enfer et la liberté, p.85, and Lorris, p.79.
- 21 Les Mouches, p.39.
- 22 Lorris, pp.78-79.
- 23 Attitudes towards death cannot be classified as 'authentic' or 'inauthentic' (EN, p.633).
- 24 See Mohanty, pp.1104-05.
- 25 It is as if Sartre has frozen Garcin (and Inès and Estelle) at that 'infinitesimal moment' of death at which one is 'nothing but' one's past (EN, p.158).

- 26 Lecherbonnier, p.42. We have seen how Garcin's fear reveals itself at once. Likewise, Inès's cruelty is not slow to assert itself - see her first remark about Florence (p.134), her complaint about Garcin's nervous tic (p.136) - and Estelle's vanity is also immediately apparent (p.138).
- 27 Lorriss, p.83.
- 28 See EN, pp.87-88.
- 29 See EN, pp.94-108.
- 30 TS, p.239.
- 31 EN, p.626.
- 32 The description of the hell of Huis clos as 'like a self-service restaurant' was coined by Thody (Jean-Paul Sartre, p.80). The previous quotation is from Lecherbonnier, p.50. The Other's possession of our past after our death makes of it an eternal present (see EN, pp.156-60).

Morts sans sépulture: Notes 1-12

- 1 'Théâtre et cinéma', in TS, p.88, and 'Sartre 1960 - Entretien avec Jean-Paul Sartre', Les Cahiers libres de la jeunesse, 1 (1960), extract in TS, p.242.
- 2 Lorris refers to the 'rythme binaire' and the 'force sententieuse' of Sartre's dialogue (Sartre dramaturge, p.341).
- 3 See 'La République du silence', Lettres françaises (1944), in Situations III, 11-14 (p.12).
- 4 'Paris sous l'occupation', France Libre (Londres, 1945), in Situations III, 15-42 (pp.28-30).
- 5 See, respectively, 'Qu'est-ce qu'un collaborateur?', La République française, août 1945, in Situations III, 43-61 (p.52); and 'La République du silence', in Situations III, p.13.
- 6 Morts sans sépulture, in Théâtre I, 183-268 (p.201). Further references in this chapter appear in parentheses in the body of the text.
- 7 See Lorris, p.90.
- 8 Robert Champigny, Le Genre dramatique, p.56, quoted by Lorris, p.88.
- 9 Sartre has gone so far as to say that 'personne ne pourrait supposer qu'ils parleraient, donc pas de suspense' (TS, p.242). He seems to forget that it is always an open question whether Sorbier or Henri will 'crack'.
- 10 'Je ne discute pas le principe: si l'on ne donne pas sa vie pour "quelque chose", on finira par la donner pour rien.' ('Sommes-nous en démocratie?', Les Temps modernes, 78 (1952), in Situations VI, 69-76 (p.69))
- 11 Lorris, p.95. Consider especially the delight Clochet takes in forcing the courageous Henri to scream (p.221).
- 12 Note Pellerin's instruction to Henri to 'baisser les yeux' (p.224).

Morts sans sépulture: Notes 13-28

- 13 Conduct typical also of the anti-semite (see above, the section 'Three Examples of Existential Death' in Chapter 1). Note Clochet's brutal and gratuitous baiting of the (presumably) Gentile Sorbier (pp.226-27).
- 14 'Julius Fucik', Les Lettres francaises, 17-24 juin 1954, in ES, 708-13 (p.710).
- 15 See Laraqe, p.92.
- 16 'Allons-nous condamner toute une vie sur une minute?' ('Julius Fucik', in ES, p.711)
- 17 'Cependant, nous avons vu se préciser un rapport proprement commun de chacun avec tous et avec chacun qui est le pouvoir diffus de vie et de mort sur le traître ou, si l'on préfère, la fraternité-terreur, comme détermination fondamentale de la socialité.' (CRD, p.587)
- 18 For a definition of the 'groupe assermenté', see CRD, pp.447-54.
- 19 See CRD, p.603.
- 20 'C'est par leurs actes futurs qu'Henri et les autres résistants de Morts sans sépulture décideront du sens qu'il faudra donner au meurtre de François,' (Boros, p.143).
- 21 That is, Jean's for Lucie, Oreste's for Électre.
- 22 See, for example, SG, pp.358-59.
- 23 Koefoed, p.75.
- 24 See, for example, Rabi, p.447.
- 25 '[Sartre et moi] nous étions du même avis: se trouver responsable par pure obstination de la mort de quelqu'un, on ne doit pas commodément se le pardonner.' (Simone de Beauvoir, La Force de l'âge, p.514)
- 26 See Lorris, p.110.
- 27 Boros, p.20.
- 28 Lorris, p.102.

Morts sans sépulture: Notes 29-34

- 29 McCall, pp.49-50. Cohn has also rightly observed:
'Despite the ironic end, however, the three survivors have acted heroically; they were ready to die when there was a reason to die, and they forced themselves to live, after excruciating torture, when there was no reason to die.' (Currents, pp.132-33)
- 30 Laraqe, p.89.
- 31 EN, pp.483-84.
- 32 Koefoed, p.78.
- 33 See Koefoed, p.77.
- 34 See above, note 1.

La Putain respectueuse: Notes 1-21

- 1 See ES, pp.135-39.
- 2 'Orphée noir', Introduction à l'Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache, de Léopold Sedar Senghor, Presses universitaires (Paris, 1948), in Situations III, 229-86 (p.283).
- 3 La Putain respectueuse, in Theatre I, 269-316 (p.275). Further references in this chapter appear in parentheses in the body of the text.
- 4 'La vie du noir est en jeu, mais à aucun moment la valeur de son existence n'entre en question; qu'il soit poursuivi ou protégé, l'intérêt qu'il présente n'est qu'objectuel.' (Lorris, p.130)
- 5 Compare Roquentin's remark about 'le Docteur Rogé' and his kind: 'Voilà ce que c'est que leur expérience, voilà pourquoi je me suis dit, si souvent, qu'elle sent la mort: c'est leur dernière défense.' (La Nausée, p.102)
- 6 See Lorris, p.129.
- 7 See L'Existentialisme est un humanisme, p.17.
- 8 See La Nausée, pp.117-33.
- 9 See EN, pp.98-99.
- 10 'Un acte qu'on accomplit pour être, ce n'est plus un acte, c'est un geste.' (SG, pp.87-88)
- 11 This is, in a nutshell, the analysis Sartre expounds in L'Être et le néant, pp.615-33. See also SG, p.77.
- 12 Koefoed, p.79.
- 13 Lorris, p.125.
- 14 Lorris, p.130.
- 15 See again La Nausée, pp.117-33.
- 16 Les Mouches, p.116.
- 17 See ES, pp.137-38.
- 18 Lorris, p.138.
- 19 Lorris, p.130.
- 20 Koefoed, pp.78-79.
- 21 See Koefoed, p.79.

Les Mains sales: Notes 1-18

- 1 Les Mains sales, p.38. Further references in this chapter appear in parentheses in the body of the text.
- 2 A contradiction which Sartre sees as inherent in the situation of the 'classic intellectual', 'détenteur d'un certain savoir que la société bourgeoise lui a donné' (Sartre, un film, p.127).
- 3 Consider Hugo's comments on pages 15, 17, 18.
- 4 Sartre remarks facetiously in Les Mots that his father's early death spared him the fate of Hugo Barine (and Frantz von Gerlach): 'je souscris volontiers au verdict d'un éminent psychanalyste: je n'ai pas de Sur-moi' (Les Mots, p.11).
- 5 See pp.45, 142, 228, 232.
- 6 See Verstraeten, Première Partie, Chapter 3, also pp.95, 101 (footnote).
- 7 SG, p.107. Compare Hugo's remark at the moment of firing: 'je me fous de ce que vous avez dans la tête.' (p.240)
- 8 SG, p.108.
- 9 Jeanson, Sartre, p.46.
- 10 'Théâtre épique et théâtre dramatique', Conférence donnée à la Sorbonne, le 29 mars 1960, in TS, 104-51 (p.135).
- 11 Laraqe, p.106.
- 12 Rabi, p.443.
- 13 'Qu'est-ce que la littérature?', Les Temps modernes, 17-22 (1947), in Situations II, 55-330 (p.228).
- 14 Verstraeten, p.96.
- 15 'Demain, au Théâtre Antoine, Jean-Paul Sartre prendra position devant le problème de l'engagement politique', Interview par Pierre-André Baude, L'Aube, 1er avril 1948, extract in ES, p.180.
- 16 Verstraeten, p.95.
- 17 La Transcendance de l'Ego, p.65.
- 18 Verstraeten, p.62.

Les Mains sales: Notes 19-23

- 19 See CRD, pp.284-85.
- 20 Situations II, p.220.
- 21 See Verstraeten, Première Partie, Chapter 3, and pp.95, 96, 101; and Jeanson, Sartre, pp.44-46. Thody employs the phrase 'grandiloquent gesture' when drawing the same comparison (Jean-Paul Sartre, p.99).
- 22 SG, pp.389, 390.
- 23 Goldthorpe calls this phrase a 'complicated oxymoron [...] For Hugo denies at the political level what he takes himself to be at the ontological level: that is to say "récupérable". The negation is intended to be a simultaneous affirmation. But the affirmation is illusory, and the illusion is reinforced, both despite and because of Hugo's will, by the act of denial.' (Sartre: Literature and Theory, p.114) See all of her Chapter 4, 'Les Mains sales: Words and Deeds', for a brilliant exegesis of Hugo's acts of murder and suicide viewed in the light of Sartre's theoretical analyses of the psychological structures of language, motivation, and volition.

Le Diable et le bon Dieu: Notes 1-18

- 1 Le Diable et le bon Dieu, p.222. Further references in this chapter appear in parentheses in the body of the text.
- 2 Verstraeten, p.74.
- 3 Compare the double-bind in which the colonised people of Bariona find themselves.
- 4 For useful comments on the importance of the crowd's role, see Lorris, p.213.
- 5 See above, my discussion of Genet in Chapter 1.
- 6 See SG, pp.397-447.
- 7 Verstraeten, pp.125-26.
- 8 Lorris, p.207. He also refers to other characters as 'forces orientatrices' (Sartre dramaturge, p.187).
- 9 See SG, pp.149-50, 358-59. Resonant also of Wilde's refrain: 'Each man kills the thing he loves', in The Ballad of Reading Gaol.
- 10 See Esquisse d'une théorie des émotions, especially pp. 45-46.
- 11 Lorris, p.194.
- 12 SG, pp.227-28.
- 13 See I Corinthians 13.
- 14 Lorris, p.194.
- 15 Laraque, p.124.
- 16 Les Mouches, p.29.
- 17 An analysis of the last two pages of the fourth tableau, comprising forty-seven lines of dialogue between Goetz and Nasty, reveals the extent both of Goetz's self-centredness -(e.g. nineteen uses of 'je')- and of the abstractness of his thinking - (notice especially the verbs he employs).
- 18 Contrast Christ's kindness to Mary Magdalene.

Le Diable et le bon Dieu: Notes 19-34

- 19 Resonances here of the sheep gathered by the Good Shepherd.
- 20 See EN, p.519, and CRD, p.255.
- 21 'Le Diable et le Bon Dieu c'est la même chose ... moi, je choisis l'homme', interview par Marcel Péju, Samedi Soir, 2 juin 1951, in TS, 268-72 (pp.271-72).
- 22 TS, p.272.
- 23 'La pièce traite entièrement des rapports de l'homme à Dieu, ou, si l'on veut, des rapports de l'homme à l'absolu.' (Paris-Presse-L'Intransigeant, 7 juin 1951, in TS, 272-73 (p.272))
- 24 Les mains sales, p.21.
- 25 It is, if anything, rather the reverse: nothingness comes into the world via the freedom which man is. (See, for example, Les Carnets de la drôle de guerre, p.166.)
- 26 For example, Robert Champigny writes: 'The creative aspect of freedom finds its immediate application in violence.' (Stages on Sartre's Way, p.177) And Gabriel Marcel writes: 'Le crime apparaît comme la condition d'une communion réelle entre les hommes,' (L'Heure théâtrale de Giraudoux à Jean-Paul Sartre, p.218).
- 27 Verstraeten is perhaps the only critic to have taken account of this fact, and even he does not quite make it clear - as it is in the text - that Heinrich strikes the first blow (see Violence et éthique, p.103).
- 28 Verstraeten, p.108.
- 29 McCall, p.32.
- 30 Laraque, p.128.
- 31 Verstraeten uses the first word of each pair of terms on p.101, the second word of each on p.74.
- 32 La Force des choses, p.261.
- 33 Verstraeten, p.94.
- 34 Laraque, p.128.

Le Diable et le bon Dieu: Notes 35-49

- 35 'Avec Goetz, pour la première fois dans le théâtre sartrien, le héros possède le double sens rétrospectif et prospectif de son meurtre: à la fois fin d'une liberté imaginaire [...] - et début d'une action aux prises avec les choses' (Verstraeten, pp.98, 100-01).
- 36 Verstraeten, p.95.
- 37 Verstraeten, pp. 139, 117, respectively.
- 38 'La plupart des révolutions prennent leur forme et leur originalité dans un meurtre. Toutes, ou presque, ont été homicides. Mais quelques-unes ont, de surcroît, pratiqué le régicide et le déicide.' (Albert Camus, L'Homme révolté, p.518) Goetz's homicide is also deicide and 'legicide'.
- 39 Verstraeten, p.139.
- 40 Simone de Beauvoir, La Force des choses, p.261.
- 41 Michel Contat, ES, pp.235-36.
- 42 Laraqe, p.248.
- 43 TS, p.270.
- 44 SG, p.358.
- 45 CRD, p.603, and see my article, 'Sartre's Theories on Death, Murder, and Suicide', pp.350-56.
- 46 ES, p.236.
- 47 'Notes inédites de Sartre', cited by Simone de Beauvoir in La Force des choses, p.262.
- 48 Compare Camus's remark: 'Si [le révolté] tue lui-même, enfin, il acceptera la mort. Fidèle à ses origines, le révolté démontre dans le sacrifice que sa vraie liberté n'est pas à l'égard du meurtre, mais à l'égard de sa propre mort.' (L'Homme révolté, p.689)
- 49 La Force des choses, p.261.

Kean: Notes 1-12

- 1 For useful comparisons of Sartre's play with Dumas's, see Lorris, pp.290-306, and David Bradby's edition of Kean (which includes the text of Dumas's play), pp.30-37. Further references in this chapter to this edition of the play appear in parentheses in the body of the text.
- 2 Only the game-playing between Hugo and Jessica in Les Mains sales gives a foretaste of the wit and humour Sartre displays in Kean and Nekrassov.
- 3 Even in Nekrassov, for comparison's sake, there is plenty of slapstick violence; and that later play opens with a suicide attempt.
- 4 A word-count reveals the extent to which Sartre has developed the idiom of life and death which was so prevalent in Romantic literature. In Dumas, the words 'vie', 'vivre', and 'mort', 'mourir', and associated words and synonyms, occur twenty-four times each; in Sartre, by contrast, 'vie', etc., occurs sixty times, and 'mort', etc., 120 times.
- 5 Lorris, p.301.
- 6 Interview, Combat, 5 novembre 1953, extract in TS, 283-84 (p.284).
- 7 'Peut-être enfin n'est-ce pas tout à fait par hasard que l'interrogation de Hamlet vient hanter celle de Kean: Hamlet, n'est-il pas en effet tout ensemble le mort-vivant qui se laisse dévorer par un mort et le velléitaire qui se prend pour un homme d'action?' (Jeanson, Sartre, p.79).
- 8 The 'analogon' is the 'presence' of an 'absence' (see L'Imaginaire, pp.72-73. See also the whole of the deuxième partie, 'Le Probable', pp.115-84, especially pp. 154-84).
- 9 'Vingt fois j'ai voulu me pendre' (p.63).
- 10 SG, p.63.
- 11 Lorris, p.303.
- 12 'Écrire pour son époque', Érasme, 11/12 (1946), in ES, 670-76 (p.670).

Kean: Notes 13-23

- 13 Compare Garcin: 'Après tout, je vivais toujours dans des meubles que je n'aimais pas et des situations fausses' (Huis clos, p.127); and Hugo: 'Je vis dans un décor' (Les Mains sales, p.132).
- 14 Lorris, p.303.
- 15 See Boros, pp.20-21, for an exposition of the idea of the dressing-room as the space 'sequestering' Kean.
- 16 Each of Sartre's heroes to be frustrated by a sense of ghostly non-existence is fascinated for a time by the phenomena of sensory experience: Oreste, for example, yearns to suffer with the Argives; Hugo envies the real taste of coffee in Hoederer's mouth, and the solidity of the things he touches; and Goetz pushes sensual experience to its very extremes - successively, excess and abstinence - in his efforts to feel his existence.
- 17 Bradby points out in his Notes that the Baudelaire poem to which Sartre is here alluding - 'L'Invitation au voyage' - 'begins with the words "Mon enfant, ma soeur", which explains Kean's next words' (p.200).
- 18 The brother/sister relationship is one of blood. Compare the references to blood-giving and blood-letting in Les Mouches, where the consanguinity of Oreste and Électre is complemented by that of mother and son.
- 19 Lorris, p.302.
- 20 Although these protestations have a distinctly Romantic ring to them, they are not, in fact, to be found in Dumas.
- 21 Of the changes made from Dumas, this is one permitted by the choice of Othello instead of Romeo and Juliet: the corresponding line in Dumas is: 'Avec quoi veux-tu que je tue Tybalt?' (p.250) Since Kean, 'acteur', will commit metaphorical suicide, it is fitting that he should be playing a scene which would climax in his own death. It is ironic that he then "kills" himself without the aid of a sword. (On the aptness of Othello as a scene of jealousy, see Bradby's Introduction.)
- 22 Gore, 'The Theatre of Jean-Paul Sartre: 1940-1965', p.142.
- 23 Lorris, p.298.

Kean: Notes 24-28

- 24 'Mais entre l'enfant d'Argos et l'acteur anglais s'étend l'ombre de Goetz le tricheur, et le défi au Prince n'est rien d'autre que le coup de dé truqué du reître allemand.' (Lorris, p.298)
- 25 Les Mains sales, p.243.
- 26 Contrast the conventionally melodramatic last words of Dumas's Kean, in answer to the same remark: 'Que Votre Altesse me pardonne!' (p.267) In Sartre's version, we can infer that the Prince has not given up play-acting, although Kean has.
- 27 Romeo and Juliet, III, 5.
- 28 See Lorris, p.306.

Nekrassov: Notes 1-16

- 1 See Sartre's interview with L'Humanité, 8 juin 1955, in TS, pp.293-95.
- 2 Interview, Combat, 7 juin 1955, in TS, 292-93 (p.292). Sartre later regretted having focussed on Valera as much as he had (see his remarks in Les Cahiers libres de la jeunesse, 1 (1960), in TS, p.297). Lorris - one of very few critics to have given Nekrassov any close attention - feels there is an imbalance in the play because Georges inadvertently assumes the role of Sartrean hero (Sartre dramaturge, p.251).
- 3 That is how it appears to Lorris (see Sartre dramaturge, pp.246-52).
- 4 The theme of life and death had its place in La Putain respectueuse, which Sartre called a 'comédie-bouffe'. But it did not there have the entirely ironic function which Sartre has assigned to it in Nekrassov.
- 5 TS, p.295.
- 6 'Or, je ne cache nullement mon intention: je veux montrer, dans Nekrassov, le mal que peut faire une campagne de presse anti-communiste.' (TS, p.294)
- 7 Often enough the satirist addresses himself to shibboleths which have virtually the status of myths.
- 8 Nekrassov, p.21. Further references in this chapter appear in parentheses in the body of the text.
- 9 Lorris is of the same opinion (see Sartre dramaturge, p.226).
- 10 See EN, p.625.
- 11 The danger is false because the violence risked is of the slapstick sort: it is unthinkable that anyone should get hurt.
- 12 Lorris, p.225.
- 13 Lorris, p.229.
- 14 Lorris, p.236.
- 15 Lorris, p.228.
- 16 Lorris, p.233.

Nekrassov: Notes 17-25

- 17 Interview, L'Humanité-Dimanche, 19 juin 1955, in TS, 295-97 (p.295).
- 18 The situation of Les Séquestrés d'Altona could be called 'war and defeat'. Huis clos is a special case.
- 19 It is characteristic of comedy that nothing is changed. Clearly, Sibilot will run Soir à Paris exactly as Jules had before him; and Jules, no doubt, will find a similar job elsewhere.
- 20 Lorris, pp.232, 251.
- 21 By contrast, there is real poignancy in Kean's 'Être ou ne pas être?', for the theatricality of his expression is a function of the existential crisis to which it gives voice. In Kean's case, as in Hamlet's, the phrase 'Voilà la question' stresses the gravity of his situation, whereas it stresses the levity of Valera's.
- 22 The correlation between existential and physical life in the situation of the Sartrean hero is debased in Nekrassov by the general assumption of the exclusive importance of the life of the body.
- 23 Le Rire, p.77. There is also here a tacit allusion (again, satirical) to the situation of Lizzie and le Nègre in La Putain.
- 24 By contrast, Kean had to work with his whole body, as any true impersonator does. But notice that when Georges takes on the identity of Nekrassov, he insists that the latter should resemble him, and not vice-versa.
- 25 We had already seen him 'at work' - that is, using his tongue - first with the tramps, then with Véronique. But for the former his psychology was too subtle, and for the latter too unsubtle. In the uncomplicated, predictable, establishment mentality of Sibilot, Valera finds the ideal material for his craft.

Nekrassov: Notes 26-30

- 26 Lorris draws attention to the importance of names in Nekrassov as indicating the 'nature bouffonne de ces personnages' (Sartre dramaturge, p.245). But he does not explain the significance of the name 'Véronique', perhaps thinking it too obvious. As the defender of Sartre's political views, 'dans cet univers de masques et de non-masques' (Lorris, p.252), 'Véronique' - i.e. 'true image, true likeness' - stands for an undistorted reflection of the world and of other people. Extending the Biblical metaphor, this makes of Georges a burlesque Messiah who dies and is reborn - 'Je meurs Valera pour renaître Nekrassov' (p.180) - in order to save the western world. (Other allusions contributing to this parody are not hard to find, for example: Sibilot 'washes' his hands (p.141), and utters Christ's dying words (p.145); Valera makes a three-fold denial in the manner of Simon Peter (p.203); etc.)
- 27 Lorris, pp.237, 238. Later on he remarks: 'Le tableau V assure la continuité de Nekrassov avec le reste de l'oeuvre dramatique de Sartre, mais ce faisant crée une dissonance à l'intérieur de la pièce. [...] Sartre a imposé un héros à une pièce qui ne devait pas en avoir; il a créé un protagoniste qui détourne au profit de la tragi-comédie les forces qui devaient être réservées à la satire.' (Lorris, p.251) I think Lorris exaggerates his case because he overlooks the fact that Georges is above all a parody of the hero, and especially of the Sartrean hero.
- 28 Compare especially her mention of Billancourt (p.207) with Sartre's famous rebuke to Camus (see 'Réponse à Albert Camus', Les Temps modernes, 82 (1952), in Situations IV, 90-125 (p.118)).
- 29 'GEORGES: [...] Qui arrêtera-t-on, peux-tu me le dire? Goblet court après Valera et la D.T. après Nekrassov. Le premier qui met la main sur moi, je deviens ce qu'il veut que je sois.' (p.275) Lorris's description of this question as 'les mailles du filet sartrien classique' (Sartre dramaturge, p.240), while not 'wrong', is too straight-faced a reading, which overlooks the fact that Georges shows no real will to become anything other than the consummate role-player he is. Thody has noted that the play indeed begins with a 'satirical repetition of Sartre's own philosophical ideas' about action (Jean-Paul Sartre, p.121).
- 30 Georges alludes, of course, to the suicide attempt which opened the play, but he forgets that he had not the necessary courage then either.

Nekrassov: Notes 31-36

- 31 Compare Hugo's almost identical question (Les Mains sales, p.243).
- 32 Georges is the founder and hero of his Party, Hugo the dispensable scapegoat of his.
- 33 Lorris, p.244.
- 34 Lorris, pp.232, 234.
- 35 SG, p.635.
- 36 TS, p.294.

Les Séquestrés d'Altona: Notes 1-16

- 1 'Jusqu'alors j'avais fait des pièces avec des héros et des conclusions qui, d'une manière ou d'une autre, supprimaient les contradictions.' (Interview, France nouvelle, 17 septembre 1959, in TS, 315-17 (p.317.)) And: 'Le théâtre est un lieu où apparaissent nos contradictions' (Interview, Théâtre populaire, 36 (1959), in TS, 299-314 (p.313)).
- 2 Sartre dramaturge, p.287.
- 3 Interview, Le Monde, 17 septembre 1959, in TS, p.318.
- 4 Interview, Der Spiegel, 11 mai 1960, in TS, 333-55 (p.333).
- 5 'La Question', Théâtre vivant, 9 (1965), in TS, 356-58 (p.358).
- 6 Interview, Présence du théâtre, 34 (1960), in TS, 318-33 (p.328).
- 7 See TS, pp.327-30.
- 8 See TS, pp.306-08, 317.
- 9 'FRANTZ: Vous, c'est moi'; 'LE PÈRE: Frantz, il n'y a jamais eu que moi.' (Les Séquestrés d'Altona, pp.51, 217. Further references in this chapter appear in parentheses in the body of the text.) On the unity of father and son, and of the family as a whole, see Lorris, pp.270-71, 278-79.
- 10 References to Frantz as 'dead', in all but the most literal sense, are numerous. Thody has pointed out that 'enormous photographs' of him dominate the scene, 'each with a large black band across the corner to indicate that he is dead' (Les Séquestrés d'Altona, ed. Thody, p.15). His father considers himself as good as dead since he became superfluous to his business (p.22).
- 11 TS, p.352.
- 12 La Nausée, p.184.
- 13 See Lorris, p.279.
- 14 See R.D.Laing's interesting footnote to this effect, Reason and Violence, p.149.
- 15 Contat, Explication des 'Séquestrés d'Altona', p.48.
- 16 See Lorris, p.276.

Les Séquestrés d'Altona: Notes 17-28

- 17 Leni first suspects Gerlach's intention to harm Frantz in Act I, scene 3 (p.64).
- 18 TS, p.354.
- 19 See Lorris, p.271.
- 20 TS, p.319. Sartre is contrasting Frantz's filial relations with those he has with Leni and Johanna, whom he calls 'vampires'. 'Human' here appears to describe a relationship which, although conflictual, is based on love.
- 21 'Le sens de la pièce est que le Père, qui aime son fils, préfère la mort de son fils à cette fuite. [...] Cette fuite est dégradante, et pour cette raison le Père veut la transformer en suicide.' (TS, p.337)
- 22 Colette Audry is just one of a good number of critics who refer to Frantz in this way ('La Situation de l'héritier dans le théâtre de Sartre', p.457).
- 23 '[...] il savait ce qu'il faisait, il risquait sa vie' (TS, p.344).
- 24 'Frantz, supprimé existentiellement par son père, [...] élevé dans l'absence de choix, en est réduit à se tuer pour abolir sa naissance.' (Lorris, p.278)
- 25 TS, p.317.
- 26 Lucifer sought to be greater than God; Adam is led on by Eve, who has been seduced by the serpent's promise that the fruit of the tree will make them 'like God' (Genesis 3. 5).
- 27 TS, p.333, my emphasis.
- 28 The trio 'victim/accomplice/witness/' is perfectly unified in Jesus Christ, the martyr par excellence. The unification of this trio signals reconciliation between Man and God (the absolute Other), and reflects the mystery of the tri-une deity, which is at the heart of Christian theology. So too is the myth of 'father/son', 'sacrifice/witness': expulsion of Adam; Abraham's offering of Isaac; the crucifixion of the Son of God. We notice that Gerlach stresses their part as 'victims' (of Nazism, p.43, and of Luther, p.49), whereas Frantz dwells upon their 'complicity'.

Les Séquestrés d'Altona: Notes 29-44

- 29 Lorris, p.281.
- 30 Lorris, p.282.
- 31 Interview, L'Express, 10 septembre 1959, in TS, 314-15 (p.314).
- 32 Contrast: 'Ainsi n'y a-t-il pas d'accidents dans une vie; un événement social qui éclate soudain et m'entraîne ne vient pas du dehors; si je suis mobilisé dans une guerre, cette guerre est ma guerre, elle est à mon image, et je la mérite.' (EN, p.639)
- 33 '[...] et je tiens - comme vous, je crois - la maladie mentale comme l'issue que le libre organisme, dans son unité totale, invente pour pouvoir vivre une situation invivable.' (Sartre's Foreword in R.D.Laing and D.G.Cooper, Reason and Violence, p.7.)
- 34 'Merleau-Ponty', Les Temps modernes, numéro spécial (octobre 1961), in Situations IV, 189-287 (p.242).
- 35 Lorris, p.285.
- 36 'Merleau-Ponty', in Situations IV, p.222.
- 37 TS, p.308.
- 38 '[...] Frantz, devait s'attendre à la mort: il s'était opposé à un pouvoir, il savait ce qu'il faisait, il risquait sa vie, il aurait donc dû être tué.' (TS, p.344)
- 39 Compare Goetz's bon mot: 'je crève d'orgueil, c'est ma façon de mourir de honte' (Le Diable et le bon Dieu, p.141).
- 40 Concerning the 'guilt' of the survivor in war, see Brunet's reflections and Schneider's remarks to Brunet in La Mort dans l'âme, pp.245, 265-66.
- 41 TS, p.320.
- 42 The fact that this reminiscence concerns, most improbably, a black woman, suggests that the episode is a figment of Frantz's imagination - (or an oblique reference to Algeria?).
- 43 TS, p.316.
- 44 See La Mort dans l'âme, p.193.

Les Séquestrés d'Altona: Notes 45-55

- 45 TS, p.347.
- 46 Compare the devastating effect of Estelle's loss of faith in Garcin.
- 47 TS, p.315.
- 48 Sartre quoted in an article by Jean-Paul Lacroix, 'Le "séquestré d'Altona" condamné à un deuxième suicide', Paris-Presse, 29 avril 1966, cited in ES, p.333.
- 49 'Le fascisme ne se définit pas par le nombre de ses victimes, mais par sa manière de les tuer.' ('Les Animaux malades de la rage', Libération, 22 juin 1953, in ES, 704-08 (p.707)) What we learn from reading about torture as practised by the Nazis is that 'il y a des circonstances où il est impossible d'être un homme: on devient un singe ou un mort' ('Julius Fucik', in ES, p.710).
- 50 'Julius Fucik', in ES, p.711.
- 51 See TS, pp.308, 317.
- 52 Compare Oreste's remark: 'Il y a des hommes qui naissent engagés: ils n'ont pas le choix, on les a jetés sur un chemin, au bout du chemin il y a un acte qui les attend, leur acte' (Les Mouches, p.26). Note that Oreste's 'act' has become Frantz's 'crime': Oreste executes the guilty, Frantz the innocent.
- 53 TS, p.347.
- 54 Madeleine Fields has tried, unsuccessfully in my view, to account for Frantz's crimes in the light of the Critique's theories of scarcity, need, and threat of death, citing the shortage of rations mentioned on page 206 (see 'De la Critique de la raison dialectique aux Séquestrés d'Altona', p.623). But I notice, as a matter of fact, that when Frantz first allowed Heinrich to torture their captives, they still had 'trois jours de vivres' (p.179). Moreover, Sartre's own remarks (see TS, p.308) do not support Fields's thesis. (Her extensive article is otherwise most interesting.)
- 55 Rhiannon Goldthorpe has emphasised this aspect: 'In the face of Johanna's real horror at the reality of his past actions, Frantz's imaginary world disintegrates; but his dependence upon it has become so total that suicide is the only recourse.' ('Sartre's Theory of Imagination and Les Séquestrés d'Altona', p.120)

Les Séquestrés d'Altona: Notes 56-68

- 56 'Ce que Sartre a appelé ailleurs "le meurtre rituel du pere grace auquel tout adolescent parvient a l'age adulte", coïncidera pour [Frantz] avec sa propre mort: la créature s'abîme dans la disparition de son Créateur, et Frantz ne deviendra un homme qu'en se supprimant.' (Contat, Explication, p.57)
- 57 Bernard Dort, 'Frantz, notre prochain?', Théâtre populaire, 35 (1959), in Lecarme, ed., Les Critiques de notre temps et Sartre, 94-99 (p.98).
- 58 Contat, Explication, p.62.
- 59 See Boros, p.45.
- 60 See Laraque, p.248.
- 61 Fields, p.626.
- 62 Cohn, Currents, p.136.
- 63 TS, p.347, my emphasis. Compare: 'Il ne se suicide pas parce qu'il a tué ou torturé, mais parce qu'il a découvert qu'il ne peut plus rien faire. C'est son impuissance qui le tue.' (TS, p.352) And see all of the previous exchange from the bottom of page 350 - 'Frantz est donc déjà mort', etc. - in which the point is made.
- 64 'La conscience lucide de leur nullité fait de leur double suicide le seul acte que puissent encore accomplir ces deux hommes d'action. De cette façon, Frantz, dans la mort, se résorbera en son père et celui-ci aura été sa cause et son destin jusqu'au bout.' (Explication, p.63)
- 65 'Gerlach retrouve son fils et lui raconte la vérité, avec l'intention que tous les deux se décideront à se suicider.' (TS, p.317)
- 66 '[Frantz] a depuis longtemps pris conscience de son crime et [...] s'épuise à se défendre devant des magistrats invisibles pour se cacher la sentence de mort qu'il a déjà portée sur lui-même.' (TS, p.357)
- 67 See EN, p.641.
- 68 See EN, p.624.

Les Séquestrés d'Altona: Notes 69-80

- 69 Interview, Tulane Drama Review (March 1961), in TS, 355-56 (p.355).
- 70 'Les Écrivains en personne', interview with Madeleine Chapsal in Les Écrivains en personne, Julliard (Paris, 1960), in Situations IX, 9-39 (p.30). Compare: 'Plongés dans la stupeur, les Français découvrent cette évidence terrible: [...] selon l'occasion, n'importe qui, n'importe quand, deviendra victime ou bourreau.' ('Une Victoire', in Situations V, p.73)
- 71 'Il y a une libération véritable dans les deux suicides. Il n'y a pas de mystère révélé. Il y a une dialectique.' (TS, p.355, my emphasis) This is the burden of Frantz's concluding taped speech.
- 72 SG, p.216.
- 73 Verstraeten, p.186.
- 74 Interview, Les Lettres françaises, 17 septembre 1959, in TS, p.318.
- 75 Bergen, 'A propos des Séquestrés d'Altona', and Fields are, I think, the only exceptions.
- 76 'The Theatre of Sartre', p.118.
- 77 See Chapter 1 of Questions de méthode, 'Marxisme et existentialisme', especially p.28.
- 78 We must infer from Sartre's comment: 'Je n'ai voulu montrer que le négatif', that there is in fact a positive side which he has chosen, no doubt for dramatic reasons, to neglect in Les Séquestrés.
- 79 See CRD, p.603. For a brief account of this process, see my article, 'Sartre's Theories', pp.352-53.
- 80 'Pour un théâtre de situations', in TS, p.20. The whole burden of Situations II is that the writer should speak through his freedom, about freedom, to the freedom of the reader: see, for example, Situations II, pp.111-12, 251, 265, and especially p.313. In presenting Les Temps modernes, Sartre had aspired to 'faire en sorte que l'homme puisse, en toute circonstance, choisir la vie' (Situations II, p.28).

Les Troyennes: Notes 1-14

- 1 Les Troyennes (d'Euripide), Adaptation de Jean-Paul Sartre. Page references in this chapter appear in parentheses in the body of the text.
- 2 See Laraque, pp.222-23. To date, the only other scholars to have discussed the play are Kauffman in Chapter 8 of Tragedy and Philosophy, and Sandier, 'Socrate dramaturge', in Lecarme, 99-103.
- 3 Lorris, p.314.
- 4 Lorris, pp.309-10.
- 5 Lorris, p.309.
- 6 See Lorris, p.309.
- 7 See CRD, p.564, note 1.
- 8 Lorris, p.315.
- 9 Compare Lady Macbeth's speech:
'I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums,
And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn
As you have done to this.' (Macbeth, I, 7)
(Of course, the motives for these murderous thoughts are quite opposite in the two cases.)
- 10 See Lorris's interesting remarks on this 'leitmotiv', p.319.
- 11 See, for example, EN, p.158.
- 12 This quotation, which originates in Plautus, Asinaria, is in fact less pessimistic than its commonly-cited abbreviation would imply: 'Lupus est homo homini, non homo, quom qualis sit non novit', that is: 'A man is a wolf rather than a man to another man, when he hasn't yet found out what he's like' (source: Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, Third Edition, OUP (Oxford 1979, 1983), p.374).
- 13 'La Fin de la guerre', Les Temps modernes, octobre 1945, in Situations III, 63-71 (pp.68-69).
- 14 This is the dominant theme of one of Sartre's last major interviews to be published before his death, 'L'Espoir, maintenant ...', Le Nouvel Observateur, nos. 800, 801, 802 (10, 17, 24 mars 1980).

Conclusion: Notes 1-10

- 1 'Le Dernier Rendez-vous', Obliques, 24/25, 3-9 (p.4).
- 2 La Cérémonie des adieux, p.151.
- 3 Howard Davies gives a useful critical survey of some of the more significant secondary works in 'Sartre: A Present from the Past'.
- 4 Once he had owed to the 'longue, amère, et douce folie' from which he was at last 'cured' (Les Mots, p.211), Sartre referred repeatedly in later interviews to his youthful aspirations as a neurotic quest for immortality (see, for example, 'Les Écrivains en personne', in Situations IX, pp.32-33; 'Autoportrait à soixante-dix ans', in Situations X, p.160; Sartre, un film, p.27; Entretiens avec Jean-Paul Sartre, in Adieux, pp.221-22).
- 5 For Sartre's ambivalent attitude towards a 'Pléiade' edition of his works, see 'Autoportrait à soixante-dix ans', in Situations X, pp.205-06.
- 6 There was frequent mention of a forthcoming volume 2 of the Critique at the meeting of the 'Groupe d'études sartriennes' held at Paris X (Nanterre) on 15th June 1985, at which a number of Sartre's 'editors' were present, notably Michel Contat and Geneviève Idt (presiding).
- 7 Sartre remembered J'aurai un bel enterrement as 'une pièce comique sur un type qui décrivait son agonie' - which sounds novel! - (Entretiens, in Adieux, p.237). 'Alceste' was to describe the fate of a king '[qui] refuse de faire face à la mort', and consequently loses all his power, 'car le pauvre Admète sera toujours l'homme dont on dira: "Il a laissé sa femme mourir pour lui"' ('Sartre talks to Tynan', The Observer, 18, 25 June 1961, extract retranslated in ES, 366-67 (p.367)).
- 8 See Entretiens, in Adieux, pp.236-37.
- 9 These three quotations are from 'Les Écrivains en personne', in Situations IX, pp.12-13.
- 10 Compare: 'Je considère quand même la philosophie aujourd'hui comme l'unité de tout ce que je fais, c'est-à-dire, si vous voulez, la seule unité qu'il peut y avoir entre les différents livres que j'ai faits à une époque donnée, c'est l'unité philosophique.' (Sartre, un film, p.42) And: 'Finalement, la partie "littéraire" de mon oeuvre, ça a plutôt été le théâtre que les romans.' ('Interférences', entretien avec Michel Sicard et Simone de Beauvoir, Obliques, 18/19, p.327)

Conclusion: Notes 11-27

- 11 Compare: 'Mais, bien sûr, chaque forme littéraire peut donner, mettons, une sensibilité ou être chargée d'une sensibilité philosophique. [...le théâtre] doit, exprimer une philosophie, mais il ne faut pas qu'on puisse à l'intérieur de la pièce poser le problème de la valeur de la philosophie qui s'y exprime.' (TS, p.326, my emphasis) And: 'Je ne pense pas que la philosophie puisse s'exprimer littérairement.' (Sartre, un film, p.42)
- 12 See Entretiens, in Adieux, pp.240-41.
- 13 See Entretiens, in Adieux, pp.200-01.
- 14 See Entretiens, in Adieux, pp.243-44.
- 15 Entretiens, in Adieux, p.243.
- 16 Entretiens, in Adieux, p.243.
- 17 Entretiens, in Adieux, p.244.
- 18 This is puzzling in the light of Sartre's earlier statement that so much of the preparation for a play is purely mental and imaginative, whereas the work for novels and stories 'se fait sur le papier' (Entretiens, in Adieux, p.241). One might have thought, therefore, that it would have been, if anything, theatrical projects which would have survived his semi-blindness.
- 19 Entretiens, in Adieux, p.244.
- 20 'Sartre par Sartre', New Left, reproduit par Le Nouvel Observateur, 26 janvier 1970, in Situations IX, 99-134 (p.124).
- 21 'Sur L'Idiot de la famille', propos recueillis par Michel Contat et Michel Rybalka, Le Monde, 14 mai 1971, in Situations X, 91-115 (p.113).
- 22 'Interferences', Obliques, 18/19, p.327.
- 23 Entretiens, in Adieux, p.166.
- 24 'Notes inédites', cited by Simone de Beauvoir in La Force des choses, p.262.
- 25 See the second epigraph to this Conclusion, taken from Cahiers pour une morale.
- 26 See Entretiens, in Adieux, pp.237-38.
- 27 See Les Mains sales, p.255.

Conclusion: Notes 28-41

- 28 See Entretiens, in Adieux, p.242.
- 29 Le Diable et le bon Dieu, p.233.
- 30 See TS, p.317.
- 31 See Le Diable et le bon Dieu, p.229.
- 32 Sartre once quipped: 'J'ai le coeur à gauche, bien sûr - comme tout le monde, d'ailleurs!'
- 33 'La République du silence', in Situations III, p.11.
- 34 Interview, L'Express, 10 septembre 1959, in TS, 314-15 (p.315).
- 35 Entretien avec Bernard Dort, Théâtre populaire, 36 (1959), in TS, 299-314 (p.301).
- 36 It is remarkable the degree to which Sartre emphasises Frantz's impotence, his conditioning by society and History, the objective impossibility for him to transcend contradictions, and the quasi-inevitability of his 'crimes' (see, for example, TS, pp.314, 317, 318-19, 332, 341, 350). He even agrees that Frantz, and all the characters, 'sont morts et [que] c'est, si vous voulez, notre "partie morte" qui est représentée' (TS, p.352).
- 37 Les Lettres françaises, 17 septembre 1959, in TS, p.318.
- 38 The common man can be heroic only in extreme situations: consider the role which Camus assigns to the 'little' man, Grand, in La Peste.
- 39 'Si je range l'impossible salut au magasin des accessoires, que reste-t-il? Tout un homme, fait de tous les hommes, et qui les vaut tous, et que vaut n'importe qui.' (Les Mots, p.213)
- 40 See 'Autoportrait à soixante-dix ans', in Situations X, p.163 (and, again, Sartre, un film, p.42).
- 41 L'Idiot de la famille I, p.7.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Any bibliography for a study on Sartre must necessarily be selective, so voluminous are the sources, both primary and secondary. I have divided this Select Bibliography into three main parts:

I. A Note on Select Bibliographical Sources.

II. A Select Primary Bibliography:

- (i) Sartre's works for the theatre.
 - (ii) Sartre's other works published in book-form.
 - (iii) Selected interviews not yet collected in book-form.
- (All listed alphabetically.)

III. A Select Secondary Bibliography: works quoted or referred to in this thesis, or consulted with particular interest in the course of its preparation, listed chronologically under authors listed alphabetically.

I.

The most important source of bibliographical information on the works of Sartre is:

Contat, Michel, and Michel Rybalka, Les Écrits de Sartre, Chronologie, Bibliographie commentée, Gallimard (Paris, 1970).

This work was augmented to cover the period 1970-1973 in the American translation:

2--- The Writings of Jean-Paul Sartre, Northwestern UP (Evanston, 1973).

Further additions, to cover the period 1973-1978, were made in:

3--- 'Les Écrits de Sartre (1973-1978)', Obliques, 18/19 (1979), 335-44.

The most comprehensive and up-to-date source of bibliographical information, on works both by and about Sartre, is the annual publication:

French XX Bibliography (formerly French VII): Critical and Biographical References for French Literature Since 1885, vols 1-8, no. 1 (Issues nos. 1-36), French Institute-Alliance française (New York, 1949-1984, to date).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I (cont.), II

An indispensable source of secondary bibliographical information is:

Wilcocks, Robert, Jean-Paul Sartre: A Bibliography of International Criticism, UAP (Edmonton, 1975).

The same author has also published a useful 'essai de bibliographie sommaire':

- 2--- 'Le Regard de l'autre (Sartre devant ses critiques)', Obliques, 18/19 (1979), 348-57.

II.

NOTE: Unless indicated otherwise, all works listed are published in Paris, by Gallimard, in the series usually called the 'collection Blanche'. In every case, the edition listed is that which has been used for reference purposes in this thesis. Where my reference edition is in a later impression than the first, the date of that later impression is included in square brackets.

(i)

- 1--- Bariona, ou le Fils du tonnerre, in Contat, Les Écrits de Sartre (1970), 565-633.
- 2--- Le Diable et le bon Dieu (1951 [1967]).
- 3--- Huis clos, in Théâtre I (1947 [1969]), 122-82.
- 4--- Kean, edited with Introduction and Notes by David Bradby (including Kean, by Alexandre Dumas), OUP (London, 1973)
- 5--- Les Mains sales (1948 [1966]).
- 6--- Les Mouches, in Théâtre I (1947 [1969]), 7-121.
- 7--- Morts sans sépulture, in Théâtre I (1947 [1969]), 183-268.
- 8--- Nekrassov, collection Folio (1956 [1973]).
- 9--- La Putain respectueuse, in Théâtre I (1947 [1969]), 269-316.
- 10--- Les Séquestrés d'Altona (1960 [1967]).
- 11--- Les Troyennes (d'Euripide), Adaptation de Jean-Paul Sartre (1965 [1966]).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

II(ii)

- 1--- L'Affaire Henri Martin, textes commentés par Jean-Paul Sartre (1953).
- 2--- L'Age de raison (1945 [1960]).
- 3--- Baudelaire, précédé d'une note de Michel Leiris, Les Essais, 24 (1947).
- 4--- Cahiers pour une morale, Bibliothèque de Philosophie (1983).
- 5--- Les Carnets de la drôle de guerre, Novembre 1939 - Mars 1940 (1983).
- 6--- Critique de la raison dialectique, précédé de Questions de méthode, Bibliothèque des Idées (1960 [1974]).
- 7--- L'Engrenage, Nagel (Paris, 1948 [1962]).
- 8--- Entretiens avec Simone de Beauvoir, in Simone de Beauvoir, La Cérémonie des adieux, (1981), 161-559.
- 9--- Entretiens sur la politique, en collaboration avec Gérard Rosenthal et David Rousset (1949).
- 10-- Esquisse d'une théorie des émotions, collection L'Esprit et la main, Hermann (Paris, 1960/1965 [1975]).
- 11-- L'Être et le néant, Bibliothèque des Idées (1943 [1949]).
- 12-- L'Existentialisme est un humanisme, collection Pensées, Nagel (Paris, 1970).
- 13-- L'Idiot de la famille: Gustave Flaubert de 1821 à 1857, Bibliothèque de Philosophie, 3 vols (1971-72).
- 14-- L'Imaginaire, collection Idées (1940 [1975]).
- 15-- L'Imagination, Nouvelle Encyclopedie philosophique, Presses universitaires de France (Paris, 1936 [1969]).
- 16-- Les Jeux sont faits, Nagel (Paris, 1947 [1968]).
- 17-- Lettres au Castor, et à quelques autres, I, 1926-1939, and II, 1940-1963, édition établie, présentée et annotée par Simone de Beauvoir (1983).
- 18-- La Mort dans l'âme (1949 [1956]).
- 19-- Les Mots (1964 [1970]).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

II(ii) (cont.)

- 20-- Le Mur (1939 [1964]).
- 21-- La Nausée 1938 [1968]).
- 22-- Oeuvres romanesques, édition établie par Michel Contat et Michel Rybalka, avec la collaboration de Geneviève Idt et de George H. Bauer, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (1981).
- 23-- On a raison de se révolter, en collaboration avec Philippe Gavi et Pierre Victor, La France sauvage (collection dirigée par Jean-Paul Sartre), (1974).
- 24-- Questions de méthode, in Critique de la raison dialectique [q.v.], 13-111.
- 25-- Réflexions sur la question juive (1954 [1961]).
- 26-- Saint Genet, comédien et martyr (tome premier des Oeuvres complètes de Jean Genet), (1952 [1970]).
- 27-- Sartre, un film, réalisé par Alexandre Astruc et Michel Contat (1977).
- 28-- Le Scénario Freud, collection Connaissance de l'Inconscient (1984).
- 29-- Situations I: Essais critiques (1947 [1968]).
- 30-- Situations II: Qu'est-ce que la littérature? (1948 [1968]).
- 31-- Situations III (1949 [1969]).
- 32-- Situations IV: Portraits (1964 [1973]).
- 33-- Situations V: Colonialisme et néo-colonialisme (1964).
- 34-- Situations VI: Problèmes du marxisme, 1 (1964).
- 35-- Situations VII: Problèmes du marxisme, 2 (1965).
- 36-- Situations VIII: Autour de '68 (1972).
- 37-- Situations IX: Mélanges (1972).
- 38-- Situations X: Politique et Autobiographie (1976).
- 39-- Le Sursis (1945 [1967]).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

II(ii) (cont.), II(iii)

- 40-- Un Théâtre de situations, textes choisis et présentés par Michel Contat et Michel Rybalka, collection Idées (1973).
- 41-- La Transcendance de l'Ego, Introduction, notes et appendices par Sylvie Le Bon, Bibliothèque des textes philosophiques, Librairie philosophique J.Vrin (Paris, 1965 [1972]).

II(iii)

- 1--- 'L'Écriture et la publication', entretien avec Michel Sicard, Obliques, 18/19 (1979), 9-29.
- 2--- 'L'Espoir, maintenant ...', entretien avec Benny Lévy, Le Nouvel Observateur, 800 (10 mars 1980), 19, 56-60; 801 (17 mars 1980), 52-58; 802 (24 mars 1980), 55-60.
- 3--- 'Interférences', entretien avec Michel Sicard et Simone de Beauvoir, Obliques, 18/19 (1979).
- 4--- 'Penser l'art', entretien avec Michel Sicard, Obliques, 24/25 (1981), 15-20.

NOTE: The above-mentioned editions of Obliques also contain a number of textes inédits by Sartre.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

III(a-b)

Aeschylus, The Oresteian Trilogy, translated by Philip Vellacott, Penguin Classics (London, 1959).

Albérès, R.-M., Jean-Paul Sartre, Classiques du XXe siècle, Editions universitaires (Paris, 1964).

Antonio, Carlino, 'L'essere di Sartre e il "suicidio ontologico"', in Colloqui con Sartre, a cura di Giovanni Invitto, Milella (Lecce, 1974).

L'Arc, 30 (1966), 'Sartre aujourd'hui'.

Astruc, Alexandre, Sartre, un film, réalisé par Alexandre Astruc et Michel Contat, Gallimard (Paris, 1977).

Audry, Colette, 'La Situation de l'héritier dans le théâtre de Sartre', in Jacquot, ed., Le Théâtre tragique [q.v.], 451-57.

Beauvoir, Simone de, Mémoires d'une jeune fille rangée, Gallimard (Paris, 1958).

2--- La Force de l'âge, Gallimard (Paris, 1960).

3--- La Force des choses, Gallimard (Paris, 1963).

4--- Tout compte fait, Gallimard, (Paris, 1972).

5--- La Cérémonie des adieux, suivi de: Entretiens avec Jean-Paul Sartre, Gallimard (Paris, 1981).

Beigbeder, Marc, 'Théâtre philosophique? II - Sartre', Esprit, 18 (1949), 924-42.

Benda, Julien, Tradition de l'existentialisme, ou les Philosophes de la vie, Grasset (Paris, 1947).

Bergen, Paul, 'A propos des Séquestrés d'Altona', La Nouvelle Critique, 121 (1960), 136-41.

Bergson, Henri, Le Rire, PUF (Paris, 1940).

Beschin, Giuseppe, 'La Morte in Heidegger e in Sartre', Annali della Facoltà di Lettere dell'Università di Macerata, 3/4 (1970-1971), 343-62.

Billy, André, 'Où Sartre est invité à se suicider', summarised in Wilcocks, Jean-Paul Sartre: A Bibliography of International Criticism [q.v.], 438-39.

Birault, Henri, 'Le Problème de la mort dans la philosophie de Sartre', in Autour de Jean-Paul Sartre, Idées, Gallimard (Paris, 1981), 181-215.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

III(b-d)

- Boros, Marie-Denise, Un Séquestré: l'homme sartrien: étude du thème de la séquestration dans l'oeuvre littéraire de Jean-Paul Sartre, Nizet (Paris, 1968).
- Bradby, David, ed., Kean, by Jean-Paul Sartre, Clarendon French Series, OUP (London, 1973).
- Camus, Albert, L'Homme révolté, in Essais, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard (Paris, 1965), 413-709.
- 2--- 'Lettre au Directeur des Temps modernes', Les temps modernes, 82 (1952), 317-33.
- Cases, Ida Petazzoni, ed., 'Les Mouches' de J.-P. Sartre, avec un commentaire par I.P. Cases, Angelo Signorelli (Rome, 1972).
- Champigny, Robert, Stages on Sartre's Way 1938-52, IUP (Bloomington, 1959).
- 2--- Le Genre dramatique, Regain (Monte Carlo, 1965).
- Choron, Jacques, La Mort et la pensée occidentale, Payot (Paris, 1969).
- Cohn, Ruby, 'Four Stages of the Absurdist Hero', Drama Survey (Winter 1965), 195-208.
- 2--- Currents in Contemporary Drama, IUP (Bloomington, 1969).
- Contat, Michel, Explication des 'Séquestrés d'Altona' de Jean-Paul Sartre, Archives des lettres modernes, 89 (Paris, 1968).
- 2--- and Michel Rybalka, Les Écrits de Sartre, Gallimard (Paris, 1970).
- 3--- and Michel Rybalka, eds., Un Théâtre de situations, Idées, Gallimard (Paris, 1973).
- 4--- [see above, 'Astruc, Alexandre']
- 5--- and Michel Rybalka, eds., Jean-Paul Sartre, Oeuvres romanesques, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard (Paris, 1981).
- Cooper, D.G., and R.D. Laing, Reason and Violence: A Decade of Sartre's Philosophy 1950-1960, Tavistock (London 1964).
- Cranston, Maurice, Sartre, Writers and Critics, Oliver and Boyd (Edinburgh and London, 1962).
- 2--- 'Sartre and Violence: A Philosopher's Commitment to a Pledge', Encounter, 29, no.1 (July 1967), 18-24.
- Davies, Howard, 'Sartre in 1984: A Present from the Past', French Studies, 38, no. 2 (April 1984), 170-72.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

III(d-f)

- De Franco, Rafaella, 'La Idea della morte e il suicidio', Giornale critico della filosofia italiana, 51 (1970), 566-79.
- Desan, Wilfrid, The Tragic Finale, Doubleday (Cambridge, Mass., 1954).
- 2--- The Marxism of Jean-Paul Sartre, Doubleday (Toronto, 1965).
- Dickinson, Hugh, Myth on the Modern Stage, UIP (Urbana, 1969).
- Domenach, Jean-Marie, Le Retour du tragique, Seuil (Paris, 1967).
- Dort, Bernard, 'Frantz, notre prochain?', Théâtre populaire, 35 (1959), in Lecarme, ed., Les Critiques de notre temps et Sartre, 94-99.
- Doubrovsky, Serge, 'Sartre and Camus: A Study in Incarceration', Yale French Studies, 25 (1960), 85-92.
- Dreyfus, Dina, 'Jean-Paul Sartre et le mal radical: de L'Être et le néant a la Critique de la raison dialectique', Mercure de France, 341 (1961), 154-67.
- Dumas 'père', Alexandre, Kean, ou Désordre et génie, in Bradby, ed., Kean, by Jean-Paul Sartre [q.v.], 205-67.
- Euripides, Medea, and Other Plays, translated by Philip Vellacott, Penguin Classics (London, 1963).
- 2--- Orestes, and Other Plays, translated by Philip Vellacott, Penguin Classics (London, 1972).
- 3--- The Bacchae, and Other Plays, translated by Philip Vellacott, Penguin Classics (London, 1973).
- Fabre-Luce, Alfred, 'Sartre par Flaubert', Revue des deux mondes, octobre 1972, 44-61.
- Feifel, Herman, ed., The Meaning of Death, McGraw-Hill (New York, 1959).
- Fields, Madeleine, 'De la Critique de la raison dialectique aux Séquestrés d'Altona', PMLA, 78 (1963), 622-30.
- Fornoville, Theodore, 'Le Suicide dans l'éthique sartrienne', Revue philosophique de Louvain, 57, no. 53 (février 1959), 80-95.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

III(g-h)

- Garaudy, Roger, Literature of the Graveyard, translated by Joseph M. Bernstein, International Publishers (New York, 1948).
- Gaulupeau, Serge, André Malraux et la mort, Archives des lettres modernes, 98 (Paris, 1969).
- Goldmann, Lucien, 'The Theatre of Sartre', The Drama Review, 15, no.1 (Fall, 1970), 102-19.
- Goldthorpe, Rhiannon, 'Sartre's Theory of Imagination and Les Séquestrés d'Altona', Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology, 4, no. 2 (May 1973), 113-22.
- 2--- 'Huis clos: An Ambiguous Thesis Play Reconsidered', French Studies, 34, no. 1 (January 1980), 45-59.
- 3--- Sartre: Literature and Theory, CUP (Cambridge, 1984).
- Gore, Keith O., 'The Theatre of Jean-Paul Sartre: 1940-1965', Books Abroad, 41 (1967), 133-49.
- 2--- Sartre: 'La Nausée' and 'Les Mouches', Studies in French Literature, 17, Arnold (London, 1970).
- Grand Larousse encyclopédique, vols. 3, 8 (Paris, 1960, 1963).
- Grimsley, Ronald, 'Dread as a Philosophical Concept', The Philosophical Quarterly, 6, no. 24 (July 1956), 245-55.
- Guicharnaud, Jacques, in collaboration with June Beckelman, Modern French Theatre from Giraudoux to Becket, YUP (New Haven, 1961).
- Hastings, P.G., 'Symbolism in the Adaptation of Greek Myth by Modern French Dramatists', Nottingham French Studies, 2 (1963), 25-34.
- Heinemann, Frederick H., 'What Is Alive and What Is Dead in Existentialism?', Revue internationale de philosophie, 3, no. 9 (1949), 306-19.
- Hobson, Harold, The French Theatre of Today: An English View, Harrap (London, 1953).
- Hoffman, Frederick J., The Mortal No: Death and the Modern Imagination, PUP (Princeton, 1964).
- Howells, Christina, 'Sartre and Freud', French Studies, 33 (1979), 157-76.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

III(i-1)

- Idt, Genevieve, 'La Nausee': Sartre, Profil d'une oeuvre, 18, Hâtier (Paris, 1971).
- 2--- 'La "Littérature engagée", manifeste permanent', Littérature, 39 (1980), 61-71
- 3--- ed., Études sartriennes, 1, Cahiers de sémiotique textuelle, 2 (1984).
- Issacharoff, Michael, 'L'Espace et le regard dans Huis clos', Magazine littéraire, 103/104 (1975), 22-27.
- Jacquot, Jean, ed., Le Théâtre tragique, CNRS (Paris, 1962).
- 2--- 'Sartre et la liberté', in Jacquot, ed., Le Théâtre tragique, 512-14.
- Jeanson, Francis, Le Problème moral et la pensée de Sartre, Myrthe (Paris, 1947).
- 2--- 'Albert Camus, ou l'âme révoltée', Les Temps modernes, 79 (1952), 2077-90.
- 3--- 'Pour tout vous dire...', Les Temps modernes, 82 (1952), 354-83.
- 4--- Sartre, collection Écrivains de toujours, Seuil (Paris, 1955).
- 5--- Sartre dans sa vie, Seuil (Paris, 1974).
- Jolivet, Régis, Le Problème de la mort chez Heidegger et chez Sartre, Fontenelle (Abbaye de Saint Wandrille, 1950).
- Kaufmann, Walter, 'Existentialism and Death', in Feifel, ed., The Meaning of Death [q.v.], 39-61.
- 2--- Tragedy and Philosophy, Doubleday (New York, 1969).
- Kern, Edith, ed., Sartre: A Collection of Critical Essays, Prentice Hall (Englewood Cliffs, 1962).
- 2--- 'Abandon Hope, All Ye...', Yale French Studies, 30 (1963), 56-60.
- Koefoed, Oleg, 'L'Oeuvre littéraire de Jean-Paul Sartre: Essai d'interprétation', Orbis litterarum, 6 (1948), 209-72, and 7 (1949), 61-141.
- Laing, R.D., [see above, 'Cooper, D.G.']
- Laraque, Franck, La Révolte dans le théâtre de Sartre, vu par un homme du Tiers Monde, Encyclopédie universitaire, Delarge (Paris, 1976).
- Launay, Claude, 'Le Diable et le bon Dieu': Sartre, Profil d'une oeuvre, 15, Hâtier (Paris, 1970).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

III(1-o)

- Lecarme, Jacques, ed., Les Critiques de notre temps et Sartre, Garnier (Paris, 1973).
- Lecherbonnier, Bernard, 'Huis clos': Sartre, Profil d'une oeuvre, 31, Hâtier (Paris, 1972).
- Lilar, Suzanne, A propos de Sartre et de l'amour, Grasset (Paris, 1967).
- Leiris, Michel, 'Oreste et la Cité', Les Lettres francaises, 12 (1943), in Lecarme, ed., Les Critiques de notre temps et Sartre [q.v.], 73-77.
- Lorris, Robert, Sartre dramaturge, Nizet (Paris, 1975).
Magazine littéraire, 103/104 (1975), 'Sartre dans son histoire'.
- Malachy, Thérèse, La Mort en situation dans le théâtre contemporain, Nizet (Paris, 1982).
- Marcel, Gabriel, L'Heure théâtrale de Giraudoux à Jean-Paul Sartre, Plon (Paris, 1959).
- Marcuse, Herbert, 'The Ideology of Death', in Feifel, ed., The Meaning of Death [q.v.].
- McCall, Dorothy, The Theatre of Jean-Paul Sartre, Columbia UP (New York and London, 1969).
- Mohanty, Christine, 'Bariona, the Germination of Sartrean Theater', French Review, 47 (1974), 1094-1109.
- Moliere, Oeuvres complètes, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2 vols., Gallimard (Paris, 1971).
- Morin, Edgar, L'Homme et la mort dans l'histoire, Corrêa (Paris, 1951).
- Murdoch, Iris, Sartre: Romantic Rationalist, [Bowes and Bowes (London, 1953)], Fontana Library, Collins (London, 1967).
- Natanson, Maurice, 'Death and Situation', American Imago, 16 (1959), 447-57.
Obliques, 18/19 (1979), 'Sartre', and 24/25 (1981), 'Sartre et les arts'.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

III(o-s)

- O'Donohoe, B.P., 'Connaissez-vous Sartre?', Obliques, 18/19 (1979), 335-41.
- 2--- 'Sartre tuant Saint Georges', Obliques, 24/25 (1981), 163-66.
- 3--- 'Sartre's Theories on Death, Murder, and Suicide', Philosophy Today, 25 (1981), 334-56.
- O'Mahony, B.E., 'Martin Heidegger's Existential Analysis of Death', Philosophical Studies, 18 (1969), 58-75.
- O'Mara, Joseph, S.J., 'Death and the Existentialist', Studies [Dublin], 39, no. 156 (December 1950), 427-37.
- Pilkington, A.E., 'Sartre's Existentialist Ethic', French Studies, 23 (1969), 38-48.
- Pirlot, Jules, 'La Mort et la liberté', Revue philosophique de Louvain, 56, no. 52 (novembre 1958), 573-85.
- Quinn, Bernard J., 'The Politics of Despair versus the Politics of Hope: A Look at Bariona, Sartre's First pièce engagée', French Review, 45, Special Issue no. 4 (Spring 1972), 95-105.
- Rabi, Henri, 'Les Thèmes majeurs du théâtre de Sartre', Esprit, 18, no. 10 (October 1950), 433-56.
- Racine, Théâtre complet, Garnier (Paris, 1960).
- Richter, Liselotte, Jean-Paul Sartre, translated by Fred D. Wieck, Modern Literature Monographs, Frederick Ungar (New York, 1970).
- Royle, Peter, 'The Ontological Significance of Les Mouches', French Studies, 26 (1972), 42-53.
- 2--- Sartre, l'enfer et la liberté: étude de 'Huis clos' et des 'Mouches', Presses de l'Université Laval (Quebec, 1973).
- Rybalka, Michel, 'Sartre et le cinéma', Esprit créateur, 8 (1968), 284-92.
- 2--- [see above, 'Contat, Michel', 2, 3, 5]
- Saisselin, Rémy, 'L'Absurde, la mort, et l'histoire', Le Bayou, 85/86 (1961), 306-14.
- Sandier, Gilles, 'Socrate dramaturge', L'Arc, 30 (1966), in Lecarme, ed., Les Critiques de notre temps et Sartre [q.v.], 99-103.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

III(s-w)

- Shakespeare, Complete Works, edited by W.J.Craig, Oxford Standard Authors, OUP (London, 1943).
- Sicard, Michel, ed., Obliques, 18/19 (1979), 'Sartre'.
2--- ed., Obliques, 24/25 (1981), 'Sartre et les arts'.
- Simon, Pierre Henri, Théâtre et destin, Armand Colin (Paris, 1959).
- Sophocles, Electra, and Other Plays, translated by E.F.Watling, Penguin Classics (London, 1953).
- Spoerri, T., 'The Structure of Existence: The Flies', in Kern, ed., Sartre: A Collection of Critical Essays [q.v.], 54-61.
- Steiner, George, The Death of Tragedy, Faber and Faber (London, 1961).
- Stenström, Thure, 'Jean-Paul Sartre's First Play', Orbis litterarum, 22 (1967), 173-90.
- Thody, Philip, Jean-Paul Sartre: A Literary and Political Study, Hamish Hamilton (London, 1960).
2--- ed., Les Séquestrés d'Altona, by Jean-Paul Sartre, Hodder and Stoughton (London, 1976).
- Uranga, Emilio, 'Dos Teorías de la muerte: Sartre y Heidegger', Filosofía y letras, 33 (1949), 55-71.
- Ussher, Percy Arland, Journey Through Dread, Darwen Finlayson (London, 1955).
- Verstraeten, Pierre, Violence et éthique: Esquisse d'une critique de la morale dialectique à partir du théâtre politique de Sartre, Les Essais, 165, Gallimard (Paris, 1972).
- Warnock, Mary, The Philosophy of Sartre, Hutchinson University Library (London, 1965).
2--- Existentialism, OUP (London, 1970).
- Wilcocks, Robert, Jean-Paul Sartre, A Bibliography of International Criticism, UAP (Alberta, 1975).
- Wilder, Amos N., 'Mortality and Contemporary Literature', The Harvard Theological Review, 58, no. 1 (January 1965), 1-20.
- Weber, E., 'The Surrender of Goetz', Symposium, 13 (1959), 106-11.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

III(w)

- Werner, Eric, 'Sartre et la liberte', Contrepoint, 5 (1971), 37-49.
- 2--- De la Violence au totalitarisme: Essai sur la pensée de Camus et de Sartre, Calman-Levy (Paris, 1972).
- Wind, Edgar, 'Blood, Iron, and Intuition', Polemic, 5 (1946), 54-57.