MHRA TEXTS AND DISSERTATIONS

VOLUME 14

Sartre's Theory of Literature

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MODERN HUMANITIES RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

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TEXTS AND DISSERTATIONS
(formerly Dissertation Series)

VOLUME 14

Editor
W. H. BARBER
(French: Modern)

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by

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LONDON
THE MODERN HUMANITIES RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
1979

ISBN 978-1-83954-651-8
doi: 10.59860/td.b58a46a

Published by

The Modern Humanities Research Association

Honorary Treasurer, MHRA

KING'S COLLEGE, STRAND
LONDON WC2R 2LS
ENGLAND

ISBN 0 900547 57 x

Printed in England by
W. S. MANEY & SON LIMITED
HUDSON ROAD LEEDS

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FOREWORD

I would like to take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to those who helped me most considerably in my work on Sartre: to Professor John Cocking, formerly of King's College, London, for his meticulous and constructive critical supervision of my thesis; and to my husband, Bernard, for his invaluable discussion of the drafts at various stages, and for his unfailing encouragement.

C.H.

ABBREVIATIONS

WORKS BY SARTRE

Baud.,	*Baudelaire*, 1947, reprinted Gallimard, Idées, 1963.
Critique,	*Critique de la raison dialectique, tome I, Théorie des ensembles pratiques*, Gallimard, 1960.
EN,	*L'Être et le Néant*, Gallimard, 1943.
Genet,	*Saint Genet: comédien et martyr*, Gallimard, 1952.
Idiot I, II, III,	*L'Idiot de la famille*, Gallimard, vols.I & II, 1971; vol. III, 1972.
Imag.,	*L'Imaginaire: Psychologie phénoménologique de l'imagination*, Gallimard, 1940.
Mots,	*Les Mots*, Gallimard, 1964.
Plaidoyer,	*Plaidoyer pour les intellectuels*, Gallimard, 1972.
Sit. I, II, III, IV, IX,	*Situations I*, Gallimard, 1947; *II*, 1948; *III*, 1949; *IV*, 1964; *IX*, 1972.

GENERAL

rpt.,	reprinted.
transl.,	translated.

Place of publication of all works cited is Paris unless otherwise indicated.

INTRODUCTION

As an imaginative writer Sartre is fascinated by the role of imagination in the creative process. Moreover his critical, psychological and philosophical writings witness to a constant meditation on the function and status of the imaginary. In his exploration of the relationship between mind and world, the role attributed to the imagination is at least as great as that of perception: imagination is, in Sartre's view, constitutive of the 'world' as we know it. It appears moreover as the correlative of the freedom of human consciousness; and it is this which permits Sartre to bring his interest in art within his overriding preoccupation with human liberty and social commitment.

But Sartre's attitude to the imaginary is nonetheless ambiguous: imagination permits man to overcome his *embourbement* in reality, it allows his *pour-soi* to escape the toils of the *en-soi*, it is vital to any project of change; yet it can also alienate that very liberty it makes possible, leading man to deny the real and to value fantasy above reality. 'L'imaginaire pur et la *praxis* sont difficilement compatibles'.[1] The ambiguity of Sartre's attitude to imagination is reflected in his literary criticism. It leads him initially to establish a radical distinction between 'pure' art and 'committed' art which he spends the rest of his life trying to attenuate. His belief in the necessity for literature to be positively committed should, logically, lead him to reject those nineteenth-century writers who formed his notion of what 'pure' art should be. But if his early theory of commitment compels him to attack works of art where the imaginary is given priority over the real, his notion of art as *dévoilement*, and the increasingly dialectical nature of his analyses permit him to incorporate more of the purely imaginary elements of the art-object into his aesthetic ideal, and to reveal 'pure' art as ultimately reconcilable with authentic commitment. Sartre's criticism can be seen as an increasingly complex attempt to reinterpret the semi-metaphysical intuitions about art of Romanticism and Symbolism within the terms of his own comprehensive phenomenology.

Apart from various brief articles and reviews, Sartre's critical writings have been examined previously in four full-scale studies. Eugene Kaelin devotes a section of *The Existentialist Aesthetic* (1966) to Sartre's theory of art, in which he places Sartre's ideas from *L'Imaginaire* to *Saint Genet* in the context of modern aesthetic theory in France, England and America. George Bauer gives a brief account of Sartre's writings on poetry in the final chapter of his work on *Sartre*

and the Artist (1969). Benjamin Suhl discusses *The Philosopher as a Literary Critic* (1970) with the double aim of giving an assessment of Sartre's criticism and of providing a source of reference for those readers without access to Sartre's texts themselves. And most recently, Joseph Halpern, in *Critical Fictions* (1976), has traced Sartre's changing attitude to writing and writers from the early essays of *Situations* through to *L'Idiot de la famille*. Each of these works has a different contribution to make: my own approach, as outlined briefly above, is, I believe, different again. Furthermore, none of these four critics examines in any detail Sartre's ideas on language, which are, I would maintain, vital to a proper understanding of his theory of literature, communication and commitment.

CHAPTER I

THE TWO POLES: PURE ART AND COMMITTED ART

The basis of Sartre's aesthetic theories is laid in his phenomenological study of the imagination, published in 1940. An understanding of this work and its implications is essential for a proper appreciation of Sartre's ideas on art. It is, moreover, in this work of psychology that many of the paradoxes of his later aesthetics originate.

In *L'Imaginaire* Sartre discusses perception and imagination as two possible ways in which the mind relates to the world. Percepts and images are in no sense 'contents' of the mind; Sartre dismisses this idea as the illusion of immanence: 'Le mot d'image ne saurait donc désigner que le rapport de la conscience à l'objet; autrement dit, c'est une certaine façon qu'a . . . la conscience de se donner un objet . . . une image n'est rien autre qu'un rapport.'[1] The distinction between imagination and perception is radical: the object of perception is both real and present, and although Sartre is of course aware of the difference between simple reception of sensory stimuli and perception itself which involves also intentions and knowledge,[2] he nevertheless envisages perception as relatively passive: 'une conscience perceptive s'apparaît comme passivité'.[3] The object of the image, on the other hand, is absent: the image is unreal and depends almost totally on the spontaneity of the person imagining. Although a wide spectrum of activities is included under the heading 'imagination', from looking at a photograph or a work of art, to seeing shapes in the fire, or seeking out an absent friend in a café, all of the concomitant images are, according to Sartre, essentially the same in nature, differing only in the amount of spontaneity required to evoke them. For no image can be caused, but images can be motivated: and this distinction is, as we shall see, vital to Sartre's thesis on man's freedom and on the nature of literature.

Imagination and perception are then, Sartre thinks, two distinct modes of consciousness: 'L'image et la perception, loin d'être les deux facteurs psychiques élémentaires de qualité semblable et qui entreraient simplement dans des combinaisons différentes, représentent les deux grandes attitudes irréductibles de la conscience.'[4] The objects of these two modes of consciousness are also radically distinct, irreducible one to the other: 'Le réel s'accompagne toujours de l'écroulement de l'imaginaire, même s'il n'y a pas de contradiction entre eux, parce que l'incompatibilité vient de leur nature et non de leur contenu.'[5] On the other hand, although distinct, imagination and perception are necessarily inter-dependent.

The act of perception implies the possibility of imagining more than can in fact be taken in by the senses. As we shall see shortly it is this possibility which provides the key to Sartre's conception of human freedom. But the images are potential rather than actual, and cannot be evoked simultaneously with the perception itself: 'Il y a donc dans la perception l'amorce d'une infinité d'images; mais celles-ci ne peuvent se constituer qu'au prix de l'anéantissement des consciences perceptives.'[6] Similarly imagination, although it negates the real (or perceptual) world, depends on the real as the very condition of its being: 'Une image, étant négation du monde d'un point de vue particulier, ne peut jamais apparaître que *sur fond de monde* et en liaison avec le fond . . . c'est . . . cet "être-dans-le-monde" qui est la condition nécessaire de l'imagination.'[7]

What then is the status of the image in Sartre's account? This appears most clearly in his discussion of the nature of thought. Concepts, according to Sartre, can appear to the mind either reflectively as pure thought or unreflectively as images.[8] *Le savoir pur*[9] is defined as knowledge of abstract relations, or of a 'rule', whereas the image gives rather *un savoir dégradé*.[10] The term *dégradé* implies a hierarchy of values which seems to go from *savoir pur* down through *image* to *affectivité*. The image involves a synthesis of *savoir* on the one hand and *affectivité* on the other:

> L'image, si elle se donne comme la limite inférieure vers laquelle tend le savoir lorsqu'il se dégrade, se présente aussi comme la limite supérieure vers laquelle tend l'affectivité lorsqu'elle cherche à se connaître. L'image ne serait-elle pas une synthèse de l'affectivité et du savoir?[11]

The image then is 'comme une incarnation de la pensée irréfléchie';[12] it is 'une forme inférieure de pensée'.[13] Imagination is in a sense opposed to pure thought; it can never lead on to thought proper but merely to further images: 'Pour substituer à cette régression infinie l'intuition simple d'une pensée nue, il faut opérer un changement radical d'attitude, une véritable révolution, c'est-à-dire passer du plan irréfléchi au plan réfléchi.'[14] For Sartre 'la pensée irréfléchie est une possession'.[15]

L'Imaginaire reveals then, on Sartre's part, a deep-seated mistrust of the imagination. This mistrust of course underlies also his analysis of the nature of reading in so far as this engages our imagination. Sartre distinguishes between two possible aspects of reading. Initially, he suggests, words must be defined as signs on the basis of which I create meanings:

> Je *lis* les mots sur la pancarte . . . on dit que j'ai compris, 'déchiffré' les mots. Ce n'est pas absolument exact: mieux vaudrait dire que je les ai créés à partir de ces traits noirs. Ces traits ne m'importent plus, je ne les perçois plus: en réalité, j'ai pris une certaine attitude de conscience qui, à travers eux, vise un autre objet.[16]

As signs, words point beyond themselves to another reality. The connection between the sign and its object is purely conventional.[17] Reading involves the transcendence of signs towards meanings. But since I cannot perceive and imagine simultaneously, any images which my reading evokes must occur outside the act of reading proper:

Les images . . . apparaissent en général[18] en dehors de l'activité de lecture proprement dite, lorsque, par exemple, le lecteur revient en arrière et se rappelle les événements du chapitre précédent, lorsqu'il rêve sur le livre, etc. Bref les images apparaissent aux arrêts et aux ratés de la lecture. Le reste du temps, quand le lecteur est bien pris, il n'y a pas d'image mentale.[19]

Reading can of course be free from images, giving us merely a *savoir signifiant*.[20] But this is not the case with literature where knowledge, imagination and affectivity all come into play. Reading a novel gives us *savoir imageant* rather than *savoir pur*.

We should note in parenthesis that this *savoir imageant* can in turn occasionally effect what Sartre calls 'une curieuse altération du rôle des signes'.[21] Whilst remaining for the most part simple signs, words will occasionally be treated by the reader as images; in this case 'la physionomie du mot devient représentative de celle de l'objet'.[22] But Sartre is anxious to establish a clear distinction between sign and image, and insists that in so far as words ever function as images they are no longer functioning as signs: 'Si le mot est image, c'est qu'il cesse de jouer le rôle de signe'.[23] The notion of the word-image will be examined again by Sartre in *Situations II* and finally in considerable detail in the *Idiot de la famille*, and further discussion of it must therefore wait until then.

As a form of *savoir-imageant* reading too involves a kind of 'possession' by the imagination:

La lecture est un genre de fascination et quand je lis un roman policier je crois à ce que je lis. Mais cela ne signifie point que je cesse de tenir les aventures de policier pour imaginaires . . . Simplement un monde tout entier m'apparaît en image à travers les lignes du livre . . . et ce monde se referme sur ma conscience, je ne peux plus m'en dégager, je suis fasciné par lui.[24]

Sartre compares and contrasts reading and dreaming: in dreams we are wholly possessed by the fatal world which we have imagined; in reading, on the other hand, our identification with the hero

n'est jamais complète, d'abord parce que les auteurs usent le plus souvent du 'recul esthétique', ils écrivent leur livre 'au passé' par exemple, etc., ce qui permet au lecteur de survoler leur personnage. En outre, la possibilité d'une conscience réflexive est toujours présente.[25]

Reading can never involve us to the same extent as can a dream: 'cet état de transes . . . ne peut être entièrement réalisé dans la lecture'.[26] Moreover, Sartre suggests, such a total fascination 'nuirait . . . à l'appréciation esthétique'.[27] It is evident that for Sartre a certain distance is an essential concomitant of aesthetic appreciation, and he refers almost disparagingly to the 'genre d'intérêt passionné'[28] which a 'lecteur naïf' may feel when reading a novel. In other words the reader should remain aware that the novel gives him merely *un savoir imageant*, a degraded form of *savoir*. As we shall see in our examination of *Situations II*, the writer is responsible for respecting the reader's liberty in this sense, leaving him free to make

his own decisions about the events or attitudes of the work. Images are essential to capture the emotional response of the reader, but they must not also capture his freedom.

Reading in turn leads us to a further aspect of Sartre's account of the imaginary: the nature of the aesthetic object. The aesthetic object is, Sartre indicates, unreal: 'l'œuvre d'art est un irréel'.[29] He takes in the first place the example of painting and argues that it is not the materials of the work of art, the paint on the canvas for example, which constitute the aesthetic object. They rather form what Sartre calls an *analogon* of the image which is the aesthetic object proper, and which comes into being only through the mind of the spectator: 'Ainsi le tableau doit être conçu comme une chose matérielle *visitée* de temps à autre (chaque fois que le spectateur prend l'attitude imageante) par un irréel qui est précisément *l'objet peint*.'[30] (i.e. the absent subject of the painting). Imagination then is the essential element in the aesthetic experience. Sartre is categorical on this point. He recognizes however, that it is easy to mistake the perceptive attitude for the aesthetic stance:

> Ce qui trompe ici c'est le plaisir réel et sensuel que donnent certaines couleurs réelles de la toile . . . Mais il faut nous entendre: cette jouissance sensuelle, si on la considère isolément . . . n'a rien d'esthétique. C'est purement et simplement un plaisir des sens. Lorsqu'on saisit, au contraire, le rouge sur le tableau, on le saisit, malgré tout, comme faisant partie d'un ensemble irréel et c'est dans cet ensemble qu'il est beau . . . C'est donc dans l'irréel que les rapports de couleurs et de formes prennent leur sens véritable.[31]

The paint on the canvas then constitutes an *analogon* of the image which is the real domain of aesthetic appreciation. This applies, according to Sartre, not only to representational painting where the paint directs our imagination towards the object represented, but also to abstract art; and a similar process takes place in the case of literature, music, drama etc. The differences between these various forms of art lie, in this context, in their connection or lack of connection with the real. But in all instances, Sartre contends, the aesthetic object itself is unreal or imaginary. In the case of literature for example the words on the page once again serve simply as an analogon, on the basis of which the reader, like the writer, constitutes the work of art proper: 'Il va de soi que le romancier, le poète, le dramaturge constituent à travers des analoga verbaux un objet irréel.'[32] Kaelin remarks that Sartre's analysis is generally acceptable to aestheticians: 'few aestheticians will agree that the poem itself exists on a page, if so, in whose book is *the* poem?'[33] The case of music might appear somewhat different for 'un air de musique . . . ne renvoie à rien, qu'à lui-même'.[34] But Sartre explains that it is the individual performance of a symphony for example which constitutes the *analogon* of the symphony itself which exists outside time and space: 'Pour moi, cette "VII^{e} Symphonie" n'existe pas dans le temps . . . Elle est entièrement hors du réel . . . Pourtant elle dépend dans son apparition du réel . . . Ne voit-on pas clairement que l'exécution de la VII^{e} Symphonie est son *analogon*?'[35] The 'being' of the Seventh Symphony is of course

for Sartre not Platonic but simply 'unreal'.

Sartre's account of abstract art is more detailed. He is anxious to avoid misunderstandings which might arise out of the modern notion of the work of art as an object in itself:

On a coutume, depuis le cubisme, de déclarer que le tableau ne doit pas *représenter* ou *imiter* le réel mais qu'il doit constituer par lui-même un objet. Cette doctrine, en tant que programme esthétique, est parfaitement défendable et nous lui devons de nombreux chefs-d'œuvre. Encore faut-il bien l'entendre. Si l'on veut dire que le tableau, tout dépourvu de signification qu'il soit, se présente en lui-même comme un objet réel, on commet une grave erreur. Certes il ne renvoie plus à la Nature. L'objet réel ne functionne plus comme analogon d'un bouquet de fleurs ou d'une clairière. Mais quand je le 'contemple' je ne suis pas, pour autant, dans l'attitude réalisante. Ce tableau fonctionne encore comme *analogon*. Simplement ce qui se manifeste à travers lui c'est un ensemble irréel de *choses neuves*, d'objets que je n'ai jamais vus ni ne verrai jamais mais qui n'en sont pas moins des objets irréels, des objets qui n'existent point *dans le tableau*, ni nulle part dans le monde, mais qui se manifestent à travers la toile et qui se sont emparés d'elle par une espèce de possession. Et c'est l'ensemble de ces objets irréels que je qualifierai de *beau*.[36]

The sense of Sartre's argument here is made clear when a few pages later he talks of natural objects that strike us as beautiful acting as *analoga* of themselves. In the case of both abstract art and natural beauty the aesthetic attitude involves the spectator in a kind of *dédoublement*: the material object which is present refers him to the 'aesthetic object' which is absent, and which is in fact simply the material object itself imagined not perceived. The idea of an object acting as an *analogon* of itself is less sophistical and also less idiosyncratic than it might at first appear. In the first instance, as we shall see later, it is related to various Romantic and Symbolist intuitions which connect beauty with the 'spiritual correspondence' of objects in nature. Moreover the notion of a self-referring *analogon* is to be found also in the writings of certain contemporary aestheticians. E.S. Casey for example talks of a work of art as presenting 'itself as an icon of itself: i.e. as a self resembling sign in which the terms are no longer radically distinct but potentially identical'.[37]

Sartre's account of the aesthetic object aims then at removing all beauty from the real world and investing it in the imaginary: 'Le réel n'est jamais beau. La beauté est une valeur qui ne saurait jamais s'appliquer qu'à l'imaginaire et qui comporte la néantisation du monde dans sa structure essentielle.'[38] Sartre's position is in part dependent on his belief in the total contingency and absurdity of the real which can never, of itself, reveal the finality or purpose which he sees as an essential element in all beauty. The notion of finality in beauty is however suggested rather than explicitly discussed in *L'Imaginaire* and we shall therefore examine its implications in more detail at a later stage when we discuss Sartre's attitude to the Kantian notion of art as a *finalité sans fin*. For the moment we must simply note an important consequence of Sartre's radical separation of perception

and imagination, the real and the imaginary, contingent existence and beauty: this is the accompanying split between morality and aesthetics. 'Il est stupide de confondre la morale et l'esthétique',[39] he states categorically. We shall see Sartre's gradual evolution away from this position in the course of the present chapter.

Sartre's reference to 'la néantisation du monde' brings us finally to an aspect of the imagination which is essential to the philosophical position of *L'Être et le Néant* but which appears to run counter to the emphasis on imagination as fascination or possession. This is the equation of imagination with the freedom of human consciousness: 'Poser une image, c'est constituer un objet en marge de la totalité du réel, c'est donc tenir le réel à distance, s'en affranchir, en un mot, le nier.'[40] Of course, as we have seen, although imagination negates the real it is nevertheless a function of our situation in the world: 'La condition essentielle pour qu'une conscience imagine c'est qu'elle soit "en situation dans le monde" . . . Ainsi, si la conscience est libre, le corrélatif noématique de la liberté doit être le *monde* qui porte en lui sa possibilité de négation'.[41] But it is imagination which allows us to recognize our situation, to stand back from the world and consider it *as* a world, in Sartre's terms, to totalize it: 'Il faut considérer que l'acte de poser le monde comme totalité synthétique et l'acte de "prendre du recul" par rapport au monde ne sont qu'un seul et même acte . . . Toute appréhension du réel comme monde implique un dépassement caché vers l'imaginaire.'[42] It is only through the imagination then that the world can be seen in any sense as meaningful; without this faculty our consciousness would be 'totalement engluée dans l'existant et sans possibilité de saisir autre chose que de l'existant.'[43] This helps us to understand the radical distinction and yet the strict interdependence of perception and imagination:

> L'imagination . . . c'est la conscience tout entière en tant qu'elle réalise sa liberté; toute situation concrète et réelle de la conscience dans le monde est grosse d'imaginaire en tant qu'elle se présente toujours comme un dépassement du réel. Il ne s'ensuit pas que toute perception du réel doive s'inverser en imaginaire, mais comme la conscience est toujours 'en situation' parce qu'elle est toujours libre, il y a toujours et à chaque instant pour elle une possibilité concrète de produire de l'irréel.[44]

Imagination then appears 'sur fond de monde';[45] and reciprocally it is the imaginative potential of the mind which ensures that perception is more than a passive reception of sensory stimuli. The two modes of consciousness are never present simultaneously but are implied one by the other and are essential one to the other: 'Il ne saurait y avoir de conscience réalisante sans conscience imageante et réciproquement.'[46] Sartre's most explicit critical discussion of the totalization effected by the imagination is to be found in his work on Flaubert; we shall return therefore to this notion in the context of his theory of literature when we examine the aesthetics of the *Idiot de la famille.*

In *L'Imaginaire* Sartre's primary concern is to give a phenomenological account of the imagination: in so far as he discusses art it is in the context of the status of

the imaginary object. Although he recognizes certain basic differences in the ways the various arts communicate an *imaginaire*, his desire to give a general account of the status of the imaginary means that these differences are seen as less important than the similarities. In *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* on the other hand, Sartre is anxious to isolate literature, with its possibility of commitment, from the other arts which can be broadly described as 'non-significant' in the sense that they do not convey a conceptual meaning. The work shows all the signs of being hastily written: Sartre's terminology sometimes lacks precision, and the distinctions implied are, as other critics have demonstrated, not always rigorously worked out.[47]

Central to *Situations II* is Sartre's distinction between prose-literature which uses signs referring the reader to something beyond themselves and the other arts which, even when they are representational (as in some kinds of painting for example), concentrate rather on the sensuous qualities of the aesthetic medium itself, in so far, of course, as these are imagined not perceived:

> Les notes, les couleurs, les formes ne sont pas de signes, elles ne renvoient à rien qui leur soit extérieur . . . Pour l'artiste, la couleur, le bouquet, le tintement de la cuiller sur la soucoupe sont *choses* au suprême degré; il s'arrête à la qualité du son ou de la forme, il y revient sans cesse et s'en enchante; c'est cette couleur-objet qu'il va transporter sur sa toile et la seule modification qu'il lui fera subir c'est qu'il le transformera en objet *imaginaire* . . . le peintre ne veut pas tracer des signes sur sa toile, il veut créer une chose.[48]

The painter then creates an art-object with which the spectator establishes a direct contact; the writer on the other hand creates meanings: 'L'écrivain, au contraire, c'est aux significations qu'il a affaire'.[49] This difference means that whereas the writer can explicitly direct the response of his reader, the painter can only present the spectator with an object to which he is largely free to respond as he chooses:

> L'écrivain peut vous guider et s'il vous décrit un taudis, y faire voir le symbole des injustices sociales, provoquer votre indignation. Le peintre est muet: il vous présente *un* taudis, c'est tout; libre à vous d'y voir ce que vous voulez. Cette mansarde ne sera jamais le symbole de la misère; il faudrait pour cela qu'elle fût signe, alors qu'elle est chose.[50]

We should note in passing that Sartre's coupling of the term 'symbole' with 'signe' is in direct conflict with the usage current since Symbolism. Fiser, in his study of *Le Symbole littéraire*, points out that two opposed meanings of symbol coexist within the Symbolist aesthetic itself, but the term is in fact rarely used in its earlier sense of a 'représentation intellectuelle'[51] in contemporary literary criticism which rather distinguishes assiduously between sign, symbol, allegory etc.

Sartre then does not believe that a painting can communicate a precise message to the spectator, though he is aware of its ability to communicate inexplicit moods and feelings: speaking of Tintoretto's *Crucifixion*, he writes: 'Cette déchirure

jaune du ciel au-dessus de Golgotha, le Tintoret ne l'a pas choisie pour *signifier* l'angoisse, ni non plus pour la provoquer; elle *est* angoisse, et ciel jaune en même temps. Non pas ciel d'angoisse, ni ciel angoissé; c'est une angoisse faite chose.'[52] Sartre's distinction between the mode of communication of literature and the fine arts is not new; it will be familiar to anyone who has studied Baudelaire in relation to Delacroix, for example. In his journal (8 October 1822) Delacroix writes,

Quand j'ai fait un beau tableau, je n'ai point écrit une pensée . . . C'est ce qu'ils disent! . . . Qu'ils sont simples! Ils ôtent à la peinture tous ses avantages. L'écrivain dit presque tout pour être compris. Dans la peinture, il s'établit comme un pont mystérieux entre l'âme des personnages et celle du spectateur . . . L'art du peintre est autant plus intime au cœur de l'homme qu'il paraît plus matériel.[53]

But for the Romantic painter it is the 'esprits grossiers [qui] sont plus émus des écrivains que des musiciens et des peintres'.[54] Sartre on the other hand prefers an art-form where the artist is not dependent simply on the powers of suggestion of his medium, but where he can exercise a precise control over the meaning conveyed; and he thinks that only language, by its referential nature, can permit such a degree of directional control.

Sartre's position on the potential for communication of the various arts is then clear. But his terminology is somewhat imprecise: the opposition between *chose* and *signe* is arguably clumsy, and the distinction between *sens* and *signification* (which will be so important in his study of Flaubert) is not yet clearly fixed in his mind. This is evident for example from his remarks on the phenomenology of sensations: 'Il n'y a, Merleau-Ponty l'a bien montré dans *La Phénoménologie de la perception*, de qualité ou de sensation si dépouillées qu'elles ne soient pénétrées de signification. Mais le petit sens obscur qui les habite . . . leur demeure immanent . . . il *est* couleur ou son.'[55] Sign, signification and language are distinguished in a fairly general way from *sens* and *âme*; symbol seems to have been placed on the wrong side of the dividing line, but it is evident that Sartre is groping for distinctions that he will later make much clearer. What kind of 'meaning' then does Sartre attribute to the pure or 'non-significant' arts? As we have just seen, Sartre shares with Merleau-Ponty the view that colours and sounds may have certain expressive qualities as a matter of common experience, quite apart from their context as well as in interaction with it, but these are vague and inseparable from the sensory qualities themselves: 'Qui pourrait distinguer le vert-pomme de sa gaîté acide? Et n'est-ce pas déjà trop de le nommer "la gaîté acide du vert-pomme"? Il y a le vert, il y a le rouge, c'est tout.'[56] Moreover, according to Sartre, the general 'sens' attached to colours for example may interact and even interfere with the emotions, moods or states of mind which the painter is attempting to convey:

Les objets ainsi créés reflètent ses tendances les plus profondes. Seulement ils n'expriment jamais sa colère son angoisse ou sa joie comme le font des paroles ou

un air de visage: ils en sont imprégnés: et pour s'être coulées dans ces teintes qui, par elles-mêmes, avaient déjà quelque chose comme un sens, ses émotions se brouillent et s'obscurcissent; nul ne peut tout à fait les y reconnaître.[57]

Artistic creation is, Sartre thinks, a two-way process. In *L'Imaginaire* he described the artist as in a sense objectifying his mental image through the creation of an *analogon*; in *Situations II* it is clear that he is conscious also of the reverse side of such a notion: through the creation of the work of art the artist is helped to *discover* his own idea. The full implications of the interaction between the intentional and the unintentional (what Sartre follows Gide in calling 'la part du diable') are not however explored in any detail at this point. In *Situations II* Sartre is primarily concerned to show that such an interaction implies fluid possibilities of response and interpretation which, together with the lack of any means of conceptual communication, render commitment, at least as Sartre understands it at this point, impossible in the fine arts proper. Of music for example Sartre writes:

La signification d'une mélodie—si on peut encore parler de signification—n'est rien en dehors de la mélodie même . . . Dites qu'elle est joyeuse ou qu'elle est sombre, elle sera toujours au delà ou en deça de tout ce que vous pouvez dire sur elle . . . On ne peint pas les significations, on ne les met pas en musique: qui oserait, dans ces conditions, réclamer du peintre ou du musicien qu'ils s'engagent?[58]

For all that, within *Situations II* itself we are given a foresight of the way Sartre will later commit the 'non-significant' arts, for there is a reservation attached to his claim that he has no intention of committing them: 'Non, nous ne voulons pas "engager aussi" peinture, sculpture et musique, ou, du moins, pas de la même manière.'[59] The precise way in which the fine arts may be seen as committed is not discussed explicitly at this stage: but there is no reason to suppose that Sartre's remarks about the special kind of commitment open to poetry, which we will examine shortly, are not intended to apply to the other arts also.

We must now turn to Sartre's discussion of literature in order to see how he will apply the distinctions outlined above: *sens/signification, signe/chose*, to language itself, using them to establish the dichotomy of prose and poetry. At first sight the dichotomy seems relatively uncomplicated: 'l'empire des signes, c'est la prose; la poésie est du côté de la peinture, de la sculpture, de la musique'.[60] Sartre asserts that the poet relates to words in a totally different way from the writer of prose, 'serving' them, rather than 'using' them. Kaelin remarks that 'logically . . . there has been an error: species (lyric poetry) and genus (poetry) have been equivocally converted';[61] but Sartre may be absolved here for it is quite clear that he is referring only to poetry as conceived since Symbolism: 'Je répète qu'il s'agit de la poésie contemporaine. L'histoire présente d'autres formes de la poésie'.[62] Nonetheless, what is involved here is an ideal and normative definition of poetry. The poet's function is not the revelation of truth; neither is it the simple 'magical' function of nomination whereby words are used to conjure up objects: in poetry words are

objects in their own right. This means of course that Sartre rejects the stated aim of the Surrealists to destroy language as implying a misunderstanding of the nature of poetry, and indeed of their own best poetry. Sartre's normative definition is based upon a conception of the dual nature of the word which can be envisaged either as a transparent means of referring us to something beyond itself, or as the object on which the imagination focusses in the aesthetic attitude. The fact that the poet adopts the second stance does not however mean that he is unconcerned with communication; it means simply that he will try to communicate through the material rather than the conceptual aspect of the word, using it as an image rather than as a sign: 'Sa sonorité, sa longueur, ses désinences masculines ou féminines, son aspect visuel lui composent un visage de chair qui représente la signification plutôt qu'il ne l'exprime.'[63] Sartre will develop this notion in his later account of Flaubert's art but his basic thesis will remain unchanged. The poet need not choose between the various meanings of a word since he is not concerned with intellectual clarity, he rather permits the different connotations to coexist: 'Florence est ville et fleur et femme, elle est ville-fleur et ville-femme et fille-fleur tout à la fois.'[64] We may justifiably wonder whether echoes of Proust are sounding in Sartre's memory at this point, for he continues: 'Et l'étrange objet qui paraît ainsi possède la liquidité du *fleuve*, la douce ardeur fauve de l'*or*, et, pour finir s'abandonne avec *décence* et prolonge indéfiniment par l'affaiblissement continu de l'*e* muet son épanouissement plein de réserves.'[65] Poets use words, Sartre suggests, in much the same way as painters use colours: to create an object: 'Les mots-choses . . . s'attirent, ils se repoussent, ils se *brûlent* et leur association compose la véritable unité poétique qui est la *phrase-objet*.'[66] Like other 'pure' artists then, the poet cannot be committed, or so Sartre claims at this stage:

> Sans doute l'émotion, la passion même . . . sont à l'origine du poème. Mais elles ne s'y *expriment* pas . . . les mots les prennent, s'en pénètrent et les métamorphosent . . . Comment espérer qu'on provoquera l'indignation ou l'enthousiasme politique du lecteur quand précisément on le retire de la condition humaine et qu'on l'invite à considérer, avec les yeux de Dieu, le langage à l'envers?[67]

The idea that the poet envisages language 'à l'envers' brings us to another aspect of Sartre's theory of poetry and one which will become increasingly important in his aesthetics: the notion of poetry as *échec*. As we shall see in our examination of his ideas on language, Sartre envisages man as '*en situation* dans le langage, investi par les mots'.[68] Language is an integral part of man's relations with others. Prosaic language usage is based on an assumption of communicability. The poet, according to Sartre, does not share this assumption; he is, in a sense, ill-adapted to language which he envisages from outside as a barrier to true communication: 'Le poète est hors du langage, il voit les mots à l'envers, comme si . . . venant vers les hommes, il rencontrât d'abord la parole comme une barrière.'[69] The poet is not however inventing problems. Language is, Sartre believes, like all human activities,

dependant on the interpretation of others for its final meaning. The poet is simply sensitive to the difficulties inherent in any attempt to communicate, and concentrates his attention on the element of failure underlying even the fullest communication: 'Il ne s'agit pas, d'ailleurs, d'introduire arbitrairement la défaite et la ruine dans le cours du monde, mais plutôt de n'avoir d'yeux que pour elles. L'entreprise humaine a deux visages: elle est à la fois réussite et échec.'[70] The poet's use of language is based on the very failure inherent in all communication:

S'il est vrai que la parole soit une trahison et que la communication soit impossible, alors chaque mot, par lui-même, recouvre son individualité, devient instrument de notre défaite et receleur de l'incommunicable. Ce n'est pas qu'il y ait *autre chose* à communiquer: mais la communication de la prose ayant échoué, c'est le sens même du mot qui devient l'incommunicable pur. Ainsi l'échec de la communication devient suggestion de l'incommunicable.[71]

The apparently sophistical paradox can be explained simply in psychological terms: poetry makes use of the suggestive power of words, a power which in fact of course depends on a certain imprecision of meaning. In this sense a lack of intellectual clarity permits a multiplicity of poetic connotations. Sartre recognizes that poetry and prose are not radically distinct in this respect: 'Il va de soi que, dans toute poésie, une certaine forme de prose, c'est-à-dire de réussite, est présente: et réciproquement la prose la plus sèche renferme toujours un peu de poésie, c'est-à-dire une certaine forme d'échec.'[72] In other words the prose writer can never control totally the meaning of what he is saying, nor is poetry devoid of all element of conceptual communication. But if both aspects are necessarily present in all language, the writer must nonetheless choose which he will allow to predominate for, at this stage at least, Sartre does not believe that both aspects of language can be used to the full simultaneously:

Si le prosateur veut trop choyer les mots, l'*eidos* 'prose' se brise et nous tombons dans le galimatias. Si le poète raconte, explique, ou enseigne, la poésie devient *prosaïque,* il a perdu la partie. Il s'agit de structures complexes, impures mais bien délimitées.[73]

As we shall see in our discussion of the *Idiot de la famille* and of the evolution of Sartre's ideas on language, his position on this point will be gradually modified. The prose/poetry distinction will not be repudiated but will change its focus from a distinction between *genres*, to one between different forms of writing.

Sartre's identification of poetry with *l'échec* is only briefly indicated in *Situations II*, but it implies already many of the ideas which will later prove vital in his account of Genet and more especially of Flaubert. The most significant of these is the *qui perd gagne* notion, according to which failure can be seen as success on a 'higher' level. We have just seen a simple example of this in Sartre's account of the failure to communicate entailing a suggestion of the incommunicable. But Sartre is evidently already aware of more metaphysical interpretations of the idea of

qui perd gagne, for he compares the contemporary role of poetry in recuperating failure to that performed in previous centuries by religion. Sartre's fascination with the various forms and degrees of authenticity or inauthenticity of 'loser wins' will become increasingly apparent in his criticism and will provide the key to his study of and perhaps even his eventual rehabilitation of Flaubert. Even at this stage it is the notion of *qui perd gagne* which permits him to define the special kind of commitment open to the poet: 'Le poète authentique choisit de perdre jusqu'à mourir pour gagner . . . Si donc l'on veut absolument parler de l'engagement du poète, disons que c'est l'homme qui s'engage à perdre.'[71] We shall return to this notion again in our examination of Sartre's study of Baudelaire.

We can turn now from poetry and the fine arts to Sartre's discussion of committed literature itself, and his account of the nature of commitment. As we know from 'Qu'est-ce qu'écrire? ', Sartre's conception of committed literature applies to prose alone and excludes poetry; and although, in his discussion of commitment in 'Pourquoi écrire?', he makes no further reference to this distinction it must be taken as established. *L'écrivain* is then to be understood in this context as the prose-writer. As we have seen already, the terminology of *Situations II* is not always clearly defined. There are in fact two and perhaps even three different notions of commitment which emerge from Sartre's discussion, the first two explicit, the third implicit and farther-reaching, providing part of the basis on which he will later 'commit' arts other than literature. We will look firstly, fairly briefly, at the explicit account.

The writer is, according to Sartre, *embarqué*, or *engagé* in the sense of being involved in the historical and political situation of his day, whether or not he likes or even admits the fact: Balzac is implicated by his inactivity during the 1848 Revolution, just as is Flaubert during the Commune. The writer, Sartre insists, must not ignore this involvement, he must rather attempt to contribute to the establishment of social freedom and justice. In other words he should be *engagé* also in a positive and conscious sense. This *engagement* by no means however implies the reduction of the writer's role of that of mere journalist: Sartre's conception of the relevance of the historical moment is in this sense analogous to Baudelaire's notion of modernity as we find it for example in his essay on Constantin Guys:

> Le beau est fait d'un élément éternel, invariable, dont la quantité est excessivement difficile à déterminer, et d'un élément relatif, circonstantiel, qui sera, si l'on veut, tour à tour ou tout ensemble l'époque, la mode, la morale, la passion. Sans ce second élément . . . le premier élément serait indigestible, inappréciable, non adapté et non approprié à la nature humaine.[75]

Baudelaire is here attempting to refute the 'professeurs-jurés d'esthétique' such as Winckelmann. Sartre of course is not attempting to combat neo-classical aesthetic theory, but is rather resisting the Symbolist heritage still clinging round even his own idea of literature. He emphasizes first that eternal values will in fact be reached

through the temporal and relative: 'Ainsi, en prenant parti dans la singularité de notre époque, nous rejoignons finalement l'éternel et c'est notre tâche d'ecrivain que de faire entrevoir les valeurs d'éternité qui sont impliquées dans ce débats sociaux ou politiques.'[76] But like Baudelaire he continues: 'Mais nous ne nous soucions pas de les aller chercher dans un ciel intelligible: elles n'ont d'intérêt que sous leur enveloppe actuelle.'[77] Even the vocabulary is Baudelaire's here: we are reminded of the 'enveloppe amusante . . . du divin gâteau'.[78] We shall explore further these and other resemblances between Sartre's critical theory and that of Baudelaire in a later chapter.

The primary element of commitment, historical involvement, is then nothing new, nor is it in any sense propagandist. Sartre objects to both bourgeois and communist writers, in the sense not of bourgeois or communists who write, but rather of those who produce literature of a certain sort: exclusively analytic in the case of the bourgeois, or subordinated to utilitarian ends in the case of the communist. Sartre's ideal literature would, he believes, flourish rather in an authentically revolutionary society:

> Dans un parti authentiquement révolutionnaire [l'œuvre d'art] trouverait le climat propice à son éclosion, parce que la libération de l'homme et l'avènement de la société sans classes sont comme elle des buts absolus, des exigences inconditionnées qu'elle peut refléter dans son exigence.[79]

The writer is then, like all men, part of history, and responsible for the effect, direct or indirect, of his actions and therefore of his writing. Besides any deliberate and positive involvement, he is also committed in the sense that his world-view, even if apparently a-historical, itself involves a choice of perspective. If he abstains from direct political commitment he is not merely responsible for his lack of positive guidance, but also for the political implications of the imaginary universe he portrays. In this sense too, then, all writers are committed and Sartre is advising them of the necessity to be conscious of the fact.

Writers are however committed also in a third and perhaps more far-reaching sense: by writing they reveal the world to their readers, and thereby change the nature of their readers' relations to that world. In Sartre's terms: 'La perception même est partiale, puisque, à elle seule, la nomination est déjà modification de l'objet.'[80] In other words literature necessarily transforms our non-reflective awareness of the world into a reflective, thetic, self-conscious awareness. The reader can no longer take the world for granted in the same passive manner as before. Literature, by its very nature, reveals the possibility of change. Of the seventeenth century for example Sartre writes: 'Le miroir qu'il présente modestement à ses lecteurs est magique: il captive et compromet . . . les conduites spontanées en passant à l'état réflexif, perdent leur innocence et l'excuse de l'immédiateté: il faut les assumer ou les changer.'[81] It is an extension of this notion of art as revelation which will later allow Sartre to commit not only

literature but the fine arts also.

Sartre has then in *Situations II* three coexisting ideas of commitment: the first can be stated as the idea that the writer is always *en situation*; the second is the more familiar idea of positive *engagement*: the third is part of the notion of *dévoilement*, the implications of which we shall discuss at a later stage. Sartre's main concern in *Situations II* is however with the necessity for conscious and deliberate commitment on the part of prose writers: this leads him, within the main body of the text at least, to simplify his conception of prose by describing its primary role as that of conveying conceptual meaning, and consequently to reduce the potential for commitment of the 'non-significant' arts. As I have indicated however, a more complex conception of the nature of both literature and the other arts underlies the main lines of his argument, and surfaces from time to time in parentheses and footnotes.

There is in *Situations II* a final aspect of commitment which we have not yet discussed: this depends on the integral connection which Sartre establishes between literature and liberty. Much of Sartre's discussion, as he himself indicates, applies in fact to the fine arts also, in so far as these, like the literary work, depend on the imagination not only of their creator but also of the spectator, listener or reader. In *L'Imaginaire*, the imagination was described as constitutive of human freedom: 'c'est la conscience tout entière en tant qu'elle réalise sa liberté'.[82] For Sartre, freedom, like truth, is one, 'la liberté est une, mais elle se manifeste diversement selon les circonstances',[83] so ontological, artistic, intellectual and political freedom are inextricably linked. Whether Sartre establishes this unity as a fact or merely takes it as a supposedly incontrovertible premise will of course need to be examined. He can perhaps, without much fear of contradiction, assert the interrelationship of intellectual and political freedom: 'Il y a coïncidence, non seulement entre la liberté formelle de penser et la démocratie politique, mais aussi entre l'obligation matérielle de choisir l'homme comme perpétuel sujet de méditation et la démocratie sociale.'[84] It is in fact the notion of liberty which provides the pivotal link between his aesthetic theories and his political or sociological beliefs. It is the key to his mistrust of excessively emotive writing, and to his belief in the necessity of a certain 'aesthetic distance': 'Dans la passion, la liberté est aliénée . . . De là ce caractère de *pure présentation* qui paraît essentiel à l'œuvre d'art: le lecteur doit disposer d'un certain recul esthétique'.[85] The writer then must not attempt to alienate his reader's judgement by involving him in an enforced 'participation'. We should note in passing that Sartre's admiration for Bertold Brecht is in fact founded to a large extent on Brecht's deliberate refusal to engage the imagination of his spectators too thoroughly. On the other hand, Sartre of course recognizes the necessity of an emotional response, but he considers it to be of a particular nature:

Cela ne veut pas dire que l'écrivain fasse appel à je ne sais quelle liberté abstraite

et conceptuelle. C'est bien avec des sentiments qu'on recrée l'objet esthétique . . . Seulement ces sentiments sont d'espèce particulière; ils ont la liberté pour origine: ils sont prêtés.[86]

As we saw in *L'Imaginaire*, images cannot be caused but they can be motivated: we must choose to take up the imaginative rather than the purely perceptual attitude. Reading then involves a free choice: the emotions and images it suggests are freely accepted and the 'suspension of disbelief' is 'willing' and chosen:

Le propre de la conscience esthétique c'est d'être croyance par engagement, par serment, croyance continuée par fidélité à soi et à l'auteur, choix perpétuellement renouvelé de croire. A chaque instant je puis m'éveiller et je le sais: mais je ne le veux pas: la lecture est un rêve libre. En sorte que tous les sentiments qui se jouent sur le fond de cette croyance imaginaire sont comme des modulations particulières de ma liberté.[87]

It is not merely the reader whose freedom is implied by the work of art. The writer too must remain free. His freedom is closely related in Sartre's view to the 'purpose' embodied in the work of art. Sartre declares that the imagination or freedom of mind involved in the appreciation of natural beauty is unregulated, since natural beauty is simply in the eye (or mind) of the beholder. This unregulated liberty he calls *caprice*.[88] The beauty of art, on the other hand is willed, it is *intentionnelle*,[89] so the spectator is assured that the beauty he recognizes is not an arbitrary construct of his own mind, it is purposeful. For Sartre this element of purpose depends on the freedom of the artist:

Si je devais soupçonner l'artiste d'avoir écrit par passion et dans la passion, ma confiance s'évanouirait aussitôt, car il ne servirait à rien d'avoir étayé l'ordre des causes par l'ordre des fins; celui-ci serait supporté à son tour par une causalité psychique et, pour finir, l'œuvre d'art rentrerait dans la chaîne du déterminisme.[90]

It is not immediately clear what kind of status Sartre is prepared to grant to works which are 'supporté[s] . . . par une causalité psychique', nor even whether he is prepared to consider them as works of art at all. He would perhaps claim that his definition of art as a relationship of two freedoms is in fact descriptive and not merely prescriptive, for he finds it impossible to conceive of a work of art created in the heat of passion without any kind of aesthetic detachment: 'Sa [i.e. the writer's] décision d'écrire suppose qu'il prenne du recul par rapport à ses affections; en un mot, qu'il ait transformé ses émotions en émotions libres, comme je fais des miennes en le lisant, c'est-à-dire qu'il soit en attitude de générosité.'[91] Sartre's emphasis on purpose as the essential element of beauty appears in many ways as the corollary of his belief in the contingency of the natural world: only man can have purpose and in so far as a work of art may contain elements which are not fully purposeful it betrays the reader who is seeking an alternative to contingency. As we have seen, Sartre is of course aware of the 'part du diable' inherent in any art, but he considers that this too can be incorporated within the overall intention of the artist and rendered retrospectively purposeful. In the

complex process of artistic creation the unintentional can be made to serve the intentional.

The 'purpose' embodied in the work of art in no way however restricts the reader's freedom. Indeed the reader is rather aware of his freedom as creator of the aesthetic object. Sartre is categorical on the question of the reader's role in creation. Since the author produces only an *analogon* of the aesthetic object, the reader's participation is necessary if the *imaginaire* itself is to come into being:

L'objet littéraire, quoiqu'il se réalise *à travers* le langage, n'est jamais donné dans le langage . . . le sens n'est pas la somme des mots, il en est la totalité organique. Rien n'est fait si le lecteur ne se met d'emblée et presque sans guide à la hauteur de ce silence . . . S'il ne l'invente, en somme, et s'il n'y place et fait tenir ensuite les mots et les phrases qu'il réveille. Et si l'on me dit qu'il conviendrait plutôt d'appeler cette opération une réinvention ou une découverte, je répondrai que d'abord une pareille réinvention serait un acte aussi neuf et aussi originel que l'invention première . . . Sans doute l'auteur le guide: mais il ne fait que le guider . . . En un mot, la lecture est une création dirigée . . . Ainsi, pour le lecteur, tout est à faire et tout est déjà fait; l'œuvre n'existe qu'au niveau de ses capacités.[92]

The paradox of *création dirigée* parallels the paradox of *savoir imageant*: reading gives both *savoir* which can be caused, and images which can only be suggested. 'La lecture en effet, semble la synthèse de la perception et de la création.'[93] In other words the reader does not create the conceptual meaning of the literary work, but he creates the *objet esthétique* in so far as it is always an *imaginaire* dependent on the human mind for its existence.

In one sense then all art, according to Sartre, is liberating. It is liberating in so far as it is negative, presenting us with an imaginary world by which we can escape our *embourbement* in reality. Art depends on the imagination, and the imagination is synonymous with the freedom of human consciousness. But this first kind of liberation involves only the subject. There is a second sense in which art can be seen as liberating. Sartre's discussion is restricted to the literary work but the context gives us no reason to suppose that it is not applicable to the 'non-significant' arts also. Literature is defined as 'l'œuvre d'une liberté totale s'adressant à des libertés plénières . . . elle manifeste à sa manière, comme libre produit d'une activité créatice, la totalité de la condition humaine.'[94] Sartre is suggesting that in so far as a work of art depends on a reader or spectator for the realization of its *imaginaire*, it is potentially a call to any man, and hence, Sartre believes, to all men. From this theoretical position he moves on to claim that if art depends on the liberty of men, it must necessarily work in favour of this liberty. Sartre has made of art a kind of categorical imperative,[95] and he uses this notion to suggest that the writer is in some sense *logically* bound to work towards a truly democratic society in which all men would be free to read his works and to take any action suggested by them. In this sense art becomes socially as well as psychologically liberating. Sartre is evidently struggling to identify the

interests of the artist with the interests of all men. He appears however to have performed some philosophical sleight of hand. 'Liberty' has been transformed from the ontological correlative of imagination into a practical, politico-social freedom. The distinctions have, we may suspect, been deliberately blurred for polemical reasons. Sartre is in fact trying to reinforce in the reader the notion of the artist as a political as well as a 'psychological' liberator. As a political liberator he is necessarily subversive: 'souhaitons . . . qu'il retrouve en lui-même la force de faire scandale',[96] for 'la littérature est par essence hérésie'.[97] A writer, then, Sartre urges, must not allow his works to be 'recuperated' or incorporated into the dominant culture; or at least he must make the recuperation as difficult and therefore as productive of change as possible: 'Par la littérature, je l'ai montré, la collectivité passe à la réflexion et à la médiation, elle acquiert une conscience malheureuse, une image sans équilibre d'elle-même, qu'elle cherche sans cesse à modifier et à améliorer.'[98] If the writer is subversive, the reader too is drawn into the subversive activity: 'tout l'art de l'auteur est pour m'obliger à *créer* ce qu'il *dévoile*, donc à me compromettre'.[99] The reader cannot escape responsibility for his part in the *création dirigée*. This notion will acquire increasing importance in Sartre's studies of Genet and Flaubert.

Sartre has then conflated several different types of liberty and liberation in his account of art in *Situations II*. But he has established a link on various distinct levels (ontological, social, political) between art and liberty, even if these levels are not in fact interrelated in the simple manner he is attempting to imply. He has moreover given, at least implicitly, some indications of the basis on which he will later commit poetry and the fine arts.

The notion of commitment raises the important question of the purpose specific to art, and this brings us to an idea which is central to Sartre's aesthetics and in particular to his conception of the function of art in the world: the notion of art as a *fin*. The idea does not change significantly in nature throughout Sartre's writings; it is important in the later critical essays on Genet and Flaubert, but it is first clearly set out in *Situations II* where its role is capital since without it Sartre's critical theories might be interpreted as basically anti-art.

The idea of art as an end can be interpreted on various levels, the simplest and most superficial being by opposition to any idea of art as a means to an end. Sartre rejects propaganda: he believes that true art cannot be servant of any cause, however worthwhile:

> Je dis que la littérature d'une époque déterminée est aliénée lorsqu'elle n'est pas parvenue à la conscience explicite de son autonomie et qu'elle se soumet aux puissances temporelles ou à une idéologie, en un mot lorsqu'elle se considère elle-même comme un moyen et non comme une fin inconditionnée.[100]

> L'œuvre d'art, fin absolue, [s'oppose] par essence à l'utilitarisme bourgeois. Croit-on qu'elle peut s'accommoder de l'utilitarisme communiste?[101]

Art then is not a means; but Sartre considers that this notion has been misunderstood and misapplied in the past, as for example, by the art-for-art's-sake movement, according to which art must not only steer clear of utilitarianism but must deliberately set out to be useless, to become in Sartre's terms, 'la forme la plus élevée de la consommation pure':[102]

Les extrémistes souhaitent, par terreur de servir, que leurs ouvrages ne puissent pas même éclairer le lecteur sur son propre cœur, ils refusent de transmettre leur expérience. A la limite l'œuvre ne sera tout à fait gratuite que si elle est tout à fait inhumaine . . . L'imagination est conçue comme faculté inconditionnée de *nier* le réel et l'objet d'art s'édifie sur l'effondrement de l'univers.[103]

For Sartre, of course, imagination negates ('néantiser') the real, it cannot, in his terms, deny ('nier') it.

Sartre discusses the art-for-art's-sake movement in greater detail in the *Idiot de la famille* where he sees it as alienating the artist, just as effectively as the bourgeois quest for profit. In *Saint Genet* he claims that the notion of art-for-art's-sake indirectly provides the bourgeois with an excuse for ignoring his own potential to effect change:

Le Juste laissera au peintre, à l'écrivain, au musicien le soin de discipliner les images: quant à lui, il se réserve le sérieux, c'est-à-dire le rapport originel à l'être. Beaucoup plus qu'une conception d'artiste la théorie de l'Art pour l'art est une revendication de l'homme de Bien: 'A vous les images, à moi la réalité'.[104]

Art-for-art's-sake effects a separation between art and reality to radical that it renders in a sense the negating power of artistic creation practically harmless.

This then is one interpretation of the idea of art as an end and one perversion of this interpretation. But Sartre is not content simply to state his objection. He attacks the perversion also at its very source: in the aesthetics of Kant. Kant, Sartre concedes, is 'fort sage'[105] in that he divorced art from didacticism. He rejected the subordination of art to ethical ends and introduced the idea of the separation of functions which was vital to the Romantic revolution. But Kant's theories, Sartre claims, had the effect of confining nineteenth-century aesthetics within a simple and ultimately 'inert' notion of the art-object which severed art completely from ethical activity even in the widest sense. In this way the art-for-art's-sake movement grew out of Kantianism and formed the hard-core of aesthetic doctrine in mid-nineteenth-century France, despite the intuitions of writers like Baudelaire, Flaubert and later on Mallarmé, who remained, in varying degrees inassimilable to the art-for-art's-sake school.

Sartre's criticism of Kantian aesthetics bears specifically on a number of closely interrelated points. In the first place he thinks that Kant's version of the notion that beauty is 'multiplicity in unity' is still basically formalistic, and that a proper understanding of the process of totalization as opposed to simple unification is absent.[106] We shall examine Sartre's idea of totalization at a later stage in the

context of the *Idiot de la famille*.

Secondly, already in *Situations II*, Sartre takes exception to Kant's view that the work of art has no real *end*, only a formal finality which is no more than the arrangement of elements within the work with a view to producing the impression of an effortless or 'natural' beauty. In fact Sartre contends that Kant's idea of beauty as a *finalité sans fin* is designed on the model of so-called natural beauty, and that this is Kant's fundamental mistake. In *L'Imaginaire*, Sartre of course distinguishes between 'natural' beauty which arises if the imaginative attitude is taken up towards external reality, and man-made beauty which, whilst still requiring the imaginative attitude, witnesses to the purpose of the creator. Like Sartre, Kant does not consider the finality of nature to be objective:[107] in his terms it is a formal, subjective finality, dependent upon the imagination: 'A subjective finality resting in the play of imagination in its freedom, where it is we who receive nature with favour, and not nature that does us a favour.'[108] Here Sartre's position and Kant's are similar but there is an important difference which depends on their respective attitudes towards the imagination itself. For Kant, natural beauty, though in fact a subjective phenomenon, is universally apparent, if not universally appreciated. Sartre, on the other hand, is bound to disagree, for he has established a radical distinction between imagination and perception which, although inter-dependent, cannot occur simultaneously. Since our awareness of natural beauty depends on our taking the imaginative attitude towards the world, any suggestion that such beauty was universally apparent would imply that man's general attitude towards the world was imaginative. For Kant, the problem does not arise for he includes an element of imagination in his idea of perception. But despite this theoretical difference, Sartre and Kant nevertheless appear to be in agreement about natural beauty itself: it is dependent on an apparent finality which corresponds to no real end[109] and which is a product of the human mind.

On the nature of art, however, their ideas diverge sharply. For Sartre the Kantian formula is totally inapplicable to art: 'L'expression kantienne de "finalité sans fin" me paraît tout à fait impropre à désigner l'œuvre d'art . . . La beauté de la nature n'est en rien comparable à celle de l'art.'[110] Kant on the other hand thinks of art by analogy with nature and ultimately judges it to be inferior: 'The superiority which natural beauty has over that of art . . . accords with the refined and well-grounded habits of thought of all men who have cultivated their moral feelings.'[111] According to Kant, art cannot rival nature but it must nonetheless appear 'final' in the same way that nature does, that is to say spontaneously or 'naturally': 'A product of fine art must be recognized to be art and not nature. Nevertheless the finality of its form must appear just as free from the constraint of arbitrary rules as if it were a product of mere nature.'[112]

Kant admits that art presupposes an end in the sense that it has been deliberately created: 'art always supposes an end in the cause'.[113] But this does not mean that art should be judged according to ethical or practical ends. Such a subordination

would imply the degradation of art: the loss of its spontaneous status, its alienation to the useful or the merely agreeable:

> The principle of the idealism[114] of finality is still more clearly apparent in fine art. For the point that sensations do not enable us to adopt an aesthetic realism[115] of finality (which would make art merely agreable instead of beautiful) is one which it enjoys in common with beautiful nature. But the further point that the delight arising from aesthetic ideas must not be made dependent upon the successful attainment of certain determinate ends (as an art mechanically directed towards results) . . . is brought home to us by the fact that fine art, as such, must not be regarded as a product of understanding or of science but of genius.[116]

Kant is concerned with separating the beautiful from the good and the true, though he recognizes a 'symbolic' relationship between them.[117] And moreover art may have indirectly a moral effect in the general sense that it helps to exercise and refine out powers of sensibility and judgement: 'Fine art . . . is a mode of representation which is intrinsically final, and which, although devoid of an end, has the effect of advancing the culture of the mental powers in the interests of social communication.'[118] But for all this, in Kant, beauty and hence art is cut off from the realm of ends in the proper sense of the word. Kant's categorical imperatives belong to the realm of morality not beauty.

Sartre, in *L'Imaginaire*, adopted the Kantian distinction between ethics and aesthetics: 'il est stupide de confondre la morale et l'esthétique'.[119] In its radical form such a distinction is of course incompatible with the notion of commitment, and whilst never explicitly repudiating his earlier statement, Sartre has attempted to reinterpret it within the framework of the committed aesthetics of *Situations II*. He uses the very notion of the gratuitousness of the work of art to reintroduce it into the kingdom of ends: 'L'œuvre d'art n'*a pas de* fin, nous en sommes d'accord avec Kant. Mais c'est qu'elle *est* une fin.'[120] and he defies Kant by implication when he writes: 'L'œuvre d'art est gratuite parce qu'elle est fin absolue et qu'elle se propose au spectateur comme un impératif catégorique.'[121] From a theoretical point of view then Sartre's disagreement with Kant hinges on their different ideas of the aesthetic object. Kant, according to Sartre, envisages the work of art as a more or less definitive object which is offered to the free imagination of the spectator but does not involve it in any creative way: 'Kant croit que l'œuvre existe d'abord en fait et qu'elle est vue ensuite . . . C'est oublier que l'imagination du spectateur n'a pas seulement une fonction régulatrice mais constitutive.'[122] For Sartre on the other hand the work of art is an appeal to the spectator's own creative activity to bring the aesthetic object into being: 'l'œuvre . . . n'existe que si on la *regarde* et elle est d'abord pur appel, pure exigence d'exister'.[123] In this sense he is able to claim that the work of art is both 'categorical imperative' and 'fin absolue' interdependently. It can be seen that Sartre's position relies ultimately on the distinction between *analogon* and aesthetic object. Strictly speaking, it is the *analogon* which appeals to the spectator to bring the aesthetic object into

being. A certain amount of unnecessary obscurity arises from the fact that Sartre sometimes compresses the two elements into a single term ('l'œuvre d'art') in order to challenge Kant with a formulation as striking as his own.

But since it involves communication between two freedoms, the categorical imperative of art cannot be regarded as merely aesthetic; so that Sartre can claim: 'au fond de l'impératif esthétique nous discernons l'impératif moral'.[124] What is for Kant an incidental 'effect' of art becomes in Sartre's view its 'end'. The wheel has turned full circle. The ethical dimension has been reintroduced into art, paradoxically enough, through the very notion of the gratuitousness of art. Art becomes once again communication in the fullest sense: in responding to the categorical imperative of art, by bringing the *imaginaire* into being, the spectator or reader communicates with the artist by participating in a vision of the world seen through an individual consciousness.

Sartre's reflections upon Kant play an important part in the argument of *Situations II*. It is clear that Sartre is already trying to reunite the two poles of his aesthetics, and that, as early as 1947, he is determined to bring pure art, at least potentially, under the umbrella of commitment.

CHAPTER 2

SITUATIONS: THEMES AND CRITICAL CRITERIA

Having examined the broad basis of Sartre's aesthetic theories, we must now turn to a more detailed examination of the specific critical criteria and themes implicit in his criticism itself. These themes in fact provide constant reference points throughout Sartre's critical writings; but since his attention will be focussed progressively more sharply on individual authors rather than diffused in numerous circumstantial articles, it is naturally in the earlier essays of *Situations* that such themes will reveal themselves most clearly as touchstones for a wide variety of critical judgements. I hope therefore in this chapter to demonstrate the origins of these critical themes in Sartre's writings, and also to show briefly their continuity in his later articles where they are often simply referred to rather than re-explored in any detail.

The first critical notion which we must examine is closely connected with Sartre's distinction between prose and poetry. This is his classification of literature as either 'Terror' or 'Rhetoric', depending on the attitude to language of the writer. The distinction is taken from Paulhan's *Les Fleurs de Tarbes* (1941) and Sartre assumes a familiarity with this work on the part of his readers which can no longer be taken for granted. 'Terror' is for Paulhan the assumption that thought precedes language, and that language is consequently inadequate and misleading, betraying the thought it is groping to express. Terrorists believe that language can acquire its own momentum, separate from thought, they mistrust therefore facility or cliché; in the domain of literature, terror implies an emphasis on originality and subjectivity and a tendency towards non-communication. 'Rhetoric', on the other hand, is the assumption that thought exists only through language, that language is therefore adequate, coinciding with thought which it communicates in its entirety. A consciously committed writer is then necessarily a *rhétoriqueur* rather than a *terroriste*, since commitment in art of course depends on the possibility of communication. The terror-rhetoric dichotomy can thus be seen as a particular aspect of the broader dichotomy of pure and committed art. There is not an exact one-to-one correspondence between the two sets of ideas, but the terror-rhetoric distinction raises questions about the purpose, nature and specificity of art closely related to those already examined in chapter I.

Sartre's first mention of literary terrorism occurs in his *Explication de l'Etranger*

(1943) in relation to what he calls 'la hantise du silence'[1] of the Surrealists and the theatre of J-J. Bernard. He gives the notion a semi-philosophical basis by referring to Heidegger's belief in silence as 'le mode authentique de la parole'.[2] As will become increasingly apparent, Sartre's critical approach tends to a large extent to take the writers he discusses on their own terms. He therefore approaches the pseudo-metaphysics of the terrorists with a seriousness which misleads Jean Paulhan into thinking that Sartre himself shares the suppositions of the terrorists.[3] Indeed the idea of terror and silence seems to fascinate Sartre. We are not concerned here however with the linguistic philosophy underlying Sartre's discussion, for this will be examined in the final chapter, but rather with the use which he makes of the notion in his criticism. The terrorist mistrust of language has led, he claims, to a cult of silence and a belief that true communication must in some way bypass words. But since writers in fact write rather than keep silent, a major aspect of the terrorist phenomenon is the question of literary technique: 'Comment se taire avec des mots?'[4] In his essay on Faulkner in 1939 Sartre set out the aim of his literary criticism: 'une technique romanesque renvoie toujours à la métaphysique du romancier. La tâche du critique est de dégager celle-ci avant d'apprécier celle-là'.[5] In his criticism of the writings of the terrorists and of those writers connected with terrorism he can be clearly seen as fulfilling this programme.

Terrorism provides a major reference point for Sartre's discussion in *Situations I* of the style and literary technique not only of Camus but also of Georges Bataille, Brice Parain, Francis Ponge and Jules Renard, whom he relates in various ways to the terrorist ideal. The term allows him to make subtle and complex distinctions in a concise form. These need only be referred to briefly now as they will be discussed in more detail in the context of Sartre's own ideas on language. Bataille's hatred of language is situated as that of a mystic rather than a terrorist: he does not envisage language as betraying thought but rather as a project involving the dispersal of the mind in a temporal sequence. Bataille would like to exist 'tout entier et tout de suite: dans l'instant'.[6] Parain is described as finding his original terrorist position psychologically untenable and as turning eventually to God as guarantor of meaning and therefore of rhetoric. Ponge is contrasted with Parain for he escapes terrorism without invoking the aid of God: he sees that it is not language which is to blame when communication breaks down, but rather the misuse of it; and Sartre uses this notion as a springboard for a detailed discussion of Ponge's aims and literary technique. Jules Renard is also contrasted with the terrorists: he too loves silence but, unlike the terrorists proper, feels no need to create or invent it: 'le silence, il s'imagine le posséder d'abord'.[7] But the technical problems Renard encounters in his attempt to convey silence are identical with those of the terrorists proper, and it is from this angle that Sartre analyses Renard's style.

The terror-rhetoric distinction forms the context, in *Situations II*, of Sartre's discussion of the Surrealists, terrorists *par excellence*, and his discussion of Surrealism in turn helps situate the theme of terrorism in a historical perspective.

From the outset a certain ambiguity colours his attitude towards Surrealism as it does his attitude towards nineteenth-century aesthetics. Surrealism starts from the principle that art is a perpetual reinvention of the real, and has intuitions that the poem in turn is not a static object but a reinvention of the words on the page. Implicit in its poetry moreover – but at variance with its proclaimed aims – is the ideal of art as its own end. Sartre's analysis is of the theory rather than the practice of Surrealism. He sees the movement as the latest and most extreme symptom of the bankruptcy of bourgeois society, the latest phase in a process of cultural disintegration, the end-product of the progressive alienation of the intellectual from the aims and purposes of Western society. It is a dying spasm of a decadent culture whose real nature was brought into the open by the inescapable real issues raised by the first World War. The intellectual élite develop feelings of guilt and inferiority in respect to the worker: a moral and historical crisis has provoked 'la douloureuse débâcle du parasitisme'.[8] At the same time, Surrealism is evidence of the bourgeois intellectual's inability to do anything about the crisis other than accelerate the process of disintegration. Surrealism is, Sartre thinks, 'Le terme dernier d'un long processus dialectique: au XVIIIe siècle la littérature était négativité; sous le règne de la bourgeoisie elle passe à l'état de Négation absolue et hypostasiée, elle devient un processus multicolore et chatoyant d'anéantissement.'[9] Inevitably then the hall-mark of Surrealism is a deep-seated self-contradiction which is none other than that of capitalist society in its decadence. The contradiction reveals itself in the fundamental bad-faith underlying the Surrealists' political, psycho-philosophical, and aesthetic intentions.

The Surrealists set out to destroy the old moral, social and intellectual norms and to liberate the frustrated potential of humanity. Their claim to ally themselves with Communism and the worker is interpreted by Sartre as a vain attempt to cover up the anarchy of terrorist nihilism. Moreover it reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of the Communist aim: the negative phase of Communist revolution is mistaken for its real objective. Surrealists on the other hand hold destruction as an end in itself: 'au lieu de détruire pour construire, c'est pour détruire que [le Surréalisme] construit.'[10] The insincerity of the Surrealists' alleged political intentions is shown up most clearly in their inconsistent attitude towards the relationship of literature and politics; for whilst claiming to subordinate art to life, they will explain away radical political writings such as Aragon's incitement to murder, as pure uncommitted poetry.

Surrealist psychology is equally inconsistent: the claim to liberate desire, the unconscious and the imagination; to seek a point from which contradictions are reconciled, 'd'où la vie et la mort, le réel et l'imaginaire, le passé et le futur, le communicable et l'incommunicable, le haut et le bas, cessent d'être perçus contradictoirement',[11] is vitiated by their denial of the subjectivity itself: 'Leur refus du subjectif a transformé l'homme en une simple maison hantée . . . L'homme surréaliste est une addition, un mélange, mais jamais une synthèse . . . [il] n'est que

la somme exhausive de toutes ses manifestations.'[12] Man as he is understood by Sartre has been destroyed: 'il n'y a personne à libérer'.[13]

If their psychology is intent on destroying subjectivity, their aesthetics seek rather to destroy objectivity; since a real destruction of the world is impossible they produce art-objects whose internal contradictions are designed to reveal the world as a 'contradiction radicale'.[14] The terrorists claim to value life above art, the tangible object above signs or symbols, action above language:

Le terrorisme ou plutôt le complexe terroriste, car c'est un nœud de vipères, on pourrait y distinguer: 1° un dégoût si profond du signe en tant que tel qu'il conduit à préférer en tout cas la chose signifiée au mot, l'acte à la parole, le mot envisagé comme objet au mot-signification . . . 2° un effort pour faire de la littérature une expression parmi d'autres de la vie, au lieu de sacrifier la vie à la littérature.[15]

But their creations are in fact aesthetic, symbolic and verbal and unrelated to the reality of active life. Their art, like all art, cannot help being creative:

Au moyen . . . de l'annulation symbolique du langage par la production des sens aberrants, de la destruction de la peinture par la peinture et de la littérature par la littérature, le surréalisme poursuit cette curieuse entreprise de réaliser le néant par le trop plein d'être. C'est toujours en *créant*, c'est-à-dire en ajoutant des tableaux aux tableaux déjà existants, des livres aux livres déjà édités qu'il détruit.[16]

The Surrealist art-object is 'chatoyant', it can be seen in two opposed ways: either as an invented object (like Duchamp's sugar cubes in marble) or as the denial of a real object: 'Selon la direction de l'attention il est "sucre de marbre" ou contestation du sucre'.[17] The difference between Surrealist art and 'traditional' art is of course one of intention rather than of nature. All art invents objects which negate the real world, but whereas in traditional art it is the object which is the aim, in Surrealism the aim is rather the denial of the real. Their theories may be self-contradictory but their works themselves are real in the same terms as any other work of art. 'Je reconnais hautement', says Sartre, 'que le surréalisme est le *seul* mouvement poétique de la première moitié du XX^{e} siècle'.[18] If the Surrealists have not liberated desire or 'la totalité humaine', they have, Sartre contends, contributed to a liberation of the imagination.

Sartre's feelings about Surrealism are perhaps more complex than his feelings about any other literary movement. In the first place he accepts their poetry whilst rejecting their theories, on the grounds that the theory gives a one-sided and distorted account of the practice; secondly there is a tension between his instinctive literary tastes and his intellectual/political opinions, which is in the last analysis no more than the tension between the two poles, which are arguably for Sartre at this stage two conflicting ideals, of pure art and committed art. As a rhetorician he is fascinated with terrorism; as an advocate of committed art he is

delighted by the very imaginative works which he sees as fundamentally incompatible with commitment. Sartre's delight will become more apparent and his criticisms less stringent as his conception of the true nature of commitment becomes progressively more subtle. Already in *Orphée noir* for example, the neo-Surrealist French African poets are described as able, albeit by historical good fortune, to unite pure poetry with commitment;[19] and later in *Saint Genet* when his idea of *l'art engagé* has broadened to include poets and apparent aesthetes such as Mallarmé and Genet, the surreality of Breton shares in the reflected glory of Genet's brand of sainthood, and Sartre contrasts it with 'ce que la mesquinerie bourgeoise nomme le réel'.[20] In *Situations II* Sartre declares that 'l'imaginaire pur et la *praxis* sont difficilement compatibles'.[21] His literary criticism can be seen as an increasingly complex attempt to reconcile these two opposed elements. In our account of *Saint Genet* we will return to the question of Surrealist terrorism, and examine also the importance of Sartre's notion of rhetoric in his analysis of Genet and Mallarmé.

In the essay on Leibowitz in 1950 the terror-rhetoric distinction is situated within a wider context and related to the Hegelian notion of terror, described by Sartre as a 'liberté formelle et purement négative'.[22] The formula applies also of course to terrorist liberty as defined by Paulhan. The alternative to Terror in Hegel's terms is not however Rhetoric but what Sartre calls 'Servitude' or 'Réaction'. Rhetoric simply acknowledges the power of art; in periods of servitude this power is annexed for purposes of propaganda. The opposition with Hegelian servitude in turn allows us to clarify the relations between terrorism and Sartre's notions of pure and committed art. Sartre admits that faced with the alternatives of terror or servitude he would take the side of terrorism since at least 'elle maintient les exigences proprement esthétiques de l'art'.[23] Sartre is here maintaining his insistence that art should remain autonomous, even if its autonomy can be protected only by a recourse to abstraction and non-communication. But he emphasizes that it is only in the non-significant arts that the artist is confronted with the choice between producing abstract formalistic works, or works that can be appropriated by the State and used as propaganda. Literature escapes the dilemma since, as it possesses the potential for direct commitment, it can determine its own social implications and relevance, and thereby resist recuperation by the prevailing ideology.

The terror-servitude dichotomy lies also behind Sartre's discussion of the paintings of Tintoretto (1957). Tintoretto's public want art to give them not merely pictorial representations but '*la chose même* et qu'elle écrase: qu'elle soit plus grande que nature, plus présente et plus belle: c'est la Terreur. Mais la Terreur est une maladie de la Rhétorique!'[24] Terror and rhetoric are now not simply opposed but interrelated: paradoxically terror has arisen at a time when rather than being mistrusted art is on the contrary admired and revered. It is in fact this very reverence which has resulted in a misunderstanding of the proper

purpose of art: the Venetian public expect art to provide a substitute for life, a simulacrum of the object represented. Sartre is here envisaging terror as a phenomenon dependent not simply on the artist's personal attitude towards his art, but also on the historical situation of art at any given moment. Tintoretto lives during a period of aesthetic transition: the artist's role is changing: no longer convinced that he is painting for God, unwilling to be a mere decorator, he is not yet sure enough of himself to be simply a creator of autonomous art-objects. 'Il est trop tard pour *montrer*, trop tôt pour *créer*, le peintre est en enfer'.[25] Rhetoric has led to terror in Paulhan's sense. It has, moreover, we might note, led ultimately to a form of servitude: rhetoric recognizes art's potential for communication, but the nature of this communication can be misinterpreted, especially in the case of the fine arts. In sixteenth-century Venice the church and state want painting to communicate a message, to be committed in a sense which is impossible to the non-significant arts. The artist feels alienated, his independence is threatened and he is driven finally to adopt an attitude of terrorism towards his own art, and to see it as incapable of corresponding to what he wants to convey.

Terror, rhetoric and servitude have been shown to be ultimately interdependent; but the contributions of Paulhan and Hegel must be recognized and separated conceptually if the implications of Sartre's analyses are to be fully understood. The original literary distinction has become wider-ranging, more complex and more philosophical.

The terror-rhetoric dichotomy has led then to the question of the autonomy and specificity of art. As we saw in the previous chapter, Sartre's criticism is concerned ultimately with determining the true relationship between life and art, ethics and aesthetics. He is anxious that his own notion of commitment should not be misunderstood and used to threaten the autonomy essential to all art. Sartre considers, moreover, the 'purity' of art to be more basic to its survival than its explicit commitment. Indeed, in a sense it would seem that the purer the artist's commitment to his art, the closer his art comes to commitment. This is of course another aspect of the special form of 'commitment' open to poetry, painting and music.

The purpose specific to art must then be distinguished from the purposes to which art can be put. Sartre follows Baudelaire in his insistence that artists should recognize the specific qualities of their chosen medium and express themselves within it. He rejects therefore art which he calls 'symbolic', using the term in the same narrow sense ascribed to it in *Situations II*. The painter Masson for example is praised for moving away from mythological subjects which involved an element of 'literary' meanings: 'Il découvre un truquage dans sa mythologie: le dessin n'y est pas tout: il s'allie à des significations qui débordent le graphisme; pour animer ses gravures ou ses toiles, Masson s'aperçoit qu'il a eu recours à des symboles.'[26] It is on similar grounds that Sartre dislikes poetry like Genet's which can be translated into a set of prose statements: 'Genet . . . s'amuse à déchiffrer

sa propre pensée dans les blocs sonores qu'il pêche et ramène au jour . . . Je l'ai dit: la *vraie* poésie est intraduisable. Mais voyez comme ces vers sont proches de la prose: la traduction s'impose puisqu'ils réclament d'être compris.'[27] One of the qualities of good art is then that it should be untranslatable into another medium, and a novel should ideally be like any other art-form in this sense. A novelist like Maurice Blanchot who undertakes to explain the meaning of his own symbols offends doubly in this respect: 'Pourquoi . . . nous offre-t-il une traduction perpétuelle, un commentaire abondant de ses symboles? En de nombreux passages, les explications se font si insistantes que l'histoire prend nettement l'allure d'une allégorie.'[28] The corollary of Sartre's dislike of 'symbolic' art is his mistrust of the kind of criticism which attempts to 'translate' an author's work, or to 'decipher' its symbols. For example Parain's translation of the philosophers he studies opens up the possibility of an infinite series of similar translations:

Ne puis-je m'amuser à mon tour *à traduire* la pensée de Parain . . . Et s'il me traduit, je traduirai sa traduction: nous n'en finirons pas. Ne vaut-il pas mieux laisser dire à chacun ce qu'il voulait dire? 'Non, Monsieur, disait Breton à un commentateur de Saint-Pol-Roux. Si Saint-Pol-Roux avait *voulu dire* "carafe" il l'aurait dit'. N'en est-il pas de même pour Descartes ou pour Hegel?[29]

The duty of the critic, as Sartre conceives it for example in his essay on Giraudoux, is to take the works he studies *literally*, in the fullest sense: 'Je n'ai pas voulu traduire, je n'ai pas cherché la métaphore, ni le symbole, ni le sous-entendu: j'ai tout pris pour argent comptant, dans le dessein d'avancer non dans la connaissance des hommes mais dans celle de M. Giraudoux.'[30] But 'translation' or symbol-hunting is not to be confused with interpretation which is of course a major aspect of the critic's task. Proper interpretation involves rather an attempt to enter into the structures of thinking and feeling of an author in order to elucidate as fully as possible his world-view, which only then can be related to the critic's own notion of truth or reality. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, this is the double programme Sartre sets out to fulfil in his critical monographs.

Furthermore, just as Sartre dislikes criticism which 'translates' the works it studies, forcing them into a preformed mould, patterning their ideas and reducing their intrinsic singularity, he dislikes also authors who impose the same patterning on to the reality of the world itself. Sartre's willingness to enter into the world-view of an author does not mean that he in any sense forgets the reality of the world as he sees it. This is clear from his essay on Giraudoux:

J'ai . . . feint que je ne connusse point cette pâte molle parcourue d'ondulations qui ont leur cause et leur fin hors d'elles-mêmes, ce monde sans avenir, où tout est rencontre, où le présent vient comme un voleur, où l'événement résiste par nature à la pensée et au langage, où les individus sont des accidents, des cailloux dans la pâte, pour lesquels l'esprit forge, après coup, des rubriques générales.[31]

As we saw in our discussion of art as an end, part of the value of art lies in its

intrinsic 'purpose' or 'necessity'. But this 'purpose' is part of the ontological status of the art-object, not a visible aspect of its subject-matter, on which it must not impinge. In other words, the work of art may be 'necessary' but it must express contingency. Already in *La Nausée* art was seen as 'objectifying' the painful flux of existence, and as retaining human contingency and relativity within a structure which is sensed to be purposeful. In *Situations II* Sartre describes the aim of his own writings and the writings of his contemporaries: rather than presenting the reader with 'du vécu déjà repensé,'[32] their works attempt to give the impression of mirroring existence as it is lived: 'Nous nous persuadions qu'aucun art ne saurait être vraiment nôtre s'il ne rendait à l'événement sa brutale fraîcheur, son ambiguïté, son imprévisibilité, au temps son cours, au monde son opacité menaçante et somptueuse, à l'homme sa longue patience.'[33]

G. H. Bauer, in *Sartre and the Artist* (1969), has described Sartre's ideal as a preference for writers whose works seem to reveal 'existence' rather than 'être', flux and movement rather than static essences. Bauer traces this preference through Sartre's writings on painting and poetry and argues convincingly that it is this which determines his opinions of Ponge, Baudelaire and Mallarmé. It is of course this same preference which leads Sartre to accuse Giraudoux of 'Aristotelianism'. Giraudoux's characters are 'archetypes': they cannot evolve except in so far as they realize more perfectly their 'forme substantielle'.[34] As the *Mendiant* says in *Electre*: 'La question . . . est de savoir si le roi se déclarera dans Egisthe avant qu'Electre ne se déclare dans Electre.'[35] The tendency to concentrate experience into archetypes is of course a permanent feature of human imagination: 'Nous sommes tous, à nos heures, aristotéliciens . . . Ce soir, entre tous les soirs, est "soir de Paris"'.[36] But we must not allow this tendency to distort our understanding of reality as Giraudoux seems to do. Later, in *Situations IV*, Sartre criticized Mallarmé for a similar kind of essentialism: experience in time is condensed into poetic essences which are presented as eternal. All Mallarmé's autumn walks are unified in a single image: 'Ma promenade me rappelle par son automne'.[37] There is of course a difference in that Mallarmé equated his 'ideas' with Platonic essences,[38] whereas Giraudoux's universals are within nature; but nevertheless both reduce diversity to a false unity. This eschewal of the contingent is a form of fastidiousness which Sartre calls 'politesse', and which is ultimately to be attributed to class. Giraudoux is criticized more severely than Mallarmé in this respect, because in the former Sartre is rejecting part of his own education:[39]

> Un marxiste appellerait [ses] vues un rationalisme de politesse . . . il expliquerait le rationalisme par l'essor du capitalisme au début de ce siècle—et la politesse, par la position très particulière de M. Giraudoux au sein de la bourgeoisie française: origines paysannes, culture helléńique, diplomatie.[40]

Mallarmé is described in similar terms: 'Il choisit le terrorisme de la politesse: avec les choses, avec les hommes, avec lui-même, il conserve toujours une imperceptible

distance.'[41] This is not the moment to discuss in detail either Giraudoux's rationalism or Mallarmé's terrorism, but the so-called *politesse* of the two writers is important, for it reveals a distance from the real world that Sartre cannot accept. The *politesse* of both men is in fact a result of their implicit purification of the real, which is not accepted in its 'complexities of mire or blood' but rather transmuted into the 'glory of changeless metal'.[42] In Bauer's terms, Sartre is looking in art for the flux of existence, but in Giraudoux he comes up against the solidity of being and in Mallarmé against the permanence of essence.

Sartre's phenomenology determines not only his notion of the world as it is and as it should be revealed in literature, but also his notion of the techniques which should contribute to this revelation. The novelist's attitude to his characters for example must, Sartre believes, reflect our experience of other people. The technique of the omniscient narrator is rejected on the grounds that it is incompatible with human experience: we cannot know another person's subjectivity as lived from the inside any more than we can see ourselves objectively as we appear to others. Sartre's ideal novel is 'sans narrateurs internes ni témoins tout-connaissants'.[43] The novels of Mauriac, for example, are criticized on two counts: like Giraudoux, his characters have destinies rather than freedom. Mauriac presents them as caught in a tragic conflict between character and will-power. This falsely dramatic view of the ethical life diverts attention from the real nature of human conflict according to Sartre: 'Le vrai conflit romanesque est . . . de la liberté avec elle-même.'[44] Secondly, Mauriac's technique itself is unacceptable: Mauriac lets his reader enter the subjectivity of his characters at one moment, only to present them from an external viewpoint at the next.

These various criticisms appear however to conflict with Sartre's admiration of another writer whose characterization and technique seem, at first sight, as Sartre presents them, remarkably similar to Mauriac's. Why then is Dos Passos 'le plus grand écrivain de notre temps'[45] for Sartre, although his characters too have destinies, and although they too are presented from within and from without: 'L'homme de Dos Passos est un être hybride, interne-externe'?[46] The purposes of Mauriac and Dos Passos are however totally opposed. Sartre admires the way in which Dos Passos reveals 'l'abondance triste de ces vies sans tragique . . .'[47] The lives of Dos Passos's characters are in fact similar to the lives of certain characters in *La Nausée*: 'Ces mille aventures ébauchées, manquées, aussitôt oubliées, toujours recommencées . . . jusqu'au jour où l'une d'elles . . . écœure un homme pour toujours.'[48] Sartre is not simply *excusing* Dos Passos for his use of the *interne-externe* technique or for giving his characters destinies rather than freedom. He considers that these very elements are being applied consciously and deliberately to create an effect of suffocation. Dos Passos has given his characters destinies in order to impress upon the reader that: 'Les jeux sont faits . . . C'est cet étouffement sans secours que Dos Passos a voulu exprimer. Dans la société capitaliste les hommes n'ont pas de vies, ils n'ont que des destins.'[49] Sartre remarks upon the skill with

which Dos Passos applies the *interne-externe* technique, shifting suddenly for example from inside the consciousness of his hero Joe to take up an external viewpoint at the moment of his death: 'Rien ne fait mieux sentir l'anéantissement'.[50]

Sartre's preoccupation with the technical problems of the novelist's craft is apparent in his criticism from his earliest essays. But his analyses will increase in subtlety. In 1938 Sartre claims: 'Nous ne sommes ni des mécaniques ni des possédés; nous sommes pires; libres. Tout entier *dehors* ou tout entiers *dedans*.'[51] The novelist's basic choice is then between an internal and an external portrayal of his characters, though, as in the case of Dos Passos, Sartre recognizes that a combination of techniques can be used to create specific literary effects. Sartre is of course conscious from the outset of the complex implications of the novelist's position with respect to the characters he creates: 'Est-il "avec" ses personnages, "derrière" eux ou dehors?'[52] Aware that the novelist relates to his characters in all these ways, in 1938 he considers that this all-embracing perspective should, in general, be reduced to a unified point of view within the narrative. Such a reduction of course means that the novelist must *appear* to have less knowledge of his characters than is in fact the case. It is in this light that Sartre later analyses the aesthetic theories of Nathalie Sarraute whose primary concern is with the novelist's perspective: 'C'est la mauvaise foi du romancier—cette mauvaise foi *nécessaire*—qui fait horreur à Nathalie Sarraute.'[53] Furthermore in 1948 Sartre recognizes that the novelist is not in fact presented with a simple choice of perspective. This is in part because his own definition of man has undergone a small but significant change: 'Nathalie Sarraute cherche à sauvegarder sa bonne foi de conteuse. Elle ne veut prendre ses personnages ni par le dedans ni par le dehors parce que nous sommes, pour nous-mêmes et pour les autres, tout entiers dehors et dedans à la fois.'[54] The choice is then no longer the simple 'dehors ou dedans'[55] presented as the novelist's alternative in 1938: man is now described as he is in *L'Être et le Néant* as both subject and object simultaneously, both looking and looked at. And this interrelation poses further problems of literary technique. It is the effect of *le regard* on us which Nathalie Sarraute is trying to capture: 'Le dehors, c'est un terrain neutre, c'est ce *dedans* de nous-mêmes que nous voulons être pour les autres et que les autres nous encouragent à être pour nous-mêmes.'[56] Sarraute reveals our *mauvaise foi* and our inauthenticity; but she thereby manages to suggest, in a negative fashion, a potential authenticity: '*L'authenticité*, vrai rapport avec les autres, avec soi-même, avec la mort est partout suggérée mais invisible. On la pressent parce qu'on la fuit.'[57] Just as Dos Passos's revelation of our suffocation within capitalism may, Sartre feels, lead us to revolt against it, so Sarraute's picture of our inauthenticity may in turn encourage us to acknowledge and reject this also. In the case of Sarraute, as of Dos Passos, Sartre's concern is simultaneously ethical and aesthetic: 'Elle a mis au point une technique qui permet d'atteindre, par-delà le psychologique, la réalité humaine, dans son *existence* même.'[58]

Even when he is at his most polemical, Sartre does not neglect entirely problems of aesthetics. In *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* he devotes several footnotes to the question of the author's attitude towards his characters, in which he recognizes that totally objective and totally subjective approaches are neither aesthetically satisfactory nor even philosophically possible. In both cases the character portrayed is inaccessible in any real sense: either seen from outside so that the reader has no means of access to his subjective feelings, or alternatively shut up within his own subjectivity, cut off from 'l'univers intermonadique'.[59] Neither way permits us to grasp the interaction between man and the world. In this sense, Sartre can claim that 'l'objectivité absolue . . . est rigoureusement équivalente à l'absolue subjectivité',[60] and that in interior monologue 'il s'agit . . . de pousser jusqu'au bout l'hypothèse d'une subjectivité première et de passer au réalisme en menant jusqu'à l'absolu l'idéalisme.'[61] Both approaches are fundamentally false: the one pretending to an inhuman objectivity – and we shall return to this point again shortly; the other professing to give the unadulterated subjectivity of the character, whereas the author in fact chooses what to relate, manipulates the character's time, and expresses in words psychic states which are normally unverbalized thereby transforming a non-thetic self-awareness into a form of reflective self-conscious thought.

Sartre's aesthetics are here again clearly related to his philosophy: interior monologue is seen as false in the first place because the verbalization of the pre-verbal (unacknowledged by the author) contravenes the distinction Sartre thinks must be maintained between moods or feelings which are not necessarily verbalized and thoughts which are always verbalized; and secondly because it is the language of a pseudo-transcendent ego. Sartre's sensitivity to the problems of absolute subjectivity and absolute objectivity in art derives then from his own philosophical attempt to steer clear of the twin pitfalls of realism and idealism, seen here as the Scylla and Charybdis of modern literature.

Sartre's phenomenology also permits us to understand his ideas on the presentation of time in literature. Like all aspects of reality as we know it, time comes into the world through man, not merely in the sense of subjective individual experience of time, but in the sense of time as it is generally understood: 'le temps universel vient au monde par le Pour-soi'.[62] Past, present and future are the three dimensions of my being in which I try to realize an essence: 'Chaque dimension est une façon de se projeter vainement vers le Soi'.[63] When, in his essay on Giraudoux, Sartre describes the world as a 'monde sans avenir'[64] he is speaking loosely: in fact he thinks the world has a future as long as there are men alive in it: 'Mon futur entraîne comme coprésence future l'esquisse d'un monde futur'.[65] It is the implicit distinction between the emotive connotations and the literal meaning of 'future' which allows Sartre to follow Heidegger in his paradoxical assertion that 'un avenir barré, c'est encore un avenir'.[66] Right up to the point of death man is perpetually forming new projects.

Time then is part of the 'réalité humaine' which Sartre expects to see revealed in literature. It is rare however that he finds it, even in writers whom he admires: 'La plupart des grands auteurs contemporains, Proust, Joyce, Dos Passos, Faulkner, Gide, V. Woolf, chacun à sa manière, ont tenté de mutiler le temps.'[67] This mutilation depends ultimately on their world-view, in Sartre's terms, on their metaphysics. Faulkner for example is criticized for showing characters without a project, but he is praised for distinguishing what Sartre sees as true temporality from mere chronology. Indeed an intense awareness of time lies at the heart of all Faulkner's art, and ultimately provides the key to his 'metaphysics': 'il saute aux yeux que la métaphysique de Faulkner est une métaphysique du temps'.[68] Life as we live it in the present is, in Sartre's view, just 'un glissement furtif sous des voiles',[69] and only in retrospect does it take form and become an 'histoire'. Sartre compares Faulkner to Proust in so far as, for both writers, 'l'ordre du passé est l'ordre du cœur',[70] though whereas Faulkner feels that man cannot escape the past, Proust's aim is on the other hand to recapture it. 'J'aime son art, je ne crois pas à sa métaphysique',[71] Sartre writes of Faulkner. But unlike the Surrealists, Faulkner's metaphysics are not separate theories, they are implicit in his art itself: Sartre's distinction reveals an ingenuousness rarely found in his later writings where he attempts rather to unify his attitude to the writers he criticizes. Like Dos Passos, Sartre considers, 'Faulkner emploie son art extraordinaire à décrire ce monde qui meurt de vieillesse et notre étouffement'.[72] Whereas Dos Passos however is, Sartre believes, trying to incite his readers to revolt, Faulkner has no such aim: he too presents an absurd, futureless world, but his attitude towards it is one of despair. The political implications of his works are unintentional: it is Sartre and not Faulkner who sees revolution as a possible solution.

In the case of Mauriac too the time scheme is singled out for criticism: Mauriac gives the reader neither an impression of objective or universal time, nor an individual subjective awareness of time, but rather a purely fictional temporal construct, used, like the *interne-externe* technique, without regard for its effect on the reader: 'Dans un roman il faut se taire ou tout dire, surtout ne rien omettre, ne rien "sauter". Un raccourci, c'est simplement un changement de vitesse dans la narration. M. Mauriac, lui, est pressé.'[73] But by 1947 Sartre's attitude to the novelist's presentation of time has evolved in accordance with his changing attitude to the whole question of 'subjective' and 'objective' presentation: whilst still considering Mauriac to have failed totally to cope with or even to acknowledge the technical problems implicit in any attempt at realism, he has come to recognize that these problems are not in fact so easily resolved:

> Si je ramasse six mois en une page, le lecteur saute hors du livre. Ce dernier aspect du réalisme suscite des difficultés que personne de nous n'a résolues et qui, peut-être, sont partiellement insolubles, car il n'est ni possible ni souhaitable de limiter tous les romans au récit d'une seule journée.[74]

But in 1958 Sartre finds in André Gorz an author who appears to have achieved the impossible task of giving the reader 'le vécu' *à l'état pur*. His novel *Le Traître* is described as an event which happens as we read: '[Ce] n'est pas une œuvre d'art: c'est un événement, une brusque précipitation, un désordre de mots qui s'ordonnent.'[75] In other words the reader does not have the impression of listening to a description of what happened, but rather of being present at and witnessing the 'happening' itself. In so far as Gorz can be identified with the narrator, he is changing as he writes, groping for his identity through writing the novel: '*Le Traître* ne prétend pas *nous raconter* l'histoire d'un converti: il *est* la conversion elle-même.'[76] The philosophical problems previously outlined by Sartre have not of course been in fact solved. But they have been rendered irrelevant from the aesthetic point of view by the successful achievement of illusion. All art is, Sartre recognizes, necessarily artificial, built on an acknowledged illusion; as we shall see, it can never in fact reveal the world 'tel qu'il est', but it must, Sartre believes, at least appear to do so.

The time-structure of the novel constitutes a permanent criterion in Sartre's literary judgement and provides a constant reference point in his analyses. In 1970 for example he reaffirms his rejection of the kind of realist novel which makes no attempt to give an impression of time as we experience it:

> Le romancier réaliste nous raconte des histoires qui se déroulent dans une temporalité unique et continue dont il choisit soigneusement la vitesse d'écoulement et qu'il déplie ou resserre suivant les besoins du récit . . . Cette durée réelle est parfaitement imaginaire . . . je l'appelle pour ma part le temps de la simulation et ses à-coups, ses brusques changements de rythme ne sont tolérables que pour un lecteur qui, de connivence avec l'auteur, s'est placé au plus haut degré de l'abstraction.[77]

In direct contrast to pseudo-realism, André Puig presents time as subjective and *pluridimensional*. By this Sartre does not mean that Puig shows how different people have different awarenesses of time, but rather that in Puig's novel each person is aware of time in several ways simultaneously: the time of his present activities, of his long-term objectives, of his relations with other people, and also 'le temps de la répétition', cyclical time, which Sartre discusses in more detail in his studies of Genet and Flaubert. Puig succeeds in making these various subjective time-structures cohere finally around the character Georges into whose consciousness and awareness of time the reader emerges with a sudden lurch when he discovers that Marcel, through whom he had previously been experiencing time, was in fact simply an aspect of one of Georges's fantasy worlds. Sartre is fascinated by the complexity of time as Puig conveys it, and requests a further complexity: the interweaving of time structures at some group function: 'Je sais: chercher la totalisation de l'innombrable, c'est aussi vain peut-être que de vouloir produire le *perpetuum mobile*. Mais ce n'est pas notre faute si le livre de Puig nous rend exigeants.'[78] Sartre's expectation at this point clearly depends not simply on the

increasing technical subtlety of the contemporary novel but also and more importantly on his own present preoccupations with the dialectical interrelationship of individual and group.

In 1943 a new consideration enters Sartre's literary criticism. This is his stress on the 'signification humaine' implicit in all aspects of the world as man lives it. Already in *L'Imaginaire* Sartre recognized the affective aspect of human intentionality. By 1943 he has come to recognize also purposeful intentions, and moreover to see these as present from the outset in all human awareness of the world. Pure representation is thus seen as a secondary abstraction. When we consider Sartre's ideas on language we shall see this notion in its Bergsonian form, but it is clear that in Sartre's early literary criticism the idea derives immediately from Heidegger. Indeed Sartre refers explicitly to Heidegger's distinction between objects as *zuhanden* and as *vorhanden*, as *Zeug* and as *Ding*: 'Dans le monde heideggérien, l'existant est d'abord "Zeug", ustensile. Pour voir en lui "das Ding", la chose temporo-spatiale, il convient de pratiquer sur soi-même une neutralisation.'[79] This 'neutralisation' involves the imaginary suspension of the human project. Sartre's first reference to the Heideggerian notion in his criticism occurs in the 'Explication de *L'Etranger*', when he accuses Camus of deliberately removing all meaning from man's actions, portraying them as a futile series of gestures devoid of purpose: 'Contre [lui] la philosophie contemporaine a établi que les significations étaient elles aussi des données immédiates.'[80] Sartre does not expand or explain the notion at this stage, commenting that 'ceci nous entraînerait trop loin',[81] but he returns to it frequently in the essays of *Situations I* using it in particular to illumine his discussions of Ponge and Blanchot. In the real world, Sartre claims, 'j'aperçois d'abord des ustensiles',[82] *ustensiles* which refer us to human ends and intentions: 'tel est le monde humain *à l'endroit*'. In Blanchot's world on the other hand means and end are reversed, we see 'Des objets qui manifestent d'eux-mêmes leur ustensilité, mais avec un pouvoir d'indiscipline et de désordre, une sorte d'indépendance pâteuse qui nous dérobe soudain leur fin quand nous pensons la saisir.'[83] The world revealed by Blanchot is not absurd, for absurdity implies 'la totale absence de fin',[84] it is rather *fantastique*. Sartre's idea of the fantastic is in direct opposition to that later formulated by Tzvetan Todorov for whom the fantastic depends on a continuing uncertainty as to whether strange events have a natural or a supernatural explanation: once this is determined the fantastic gives way either to the uncanny (*l'étrange*) or to the marvellous (*le merveilleux*).[85] For Todorov the fantastic involves inexplicable events occurring in an otherwise normal environment. For Sartre on the other hand the fantastic is not based on anomaly: it involves a total reinvention of the world: 'On ne fait pas sa part au fantastique: il n'est pas ou s'étend à tour l'univers: c'est un monde complet où les choses manifestent une pensée captive et tourmentée.'[86] According to Sartre's definition then Blanchot presents the reader with a fantastic and inverted world in which tools are not means but ends, and

where man himself is only a means to ends which are inhuman and capricious. In his essay on *L'Etranger* Sartre criticized Camus for removing human meaning artificially from the world. Blanchot too removes meaning from the world but his purpose is different. Whereas Camus is attempting to reveal the world as absurd, Blanchot is rather trying to make us aware that, like Thomas who cannot see the fantastic nature of the universe he inhabits, we too cannot judge our own world since we are an inextricable part of it. As we shall see, Sartre agrees with Blanchot that in life as in art or science, total objectivity is both impossible and fundamentally inhuman. Unlike Blanchot however, Sartre does not envisage this impossibility as contributing to human alienation: meaning may be man-made, but the universe is still irrevocably meaningful for man; the potential for imposing human significance on the world is an essential part of human reality.

In 1943 also Georges Bataille is criticized on the grounds that he too 'veut surprendre l'humain sans les hommes'.[87] Sartre relates Bataille's world-view to the outmoded sociology of Durkheim. The objections he formulates anticipate incidentally his later protest against Structuralism and in particular Structuralist anthropology:

> Voilà ce qui séduit M. Bataille dans la Sociologie. Ah! s'il pouvait traiter comme des choses les faits sociaux et les hommes et lui-même, si son inexpiable individualité pouvait lui apparaître comme une certaine qualité donnée, alors il se serait débarrassé de lui-même. Malheureusement pour notre auteur, la Sociologie de Durkheim est morte: les faits sociaux ne sont pas des choses, ils ont des significations et, comme tels, il renvoient à l'être par qui les significations viennent au monde, à l'homme, qui ne saurait à la fois être savant et objet de science.[88]

Francis Ponge too is seen as attempting to divest the world of a properly human significance. In a sense, of course, much of his poetry *is* phenomenological, for rather than attempting to describe objects 'objectively' from outside, he tries to enter their world: 'Il s'agit moins d'observer le galet que de s'installer en son cœur et de voir le monde avec ses yeux, comme fait le romancier qui, pour peindre ses héros, se coule dans la conscience de ceux-ci et décrit choses et gens tels qu'ils leur apparaissent.'[89] But Ponge is not a thorough-going phenomenologist where the human world is concerned: 'N'est-il pas venu aux choses avec des idées préconçues?'[90] Sartre asks. By this he means that the human is deliberately and automatically excluded from the world of Ponge's poems even when essentially human actions are being evoked. An oyster being opened is described in such a way as to appear devoid of all purpose: fingers are seen but are not related to their human project; people too are portrayed in a pseudo-objective style as if they were animals or inanimate objects: 'Voici un univers peuplé d'hommes et pourtant sans les hommes'. Ponge's dehumanization of reality can, Sartre concedes, create an impression of poetic mystery when applied to the inhuman world of water or stones, but it is merely a misleading and inappropriate literary trick when extended

to an 'ustensile fort humain' such as a cigarette, or to people themselves. A true phenomenologist is without *parti-pris*: he recognizes meaning where meaning exists. But Sartre's final assessment of Ponge is positive, for he judges him by the best of his productions, not only by those in which a false 'petrification' of the human has occurred: 'Ponge poète—si l'on néglige les intrusions fâcheuses de la science—a jeté les bases d'une Phénoménologie de la Nature.'[91]

Although it is in the essays of *Situations I* that Sartre lays most stress on the Heideggerian notion that objects appear to us firstly as *ustensiles* and therefore as significant, the notion will retain its importance amongst his critical criteria, and will prove vital for example in his analyses of the nature of beauty and poetry in *Saint Genet*. Later still, in 1960, Sartre makes use of the notion in order to explain his objections to the aesthetic ideal of the new-novelist Alain Robbe-Grillet. He criticizes Robbe-Grillet's attempt to 'déconditionner notre vision romanesque en faisant table rase des significations pré-établies'.[92] The attempt is, Sartre considers, futile; for the world of the novel is essentially human and therefore intrinsically meaningful: 'L'objet total qui figure dans un roman, c'est un objet *humain* et qui n'est rien sans ses significations humaines . . . Otez l'homme, les choses ne sont plus ni loin ni près, elles ne sont plus.'[93] Sartre is not of course making a profession of radical philosophical idealism, he means simply that it is man who sees the world as made up of individuated objects which are by the same token totalities. As he said nearly twenty years earlier in his essay on Ponge, it is man 'qui affirme *contre la science* l'unité de cette pierre qui s'offre comme telle à sa perception'.[94] It is impossible for a human being to imagine, in any real sense, the universe without man. Robbe-Grillet's attempt is then both humanly irrelevant and necessarily doomed to failure

Sartre's claim that, for man, the world is human, imbued with significance, has brought us finally to a more complex aspect of his critical criteria: that of the interrelationship between man and the world, and in particular the situation of the artist in the world. It is necessary therefore to look briefly at the philosophical background to Sartre's conception of this interrelationship.

Sartre starts from the premise that man is *in* the world, not an outside observer, and that his view of the world is conditioned by his situation within it. Absolute objectivity is then humanly impossible, for the world is more than just the place in which man has his existence, it is rather *constitutive of* his existence. His comprehension of the world cannot be separated from his sense of being part of the world (in Heidegger's terms '*Befindlichkeit*'). The notion of being-in-the-world does not of course originate in Sartre: it appears already for example in Kierkegaard. It is not through Kierkegaard however that Sartre first becomes familiar with the notion but through Husserl and Heidegger. For Husserl, the relationship between consciousness and the world is the fundamental structure underlying all human experience. Moreover this relationship necessarily involves the notion of inter-subjectivity: experience of 'self' implies experience of the world, the

'objectivity' of which is guaranteed by other selves. Sartre sums up the Husserlian position in *L'Être et le Néant*:

Pour Husserl, le monde tel qu'il se révèle à la conscience est intermonadique. Autrui n'y est pas seulement présent comme telle apparition concrète et empirique mais comme une condition permanente de son unité et de sa richesse . . . Et comme notre moi psycho-physique est contemporain du monde, fait partie du monde et tombe avec le monde sous le coup de la réduction phénoménologique, autrui apparaît comme nécessaire à la constitution même de ce moi.[95]

But despite his admiration for Husserl, Sartre criticizes him on the grounds that he has conserved Kant's transcendental subject, and that the implications of his philosophy remain ultimately solipsistic: 'Ainsi, pour avoir réduit l'être à une série de significations, la seule liaison que Husserl a pu établir entre mon être et celui d'autrui est celle de la *connaissance*.'[96] In Sartre's eyes true relationships exist between human beings, not between 'connaissances'.

Heidegger too has attempted to overcome the isolation of the Cartesian *cogito*. He describes man's being-in-the-world as necessarily implying his being-with-others (*'Mitsein'*). Sartre describes Heidegger as having made considerable advance over Husserl in that he attempts to portray our relations with others as 'une relation d'être à être, non de connaissance à connaissance',[97] but he expresses reservations on two accounts. Firstly he sees philosophical problems arising from the ontological status given to *Mitsein* by Heidegger. And secondly he sees it as an idealized description of the reality of human relations. For although Sartre objects to Hegel's formulation of human relations as those of master/slave, on the grounds that this implies that we are permanently cut off from the subjectivity of the other, and therefore unable to identify with him in any meaningful way, he nonetheless appears to find such a picture truer to the psychological reality of human relations as he sees them in the early 1940s than *Mitsein*. Indeed he states: 'l'essence des rapports entre consciences n'est pas le Mitsein, c'est le conflit'.[98]

It is against this philosophical background that we can best understand the implications of Sartre's conception of the *situation* of man, and more particularly of the artist as it appears in his literary criticism. At the simplest level for example Sartre maintains that the technique of the omniscient narrator as practised by Maupassant or Mauriac implies an impossible abstraction of self from the world. Blanchot on the other hand is praised not only for avoiding what Sartre calls 'la conscience de survol', but for attempting to make his readers recognize their inescapable involvement in and interrelationship with the world. Similarly Bataille is accused of obscuring the reality of intersubjective relations: his art does not live up to the promise implied in the Heideggerian resonances of his language: his stress on communication, Sartre suggests, leads us to expect a description of man's relations with others as a form of *Mitsein*.[99] But Bataille attempts rather to portray man from outside, reducing him to an object rather than revealing him as a subject

relating to other subjects.

In *Situations II*, where the artist's role is extensively discussed, the notion of man-in-the-world plays surprisingly little part, apart from the footnotes devoted to the problems of narrative objectivity and realism. It appears in the main body of the text only in its most rudimentary form: that of our historicity and its effect on the artist's portrayal of the world. Indeed Sartre is not primarily concerned with founding the ideas of *Qu'est-ce que la littérature*? in theoretical philosophy, though philosophical notions in fact underlie certain of the apparently more straightforward theses, as we shall see shortly when we discuss Sartre's idea of artistic *dévoilement*.

Man-in-the-world as a philosophical notion recurs however in many of Sartre's later critical essays, especially in *Situations IV*. His favourite formulations of the notion seem to come from Merleau-Ponty who emphasizes its dialectical potential: 'le corps est pris dans le tissu du monde mais le monde est fait de l'étoffe de mon corps'.[100] Merleau-Ponty's term for this aspect of the human condition is *l'enveloppement*, which would appear to be attempt to render 'l'être-dans-le-monde' more succinctly. Sartre's use of the notion as a critical reference point is most frequent in his essays on painting, for he sees painting as the medium which can best witness to the interrelationship of man and the world: 'Si la peinture est possible, inversement, les nervures de l'être que le peintre aperçoit dans la chose et fixe sur la toile, il faut qu'elles désignent au fond de lui-même, les "flexions" de son être.'[101] We have already examined Sartre's ideas on the ways in which the different arts communicate, and it is these which help explain why the painter should be envisaged as 'l'artisan privilégié, le meilleur témoin de cette réciprocité médiée.'[102] In Sartre's view, all the arts necessarily express the mind of their creator. But the degree of their relationship to the external world varies. Music, for example, does not refer to the external world; and literature expresses it only indirectly, through signs which are 'unmotivated'[103] (and, we might add, consecutive) and therefore less immediate. Painting, on the other hand, gives us images with which we establish a direct, non-discursive contact: direct, because, unlike words, images are not arbitrary; non-discursive because our mind seizes their interrelationship as an instantaneous impression. Sartre does not refer at this stage to these distinctions which he established earlier in *L'Imaginaire* and in *Situations II*, but they evidently underly his discussion.

Sartre praises in particular the painters Masson, Wols and Lapoujade for their sensitivity to the true nature of our relationship with the world, and for their attempts to render this in their paintings. In their different ways all these artists portray a very human world: 'Masson sait que l'expérimentateur fait partie intégrante du système expérimental . . . Cet artiste veut mettre le peintre dans la peinture, et nous faire voir le monde avec l'homme dedans.'[104] Masson indeed gives us a spectacularly *human* world: the drawings which Sartre is discussing here are frankly anthropomorphic. But there is no need to resort to anthropomorphism

to portray the human: many of the paintings of Lapoujade are technically abstract, but Sartre sees him as dealing with fundamentally the same question: 'Comment peindre la foule vue par elle-même'.[105] In discussing the water-colours of Wols, Sartre's writing becomes more obscure and paradoxical but his theme is still the same:

Le peintre et son modèle appartiennent à la totalité qui règle leurs rapports véritables, et d'autre part s'incarne toute en chacun d'eux. L'objet se dévoile dans son rapport fonctionnel avec le monde et, du même coup, dévoile l'artiste dans sa relation physiologique avec l'indivisible ensemble. Le Voyant est chose vue, la Voyance s'enracine dans la visibilité . . . Wols . . . a compris que l'expérimentateur fait nécessairement partie de l'expérience et le peintre du tableau.[106]

In a sense of course Sartre is simply saying that by exaggerating subjectivity, these painters make us realize that every lived 'world' is also subjective. But he is saying something more: the portrayal of a subjective world necessarily implicates its creator. A portrait of the world is also a self-portrait; a judgement of others, a self-judgement. We saw in our discussion of committed art that Sartre envisages the writer as a liberator, and noted that by extension the notion applied, in one sense at least, to other artists also. But he is not a liberator after the manner of Sartre's own Orestes who remains essentially uninvolved. Already in 1945 Sartre criticizes the idea of a distance between the artist and society in his essay on Jules Renard:

Cette idée d'*artiste* n'est pas seulement la survivance dégradée d'un grand mythe religieux—celui du poète, *vates*—; elle est surtout le prisme à travers lequel une petite société de bourgeois aisés et cultivés—qui écrivent—se saisissent et se reconnaissent comme l'élite de la III^e^ République.[107]

Since then he has returned frequently to the notion, referring for example to Lapoujade as 'le peintre sans privilèges'. In this essay in 1961 Sartre relates his dislike of artistic élitism to Marx's ideal of a society in which there would be no 'peintres', 'tout juste des hommes et qui peindront'.[108] In 1960 Sartre explained this notion in more detail:

Peut-être, un jour, l'écriture naîtra n'importe où, chez n'importe qui, et puis disparaîtra pour renaître chez le voisin. Il n'y aura plus d'écrivains: tout juste des hommes qui—entre autres choses—écriront. Ce sera plus vrai . . . Nous nous présentons comme des élus. Mais c'est un mensonge . . . En réalité, on lit parce qu'on veut écrire. Lire, c'est un peu en tout cas, récrire.[109]

The artist is a man among men, not a member of an omniscient élite. This idea of course in no way conflicts with Sartre's belief that literature or indeed painting, has to be all or nothing. Indeed it is in the same interview that he declares: 'Si la littérature n'est pas *tout*, elle ne vaut pas une heure de peine. C'est cela que je veux dire par "engagement".'[110] And ten years later he relates the commitment of Rebeyrolle in similar terms: 'Pour lui, cette fois, la peinture a été *tout*, lui-même et le monde'.[111] It is because art is so vital, so essential to human liberty, that it

is too important to be the property of a small group of privileged men. It is moreover a constant, not merely a historical need: if imagination is, as Sartre claims, 'la conscience tout entière en tant qu'elle réalise sa liberté',[112] and art the attempt to objectify or realize concretely the products of that imagination, then art is a basic form of the permanent human attempt to become *en-soi-pour-soi*. We shall return to this question again in our account of Sartre's analysis of Baudelaire.

The artist then is inevitably *in* the world, and his portrait of the world must be true to both the contingency of existence and also to the facts of man's relations with the world. Indeed Sartre defines his notion of the aim of art in these terms: 'Récupérer ce monde-ci en le donnant à voir tel qu'il est, mais comme s'il avait sa source dans la liberté humaine.'[113] 'Tel qu'il est': in other words in all its flux and contingency. But how can the world be revealed 'tel qu'il est' if it is modified to appear *as if* its origin were in human freedom? Sartre's conception of art as *dévoilement* raises various philosophical problems which need now to be discussed in their turn.

As I have already indicated, Sartre is uncomfortably aware of the gap between the work of art as an imaginary structure and the world. The implications of this distinction necessarily conflict with his desire to commit literature and ultimately the other arts also. He is therefore anxious to close the gap, and has to hand a number of systems of thought which might make this possible, for all entail the notion of the world as a place through which a certain truth is revealed.

Romantic and neo-Romantic sources evidently play a large part in Sartre's conception of art as *dévoilement*, in particular through the notion of art as partial revelation. Hegel, for example, declares that 'art has the vocation of revealing the *truth* in the form of sensuous artistic shape'.[114] Hegel envisages art as only an early step in a progression passing through Religion to Philosophy, a chain in which Reason is at first implicit and gradually becomes more explicit and conscious. Indeed only a certain circle and grade of truth is capable of being represented in the medium of art.[115] Nevertheless, Hegel's attitude to art is positive: knowledge can be partial although Truth cannot, and Hegel considers partial revelation as a step towards the historical realisation of the Absolute Idea. By the very nature of the dialectical process even error is accepted provided it results from the conditions of the historical moment.

Heidegger too is concerned with revelation; he defines truth as *aletheia* (Greek: disclosure, *dévoilement*), and sees art as one means through which the world is revealed. His earliest extended discussion of art appears in *Holzwege*, first published in 1950, but which includes lectures given in 1935/6. Sartre could not, of course, have read *Holzwege* in 1946, but he was familiar with Heidegger's earlier works in which the notion of *aletheia* is central: for example, *Sein und Zeit* (1927). As I have indicated, Heidegger believes that in our practical, everyday activities objects are seen merely as means to certain ends: we see through them, rather than see them in themselves. In art, on the other hand, the practical attitude is suspended

in favour of an attitude of contemplation, through which the world itself may be revealed. There is however another side to the picture. Art may indeed reveal the world, but, according to Heidegger, it also helps to conceal it, for art participates in *aletheia* and *aletheia* itself is never pure revelation: it also involves error, failure to reveal, and hence concealment. In Heidegger, the ambiguous nature of art depends also upon his almost mystical distinction between 'world' and 'earth'. Thus we find statements such as the following:

Earth is that which comes forth and shelters . . . Upon the earth and in it, historical man grounds his dwelling in the world . . . The work lets the earth be an earth . . . The earth is essentially self-secluding. To set forth the earth means to bring it into the Open as self-secluding.[116]

This distinction must be mentioned in any account, however brief, of Heidegger's ideas on the nature of art. Translated into less poetic terms, 'earth' is more or less equivalent to Being-in-itself, whilst 'world' is Being as it appears to us. Heidegger expresses the same idea somewhat less prosaically elsewhere:

Truth is untruth, in so far as there belongs to it the reservoir of the not-yet-unconcealed, the un-uncovered in the sense of concealment.[117]

In other words, knowledge, in its very validity, is a form of untruth, for it conceals the ignorance which it cannot fully abolish. Heidegger then, is troubled by the incomplete nature of human knowledge. For Hegel, error could serve as partial Truth. For Heidegger, all truth is also error. An epistemological optimist and a pessimist are interpreting the self-same notion.

Here, as so often, Sartre appears to be taking over from Hegel and Heidegger a terminology and a structure of thinking which he then reinterprets within his own philosophical framework. The main differences lie in the various reasons the three philosophers give for the partial nature of the revelatory power of art. For Hegel it is partial because temporal; for Heidegger it is partial because the known must necessarily imply an unknown; and for Sartre it is partial because filtered through an individual consciousness. As we shall see, Sartre will later accept the full implications of his own philosophy as they affect the status of philosophy itself, and recognize that it too is situated and therefore partial.[118] But he recognizes from the outset the partial nature of the 'truth' revealed by art.

We come here to a further aspect of Sartre's conception of art as *dévoilement*. We have already seen that, for Sartre, 'la perception même est partiale',[119] and that this notion assists him in his later commitment of the non-significant arts such as painting.[120] The notion is, of course, central to *L'Être et le Néant*, but the emphasis placed on it in *Situations II* is rather different: 'L'écrivain "engagé" sait que la parole est action: il sait que dévoiler c'est changer et qu'on ne peut dévoiler qu'en projetant de changer.'[121] Here Sartre is very close to the philosophy of revolution which he outlines in *Matérialisme et Révolution*: 'L'action sur l'univers

ne fait qu'un avec la compréhension de cet univers tel qu'il est, autrement dit . . . l'action est dévoilement de la réalité *en même temps* que modification de cette réalité.'[122] A form of this notion too is to be found in Heidegger, but Sartre indicates in a footnote that he is thinking rather of Marx's practical materialism, and although he disagrees with the terminology ('materialism' has implications which he whole-heartedly rejects at this stage), he nevertheless agrees with the theory itself.

The notion of art as partial revelation is derived by Sartre primarily from Hegel and Heidegger; the notion of action as revelation and revelation as action is derived from Marx: both sets of ideas, the epistemological and the practical, are taken up and amalgamated by Sartre in his interpretation of art as *dévoilement.*

But if Sartre claims that the aim of art is to reveal the world he is nonetheless aware that such a revelation is neither simple nor straightforward. His position is in fact ambiguous, as he attempts to steer an uneasy course between his own existentialism and the special kind of phenomenology exemplified by philosophers such as Merleau-Ponty. And Merleau-Ponty himself is already attempting a difficult synthesis in which mind and world must be given equal status:

> For . . . Merleau-Ponty . . . the self is truly 'in the world'. The latter is already a reservoir of potential values and meanings: it is therefore already structured, although its structures are potentialities and await the sense-giving intention to be actualized . . . Self and the world entertain a relation of complementarity and meanings emerge within this relation as between a sense-giving and a sense-revealing term.[123]

Sartre, on the other hand, has established an inescapable dichotomy between the *en-soi* and the *pour-soi*, and in fact

> places a sense-originating self *over-against* a world which is devoid of meaning and incapable of any effective contribution to the emergence of meaning. The world . . . [is] *a wholly indeterminate and passive ground for the projects of self's* unconditioned freedom and for its choice of values *ex-nihilo*.[124]

Sartre then is bound to be uneasy with any claim to reveal the world 'as it is' since it is man who constitutes the world as a world. The world 'tel qu'il est' is in fact fundamentally unknowable: only the human world can be known: 'Pour connaître l'être tel qu'il est, il faudrait être cet être, mais il n'y a de "tel qu'il est" que parce que je ne suis pas l'être que je connais et si je le devenais le "tel qu'il est" s'évanouirait et ne pourrait même plus être pensé.'[125]

We come now to the second half of Sartre's definition of the aim of art: to reveal the world 'tel qu'il est, *mais comme s'il avait sa source dans la liberté humaine*'. On a simple level, Sartre is at this point expressing within his own philosophical terms the familiar Romantic notion that aesthetic experience transcends life. And for Sartre, of course, art transcends life because it reveals freedom, purpose and project. But the definition poses serious philosophical

problems. It can be argued that since Sartre has identified imagination with the freedom of the human mind, and described it as essential to our appreciation of the world as a totality, then any view of the world as a 'world' must necessarily witness to human freedom. So if 'le monde tel qu'il est' is simply the human world, it is logically identical with 'le monde . . . comme s'il avait sa source dans la liberté humaine', and Sartre's definition is a tautology. But Sartre's *mais* invites us to interpret the formula differently. It reveals moreover a deep-seated reservation, for it is attempting to imply more than he can in fact argue, and to credit art with an ability to reveal a world arguably inaccessible even to philosophy.

If we turn to another French existentialist aesthetician, Mikel Dufrenne, who gives a more extended analysis of this question, the issues become clearer. Dufrenne is attempting to define the status of the 'truth' of an aesthetic object. He claims, like Sartre, that a 'world' can appear only when 'le réel' is viewed through a free consciousness: 'Il n'y a de mondes que plusieurs parce qu'il n'y a de monde, même objectif, qu'assumé et défini par une conscience qui est d'abord une conscience singulière . . . L'unité du réel comme monde objectif ne peut être pressentie ou affirmée qu'à partir de l'expérience des mondes singuliers.'[126] Or again:

Ainsi un monde objectif ne peut-il être absolument pensé pour lui-même, sinon comme une limite et comme une tâche infinie, et ne peut-il s'opposer, pour les disqualifier sous prétexte qu'ils sont plusieurs, aux mondes subjectifs: dans la mesure où il est pensé comme monde, il s'enracine en eux. C'est pourquoi en retour, les mondes subjectifs ne peuvent être considérés comme des pièces détachées d'un monde objectif qui les contiendrait tous et les engloberait.[127]

At first sight it would appear that Dufrenne is saying no more than can be deduced from Sartre's own account of imagination as totalization. However a closer examination of Dufrenne's text reveals that he distinguishes three factors: 'le réel', 'le monde objectif', and 'le monde subjectif'; whereas Sartre has, explicitly at least, only one: 'le monde'. This is more than just ellipsis. An evident sleight of hand is involved. Sartre is fully aware of the complexity of the question but wishes to identify 'le réel', 'le monde objectif' and 'le monde subjectif' for the purposes of polemics. This intention is clearly revealed a few pages later in *Situations II*, when Sartre attempts once again to bring together the real and the imaginary, 'l'être' and 'le devoir-être':

Dans la joie esthétique, la conscience positionnelle est conscience *imageante* du monde dans sa totalité comme être et devoir-être à la fois, à la fois comme totalement nôtre et totalement étranger . . . Ecrire, c'est donc à la fois dévoiler le monde et le proposer comme une tâche à la générosité du lecteur.[128]

Sartre then wants to tighten the link between art and the world. To this end he takes over the notion of *dévoilement* and its various implications which we have examined and uses the term to blur the difference between his own and other more positive interpretations of the possible role of art as revelation. The

ambiguities of his formula suggest that he is caught between the implications of his own philosophical system on the one hand, and on the other his desire to commit all literature and ultimately all art.

CHAPTER 3

SARTRE AND BAUDELAIRE

Sartre's intention in his preface to the *Ecrits intimes* was to give a picture of Baudelaire as a totality, a unique and unified whole, consistent even within apparent inconsistency, because motivated by an original choice rather than determined by chance events over which he had no control. Sartre wished therefore to make use of the biographical data, not in the disparate and haphazard way of previous critics, but rather in order to draw from it clues to Baudelaire's basic option, and verification of that option once it was discovered. In this sense his analysis already follows the broad lines of the *méthode progressive-régressive* which was later to be outlined in *Question de méthode.* In 1946 the work created a double scandal: in the first place it was seen as concentrating on the moral quality of Baudelaire's life rather than on his poetry; and secondly its psycho-analytic method was not that of Freudian analysis, still resented by many critics (as is witnessed by the wary reception of René Laforgue's *L'Echec de Baudelaire* in 1931) but at least relatively familiar: Sartre's existential approach had not been seen in practice before in a full-scale account of a major writer, and its very novelty proved unacceptable and disorientating. We shall be examining Sartre's relations with Freudianism in detail in a later chapter, but must point out here that whilst Sartre agrees with Freud that all human behaviour is 'significant', he totally rejects the suggestion that its source is the unconscious, and rather propounds a demanding theory of total responsibility which, at least as he conceived it in the 1940s, allows no possibility of special pleading.

Sartre describes Baudelaire as living in a permanent state of *mauvaise foi*, hiding from himself the absurdity of life which he glimpsed but was afraid to recognize. He desired above all a security and justification possible only in an ordered and theocratic universe, and his life was a constant attempt to give himself fixity through the eyes of the Other: God, other people, or even himself. Sartre sees this attempt in terms of the analysis of human relations contained in *L'Être et le Néant*. The degree of divergence from the Freudian analyses of Laforgue and later Blin (*Le Sadisme de Baudelaire*, 1948) can be seen for example in Sartre's attempt to reinterpret Baudelaire's sado-masochism in terms not of unconscious motives, but of the 'metaphysical' desire to become an object ratified by *l'Autre*. But Baudelaire also wants to feel free; he rebels against the established order whilst at the same

time depending on it as a secure framework which he does not really wish to overthrow. Baudelaire's horror of nature, his cult of sterility, his dandyism and his poetry itself are seen to depend ultimately on his refusal to accept the possibility of creating his own values. Baudelaire sets evil and artifice up against God and nature, though the former depend on the latter for their very existence. He wants to scandalize, but to be at the same time in control of the impression he creates on other people. These are for Sartre all elements of Baudelaire's particular way of living out the fundamental human project: the 'passion inutile', the desire to be and to exist at the same time, to have an essence whilst still remaining free. Finally Sartre relates the recurrent symbols of Baudelaire's poetry to his project: they express the poet's aspiration towards what he calls the 'spirituel': a fusion of being and existence best symbolized by evanescent sensations such as certain perfumes or impressions of twilight which are, so to speak, matter in its least solid form, and therefore stand as metaphors of an impossible synthesis.

Baudelaire's Satanism is then, for Sartre, simply a way of reaffirming a wavering belief in a theocratic universe: he sees Baudelaire as inauthentic in a broadly religious sense: as alienating his own freedom to absolute ideas of Good and Evil. Sartre's contention is that Baudelaire's project is a form of parasitism. His rebellion against the theocratic world-order represented concretely by his family, Ancelle, and bourgeois society in general, is half-hearted. At one stage Sartre seems on the point of allowing Baudelaire some vestige of dignity: he is described as identifying with Satan who, though defeated by God, is nevertheless superior to him by reason of 'cette flamme d'insatisfaction triste qui, dans le moment même où il consent à cet écrasement, brille comme un reproche inexpiable. A ce jeu de "qui perd gagne" c'est le vaincu qui, *en tant que vaincu*, remporte la victoire.'[1] But this is instantly withdrawn for Satan and Baudelaire are compared to 'des enfants désobéissants et boudeurs',[2] and any suggestion of a truly Promethean revolt is nullified. Baudelaire's poetic works which exploit the themes of 'frigidité, impuissance, stérilité, absence de générosité, refus de servir, péché,[3] are described by Sartre as symbols of suicide: inauthentic suicide because Baudelaire is not truly aspiring towards 'le néant absolu';[4] he desires the death of his natural self simply in order that he should be free to survive in a more essential way. 'Pour jouir des résultats de son suicide, il faut de toute évidence qu'il y survive'.[5]

The half-heartedness of Baudelaire's revolt and 'suicide' means of course that he cannot profit from the inverted success which attends the 'qui perd gagne' schema referred to briefly in the previous chapter. In the *Baudelaire* itself, Sartre is concerned primarily with Baudelaire's *échec* in the moral sphere. If we turn to *Situations II*, a couple of years later, we find 'moral' failure connected with the idea of poetry as failure of communication, and through this a change of emphasis is already apparent. In a footnote of 'Qu'est-ce qu'écrire?' Sartre is talking of 'la poésie contemporaine', not strictly in the sense of twentieth-century poetry but in the sense of a modern ideal deriving from Symbolism: and Baudelaire is

included by implication and allusion when Sartre writes of 'le poète authentique': 'Ce guignon . . . cette malédiction dont il se réclame toujours et qu'il attribue toujours à une intervention de l'extérieur, alors que c'est son choix le plus profond, non pas la conséquence mais la source de sa poésie.'[6] The kind of poetry which fails to communicate meanings only to succeed in communicating in a non-conceptual manner is here seen to originate in the kind of moral failure which became part of the Romantic/Symbolist myth of the artist, and at the same time it is implied that the failure/success of poetry converts the moral failure of the 'poète maudit' into a 'higher' kind of success. Briefly Sartre's argument is that failure frees us from our alienation to utilitarian ends and therefore restores our dignity as human beings: 'L'échec seul, en arrêtant comme un écran la série infinie de ses projets, rend [l'homme] à lui-même, dans sa pureté.'[7] Within a bourgeois utilitarian society, Sartre suggests, the poet is still attempting to assert human values, to 'créer le mythe de l'homme',[8] but he can only do so by passing from 'la magie blanche' (the kind of art which, like the statue of Jupiter in *Les Mouches*, attempts to impose belief in a theocratic world) to 'la magie noire' or the art of the nihilist: of Flaubert and Mallarmé for example and, as we shall see, to a limited extent of Baudelaire himself.

But the rehabilitation of Baudelaire is in *Situations II* only implicit, and the relation between moral and poetic success/failure only briefly indicated. We have to wait until *L'Idiot de la famille* to see more clearly how the two aspects are interdependent. It is part of the thesis of the *Idiot* (and indeed of the *Genet*) that rejection of bourgeois society implies abnormal relations with the language of that society. In this context Baudelaire's half-hearted revolt in the moral sphere implies a similarly incomplete attempt to subvert the normal usage of language, to replace the use of language for communication by the poetic use of language as the 'suggestion de l'incommunicable':[9] in other words to inaugurate the poetic ideal of Symbolism. In the terms of *Situations II* then, Baudelaire's poetics too are an instance of 'qui perd gagne', but Baudelaire is afraid (and indeed this is the thesis of the *Baudelaire* itself) to break completely with the world of meaning. He is a rhetorician who might have been a terrorist if he had followed through his own intuitions and practised what he preached; but lacking the courage to 'perdre jusqu'à mourir'[10] he does not profit fully from the success attendant upon failure.

In fact in the *Idiot* Sartre never quite manages to make up his mind about the degree of Baudelaire's success through failure. At one point he suggests that a fundamental inconsistency underlies even Baudelaire's best poetry:

> Profondément individualiste, Baudelaire trouve *sa* solution dans le bouleversement de la poésie. Il n'a pas, cependant, la claire conscience de ce qu'il fait; c'est ce qui explique qu'on trouve chez un des plus grands poètes du siècle et, pratiquement, dans tous ses poèmes, tant de mauvais vers que Delille eût pu écrire: il oscille sans cesse entre la signification et le sens.[11]

Baudelaire is described as not recognizing fully the implications of his own poetic ideal as the creation of 'surcommunications silencieuses'.[12] Elsewhere in the *Idiot* however Sartre speaks of Flaubert and Baudelaire as the only two men in 1839 'à pressentir et à forger la littérature moderne',[13] and groups Baudelaire with Mallarmé and Flaubert in his discussion of the 'poète maudit'. Indeed in volume three he appears to reverse his opinion as to the degree of self-consciousness Baudelaire has of his own aims: no longer asserting that Baudelaire 'n'a pas . . . la claire conscience de ce qu'il fait', he implies rather a considerable lucidity when he states: 'Encore Baudelaire se console-t-il en pensant que le langage, véhicule de la communication, peut exister *par soi* dès qu'on le détermine comme porteur de l'incommunicable.'[14] Sartre interprets a stanza from 'Le Guignon':

> Mainte fleur épanche à regret
> Son parfum doux comme un secret
> Dans les solitudes profondes.

as expressing the idea that 'le vrai poème est par essence un incommunicable', and as thereby defining what he calls 'la poésie nouvelle'.[15]

Sartre then is uncertain whether to attribute what he sees as the 'prosaic' lines of Baudelaire's poetry to his insufficiently self-conscious aesthetic stance or to his inability to radicalize his own intuitions. It is nonetheless clear that although Sartre has never entirely overcome his ambivalent feelings about the poet, his originally stringent criticisms have given way to an acceptance of Baudelaire's art as a partially if not totally authentic instance of *l'art échec*, exemplified more fully by Flaubert, and which we shall be examining in more detail in a later chapter. Baudelaire too then has profited from the later modification and increased flexibility of Sartre's critical criteria. He is no longer criticized for his moral inauthenticity, but rather seen within the wider context of French literary and social history. Sartre is today less interested in bringing a moral judgement to bear on the quality of Baudelaire's life, than in describing as objectively as possible the poet's aesthetic activities and intuitions.

Moreover this interest is based in effect upon profound similarities between the aesthetics of the two writers which need to be made clear. The most common criticism of Sartre's study of Baudelaire is that it is reductivist: Sartre has been accused of neglecting Baudelaire's poetry and of interpreting Baudelaire himself in terms of a philosophy of life alien to the poet. In the first place of course, this view denies Sartre the right to define his own aim which is to reconstruct the project of Baudelaire starting for the most part from the evidence of the *Journaux intimes*. It has resulted moreover in attention being focussed on the differences between Sartre and Baudelaire at the expense of Sartre's empathetic understanding of 'le fait poétique baudelairien'. An examination of Sartre's view of Baudelaire within the wider context of *L'Être et le Néant* and of Sartre's theory of art reveals, despite their totally opposed philosophical assumptions, close affinities between the

aesthetics and even the 'metaphysics' of the two writers. Sartre's analysis remains closer to Baudelaire's own terms of reference than is usually the case with criticism that aims at a general reinterpretation of a writer in terms of the critic's own philosophy.

Sartre emphasizes, as the most typical aspect of Baudelaire's poetic ideal, the creation of fugitive poetic states which give the illusion of combining the material and the immaterial. Poets like Baudelaire create, Sartre says,

Par des signes de certaines natures ambiguës, chatoiement d'existence et d'être qui les satisfont doublement: à la fois parce qu'elles sont des essences objectives et qu'ils peuvent les contempler et parce qu'elles procèdent d'eux et qu'ils peuvent s'y retrouver. L'objet que Baudelaire a créé par une émanation perpétuelle dans ses poèmes et, tout aussi bien, par les actes de sa vie, c'est ce qu'il a nommé, et que nous nommerons après lui, le *spirituel* . . . il se caractérise par une manière d'absence, il n'est jamais tout à fait là, ni tout à fait visible, il reste en suspens entre le néant et l'être.[16]

As I have already indicated, Sartre sees symbols of this fusion in the typically Baudelairean themes of perfumes, twilight, lamplight etc.: 'Nous nommerons donc *spirituel*, avec lui, l'être qui se laisse saisir par les sens et qui ressemble le plus à la conscience.'[17] He also interprets in this light Baudelaire's ideal of the suggestiveness of beauty: 'La beauté . . . est suggestion, c'est-à-dire qu'elle est ce type étrange et forgé de réalité, où l'être et l'existence se confondent, où l'existence est objectivée et solidifiée par l'être, où l'être est allégé par l'existence.'[18]

Despite the aggressively critical approach of the *Baudelaire* there is an underlying correspondence between Baudelaire's poetic ideal and Sartre's own way of feeling about the relationship of mind and nature. Sartre is fascinated, as Wardman[19] has pointed out, by Baudelaire's notion of art as 'le spirituel', in the sense that it creates a coalescence of mind and world, or subject and object to use Baudelaire's own terms: 'Qu'est-ce que l'art pur suivant la conception moderne? C'est créer une magie suggestive contenant à la fois l'objet et le sujet, le monde extérieur à l'artiste et l'artiste lui-même.'[20] For example painting creates this fusion for Baudelaire in so far as it is 'la symbolique innée d'idées innées, et au même instant':[21] that is in so far as it externalizes, through the representation of nature, aspects of the artist's consciousness which cannot be expressed as intellectual statement. Sartre too describes the artist as fusing self and world: 'Par la figuration de l'être du dehors, [le peintre] présente aux autres l'être du dedans, *sa* chair, la leur'.[22] But the ideal of coalescence is for Sartre an illusion: there can be no moment of real fusion and the truth of the situation is that the work of art, as soon as it is created, becomes detached from me, turned, like my past actions, into an indifferent *en-soi*: 'L'œuvre d'art [a] . . . un rapport d'émanation figée à l'esprit. L'esprit la produit continuellement et cependant elle se tient tout seule et comme dans l'indifférence par rapport à cette production.'[23] In the terms of *L'Être et le Néant* creation and possession are interrelated ways in which we try to realize the impossible human

desire to become *en-soi-pour-soi*:

En tant, en effet, que la possession est création continuée, je saisis l'objet possédé comme fondé par moi dans son être; mais en tant, d'une part que la création est émanation, cet objet se résorbe en moi, il n'est que moi, et en tant, d'autre part, qu'il est originellement en-soi, il est non-moi, il est moi en face de moi, objectif, en soi, permanent, impénétrable, existant par rapport à moi dans le rapport d'extériorité, d'indifférence. Ainsi, je suis fondement de moi en tant que j'existe comme indifférent et en-soi par rapport à moi. Or, c'est précisément le projet même de l'en-soi-pour-soi.[24]

The idea of art as a mediating emanation arises then out of the desire to escape the tragic dichotomy of matter irreducible to mind. In Baudelaire's diaries, when the poet is writing for himself and has largely abandoned the myth of the mystical poet, Sartre would have found cryptic expressions of a radical scepticism similar to his own. Art is seen by the dandy as 'prostitution', in the sense of giving the illusion of a relationship with something outside oneself, but in reality entailing a 'déperdition'[25] of self, an alienation of oneself to an external object, a 'vaporisation . . . du *Moi*',[26] rejected, momentarily at least, in the name of an alternative ideal which is that of 'centralisation', or self-possession through self-knowledge. For Sartre too art involves, in a sense, an inevitable degradation of man's relations with himself and the external world: 'Ainsi, à travers une dégradation continue, le lien de création est maintenue entre le sujet et l'objet.'[27]

The affinities with Baudelaire are then first of all in terms of a frustrated idealism of the sensibility: they are also in terms of particular insights and judgements about art. In this sense the parallels are clearest between Sartre and the Baudelaire of the *Journaux intimes*, the *Salon de 1859*, and the critical essays of the early 1860s, when Baudelaire came closest to a definitive understanding of his own ideal of art. Both writers start from a sense of the antagonism of consciousness and world, and both see the imagination as that which frees us from the *en-soi* of nature and enables us to recreate the world as a humanized totality:

Mystérieuse faculté que cette reine des facultés! Elle touche à toutes les autres; elle les excite, elle les envoie au combat . . . Elle est l'analyse, elle est la synthèse . . . Elle décompose toute la création et, avec les matériaux amassés et disposés suivant des régles dont on ne peut trouver l'origine que dans le plus profond de l'âme, elle crée un monde nouveau, elle produit la sensation du neuf. Comme elle a créé le monde . . . il est juste qu'elle le gouverne.[28]

Imagination, for Baudelaire as for Sartre, plays a major role in the constitution of the aesthetic object. In his essay on Wagner, for example, Baudelaire writes: 'Dans la musique, comme dans la peinture et même dans la parole écrite, qui est cependant le plus positif des arts, il y a toujours une lacune complétée par l'imagination de l'auditeur.'[29] It is in fact this conception of the aesthetic object as 'imaginary' which determines not only the unease both critics feel with respect to so-called 'natural beauty', but also a hierarchy of preferences within art itself.

For Baudelaire, music and painting come at the top of the hierarchy in so far as both appeal directly to the imagination via the senses. In the case of painting Baudelaire talks of its 'prétentions immenses', and its 'nature paradoxale et abstractive'.[30] The preference accorded to painting over sculpture is, on the whole, Baudelaire believes, a feature of advanced civilization: it requires a more sophisticated imagination to constitute the colours and shapes on a few square feet of canvas into the image of a landscape or historical scene etc. Literature comes further down the hierarchy: it is more 'positif' in the sense that the spontaneity of our imagining is inhibited by the finite determinate meanings built into language grammatically structured. At the bottom of the hierarchy (even in 1859) is sculpture which remains for Baudelaire too close to the objects of nature, incapable for the most part of expressing moods or movement except in relatively simple though powerful forms, resistant to the imagination of the spectator because three-dimensional, denying the spectator the simple 'point de vue' from which the aesthetic object may be constituted in its entirety.

If we view Sartre's implicit hierarchy of the arts from the point of view of his ideal of commitment, then of course literature appears at the top of the list; but we have seen that from the point of view of pure art (that is when he is trying to determine the nature and properties of the aesthetic object proper) a different scale of values is apparent. It is the 'non-significant' arts (at least music and painting) which provide him, like Baudelaire, with the clearest illustrations of the nature of the aesthetic object as an imaginary reality. Literature occupies a problematical position precisely because of its ability to direct and control the reader's response through conceptual meaning. Sculpture comes clearly at the bottom of the list: Sartre dislikes the solidity and immobility of traditional sculpture. His admiration for Giacometti is the exception which proves the rule. In Giacometti's sculptures the 'matière' of the figures is reduced to a minimum, it is 'suggéré[e], esquissé[e], signifié[e], mais non donné[e]',[31] and moreover Giacometti succeeds in introducing into his work the *imaginary* distance of painting: 'A ses personnages de plâtre il confère une *distance absolue* comme le peintre aux habitants de sa toile ... Du coup, la voilà [i.e. la figure] qui saute dans l'irréel, puisque son rapport à vous ne dépend plus de votre rapport au bloc de plâtre: l'art est libéré.'[32]

In their aesthetic writings then both Sartre and Baudelaire are concerned with isolating that element in art which constitutes *pure* art. Neither has any patience with the 'fameuse doctrine le l'indissolubilité du Beau, du Vrai et du Bien'[33] in so far as this is equatable with the 'hérésie de l'enseignement'.[34] But on the other hand both instinctively reject the doctrine of art-for-art's-sake as untrue to the complexity and unity of human experience. Both are convinced that, even if a moral end is not directly intended by the artist, a moral effect is nonetheless inevitable: it is in this sense that Baudelaire claims that 'La poésie est essentiellement philosophique; mais comme elle est avant tout *fatale*, elle doit être involontairement philosophique',[35] and that 'tout poème, tout objet d'art *bien fait* suggère naturellement et forcément

une *morale*, c'est l'affaire du lecteur'.[36] Here the parallel with Sartre is of course particularly close. Intellectual, aesthetic and moral judgements must be kept distinct in terms of our intentions. They are nonetheless linked on a more fundamental level:

L'Intellect pur vise à la Vérité, le Goût nous montre la Beauté, et le Sens Moral nous enseigne le Devoir. Il est vrai que le sens du milieu a d'intimes connexions avec les deux extrêmes, et il n'est séparé du Sens Moral que par une si légère différence qu'Aristote n'a pas hésité à ranger parmi les vertus quelques-unes de ses délicates opérations.[37]

For all his intellectual fastidiousness, there is in Baudelaire a profound recognition of the fact that we cannot ever escape the reality of moral responsibility, which in turn implies the political social and historical realities of our situation. The ivory-tower conceptions of art-for-art's-sake result in art being cut off from its source in life and therefore from its very materials. Following Stendhal Baudelaire claims: 'Il y a autant de beautés qu'il y a de manières habituelles de chercher le bonheur'.[38] Something more than a simple parallel is being implied. Baudelaire states elsewhere: 'Congédier la passion et la raison, c'est tuer la littérature. Renier les efforts de la société précédente, chrétienne et philosophique, c'est se suicider . . . Il faut que la littérature aille retremper ses forces dans une atmosphère meilleure.'[39] Art is one form of human aspiration towards an 'atmosphère meilleure', and as such is linked at a fundamental level to other forms of aspiration which can broadly be termed moral. Moreover, Baudelaire argues, moral values are inevitably part of the aesthetic experience itself:

Le beau est fait d'un élément éternel, invariable, dont la quantité est excessivement difficile à déterminer, et d'un élément relatif circonstantiel, qui sera, si l'on veut, tour à tour ou tout ensemble, l'époque, la mode, la morale, la passion. Sans ce second élément, qui est comme l'enveloppe amusante, titillante, apéritive, du divin gâteau, le premier élément serait indigestible, inappréciable, non adapté et non approprié à la nature humaine.[40]

One must distinguish in art between two elements: one relative which makes the work of art this particular work and none other, created by a particular artist belonging to a particular society and epoch; the other universal, which it shares with every other work of art and which may be thought of either as an abstraction or as a real universal. Nevertheless the second can only be known through the first: both are given to us in a single experience. Baudelaire is on the whole inclined to talk in terms of individual *ideals* of beauty rather than of an abstract, ideal beauty, at least in the neo-Classical sense.[41] And our individual ideal of beauty is part of a *goût* which is a matter of our individual sensibility, conditioned in turn by the sensibility of our age and historical moment. The *naïveté* recommended in the *Salon de 1846* includes a recognition of historical relativism and by the same token of the artist's historical dependence: the great artist, like anyone else,

cannot exist in isolation and cannot successfully create or communicate outside a set of conventions and general assumptions which must however remain open to continuous modification.[42]

The artist then for Baudelaire as for Sartre is *in the world* in the fullest sense of the expression: and the same is true of the critic. For Baudelaire the critic starts from the standpoint of 'l'individualisme bien entendu': 'La critique doit être partiale, passionnée, politique, c'est-à-dire faite à un point de vue exclusif, mais au point de vue qui ouvre le plus d'horizons.'[43] The remarks of 'A quoi bon la critique? ' are designed to puzzle by an accumulation of semi-facetious paradoxes, but the real sense of Baudelaire's remarks becomes apparent in the general context of the *Salons*. The *naïveté* of the artist and the *naïveté* of the critic are not arbitrarily confronted: both imply world-views which are interrelated in many ways. Like Sartre, Baudelaire considers that the job of the critic is to penetrate by empathy through to the world-view implicit in the work of art, and to convey this to the reader. In Sartre's terms: 'Une technique romanesque renvoie toujours à la métaphysique du romancier. La tâche du critique est de dégager celle-ci avant d'apprécier celle-là.'[44]

This empathy does not mean the avoidance of value-judgements which are part of the critics own commitment in the broadest sense ('Enfin, il faut parier', urges Sartre, 'le livre est-il bon? est-il mauvais?')[45] but it does mean a sensitivity to the 'philosophy' indirectly expressed in both its historical and its metaphysical dimensions: 'Comme [tous les arts] sont toujours le beau exprimé par le sentiment, la passion et la rêverie de chacun, c'est-à-dire la variété dans l'unité, ou les faces diverses de l'absolu—la critique touche à chaque instant à la métaphysique.'[46]

Sensitivity to Romantic metaphysics and aesthetics is one of the most striking features of Sartre's criticism. His conception of works of art as the expression of a historical moment will grow in importance and complexity from *Situations II* and *Saint Genet* to the *Idiot de la famille.*

CHAPTER 4

SAINT GENET: COMEDIEN ET MARTYR

Saint Genet: comédien et martyr lies about half-way between *L'Imaginaire* and *L'Être et le Néant* on the one hand, and the *Critique de la raison dialectique* on the other, with respect to both chronology and content. Many of Sartre's earlier preoccupations are still very much in evidence: in particular his distinction between the real and the imaginary from *L'Imaginaire*, and the categories of good and bad faith and the problems surrounding personal liberty from *L'Être et le Néant*. But the work is also a sociological study of the formative influences on one particular illegitimate child, and an attempt to discover to what extent these condition or limit potential choices of career and personality. In his conclusion Sartre defined his intentions in writing *Saint Genet* in this fashion:

Montrer les limites de l'interprétation psychanalytique et de l'explication marxiste et que seule la liberté peut rendre compte d'une personne en sa totalité, faire voir cette liberté aux prises avec le destin, d'abord écrasée par ses fatalités puis se retournant sur elles pour les digérer peu à peu, prouver que le génie n'est pas un don mais l'issue qu'on invente dans les cas désespérés, retrouver le choix qu'un écrivain fait de lui-même, de sa vie et du sens de l'univers jusque dans les caractères formels de son style et de sa composition, jusque dans la structure de ses images, et dans la particularité de ses goûts, retracer en détail l'histoire d'une libération: voilà ce que j'ai voulu; le lecteur dira si j'ai réussi.[1]

This account of Sartre's aims corresponds fairly closely to the work in so far as it is a piece of existential psychoanalysis and sociological description. But as well as fulfilling this specific programme, Sartre uses his study of Genet both to develop further his earlier aesthetic criteria, and also to explore the parallels and oppositions between the metaphysics of Genet and his own philosophical theories.

Saint Genet has been studied for the most part as existential psychoanalysis and it would seem therefore redundant to devote a full-scale study to this aspect of the work. A brief account of it will suffice: the reader is referred for further detail to the study by Laing and Cooper, *Reason and Violence*.[2] Sartre lays out the aims and principles of existential psychoanalysis in *L'Être et le Néant:*

La *principe* de cette psychanalyse est que l'homme est une totalité et non une collection; qu'en conséquence, il s'exprime tout entier dans la plus insignifiante et la plus superficielle de ses conduites–autrement dit, qu'il n'est pas un goût, un tic,

un acte humain qui ne soit *révélateur*.

Le *but* de la psychanalyse est de déchiffrer les comportements empiriques de l'homme, c'est-à-dire de mettre en pleine lumière les révélations que chacun d'eux contient et de les fixer conceptuellement.

Son *point de départ* est l'*expérience*; son *point d'appui* est la compréhension préontologique et fondamentale que l'homme a de la personne humaine . . . Sa méthode est comparative . . . c'est par la comparaison [des] conduites que nous ferons jaillir la révélation unique qu'elles expriment toutes de manière différente.[3]

It is also in *L'Être et le Néant* that Sartre makes his first reference to the regressive-progressive analytico-synthetic approach which we have already mentioned briefly in relation to the *Baudelaire*. His emphasis is here on the psychological aspect of this approach:

La compréhension se fait en deux sens inverses: par une psycho-analyse régressive, on remonte de l'acte considéré jusqu'à mon possible ultime—par une progression synthétique, de ce possible ultime on redescend jusqu'à l'acte envisagé et on saisit son intégration dans la forme totale.[4]

Sartre stresses the importance of discovering the fundamental project which will illuminate all the activities of its author, and it is this project which, as we have seen, he attempts to discover in his study of Baudelaire. The other side of the regressive-progressive method, its historical or sociological dimension, is of course already present in embryo in *L'Être et le Néant* and *Baudelaire* but it will grow steadily in importance. Sartre explains the method in rather different terms in the *Critique de la raison dialectique:*

C'est en même temps un va-et-vient enrichissant entre l'objet (qui contient toute l'époque comme significations hiérarchisées) et l'époque (qui contient l'objet dans sa totalisation) . . . la simple juxtaposition inerte de l'époque et de l'objet fait place brusquement à un conflit vivant.[5]

In fact Sartre does not really perfect his own use of this method until his work on Flaubert; *Saint Genet* still concentrates on Genet himself rather than on his historical situation, and this is why Sartre later criticized his study as insufficient despite its length: 'Il est évident que l'étude du conditionnement de Genet par les événements de son histoire objective est insuffisante, très très insuffisante.'[6] Although Sartre lays more stress on the formative influence of Genet's childhood than in the case of Baudelaire, it is nonetheless clear that he is still concerned with the free choice Genet made within his situation at the expense of an equally detailed account of that situation itself, which alone could enable us to judge the extent of Genet's area of choice or the extent to which his liberty successfully dominated his objective situation. Sartre is anxious to show the limitations of a rigid Marxism which imagines it has explained a man once it has situated him in a broad historical framework; 'Valéry est un intellectuel petit-bourgeois, cela ne fait

pas de doute. Mais tout intellectuel petit-bourgeois n'est pas Valéry'[7]. For this reason Sartre will not stress the 'Marxist' elements of his analysis until his work on Flaubert, where, as we shall see, Flaubert's social and family history is given its full due, and Flaubert's choice to be a writer can be all the more perceptively evaluated. *Saint Genet* is, however, a clear step in the direction of completeness.

The work is, in fact, a novel piece of criticism partly because of its scope. Sartre does not merely try to psychoanalyse Genet existentially, in the sense of revealing his original choice; he takes the matter further and attempts to reconstitute the *pour-soi* of Genet at all the different stages of his development, and to indicate precisely why he chose writing as the eventual solution to his alienation. Already in *Situations II*, in answer to his own question 'Pourquoi écrire? ' Sartre replied:

Chacun a ses raisons: pour celui-ci l'art est une fuite; pour celui-là un moyen de conquérir. Mais on peut finir dans un ermitage, dans la folie, dans la mort; on peut conquérir par les armes. Pourquoi justement *écrire*, faire par *écrit* ses évasions et ses conquêtes?[8]

In *Saint Genet* Sartre makes his first detailed attempt to reveal why one individual author chose writing rather than any other activity as a way of resolving his personal problems.

Saint Genet runs less risk than *Baudelaire* of being called reductive criticism. This is partly because the account probes deeper and is more detailed and therefore more revealing and complex than the earlier work; but also because, as I have just indicated, Sartre's method is here more dialectical. Sartrean existentialism, of course, eschews simple causal explanations; but rather than envisaging the author's choice as a one-way affair, he now, in *Saint Genet,* describes the more complex interrelationship of the writer's life, the works he produces, the society he lives in and the public which reads him. In *Question de méthode* we find Sartre explicitly rejecting reductivist critics:

Leur désir d'explication cacherait la volonté d'assimiler le complexe au simple, de nier la spécificité des structures et de réduire le changement à l'identité. C'est retomber au niveau du déterminisme scientifique. La méthode dialectique, au contraire, refuse de réduire; elle fait la démarche inverse: elle dépasse en conservant . . .[9]

The depth of Sartre's analysis is then a result partly of the dialectical method; it would appear also to owe much to Sartre's phenomenological approach which aims to describe in detail without taking any aspect of life or work for granted. In examining how Genet became a prose writer Sartre is thus led to discuss not only Genet himself but also the nature of prose as opposed to poetry, and indeed the nature of writing itself, not only from the point of view of the writer but also from that of the reader.

Sartre declares that he hopes to 'retrouver le choix qu'un écrivain fait de lui-même, de sa vie et du sens de l'univers jusque dans les caractères formels de son

style et de sa composition, jusque dans la structure de ses images.'[10] It is this aim which is behind the brilliant analyses of passages from Genet's works, in which Sartre examines the distinctive features of Genet's writings—poetic prose, cerebral rather than sensuous beauty, an essentialist kind of stylization—and reveals both the linguistic mechanisms behind them, and also their interrelationship within a discernable world-view. Technique and metaphysics are shown once again to be interdependent for the critic. Sartre's method of criticism is based on what Baudelaire calls 'l'individualisme bien entendu' which alone can reveal the secret of 'les destinées particulières.'[11] Moreover Sartre succeeds in giving exact and illuminating analyses of various literary impressions, whilst never falling himself into impressionist criticism.

Sartre's ability to interrelate all the different strands of Genet's life and works does not however produce a work so tight-knit as to allow no room for the expansion of certain ideas peculiar to Sartre himself. *Saint Genet* can in fact be seen as a work made up of digressions on topics as various as luxury, feudalism, evil, sainthood, purpose in art, surrealism, beauty and poetry. Indeed Sartre appears to enter into the world of Genet's inverted metaphysics and takes these over as his own imaginatively, whilst exploring their logical consequences. It is sometimes difficult, when discussing *Saint Genet*, to determine on purely textual grounds when Sartre is speaking for himself and when he is merely exploring the implications of Genet's own ideas: there is no clear dividing line. The depth and coherence of *Saint Genet* emphasize the limitations of more traditional accounts which examine Genet's works by artificially isolating themes, plot, character etc.,[12] or which attempt to discuss Genet as a writer without ever examining the nature of writing and thereby of reading and the reading public. Of course Sartre's originality appears not so much in relation to studies on Genet, but rather in relation to academic criticism in general, since most criticism of Genet postdates Sartre's account and is heavily indebted to it.

Thody suggests that after an initial traumatism at being 'stripped naked . . . unceremoniously'[13] Genet could not but be influenced to move in the direction suggested by Sartre's study. He admits however that this might perhaps have involved no more than Genet's being made conscious of previously implicit themes and notions. Indeed there is no real break in the thematic content of the writer's output. Genet declared himself overwhelmed by Sartre's study whilst vigorously rejecting Sartre's interpretation. It would seem that Sartre, in a sense unintentionally, effected a kind of existential psychoanalytic 'cure' on Genet, bringing Genet's 'premier choix originel' to the surface, and thus facilitating a 'réflexion purifiante' during which Genet could either reject or ratify his original choice, but no longer claim to ignore it. The reader is referred to Thody's account of Genet for further information about Genet's development since the publication of Sartre's study.

Let us turn now to *Saint Genet* itself. We must first examine briefly Sartre's account of Genet's 'facticité' and the development of his choices. The following

summary is purely descriptive and is given in order to enable the reader to situate Sartre's analyses and digressions within the wider context of the work as a whole.

Genet is an illegitimate child adopted by God-fearing Morvan peasants. The peasant family do not love him as their own child, hence, says Sartre, he feels unjustified and tries, like Daniel in *Les Chemins de la liberté*, to compensate for this by imagining that he is constantly present before the eyes of God. This is the origin of his projected sainthood. As a child, Genet owns nothing and, feeling worthless in a property-respecting community, he starts to steal. Referring back to *L'Être et le Néant* Sartre says 'il n'a pas assez pour être'.[14] He is rejected by his adoptive family, called a thief, and sent to Mettray reformatory. The young Genet accepts the label of thief and thereby alienates himself by internalizing the point of view of other people about himself; he moreover becomes involved in numerous psychological paradoxes through the attempt to see himself as evil. This process of internalization is the key to all Genet's problems; as we shall see it renders him 'imaginary' and vitiates his relations with the outside world. Genet is saved however by the knowledge that he originates from Paris not the country, and this affords him the essential *dédoublement* to escape from his intolerable alienation. Genet assumes his destiny as thief: he decides to change his motives for stealing, and to steal in order to *be* a thief. This, Sartre shows, involves further paradoxical contradictions, confirms his imaginary nature, and leads him to homosexuality. Here Sartre seems close to the traditional psychoanalytical notion of trauma, for he connects the fact that Genet was surprised from behind whilst stealing with his role as passive homosexual, taken from behind. Sartre then demonstrates how Genet comes to make positive use of his imaginary nature: he will *choose* the imaginary, first as a pure aesthete, then as a poet, and finally as a prose writer. This progression implies a number of distinctions and definitions which we will need to discuss. Genet's sexual life changes similarly: he begins to take the male role in his homosexual activities. In both cases Sartre is describing a progression from passive acquiescence to a more active attempt to manipulate his own destiny. The final equation which Sartre establishes between prose writing and the attempt to be the agent of one's own destiny has many aspects, the chief of which is the notion that prose involves a reciprocal relationship with the reader, i.e. it communicates in Sartre's sense. But Sartre will show that Genet's prose is a false prose giving a false communication; paradoxically however he sees this as one of the keys to Genet's literary quality and moral usefulness.

Before we continue our account of Sartre's work there is one major question which must be examined, just as we tried to examine it in the case of Baudelaire: Why Genet? It has been suggested that Sartre was likely to be particularly receptive to Genet's works because he knew and liked the author personally, but this explanation does not fit the chronology: Sartre admired Genet's writings long before he met Genet himself; it was in fact literary admiration which drew the two writers together, as Simone de Beauvoir tells us: 'Genet—qui savait que nous

aimions *Notre Dame des Fleurs* a abordé Sartre au Flore'.[15] How then did an aesthete such as Genet earn the literary respect of the chief exponent of committed literature, even though Sartre's idea of commitment had, by this stage, broadened out to include writers previously considered uncommitted? Genet's values are indeed not those of a bourgeois society, but on the other hand they are merely a logical inversion of bourgeois values and moreover depend necessarily on these for their very existence. As Thody points out [16] Genet, like Baudelaire, is a rebel not a revolutionary: he does not wish to bring about a new moral order based on his own inverted values, their very appeal lies in the fact that they are inverted and unacceptable to society. Once generally admitted and rationalized they would cease to approximate to pure evil. Like Baudelaire also, Genet *'réclame* d'être condamné',[17] but whereas Baudelaire is guilt-ridden and writes frequently in a spirit of repentance more or less clearly acknowledged, we find none of this in Genet, whose desire for condemnation is simply the desire to confirm his status as evil; it is never envisaged as a punishment assisting his eventual redemption. Of course both writers use 'evil' as the subject matter of their writings, and make of this beauty and poetry. 'J'ai pétri de la boue et j'en ai fait de l'or'[18] is as true of Genet as it is of Baudelaire. But their attitudes to the evil they transform are less similar: Genet accepts evil as evil and glories in it, proclaiming his desire both to do and to be evil incarnate; Baudelaire, on the other hand, is haunted by moral anguish at the thought of evil, and attempts to come to terms with it in various ways. Sometimes he envisages it as a necessary punishment, a purification; at other times he attempts to disclaim all responsibility, and declares evil to be beyond his control: 'c'est le Diable qui tient les fils qui nous remuent!',[19] and his third way of trying to resolve the problem is through his attitude as a dandy, detached even from his own life. These three solutions all involve an evident *mauvaise foi* which Genet avoids at this level at least, though his own desire to *be* evil must prevent him from ever attaining complete authenticity in Sartre's eyes. Basically, the difference between the two writers involves the question of guilt: Baudelaire has a genuine if idiosyncratic religious sensibility; however inauthentic his attitudes towards his own wrong-doing might be, and despite insights into the way the criminal is made the scapegoat of bourgeois society, evil for Baudelaire is real, a positive force to be contended with, sometimes given in to. Satan is the symbol of both the perversity and the weakness of his own will. Genet on the other hand, is a twentieth-century atheist who has chosen evil as his particular way of being unconventional. Evil for Genet is simply what other people have decided it to be; the systematic inversion of all bourgeois values. In this sense Genet's universe is monolithic: the feeling of guilt is conspicuously absent, so too is Satan or the notion of a real force for evil counterbalancing good. In short Genet is the only kind of 'sinner' Sartre finds morally and philosophically acceptable, and, moreover, the only kind of saint.

Sartre defends Genet as 'un des héros de ce temps'.[20] He sees his work as the

elaborate sophistry of a man for whom both God and Satan are dead, whose only points of reference are therefore the values of contemporary bourgeois society which he recognizes to be bankrupt. Genet then becomes in a sense for Sartre 'le seul Christ que nous méritons'[21] : he is a great artist precisely because he is *modern* in Baudelaire's sense of the word. Sartre's defence of Genet is on the grounds of the 'moral utility' his works may have within the terms of existential humanism. Sartre argues that Genet is not advocating treachery, theft or pederasty: 'Il ne nous demande rien du tout. A qui se proposerait de devenir son disciple, je suis sûr qu'il répondrait: "Comment pourrait-on agir comme moi si l'on n'est pas moi?" '[22] Sartre asserts that Genet can help us work towards a more authentic personal life and a better society. There are two sides to this assertion: firstly and more simply, Genet has, as we have seen, some if not all of the qualities of an existential hero: he is utterly lucid, 'je demande en quel cœur on trouvera lucidité plus grande'[23] Sartre asks; he affirms his own values (simple inversion though they may be) in the face of society; and he finds his own personal and highly successful way out of a seemingly impossible dilemma, for Sartre of course considers genius to be a choice rather than a gift. In this sense then Genet has certain exemplary characteristics. But more important is the second aspect of the utility of Genet's works, and this depends on the notion, already examined in a previous chapter, that reading involves a re-creation on the part of the reader who thus assumes responsibility for the world he has evoked in his imagination. Genet's works are beautiful, and if we accept to read them for their beauty we are instantly trapped in a cleft stick, because this beauty is based on evil. The most beautiful images are those of the most ghastly crimes. 'Genet joue allègrement sur deux tableaux', says Sartre, 'le plus grand crime dans le premier système sera le plus beau geste dans le second.'[24] We shall look at this equation in more detail later; for the moment suffice it to notice that Genet has succeeded in turning the tables on his reader by resorting to an alternative set of values: aesthetic rather than moral. The two cannot, however be separated: form and content are necessarily one. Through Genet, then, we see a life of 'vice' from the inside, we enter his world rather than its being revealed to us from the outside as alien and unrelated to us. Genet the 'criminel' ceases to be an object and becomes a subject for the reader. 'L'horreur est *reconnaissance*'[25] says Sartre: we may think of ourselves as thoroughly heterosexual but we can no longer ignore the other possibilities of sexual feeling. Genet imposes upon us the subjectivity of the homosexual traitor and thief: if we are revolted this can only be because we have understood and recognized these as choices potentially open to all men, as aspects of our *own* humanity which we may previously have chosen to ignore or deny.

Genet does not analyse, he communicates: part of his communication is of the experience of solitude as the negative side of our relations with others. It is in this respect that Sartre believes reading Genet can enlighten our lives most fully. We are never, Sartre suggests, entirely subjects nor entirely objects: we live in a half-way

land between the two. Sartre appears to be borrowing from Heidegger's description of *Das Man* when he evokes this condition:

Vous êtes avec tous . . . vous recevez les pensées du dehors par les journaux, la radio, les conférences et les discours pour les redistribuer aussitôt, vous ne restez pas un moment sans parler, sans écouter et jamais vous ne dites ni n'entendez que ce que n'importe qui eût dit ou entendu à votre place, vous subissez du réveil à la nuit la tyrannie de la face humaine . . . et pourtant d'une certaine manière vous êtes seuls . . .[26]

As we saw in *Situations II*, this solitude, this *échec* lies at the heart of all communication, of all success in Sartre's terms. But we cannot opt out entirely and become nothing more than our role in society (i.e. mere objects)—we are always aware of our inescapable liberty as subjects:

L'homme, dit Marx, est objet pour l'homme. Cela est vrai. Mais il est vrai aussi que je suis sujet pour moi dans la mesure même où mon prochain est objet à mes yeux: et voilà ce qui nous sépare; lui et moi, nous ne sommes pas *homogènes* et nous ne pouvons faire partie d'un même ensemble qu'aux yeux d'un tiers qui nous saisit l'un et l'autre comme un seul objet. Si nous pouvions être tous, dans une simultanéité et dans une réciprocité parfaites, objets et sujets à la fois, les uns pour les autres et les uns par les autres ou si nous pouvions nous abîmer ensemble dans une totalité objective ou si nous n'étions jamais, comme dans la Cité des fins kantienne, que des sujets se reconnaissant comme sujets, les séparations tomberaient; mais on ne peut pousser à l'extrême ni dans un sens ni dans l'autre: nous ne saurions être tous objets que ce ne soit pour un sujet transcendant, ni tous sujets que nous n'entreprenions d'abord l'impossible liquidation de toute objectivité; quant à la réciprocité absolue, elle est masquée par les conditions historiques de classe et de race, par les nationalités, par la hiérarchie sociale; un chef n'est jamais objet pour ses subordonnés ou bien il est perdu; il est rarement sujet pour ses supérieurs.[27]

We may fairly assume that Sartre is at this point bringing to his study of Genet something of his own moral and philosophical preoccupations of the early 1950s. In this sense parts of *Saint Genet* may sometimes tell us more about Sartre himself than about Genet. Indeed Sartre is himself quite conscious that the experimenter is part of his experiment and that the critic is implicated and revealed by his criticism.[28] It would seem then that Sartre is at this stage obsessed with the interconnection, indeed the interdependence of the subjective and the objective. The reasons behind this obsession become clearer if we remember that *Saint Genet* is in a sense a half-way book, written when Sartre was moving from a Romantic notion of human tragedy towards a Marxist conception of human history. As is clear from the text, despite his desire for the objective and the subjective to be integrated, Sartre is extremely sceptical about the possibility of such an integration, insisting that 'nous ne sommes pas *homogènes* et nous ne pouvons faire partie d'un même ensemble qu'aux yeux d'un tiers qui nous saisit l'un et l'autre comme un seul objet.'[29] Sartre is here implicitly rejecting Hegel's notion of *l'Esprit* as a principle of unification resolving the subject-object dichotomy which lies at the heart of

'la conscience malheureuse'. In *L'Être et le Néant* Sartre explicitly rejects the Hegelian notion of a unity guaranteed by a transcendent *Esprit*: 'La multiplicité des consciences nous apparaît comme une synthèse et non comme une collection, mais c'est une synthèse dont la totalité est inconcevable'[30], and the idea of a 'transcendance commune' is dismissed as 'd'ordre psychologique et non ontologique':[31]

Tout se passe comme si le monde, l'homme et l'homme-dans-le-monde n'arrivaient à réaliser qu'un Dieu manqué. Tout se passe comme si l'en-soi et le pour-soi se présentaient en état de *désintégration* par rapport à une synthèse idéale. Non que l'intégration ait jamais *eu lieu*, mais précisément au contraire parce qu'elle est toujours indiquée et toujours impossible. C'est le perpétuel échec qui explique à la fois l'indissolubilité de l'en-soi et du pour-soi et leur relative indépendance . . . Il nous est apparu que la question de l'unité synthétique des consciences n'avait pas de sens, car elle supposait que nous avions la possibilité de prendre un point de vue sur la totalité; or, nous existons sur le fondement de cette totalité et comme engagés en elle.[32]

In the *Critique de la raison dialectique* also Sartre repeatedly rejects the idea of a totality of Mind along with the idea of any 'hyperorganismes', emphasizing that these can never exist except as 'des totalités détotalisées'.[33] For this reason Sartre, in *Saint Genet*, is extremely careful in his expression of the desire for the reconciliation of subject and object: he does not wish his words to be interpreted as implying acceptance of either a Hegelian or a Marxist philosophy of unification.

However, as we shall see again shortly when discussing Sartre's interpretation and so-called 'betrayal' of Genet, he is afraid of the nefarious consequences which must ensue from a rigorous distinction being drawn between subject and object. Sartre refers to Bukharin who chose to accept the opinion others had of him as a traitor and humbly admit his crime, thus rejecting his own subjective awareness of himself in favour of seeing himself as the object he was in the eyes of other people: 'il refuse d'écouter son propre témoignage et de voir autre chose en soi qu'un objet'.[34] Genet also accepts the opinion others have of him as traitor and thief, 'il découvre, comme Boukharine, sa subjectivité en se jugeant selon les maximes objectives de sa société.'[35] Unlike Bukharin however he affirms his treachery with pride rather than confessing it with humility. Sartre suggests that we too may be left with the limited choice between being a Genet and being a Bukharin. Genet's works, he argues, may bring our present precarious situation home to us:

Puisque la relation sociale est ambigüe et comporte toujours une part d'échec . . . puisque chaque pensée divise autant qu'elle unit, puisque toute parole rapproche par ce qu'elle exprime et isole par ce qu'elle tait, puisqu'un abîme infranchissable sépare le certitude subjective que nous avons de nous-mêmes et la vérité objective que sous sommes pour les autres . . . puisque l'événement transforme non seulement dans l'histoire mais jusque dans la vie de famille nos meilleures intentions en volontés criminelles . . . puisque nous échouons sans cesse à communiquer, à aimer, à nous faire aimer . . . puisque nous ne pouvons nous arracher à l'objectivité

qui nous écrase ni dépouiller la subjectivité qui nous exile, puisqu'il ne nous est permis ni de nous élever jusqu'á l'être ni de nous abîmer dans le néant, puisque nous sommes, en tout état de cause *d'impossibles nullités*, il faut écouter la voix de Genet, notre prochain, notre frère.[36]

If we use Genet's works rightly, Sartre suggests, we can perhaps work towards a better and more human world in which the objective and the subjective can in some sense be integrated:

Si nous gardons l'espoir et le ferme propos d'échapper à cette alternative, s'il est encore temps, par un dernier effort, de réconcilier l'objet et le sujet, il faut, ne fût-ce qu'une fois et dans l'imaginaire, réaliser cette solitude latente qui ronge nos actes, nos pensées; nous passons notre temps à fuir l'objectif dans le subjectif et le subjectif dans l'objectivité: ce jeu de cache-cache ne prendra fin qu'au jour où nous aurons le courage d'aller jusqu'au bout de nous-même dans les deux directions à la fois. Aujourd'hui il s'agit de faire apparaître le sujet, le coupable, cette bête monstrueuse et misérable que nous risquons à tout moment de devenir; Genet nous tend le miroir: il faut nous y regarder.[37]

It is this final sentence of the work which gives us the key to Sartre's admiration of Genet on other than aesthetic grounds. We have already seen in a previous chapter that Sartre's idea of commitment in literature involves not simply the familiar explicit account (according to which some writers are seen as using their prose works 'correctly' in order to lead us towards social justice, whilst others concentrate irresponsibly on the purely aesthetic aspects of their works), but also a more subtle conception which admits, potentially, many more writers to the ranks of the committed; writing is seen by Sartre as an essentially revelatory activity: art reveals the world, and once we have *seen* we are thereby forced to take up a position, 'Nommer c'est montrer et . . . montrer c'est changer'.[38]

Sartre then appears to be concerned as much with the effect of, as with the intention behind, Genet's works. This can in a sense be seen as conflicting with his various attacks on critics who 'ne s'occupent pas de ce que l'auteur . . . a *voulu dire* . . .'[39] Indeed Sartre is himself very much aware of the problem. He writes a *Prière pour le bon usage de Genet* in which he recognizes that by defending the moral effect of Genet's work he is betraying his intentions:

Jugez de mon embarras: si je révèle qu'on peut tirer profit de ses ouvrages, j'invite à le lire mais je le trahis; que j'insiste au contraire sur sa singularité, je risque de le trahir encore: après tout, s'il a livré ses poèmes au grand public, c'est qu'il souhaitait d'être lu. Trahir pour trahir, je prends le premier parti: au moins serai-je fidèle à moi-même.[40]

This poses in a very acute form the problem of the function of criticism, and implicitly of the function of literature also. We are returned here to the question of what has been called, rather dogmatically, the 'intentional fallacy' in art, and Sartre does not conclude in a definitive or simple fashion one way or the other. Throughout *Saint Genet* Sartre has in fact discussed (in some detail) Genet's avowed

intention to demoralize as well as putting forward his own view of the value and effect of Genet's works themselves: but when eventually forced to choose one way or the other he decides, with apparent reluctance, to 'betray' Genet's intentions. A similar conclusion is reached on another level by Philip Thody who argues that the sordid nature of crime and homosexuality, and the stupidity of criminals as described by Genet will have the effect of confirming the 'just man' in his attitudes. Sartre would not of course agree that this is a beneficial moral effect, but both critics nonetheless see a moral where none was intended. Of course Sartre is not suggesting that Genet's intentions were evil, rather that they were, so to speak, imperfectly good. Genet's rejection of bourgeois morality reveals an underlying authenticity, masked, at least at first, by his nihilism and his desire to shock. We shall discuss the question of Genet's authenticity, and of his conversion to existentially 'moral' values in the concluding section of this chapter.

But it is nonetheless clear, on Sartre's own admission, that he sees a conflict between the effect of Genet's works (even, as we shall see, on Genet himself) and his intention in producing them. Sartre's recognition of this conflict does not however mean that he is prepared to separate intention and results in any simple sense. He rejects for example the assumption of the U.S.S.R. that (objectively) treachery can have been committed when (subjectively) none was in fact intended. He is aware of the alienation which results if such a distinction is internalized by the subject in question, as in the case of Bukharin, or indeed of Genet himself who accepted the label of thief. In *Question de méthode* Sartre refers to this absolute separation of subjective and objective as a 'distinction dangereuse'·

> On a coutume d'établir une distinction dangereuse: un acte pourrait être *objectivement condamnable* (par le Parti, par le Kominform, etc.) tout en demeurant *subjectivement acceptable* . . . Cette distinction témoigne d'une décomposition avancée de la pensée stalinienne.[41]

But whilst refusing to split man up into his intentions and his effects, Sartre nonetheless recognizes that these may not tally exactly: indeed our intentions are never realized in full because they are diverted and alienated by other people. In this sense Sartre would agree with Hegel's statement in *Reason in History* that an individual may for moral reasons resist and for immoral reasons advance the course of history.[42] This is very different from the specious notion of 'objective' unintentional treachery. It is also very different from what Sartre calls 'la distinction "petite-bourgeoise" de bonnes intentions–dont "l'enfer est pavé" '.[43] It is related rather to the notion of temporal error as partial Truth which we discussed in the previous chapter in the context of artistic *dévoilement*. For Sartre, Genet is one, and cannot be split in two by any 'idéalisme volontariste'.[44] But the meaning of his works depends not simply on his intentions but also on the reader who participates in their (re-)creation, and who is free to interpret them in his own way once they have entered the public domain of literature. Sartre of course experienced

this himself with respect to the reception given to *Les Mains sales* when the play was first performed;[45] he had already discussed the question several years previously in *Situations II* with reference to Vercors's *Le Silence de la mer*; and the notion grows steadily in importance, and will become a central issue in his study of Flaubert. Indeed Sartre's account of *Madame Bovary* turns on this very question and we shall examine it again in more detail in the next chapter.

It would seem quite impossible to examine in detail all the issues and implications of *Saint Genet*. As I have indicated, the work has been studied especially as an example of existential psychoanalysis embodying the regressive-analytic/progressive-synthetic method. The present discussion will be concerned therefore rather with more specifically aesthetic and literary lines of approach, and we will examine certain of the complex aesthetic and metaphysical *tourniquets*[46] to which Sartre devotes several fascinating digressions.

Sartre continues in *Saint Genet* the development and usage of certain aesthetic themes and oppositions which were outlined in his early essays, and have been discussed with reference to these essays in our first two chapters. In *Saint Genet* the themes fall conveniently into two main categories: on the one hand *Language* within which group can be included the oppositions prose/poetry, *sens/signification*, terror/rhetoric, expansive/retractile; and on the other *Imagination* where we can include the various ideas connected with the distinction between the real and the imaginary, such as finality in art, aesthetic 'perception' and the nature of beauty and poetry. These latter in turn depend on the metaphysical *tourniquets* of good and evil, *être* and *néant*. We will look first at the group centring around language.

Sartre tells us from the outset that Genet's relations with language are abnormal: 'Il est condamné à lire les mots à l'envers. Les hommes de bien donnent les noms et les choses les portent. Genet est du côté des objets nommés, non de ceux qui les nomment.'[47] Of course, all men are 'named' by other men, but in normal circumstances this is reciprocated: Genet, however, sees himself only through the eyes of other people: he has been called a thief and by accepting this label he becomes alienated from himself and also from language. He is alienated from himself because, according to Sartre, man is alienated if he internalizes the picture of himself held by other people, if his *pour soi* tries to identify with his *pour autrui*. Moreover, since he has been condemned as a thief, the 'self' Genet is trying to internalize is further alienated by the fact that it is a 'self' which he and society consider evil, and evil, according to Sartre, is a category we can only really apply to others not to ourselves. Put simply: a man can think of himself as a 'thief' and this involves bad faith; but he cannot really think of himself as evil, he can only *imagine* that he thinks of himself as evil. A kind of double alienation is involved, for evil is always 'other', always elsewhere, never within one's own being. It is a category invented, Sartre believes, to receive the destructive impulses which man refuses to recognize in himself, and hence cannot in fact be internalized except imaginatively. If Genet then is attempting to internalize his *être pour autrui*, which

is 'evil', he thus cuts himself off from other people who cast him out as 'the other'. He is thereby excluded from all communication for this would involve an impossible reciprocity. Genet is alienated also from language itself, for as Sartre says in *L'Être et le Néant*, 'le langage . . . *est* originellement l'être-pour-autrui . . . je *suis* langage'.[48] Sartre believes that if one element of our relations with language is fundamentally altered, the whole relationship is bound to be affected. Of Genet then he writes: 'L'intuition originelle de son être lui était refusée, toutes les autres intuitions qui le touchent sont refusées aussi.'[49]

Sartre examines the consequences of Genet's alienation from language in relation to three possible attitudes: language as *nature*, as *outil* and as *miracle*. As *nature*, i.e. experienced as exterior to the individual, outside his being, language is felt by Genet to belong to others, to exclude him:

> Nos mots lui tournent le dos, désignent des absences, marquent des distances, nomment des invisibles, se réfèrent à ce qui, pour les autres, est manifeste et, à ses yeux, demeure caché: ce sont des répertoires d'intuitions irréalisables.[50]

Genet is using language which does not belong to him: 'il dérobe le langage, en retour on lui vole sa pensée.'[51] The result is that rather than being a transparent medium of communication (i.e. an *outil*), 'les mots sont en lui comme des corps étrangers . . . Ce qui compte c'est la présence matérielle du mot . . .'[52] The word 'voleur' itself attains a power and significance quite aside from its normal usage: Genet feels that it contains in some sense his very being: 'Le mot cesse d'être un indicateur, il devient un *être* . . . De moyen le verbe passe au rang de réalité suprême . . . Le tour est joué: de l'enfant truqué nous avons fait un poète.'[53] It is then the experience of alienation itself which will lead Genet to poetry. Already in *Situations II*, alienation was seen as constitutive of the poetic attitude. Genet too uses language *à l'envers*, for the formal qualities of the words rather than for their meaning. Sartre describes two phases in Genet's relations with language as poetry: firstly as an involuntary consequence of his alienation and secondly as a deliberate choice. Genet may use language *à rebours* but in the early stages this is simply a means to some practical end: he may for instance lie for profit or self-protection. Moreover when Genet is not lying and wishes to use language in order to communicate normally he cannot possess it: he has the impression of borrowing the language of the bourgeois. Even buying a pair of shoes involves a pretence at honesty, a role-playing: 'Tantôt vrai voleur et mentant, tantôt faux bourgeois disant le vrai, la parole lui demeure toujours étrangère: il l'emprunte ou la vole. Le Verbe c'est l'Autre.'[54] However Genet moves on to make conscious use of his unnatural relationship with language: he attempts a deliberate destruction of the language from which he is excluded: 'il revient à parler mais pour détruire la parole ou pour en pervertir le sens';[55] this may remind us of the aims of Surrealism and we shall look shortly at Sartre's comparison between Genet and the Surrealists. Genet makes full use of the impression language can give of being

self-determining, termed by Sartre *miracle*: Genet looks for puns, allusions and symbols in language in order to use these as fully as possible in his own speech: 'il veut mettre au jour la part du Diable dans ses propres paroles: tout se passe comme si les mots, tout en paraissant obéir à ses intentions, s'assemblaient selon une finalité objective qui lui échappe.'[56] According to Sartre, Genet has discovered poetry: 'La poésie est l'antidote de la condamnation originelle; elle apparaît quand le mot laisse soupçonner un ordre secret du langage et une convenance secrète du langage avec l'aspect caché des choses.'[57] He has found his way naïvely to an implicit notion of poetry which is that of Baudelaire, the Symbolists and the Surrealists. We need now to examine the themes which Sartre introduces in connection with this phase of Genet's development: we find once again the *signification/sens*, prose/poetry, and terror/rhetoric distinctions, and another distinction, new to his literary criticism, between expansive and retractile poetic imagery.

Sartre sums up his distinction between *signification* and *sens:*

> Par *signification* il faut entendre une certaine relation conventionnelle qui fait d'un objet présent le substitut d'un objet absent [i.e. a word is substituted for a thing] ; par *sens*, j'entends la participation d'une réalité présente, dans son être, à l'être d'autres réalités, présentes ou absentes, visibles ou invisibles, et de proche en proche à l'univers. La signification est conférée du dehors à l'objet par une intention signifiante, le sens est une qualité naturelle des choses . . . En produisant son premier poème comme un objet, Genet transforme la *signification* des mots en un *sens*.[58]

It is through his distinction between *signification* and *sens* that Sartre explains why Genet is not a great poet. We have already seen, in our examination of *Qu'est-ce que la littérature*? that Sartre does not believe words should be used simultaneously for their *sens* and their *signification*, although a rigid separation of the two elements is evidently impossible. Despite his psychological and sociological situation which makes of Genet, in a sense, a natural poet, the decision to write poetry is nonetheless insufficient to make him a *great* poet. In writing Genet apparently wishes to communicate despite himself; and therefore, despite certain spontaneously poetic lines, his poems are on the whole prosaic, i.e. susceptible of a clear translation into prose. Genet is caught in a kind of no-man's-land between prose and poetry: 'Mais Genet, prosateur malgré lui, se cramponne au langage poétique. Il a raison: la prose est communication, recherche en commun de la vérité, reconnaissance et réciprocité; qu'en ferait-il?'[59] We will look later at Genet's eventual transition from poet to prose writer: for the moment we will continue our examination of Sartre's discussion of poetry as he presents it in *Saint Genet*.

Within the domain of poetry itself Sartre distinguishes between what he terms the *expansive* and the *retractile* poetic imaginations: 'Il y a dans la poésie moderne deux types d'unification, l'une expansive, l'autre rétractile. Il s'agit dans l'un et l'autre cas de laisser entrevoir un ordre esthétique derrière les caprices du hasard.'[60]

Here Sartre is undertaking what is for him a fairly new venture; it involves criticism of a more purely literary nature than has been habitual in his essays. There was of course an attempt at examining Baudelaire's poetic imagery at the end of the 1947 essay, and in *Orphée noir* Sartre was again concerned with poetic technique and imagery in his discussion of the Black African poets, though always, of course, within the broader context of an overall project. In *Saint Genet* however Sartre seems to have taken a step towards a fuller phenomenological description of different types of poetic imagination, for he establishes connections and distinctions between what he sees as two basic types corresponding to two fundamental world-views. As we know from *L'Être et le Néant*, Sartre admired the work of Gaston Bachelard, despite certain theoretical and terminological reservations. He praised Bachelard for undertaking 'une psychanalyse des choses' but suggested that this itself should be thoroughly established before it be made use of in connection with literature: 'C'est . . . pourquoi, je me défierais plus que M. Bachelard, à ce niveau, de recourir aux imaginations matérielles des poètes, fussent-ils Lautréamont, Rimbaud ou Poe.'[61] It is likely that Sartre's reservations on this point owe much to the fact that in 1942, in *La Psychanalyse du feu* and to a lesser extent in *L'Eau et les rêves,* Bachelard's account of the primitive material imagination is critical, made from a scientific point of view, and within this framework Bachelard's imprecision and lack of system appear as evident faults. Later Bachelard was to adopt a more 'phenomenological' approach, which does not however involve a recognizable method as is the case with Sartre's own phenomenology. But it was Bachelard who set the stage for a phenomenology of poetic imagery; indeed by 1957 he had become quite explicit about the direction he was taking:

Il faut en venir, pour éclairer philosophiquement le problème de l'image poétique, à une phénoménologie de l'imagination. Entendons par là une étude du phénomène de l'image poétique quand l'image émerge dans la conscience comme un produit direct du cœur, de l'âme, de l'être de l'homme saisi dans son actualité.[62]

This is the direction in which Bachelard is moving long before 1957 however. Bachelard is interested in the 'material' and 'dynamic' aspects of the imagination and this is an interest Sartre shares: he does not employ Bachelard's terms but examines similar territory within his own terms of reference, which are those of the expansive and the retractile imagination.

It is plausible then to suggest that Sartre was at least given the confidence to extend his phenomenological investigation of the imagination to the field of poetic images by the example of Bachelard. Indeed he seems to have been particularly interested in the influence of Bachelard on literary criticism, for in *Orphée noir* (in which, as we shall see later, Sartre comes close to formulating the two categories of poetic imagination which we find in *Saint Genet*) he refers approvingly to a work by Michel Carrouges, which George Bauer suggests must be the study *Eluard et Claudel*,[63] one of the earliest examples of Bachelard's influence.[64] In *Saint Genet*

itself, moreover, Sartre refers twice to Bachelard, firstly in reference to Genet's sexuality which he describes as 'le dynamisme de la chute, la pesanteur de Mal ressentie dans la chair', and adds: 'Bachelard parlerait à son propos du "complexe d'Icare" ',[65] and secondly in reference to Genet's 'rêverie pétrifiante' which he analyses with help from Bachelard's description of the 'complexe de Méduse', even taking over Bachelard's subcategories of 'extravertie' and 'introvertie',[66] though he rejects Bachelard's Freudianism and situates the source of Genet's complex not 'au temps où le regard d'un père [l'] immobilisait', but rather in Genet's personal original crisis: 'c'est le regard du Juste qui l'a d'abord pétrifié.'[67]

Sartre then will follow Bachelard in examining the 'imaginations matérielles des poètes', but he will attempt to remedy what he sees as the insufficiencies of Bachelard's method by situating the 'subjective' meanings given the world by poets with respect to the 'objective' meaning of the world 'as it is'. We must look now at the implications of the two kinds of poetic imagination as Sartre sees them.

Of *expansive* imagery Sartre writes: 'La première tendance—qui est celle de Rimbaud—soumet par force, la diversité naturelle à symboliser une unité *explosive* . . . Loin de nier la pluralité, on la découvre partout . . . c'est l'instant abstrait qui la fige en une beauté "explosante-fixe".'[68] Sartre's example here is Rimbaud's description of dawn as a 'peuple de colombes' from *Le Bateau ivre*, misquoted in Sartre's article on Masson, as 'l'aube comme un vol de colombes'.[69] Here an apparently unified and inanimate natural state is transformed verbally into a dynamic multiplicity. This then is an imagery which seeks to enjoy the infinite variety of the natural world and to counteract, by language itself, the universalizing aspect of language which tends to limit and reduce reality by the very act of naming. Language cannot but fix and focus the diversity of the real, but the 'imagerie dionysiaque' of Rimbaud, Césaire and some Surrealist poets is, one might say, more like an action photograph than a posed portrait. Sartre says of this imagery: 'son but est de soumettre l'extériorité de la Nature à réfléter à l'homme sa propre transcendance'.[70] In other words, if man cannot convey verbally the infinite multiplicity of nature, he can replace this by a humanly created multiplicity, and thus, implicitly, emphasize human 'transcendance' in the Sartrean sense of man's ability to reinvent the world. The idea of a God guaranteeing the order of reality is incompatible with such a project: this form of imagination, Sartre suggests' 'vise à représenter l'unité que le travail humain impose de force au disparate'.[71]

The opposite type of imagery, exemplified by Genet and Mallarmé, is termed *retractile.* Sartre's picture is not impartial; he describes the retractile imagination as *avare:* 'Le but n'est pas de présenter l'extériorité comme une puissance expansive, mais d'en faire un néant, une ombre, la pure apparence sensible d'unités secrètes.'[72] Sartre notes amongst other examples how Mallarmé condenses all his autumn walks into one: 'ma promenade me rappelle par son automne';[73] similarly Genet replaces the natural burgeoning of flowers and leaves from a central stem, by an inverted movement of flowers towards the centre: Sartre is not being fanciful, the image is

indeed strangely unified: 'Surgit, toute raide et noire, d'un vase, une branche de cerisier que les fleurs roses en plein vol soutiennent'.[74] The initial movement appears to be outwards, culminating in 'en plein vol' but it is instantly returned to the centre by the final verb which directs us back once again to its object, the branch. Sartre takes other examples from Genet, and analyses also Proust's amusing description of the Rivebelle restaurant in which customers and tables are compared to planetary constellations, each attracting the others with a gravitational force:

En somme, il est permis d'opposer à l'univers humaniste de Rimbaud, de Nietzsche où les puissances du négatif font sauter les limites des choses, l'univers stable et théologique de Baudelaire, de Mallarmé, où une divine houlette rassemble les choses en troupeau, imposant l'unité au discontinu même.[75]

Rimbaud's explosive images are seen in sexual terms as the equivalent of the male ejaculation, whereas the feminine Genet is, by the traditional opposition, more passive, and enabled by his dependency on others to enjoy the illusion that he is at the centre of an ordered universe maintained in being through no effort of his own. Genet chooses the latter alternative, says Sartre, because, having chosen evil he is forced, like Baudelaire, to maintain the good (i.e. order) on which his evil depends. Genet is thus seen as trying to escape the anguish of responsibility and freedom by imaginatively replacing natural chaos by a purely aesthetic order:

Lorsque le détenu *veut se plaire* il n'imagine pas qu'il agit, qu'il impose lui-même l'unité au divers mais il se plaît à être *comme créateur* à la source de la cohésion magique qui produit l'unité objective des choses. En un mot, incapable de se *tailler* une place dans l'univers, il *imagine* pour se persuader qu'il a créé le monde qui l'exclut . . . il reconstruit le réel à chaque page de son livre de manière à s'administrer la preuve de l'existence de Dieu, c'est-à-dire de sa propre existence.[76]

The main body of Sartre's text tends to give the impression that poets are either expansive or retractile and never the twain shall meet. As so often, however, Sartre uses a brief footnote to render his analysis more subtle, opening up further avenues of thought, though without pursuing these: 'Il va de soi qu'il existe entre Mallarmé et Rimbaud, les deux types purs et opposés d'imagination, une série de types *mixtes* qui font la transition.'[77] It would perhaps be hard to find many truly expansive images in Mallarmé's work, though there would seem to be certain clearly retractile elements in Rimbaud's poetry, associated usually with the nostalgia for security which often counterbalances the thirst for liberty in Rimbaud and which intervenes, for example, at the end of 'Le Bateau ivre':

> Si je désire une eau d'Europe, c'est la flache
> Noire et froide où vers le crépuscule embaumé
> Un enfant accroupi plein de tristesses, lâche
> Un bateau frêle comme un papillon de mai.[78]

This image can be seen as retractile, returning us as it does from the rich profusion

of the open sea, suggested by the constant use of plurals, to a single incident symbolic of a state of dependence. Condensation rather than expansion also seems to be a feature of the imagery and structure of poems like 'Mémoire', except, as one might expect, for the evocation of escape: 'Lui, comme mille anges blancs qui se séparent sur la route . . .'[79] Similarly, although Sartre has classed Baudelaire as a retractile poet, his notion of *types mixtes* presumably allows him to account for the expansive imagery we frequently find in *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Claude Zilberberg, in *Une Lecture des 'Fleurs du Mal'*, for example shows how Baudelaire's imagery is organized around two poles: the one being the ideal of fixity, hardness, immutability, evoked by images of stones, diamonds, metal etc; the other being the thrill of feeling, imagination and senses dilating with the stimulus of certain sensations, notably of smell. (eg. 'Le Flacon').

> Ou dans une maison déserte quelque armoire
> Pleine de l'âcre odeur des temps, poudreuse et noire,
> Parfois on trouve un vieux flacon qui se souvient
> D'où jaillit toute vive une âme qui revient.
>
> Mille pensées dormaient, chrysalides funèbres,
> Frémissant doucement dans les lourdes ténèbres,
> Qui dégagent leur aile et prennent leur essor
> Teintés d'azur, glacés de rose, lamés d'or.[81]

The poem is built precisely around the opposition between images of containment and images of expansion. Sartre is then in fact discussing the two poles of poetic imagery, moments in the imagination of a poet which can be more or less typical. It would seem surprising however, considering the multiple *tourniquets* of *Saint Genet*, that Sartre does not attempt to work out any notion of a possible inter-relation between the two sets of images. His treatment of the terror-rhetoric · opposition is, as we shall see, far more complex in this respect.

G. Bauer suggests that Sartre's evident preference for the expansive over the retractile is due to his desire for an art which avoids what he calls the 'dream of stone', (the temptation to solidify the world in an attempt to create pure *being*) and which reflects rather *existence* in all its flux and diversity. Bauer points out also that Sartre's original term for expansive poetry was 'dionysian' which he uses first in *Orphée noir* and which he continues to use as an alternative term in his analysis of Genet's works. We may suspect then that Sartre's opposition has longer antecedents than he makes explicit. Indeed if we look more closely we find that it is attached to numerous unspoken values and assumptions which spring originally from a Romantic view of art: it can, in this sense, be seen as merely the tip of an aesthetic iceberg. Sartre's preferences follow the same lines in painting also; in his article on Masson, for example, the terms *expansive* and *retractile* are used to discriminate between different types of artist: 'Il y a bien de l'avarice et de la peur en celui-ci [i.e. the retractile] : on rassemble, on cerne; on étrangle, on corsette, on

enferme dans ses contours.'[82] Contour is seen by Sartre as restraining the object within manageable limits, epitomized by the stained-glass-window effects of Rouault which 'n'expriment rien de visible mais plutôt une terreur sacrée, la haine du changement et de la pluralité . . . Rouault peint le monde tel que Dieu l'a fait.'[83] We are returned once again to the notion of a theologically stable universe, revealed for Sartre in the works not only of Rouault but of Cézanne and Juan Gris also. Masson himself is described as gradually breaking away from the limits imposed by contour; 'A partir de 1948, le contour cède, la substance vivante brise ses coquilles et se répand à travers le tableau.'[84] The image is that used in *Saint Genet*: 'les révolutionnaires brisent les coquilles de l'être, le jaune d'œuf coule partout'.[85] Sartre's references are in general to modern painters, with the exception of Tintoretto, but his rejection of the limits of contour harks back to the traditional distinction between colour and line. It is of course true that Titian, to whom Sartre opposes Tintoretto, was noted as a skilled *coloriste*, but whereas Titian's figures remain within clear forms, 'Tintoretto's form is broken up and dislocated by the impact of light and shade',[86] and it is for this reason that he is one of the few earlier painters to earn Sartre's admiration.

We find here yet another similarity between the aesthetic preferences of Sartre and Baudelaire. Retractile as Sartre might consider him, Baudelaire shared Sartre's taste for 'expansive' art. This preference is behind Baudelaire's defence of colour as opposed to line in the *Salon de 1846*. It explains ultimately, not only his distaste for sculpture, for Ingres, for realism and for *l'art officiel,* but also his adulation of pre-Impressionist landscape painting, of Delacroix, and of the great *coloristes* like Rubens and Veronese. Baudelaire writes for example:

> Les coloristes dessinent comme la nature; leurs figures sont naturellement délimitées par la lutte harmonieuse des masses colorées.
>
> Les purs dessinateurs sont des philosophes et des abstracteurs de quintessence.[87]

Sartre expresses the same distinction:

> Rouault peint le monde tel que Dieu l'a fait, non tel que nous le voyons, et Cézanne, la Nature 'telle que Dieu l'étale devant nos yeux,' et Gris 'cette idée première, cette notion de l'objet qui est égale pour tous . . .' Si la notion est commune à tous, elle n'appartient en propre à personne: la table de Gris est celle que voit un sujet abstrait et universel.[88]

Gris then is attempting to paint what for Baudelaire is the wrong kind of *idéal*, of which he says: 'Les poètes, les artistes et toute la race humaine seraient bien malheureux, si l'idéal, cette absurdité, cette impossibilité, était trouvé. Qu'est-ce que chacun ferait désormais de son pauvre *moi*—de sa ligne brisée?'[89]

It has become clear that Sartre's retractile-expansive distinction is in fact an old opposition in a new form. Indeed it is not without similarity with the famous typological distinction established by the Schlegels between Classic and Romantic; and it occurs in various other forms also, as we have already seen for instance in

the Nietzschean Dionysian/Apollonian opposition. In the domain of literature the opposition is applied by Sartre in great detail to individual images which he relates to the world-view and more specifically to the sexuality of their authors. Sartre's analyses reveal also the linguistic mechanisms at work behind the two types of image.

The expansive-retractile opposition is related also to the terror-rhetoric distinction already discussed in a previous chapter. We will look first at the notions of terror and rhetoric as they appear in *Saint Genet* and then try to determine the relationship between the two sets of oppositions. In this essay Sartre identifies Surrealism and terrorism; and he opposes Genet to the terrorists in so far as the latter attempt to capture a reality beyond consciousness through the technique of automatic writing, whereas Genet's art centres rather on consciously used linguistic devices:

Genet . . . est le contraire d'un écrivain intuitif: son art sera cabale, pièce montée, machinerie; le terrorisme le sert moins que la rhétorique; il n'est pas fait pour produire de brèves formules 'traduites du silence' mais pour s'attaquer directement au langage et à toutes les ressources de la syntaxe; c'est un *écrivain discursif*.[90]

But Genet is not a rhetorician in the simple sense of trusting language and believing language and thought to coincide fully. Indeed, as we have seen, he envisages language *à l'envers*. His rhetoric is rather a trick for the reader: 'Genet . . . est contre la terreur et pour la rhétorique parce qu'il est beau d'offrir la plus belle prose en holocauste à la poésie.'[91] Sartre takes the example of Genet's description of 'l'éclat laiteux de ces perles rares: les cinq dents de devant qui lui manquaient'.[92] The reader is led unsuspectingly to the end of the sentence, when he finds the image is impossible to complete, an *irréalisable*, bewildering and disconcerting. Prose communication is not then the *end* of Genet's art but rather 'le moyen de sa poésie': 'la Poésie de Genet est parasite de la prose comme le Mal est parasite du Bien. On ne la voit jamais, elle n'apparaît qu'*aux dépens* d'une phrase prosaïque.'[93] Poetry, says Sartre, probably adapting the formula of Jacques Maritain, is 'une lèpre de la prose'.[94] Just as we have seen Genet choosing *retractile* imagery in order to maintain the hierarchy against which he defines his being, so he chooses prose in order the more insidiously to infiltrate his poetic inversion into the reader's mind. Sartre's example here is of Genet imagining that an old lady might be his mother. He desires to make a gift to her, but feels roses would be inappropriate. We are led to expect a sentimental conclusion, only to read in an apparently logical sequence: 'je me contenterais de baver sur elle . . . de baver sur ses cheveux ou de vomir dans ses mains.'[95]

Genet rejects any notion that there is some ineffable, metaphysical reality which language is in a sense obscuring; in his eyes poetry simply creates its own self-contained world:

La poésie se sert des vocables pour constituer une apparence de monde au lieu de

les employer à désigner les objets réels . . . Pour Genet, la poésie ne révèle rien: quand les mots se brûlent et tombent en cendres, il ne reste que le néant; c'est un rhétoriqueur.[96]

Like Mallarmé whose intention was to 'révéler le Néant comme le sens immédiat de la poésie',[97] Genet too is a nihilist: 'la poésie de Genet c'est la fuite vertigineuse des significations vers le néant'.[98] The Surrealists, on the other hand, as we have seen, believe that language obscures a higher truth which can only be revealed by the destruction of language: 'Les Surréalistes, héritiers de Rimbaud et de Lautréamont font de la poésie l'instrument de leurs révélations; derrière l'incendie des mots, on entrevoit l'Être: ce sont des terroristes.'[99]

Rhetoricians then believe they reveal nothing behind language (*le Néant*); terrorists claim to reveal *l'Être*. At one point Sartre assimilates the two attitudes: 'Breton comme Genet tient que la poésie dérobe un être par-delà l'être de la réalité quotidienne'.[100] But whereas for Genet *l'être* is in fact *le non-être*, an 'événement poétique qui ne se produit pas',[101] Breton on the other hand envisages his revelation as something real and potentially tangible: 'Il pense qu'on le peut voir et toucher dans certaines circonstances exceptionnelles.'[102] As Sartre points out, the term 'Surrealism' is in a sense ambiguous, for it refers to 'le surréel, c'est-à-dire l'être situé au-delà de ce que la mesquinerie bourgeoise nomme le réel';[103] in other words it concentrates on something *more* real than the 'real'.

We must turn now from abstract metaphysics and attempt to determine the nature of the poetic experiences which such metaphysics are trying to account for. *L'Être* which the terrorists hope to reveal is, they claim, potentially accessible to the human senses. It is then perhaps not so much a metaphysical reality, as reality itself, stripped of the conventional ways of thinking and feeling with which we usually surround it. Rimbaud and the Surrealists can thus be seen, in simple terms, as trying to give the reader new sensations and a more vivid experience of the world. For the *rhétoriqueurs* on the other hand, poetry reveals rather *le Néant*. Mallarmé thinks of this *néant* as a non-meaning, not in the negative sense of an absence of meaning, but rather in the sense of suggesting to the mind a potentiality of meaning which no specific determined meanings can exhaust. He is trying to give the reader not an access to the sensuous richness and reality of this world– indeed, he desires that his poems should '*rendre le monde inutile*'[104] –but rather the feeling of excitement which comes from being aware of one's own potential for realizing relationships. Sartre interprets this ambition of Mallarmé's as a proto-existentialist intuition: Mallarmé, he says, after the crisis of 1865-67, came to recognize ' "la négativité absolue" de la Conscience'.[105] Mallarmé's universe is however still theological in the sense that he desires a centre, an order in the world, and he can thus be seen as trying to hold on to the notion of a transcendent ego in a godless universe. Man replaces God as guarantor of meaning. This same process takes place in the case of Genet also, who is similarly troubled by the desire for a

guarantor of order in a world deserted by its creator: 'Il ne souhaitait être que l'*objet* des soins providentiels et s'il s'identifiait avec la Providence c'était surtout pour s'assurer d'être bien servi . . . Genet, c'est Dieu'.[106] Art then for Mallarmé and Genet is not a *théodicée* says Sartre, but rather an *anthropodicée*:

Genet . . . fait croire à l'homme que l'homme a créé le monde, il lui présente son œuvre et la justifie de l'avoir faite . . . Puisque, comme le dit Mallarmé, l'être a eu lieu, la création artistique est imaginaire: elle nous présente, à travers l'objet d'art, le monde entier comme s'il était produit et assumé pour la liberté humaine.[107]

We can now see more clearly the interconnection between the terror-rhetoric and the expansive-retractile distinctions. Rimbaud and the Surrealists are *terroristes* whose poetry is expansive; they disturb bourgeois stability by proposing disrupting metamorphoses, dionysian orgies of sensation in which traditional hierarchies vanish, dream and reality merge, clear outline is broken up and the self is dispersed into the world itself. Mallarmé and Genet, on the other hand, are *rhétoriqueurs* whose poetry is retractile: their universe is ordered and essentialist, they try to envisage it as guaranteed by a transcendent mind, but in a sense totally opposed to the kind of human transcendence which Sartre sees revealed in expansive imagery. Thus the correspondence between language and reality is ensured (though Sartre recognizes that neither Mallarmé nor Genet is really taken in by his own system). Broadly speaking then, rather than breaking out from the bounds of convention, the retractile rhetoricians introduce limits where none in fact exist; they use language to unify and centralize rather than to explode either its own limitations or the personal restrictive grid through which we usually view reality. The two attitudes (expansive and retractile) can thus be seen as corresponding to Baudelaire's distinction between the two moods we find in his own poetry, and indeed, as we have seen, in art in general: 'de la vaporisation et de la centralisation du *Moi*: Tout est là'.[108]

The second complex of aesthetic notions to be found in *Saint Genet* can be grouped, roughly speaking, under the heading of Imagination. As he did in *L'Imaginaire*, Sartre in the essay on Genet makes a radical distinction between perceptive and imaginative attitudes towards the world. He discusses Genet's relations with imagination, and declares that Genet himself is imaginary. What exactly does Sartre mean by this? How can Genet, a flesh and blood author/thief be described meaningfully as imaginary? To answer this question we need to look at Sartre's writings on the human personality in *La Transcendance de l'Ego* and *L'Être et le Néant*. It is evident that the *pour soi* or consciousness of Genet cannot possibly be imaginary, nor can his *en soi* in so far as this corresponds to something real, his facticity or his past. But what can be 'imaginary' would seem to be Genet's idea of himself, Genet's *ego*, what he thinks of as his *moi*. 'Tout se passe donc comme si la conscience constituait l'Ego comme une fausse représentation d'elle-même, comme si elle s'hypnotisait sur cet Ego qu'elle a constitué, s'y absorbait,

comme si elle en faisait sa sauvegarde et sa loi.'[109] As we know Sartre believes that the ego is 'ni formellement ni matériellement *dans* la conscience: il est dehors, *dans le monde*; c'est un être du monde, comme l'Ego d'autrui.'[110] Genet, then, who cannot relate in an ordinary human manner to the outside world because, as we have seen, he has been rejected and hence feels he does not belong, cannot relate in a normal way to his own ego either. Moreover, as we recall, he has internalized the opinion others hold of him as evil as constitutive of his true self: his ego is totally constituted from outside and is therefore necessarily doubly inauthentic. Sartre says that the ego, the *soi* is 'un idéal, une limite'.[111] In this sense then Genet tends to have an imaginary picture of himself which he cannot ever feel corresponds to anything real in his consciousness. He is alienated from himself, doomed to play the role of 'Genet': it is in this fashion that he can be termed 'imaginary'.

Moreover, as Sartre reveals, Genet is imaginary at three levels, in fact at three removes. Firstly, as we have seen, he is playing the role of thief: 'Genet joue son être pour soi-même'; secondly, even during real thefts, he is acting the role for others: 'il transforme l'être en paraître et joue pour la galérie; and thirdly, the public for whom he is acting does not in fact exist: 'comme le *paraître* exige qu'on se montre et le crime qu'on se cache, Genet, seul dans l'appartement qu'il cambriole, joue la comédie du vol pour un public fictif'.[112]

It is however through the imaginary that Genet is led to art and paradoxically to the real. We have already seen how Genet's relations with language were falsified in such a way as to make of him a natural poet; let us now look at how Genet was led to realize this propensity in actual poems. What process enabled Genet to evolve from his situation as natural aesthete to that of artist? In order to see clearly how this process took place we must first look again at Sartre's ideas on finality.

As in *Situations II* Sartre in *Saint Genet* discusses the apparent reversal of finality in art. He takes his examples firstly from the works of Genet: 'L'assassin . . . est un être qui ne peut exister qu'en fonction d'un beau geste: il a faim parce qu'il doit donner un coup de couteau;'[113] or again: 'Séduite, une fille de cosaque se venge en tuant son séducteur. Pour le spectateur, elle a tué parce qu'on l'avait violée; dans la vérité on l'a violée parce qu'elle devait tuer.'[114] This reversal of finality can occur, as we have seen, apart from art, in respect for example to natural phenomena:

> A certains moments, devant ce qu'on nomme les beautés 'naturelles', il nous arrive de percevoir comme on imagine:[115] nous saisissons le réel comme irréalité, l'être disparaît devant sa propre apparence . . . Ne dit-on pas qu'on 'croit rêver'? C'est que le paysage nous a paru témoigner d'une finalité évidente et nous avons cru qu'il avait été créé pour la manifester.[116]

We have already examined this aspect of the apparent finality in art and 'natural' beauty in a previous chapter and need not therefore repeat this here. What is

important for our discussion of Genet himself however is the extension Sartre gives to the implications of the notion, primarily by using it to make a distinction between *acte* and *geste* which will also prove useful to him later in his study of Flaubert. Because imaginary, says Sartre, Genet performs gestures rather than real acts. 'Par *actes*', Sartre indicates in *L'Être et le Néant*, 'il faut entendre toute activité synthétique de la personne, c'est-à-dire toute disposition de moyens en vue de fins.'[117] Genet however has no real project, his actions are, as we have just seen, rather play-acting, indulged in for their own sake rather than with any external end in mind; in other words his movements are real but their significance ensures that they are not true acts with a practical end outside themselves, but rather gestures which are in a certain sense their own end. Sartre sums up the distinction simply: 'Un acte qu'on accomplit pour *être*, ce n'est plus un acte, c'est un geste'.[118] Even as a child Genet's play-acting itself was not that of other children:

> D'autres enfants eussent joué au propriétaire avec des biens imaginaires. Ce caillou eût été une pièce d'or; ils eussent fait semblant d'acheter, de manger. Notre petit voleur, lui, veut manger *pour de vrai*, avec une *vraie* jouissance dans la bouche. Seulement cette jouissance vraie n'est ni voulue ni ressentie pour elle-même, elle est au service d'une tentative impossible pour coincider dans l'imaginaire avec l'essence d'un possesseur de biens. Par suite, tout le système s'irréalise, la jouissance même devient imaginaire: vrai plaisir d'un voleur, elle devient plaisir fictif d'un faux propriétaire. Il s'agit d'user la réalité jusqu'à ce qu'on voie le jour à travers.[119]

This is the very same process as takes place on the stage—finality is reversed and therefore acts become gestures: 'le meurtre devient *geste esthétique*'.[120] Indeed, for Genet even speech can become gesture when it is used to designate or transform verbally rather than to communicate: physical movement is not needed to introduce an imaginary dimension into the world, language suffices: '*la parole est geste* . . . et puis si le langage est geste, le geste est déjà langage: il est fait pour *paraître*, il s'use à signifier'.[121] Sartre uses the *acte/geste* distinction to help explain Genet's transition from aesthete to artist: a transition which he also examines in detail in his later study of Flaubert. Of Genet he says: 'Esthète, il était le proie des gestes irréalisants: artiste, il invente des actes qui réalisent des gestes'.[122]

How then did this evolution take place? Firstly, as we have seen, a gesture is distinguished from an act by its intention not by its effect. In either case the effect can be real: a murder performed for its aesthetic qualities or in order to become a murderer kills no less effectively than if the motive were some material gain. Indeed, despite the radical distinction Sartre establishes between imagination and perception, imagination can still, as we know, contribute to the production of real events. Another example in Genet's case would be his imaginative fantasies which helped him to build up sexual excitement. Once these fantasies were set down on paper they immediately come into the domain of the real. So fantasies written down to aid Genet's sexual imagination produce more than a simple ejaculation, they contribute to the creation of an art-object. Images (fantasies) plus gestures (the

game of writing) have produced material results. In playing at writing Genet produced real works. Moreover these works can affect not only Genet but also others who read them. As we shall see once Genet becomes aware of this he will be on the way out of his situation as pariah of society: 'Le nouveau choix qu'il se propose lui permettra de dépasser *toutes* ses contradictions. L'activisme et la foi vont s'unifier dans le projet de créer'.[123] In order to understand fully Genet's evolution from aesthete to artist and his transition from poetry to prose–which latter change we have so far only glimpsed in our examination of Genet as *rhétoriqueur* offering prose up as a holocaust to poetry–we must first enter into the final and most complex aspect of the imaginary.

The *tourniquets*[124] which Sartre associates with Genet develop here into a confusing and breath-taking system of interrelated concepts. These all depend on the notion of appearance, which Sartre uses to link such ostensibly opposed notions as evil and beauty, and to oppose the traditionally connected areas of poetry and beauty. Indeed beauty and evil are identified in so far as both entail the priority of appearance over being: 'Peu importe qu'il s'agisse ici de beauté et non de Mal: on verra que c'est tout un: l'une et l'autre sont la pure apparence se posant comme l'être absolu.'[125] As we have already observed and will be discussing shortly, Sartre examines, for the purposes of exploring Genet's religious mentality, the implications of the traditional scholastic identification of *le Bien* with *l'Être* and *le Mal* with *le Non-être* or appearance. For Sartre of course this kind of metaphysics is part of the *esprit de sérieux*, and he is interested not only in the intellectual sophistries which it entails but in the inauthentic moral attitudes from which it originates. According to Sartre, as we know already from *l'Être et le Néant, le juste* is afraid of his liberty, and afraid therefore of the responsibility of freely creating his own values. Value, says Sartre, 'est ce qui doit être, elle n'est jamais ce qui est'.[126] In *L'Être et le Néant* he expressed the matter in these terms:

> Il y a angoisse éthique lorsque je me considère dans mon rapport originel aux valeurs. Celles-ci, en effet, sont des exigences qui réclament un fondement. Mais ce fondement ne saurait être en aucun cas l'*être*, car toute valeur qui fonderait sa nature idéale sur son être cesserait par là même d'être valeur et réaliserait l'hétéronomie de ma volonté . . . Il s'ensuit que ma liberté est l'unique fondement des valeurs et que *rien*, absolument rien, ne me justifie d'adopter telle ou telle valeur, telle ou telle échelle de valeurs.[127]

The bourgeois refuses to recognize this fact and attempts to turn ideal values into 'des structures objectives de la réalité'.[128] He thus identifies *le Bien* with what is at the expense of ethical authenticity: 'La vertu est la mort de la conscience morale parce qu'elle est l'habitude du Bien'.[129] Sartre suggests that the artist disturbs the 'good conscience' of the bourgeois because he refuses ready-made objectified values and attempts to create his own values for which he accepts full responsibility and which he does not try to justify by reference to eternal and static rules inscribed in some transcendent dimension. Here Sartre is clearly envisaging all good art as

committed in the sense that it reveals the contingency of the world and hence works towards more authentic personal life. The bourgeois, however, Sartre argues, rejects this aspect of art which he attempts to reduce to a narrow aestheticism, cut off from the so-called real world: 'A vous les images, à moi la réalité.'[130] The rejection of reality is in fact the position not of the artist but of the aesthete, who deliberately maintains a purely imaginative stance towards the world, preferring appearance to reality, and thus, according to the logical system with which Sartre is dealing, necessarily preferring *le Non-Être* or *le Mal*. Indeed Sartre seems to believe that love of Evil is in fact primary for the aesthete, although he disguises this under the guise of love of beauty: 'La Beauté de l'esthète, c'est le Mal déguisé en valeur'.[131] This is the basis of Sartre's analysis of aestheticism in Genet: beauty, because it is only appearance, can never be grasped, and it is this very elusiveness, says Sartre, which draws Genet towards it: 'c'est *l'apparence en tant qu'apparence* qu'il chérit'.[132] However Sartre modifies his description of Genet as an aesthete by declaring that, despite his choice of the imaginary, he is nonetheless not a wholehearted aesthete in the line of Oscar Wilde, for rather than demanding judgement according to his own laws, he desires condemnation from the very moral centre against which he reacts.

Sartre makes his equation of Beauty, Evil and appearance more subtle by revealing that they are not logically interchangeable but rather interdependent: 'La Beauté n'est ni une apparence ni un être, mais un rapport: la transformation de l'être en apparence.'[133] In simple terms this would seem to mean that the recognition of beauty in the world involves a suspension of the practical attitude which sees the world as a complex of tools or even as a pure *en-soi*, in favour of an attitude which posits an imaginary finality, for example, in nature. In this sense the *being* of nature is ignored and its appearance, its *apparent* finality/beauty is allowed to come to the fore. 'Dans la Beauté "naturelle" l'être se révèle en perspective de fuite'.[134] Normally, the appreciation of natural beauty can be sustained only briefly. The aesthete is someone who tries to perpetuate the imaginative stance towards the world. In this sense Beauty can be seen as a worm eating away at the core of reality. Sartre sets out the interdependence of Beauty and Evil as follows: 'Le Mal, c'est la beauté entrevue par la Haine; la Beauté de l'esthète, c'est le Mal comme puissance d'ordre'.[135] By this he seems to mean that what the bourgeois (for whom *la Haine* appears to be a personification representing the tendency to reject all evil outside oneself on to one's fellows) sees as Evil is in fact rather appearance, the imaginary, or, according to the logic of the system, Beauty, which he fears and hates because it cannot be identified with *l'Être*, or *le Bien*. Conversely what the aesthete proclaims as Beauty is in fact a love of the imaginary in preference to the real, a rejection of being and a cult of non-being or evil. Both the bourgeois and the aesthete, then, are sensitive to the non-being at the heart of all beauty, but they react to it in totally opposed fashions.

The aesthete is contrasted again with the artist: 'A la différence des artistes,

qui, d'ordinaire, étayent la beauté de la forme sur l'agrément de la sensation . . . Genet nous dénie toute jouissance'.[136] Genet then does not love beauty for any reasons connected with so-called aesthetic pleasure in the ordinary sense of the word; Beauty is in this sense incidental to him, a means to an end. For Genet, Beauty cannot be defined by its sensory qualities. Indeed, Sartre told us very early on in the work:

Genet a une conception sévère de la beauté. Il s'inquiète peu de la matière du beau; sa force seule importe. 'La beauté, a-t-il-dit, c'est la perfection de l'organisation' . . . Mais l'organisation peut avoir pour but de terrifier. La beauté du criminel, c'est la parfaite organisation du Mal, sa plénitude, sa parfaite visibilité, sa pureté, sa puissance, sa vertigineuse évidence. Ce peut être la perfection *dans la laideur*.[137]

Beauty may be the relation of *l'être* to *l'apparence*,[138] but for Genet the physical relationship between the real and the imaginary is deliberately extremely strained: 'Ce qui frappe d'abord c'est l'écart extraordinaire qui sépare en ce cas l'imaginaire du réel'.[139] For Genet, beauty could almost be said to be metaphysical rather than physical. It is 'cette illumination douloureuse: le Néant est la fin absolue de l'Être'.[140] For this reason 'la Beauté ne comble pas'.[141] indeed this is the last thing Genet has in mind.

Before we can understand in practical terms what this beauty involves, we must look finally at Sartre's account of the distinction between poetry and beauty. Such a distinction might at first appear theoretical, but Sartre is in fact attempting to enter into and describe from the inside two distinct or distinguishable kinds of *moment privilégié*, as Genet knew them. The poetic experience as Sartre analyses it in Genet involves basically a tension between the human and the inhuman, between the *néant* of consciousness and the *être* of things. Sartre gives the example of the red armchairs in the green field which Genet finds poetic, and compares this with Rimbaud's 'salon au fond d'un lac'. The poetic always involves a contradiction, and is therefore, like all contradictions, says Sartre, never static: the mind is returned from one term of the contradiction to the other in an endless process. It is this endless meditation which is the essence of the poetic. The sight of the chairs in the field triggers off in Genet's mind a kind of *va-et-vient* which can be stated in various ways: between the human and the inhuman, culture and nature, negativity and positivity.

La contradiction du fauteuil et du pré, celle du lac et du salon reflètent à nos yeux l'ambiguïté de la condition humaine: l'homme est tout entier nature et tout entier contre nature, il dépasse le monde et le monde l'écrase . . . Le fauteuil est égaré dans le pré . . . le rouge de l'étoffe et le vert de l'herbe manifestent leurs affinités. Mais au cœur de ces affinités la contradiction éclate: la couleur de l'étoffe, inventée par l'homme et aussi par le temps, jure avec le vert cru des jeunes pousses; elle parle d'un autre monde . . . L'horizon cerne les chaises et les miroirs, ils se perdent dans la nature; mais les arêtes vives de ces meubles s'opposent rigoureusement aux molles courbes naturelles. Au reste, humain et inhumain s'échangent, passent de

l'outil à la nature et de la nature à l'outil: la géométrie est une invention de l'homme et pourtant il n'est rien de plus inhumain: les soupirs de la nature sont bien plus proches de notre contingence. En ce tour de passe-passe, aucune synthèse n'est possible, aucun arrêt.[142]

One is reminded forcibly of the 'charme infini et mystérieux' which Baudelaire found in the spectacle of a sailing ship at sea: 'L'idée poétique qui se dégage de cette opération du mouvement dans les lignes est l'hypothèse d'un être vaste, immense, compliqué, mais eurythmique, d'un animal plein de génie, souffrant et soupirant tous les soupirs et toutes les ambitions humaines.'[143] Poetry for Genet is a chimera, half-human, half-inhuman. We are reminded also of the 'sorcellerie évocatoire contenant à la fois l'objet et le sujet, le monde extérieur à l'artiste et l'artiste lui-même'.[144] For Genet too poetry is *bizarre* in Baudelaire's sense. The 'other world' to which we are being referred according to Sartre is of course the *Néant* of human consciousness, but poetry refers us to this world by emphasizing the tension between *le Néant* and *l'Être*.

The beautiful, according to the account of it which is implicit, Sartre argues, in Genet, does not involve a contradiction between *l'être* and *le néant* but rather a transformation of *l'être* into *le néant*. As Sartre describes it, the aesthetic experience in Genet is a kind of faint or suicide involving the annihilation of ordinary consciousness and thus also of the world as we are normally conscious of it. This is something Genet habitually tries to effect through dreams, 'dans les rêves il s'irréalise en irréalisant les choses',[145] i.e. he transforms the world into appearance. But Genet is constantly on the look-out for occasions when this transformation appears to occur spontaneously, when it seems forced on him by an 'aesthetic experience'. This usually happens not when Genet is looking at works of art, where he finds the imagination of other people obtrusive, but haphazardly when trivial objects or scenes seem literally to acquire a vertiginous power. Sartre gives us the example of Genet mesmerized by the beauty of a young boy setting up a roundabout at a fair in Antwerp. The aesthetic experience strikes Genet as the feeling of possessing both the world and himself. But it is possession in imagination only; it is the appearance of possession, nothing has really happened: the world has simply lost its utilitarian aspect and appears self-sufficient. Beauty is a form of quietist contemplation. To see something as beautiful involves, as we have already noted, an inversion of the normal relationship of means to end: not only this, it involves an inversion of time:

Le temps s'invertit: le coup de marteau n'est pas donné *pour monter le manège*, mais la foire, les gains futurs que le forain escompte, le manège, tout cela n'existe que pour provoquer le coup de marteau; le futur, le passé sont donnés en même temps pour produire le présent. Ce temps régressif et le temps progressif que Genet continue à vivre interfèrent soudain, Genet vit dans l'éternité.[146]

One is reminded of Marcel's interpretation of his own aesthetic experiences in *A*

la recherche du temps perdu. Once one aspect of the world has been *irréalisé* in this way, the rest of the world is drawn after it: 'D'un seul coup, en se transformant en geste, l'acte entraîne avec lui, dans l'irréel, la masse énorme de l'être'.[147] Objects have become appearances: 'l'insondable richesse de l'être s'est évanouie'; Genet, says Sartre, referring us back to *L'Imaginaire*, 'perçoit *comme on imagine*'.[148] Why, Sartre asks, does an act which Genet elevates to the status of gesture have the strange power of organizing the world around itself in this way? His answer is that the gesture refers Genet back to an archetype which is unreal, the product of his own imagination:

C'est qu'il est lui-même une absence, la simple manifestation d'un geste archétypique. Et l'archétype lui-même comment peut-il ronger tout un univers? C'est qu'il *n'est pas du tout*, c'est une simple signification vide qui se perd dans un ciel abstrait. Le monde n'existe que pour permettre un geste, le geste que pour manifester un archétype et l'archétype n'est qu'un néant. Genet reçoit cette illumination douloureuse: le Néant est la fin absolue de l'être. Cette illumination, c'est la Beauté.[149]

Sartre has led us to his conclusion that beauty must not be defined as a state or a quality but as a process: 'c'est la transformation de l'être en apparence'. Or again, as he says, beauty is 'une disparition fixe', it cannot be grasped without being destroyed, 's'il avance la main il s'efface, le monde retrouve son épaisse et vulgaire densité'. Sartre concludes with a breathtaking accumulation of paradoxes:

Il n'est pas même question de la voir car elle est l'impossibilité de voir ce qu'on voit, la nécessité d'imaginer ce qu'on perçoit. C'est une éblouissante cécité, un immense cauchemar qui donne la clé de l'univers, une révélation terrible qui n'apprend rien.[150]

Poetry and beauty then both refer us back to the negating power of human consciousness but each in a different way. Poetry for Genet implies the continuous confrontation of consciousness and the world; beauty, on the other hand, as Sartre never wearies of repeating, is 'la transformation de l'être en apparence'. 'L'une est volontaire', he says, 'elle coïncide avec la tension la plus extrême; l'autre est un évanouissement'.[151] It is in this sense that Sartre claims that the poetic and the beautiful which are often to be found practically within the same experience are in fact distinct as states of mind and involve opposed attitudes towards the world:

C'est que poésie et beauté sont presque contradictoires: le non-être poétique se révèle dans l'échec, quand l'être triomphe de toute sa massivité; il est moins donné que pressenti, qu'espéré. La Beauté, au contraire, manifeste le triomphe du néant. Dans le premier cas, l'être écrase, dans la second l'être s'allège, sonne creux, sa pression diminue; c'est que Genet poète s'acharne à vouloir le réel jusqu'à sa propre ruine, et, comme Mallarmé, proclame son naufrage et que 'rien n'a eu lieu que le lieu'; au lieu que Genet, esthète, assiste à la destruction du monde. La Poésie c'est le Mal terrassé, plus méchant encore dans son impuissance; la Beauté c'est le Mal victorieux.[152]

We can recognise in Sartre's analysis of the poetic and the beautiful a brilliant attempt to incorporate and unify within his own system intuitions taken from Baudelaire, Mallarmé and even Proust. Sartre is of course inverting the mystical-idealist theories to which such intuitions are for the most part attached in Romanticism and Symbolism by referring them consistently back to a transcendent *néant* which is human not metaphysical. Sartre is introducing a distinction which is not simply invited by logic but which gives genuine insight into two typical states of mind, and which allows him to discuss these in a way far richer than if he had merely assimilated them. His analysis of the distinction is highly original and is a fruitful enterprise in general overlooked by other literary critics and aestheticians.

We are now ready to look again at Sartre's account of Genet's evolution from aesthete to artist, and from poet to prose writer. The transition from aesthete to artist can be understood in two ways, and Sartre appears to use both of these in his account of Genet's development. In the first place he is describing a change-over from the stage of purely mental fantasy to the time when Genet first put pen to paper and objectified his dreams. We have already referred to this change and it is of less importance from a literary point of view than the second interpretation of the same evolution. For Sartre continues to describe Genet as an aesthete even once he has developed from a would-be poet into a prose writer. The continuing use of this label depends on a distinction between aesthete and artist within literature itself which we will have to examine.

Sartre sums up the whole of Genet's evolution in these terms:

Puisqu'il s'agit d'objectiver ses rêves, le dormeur passe à l'action. Héros unique de ses livres, Genet est tombé tout entier dans l'imaginaire et il devient imaginaire *en personne.* Mais voici que, dans le même moment, naît une conscience austère, lucide et calculatrice, délivrée de tous les songes, délivrée du rêveur même qui l'habitait; cette pure liberté d'artiste ne connait plus ni Bien ni Mal ou, plutôt, elle n'en fait plus que les objets de son art: Genet s'est libéré.

We will look first at the literary transition from poetry to prose. As we have seen, Genet is never a true poet, his poetry tends to be prosaic, for rather than using words for their own sake he uses them to deliver a kind of prose message. Indeed Sartre describes Genet as a 'prosateur malgré lui'.[154] Prose and poetry however, as we know are not merely different genres, they involve different attitudes towards the reader. Sartre refers to this difference several times in *Saint Genet.* He is bringing into his account of Genet's choices a factor which, although referred to in *Situations II,* is absent from his account of Baudelaire, but which will be even more fully developed in his discussion of Flaubert: the implicit relationship of the writer to his public. The prose writer is speaking to his readers and requires their reciprocity for communication to take place:

Le prosateur, . . . *profane* par nature, reconnaît la liberté de ses lecteurs dans l'exacte mesure où il leur demande de reconnaître la sienne . . . le prosateur *parle* au lecteur

. . . il utilise le langage comme moyen terme entre lui-même et l'Autre . . . Entre le prosateur et le lecteur le langage s'annule au profit des idées qu'il a véhiculées.[155]

The poet, on the other hand, has a very different relationship with his reader: 'le poète . . . exige d'être reconnu par un public qu'il ne reconnaît pas,'[156] in other words he is interested in his poem rather than in his reader; indeed the reader is just a means to an end which is the actualization of the poem:

Le poète . . . se sert de l'Autre comme intermédiaire entre le langage et lui-même . . . Entre le langage et le poète, c'est le lecteur qui tend à s'effacer pour devenir pur véhicule de poème; son rôle est *d'objectiver la parole* pour refléter au poète sa subjectivité créatrice sous forme de puissance sacrée.[157]

As in *Situations II* Sartre recognizes, once again, that the two forms of language are not rigorously distinct: 'Tout langage est, dans une certaine mesure, poétique.'[158] Sartre returns to this theme in 1960 in his interview with M. Chapsal: 'Dans la prose il y a réciprocité; dans la poésie, je pense que l'autre sert uniquement de révélateur.'[159] Sartre explains his position more precisely here and we shall examine this passage from the interview in detail at a later stage when we are attempting to clarify Sartre's ideas on language.

The basis of prose is then reciprocal communication, and indeed Genet would seem to have no desire for or real chance of a relationship of reciprocity with the bourgeois public. Genet writes originally for himself alone but Sartre suggests that the written work itself calls out, as it were, for a reader:

En écrivant pour son plaisir les songes incommunicables de sa singularité, Genet les a transformés en exigences de communication . . . Genet a d'abord écrit pour affirmer sa solitude, pour se suffire; et c'est l'écriture elle-même qui, par ses problèmes, l'a conduit insensiblement à chercher des lecteurs.[160]

Genet then comes to desire a certain sort of communication, a kind of black magic through which he could 'infecter les Justes de ses images'.[161] And it is this desire which leads Genet from poetry to prose and eventually also from aesthete to artist. 'Ecrire c'est communiquer: s'il veut infecter les bien-pensants de ses rêves, il faudra qu'il se soucie de ce qui se passe dans leur tête. Ils n'étaient jusqu'alors que des apparences sacrées, figées dans une attitude de réprobation; ils vont devenir des hommes.'[162] Once Genet realizes that he in fact desires this kind of communication, unusual though it may be, he will turn from prosaic poetry to the more natural medium for communication, prose itself, which he will use in order, he hopes, to introduce Beauty, poetry, *non-être* and ultimately evil into the lives of his bourgeois readers.

Indeed, Sartre warns the reader: 'il ne servirait à rien de se tenir sur ses gardes et de prendre le Beau en laissant le Mal. Car Beau et Mal sont une seule chose'.[163] However if evil appears here at first triumphant we must expect the reversal in its fortunes necessary according to the *qui perd gagne* mechanism. This reversal occurs

primarily with respect to Genet himself: his attempt to do and be evil has culminated in his aesthetic writings: 'Ecrivant ses rêves il fait le Mal sans recourir à l'Être. Par son action d'artiste et de poète, qui réalise enfin l'irréalisable, il contraint les autres à soutenir, en ses lieu et place, le faux contre le vrai, le Mal contre le Bien, le Néant contre l'Être.'[164] 'En ses lieu et place': does this then imply that Genet himself no longer upholds the tenets of evil which we find in his works? It would seem indeed that this is the eventual result:

> Le livre est fini: ce dépouillement verbal s'achève par le silence . . . Genet . . . s'est délivré du Verbe par le 'full employment' des termes; il s'est délivré de la beauté en la faisant passer dans le langage: pure organisation du monde verbal, elle s'enfonce avec ce monde dans le silence. Surtout il a réussi ce qu'il n'envisageait pas d'entreprendre: *il s'est libéré du Bien et du Mal.* L'un et l'autre, en effet, se sont coulés dans l'œuvre et n'ont plus de sens que par elle: le mal c'est un certain ordre sophistique qu'on impose aux mots et qui donne lieu à des significations irréalisables; le Bien, l'ordre logique des mots qui désignent l'Être, n'existe que pour être violé par les jugements magnifiants. Quand le silence se referme sur l'œuvre, quand elle coule, emportée par son propre poids, au fond de la nuit, Bien et Mal sombrent dans le même néant . . . Le sens profond du moralisme de Genet se découvre enfin: il a mis la morale dans les mots pour s'en débarrasser.[165]

In other words Genet's works have changed him from an aesthete into an artist; they have achieved far more than merely trapping the just man: they have liberated Genet himself from the preoccupations that inspired them. The relationship between the writer and his work is here seen not as a simple one-way process of cause and effect, but rather as a dialectical interaction in which the writer is necessarily transformed by his writing. This adds a further dimension to Sartre's criticism, one which he will again develop in greater depth in *L'Idiot de la famille.*

Genet has achieved all he desired and more. But this success itself has results which we may well have anticipated: 'Il a gagné, c'est sûr. Mais le jeu de qui perd gagne a des retournements prévus: il a perdu donc gagné; mais s'il gagne, voilà qu'il perd. L'échec secret de tout triomphe c'est que le vainqueur est changé par sa victoire et le vaincu par sa défaite.'[166] Just as the bourgeois can never be the same having read Genet's works, Genet too must change. This change takes place in several ways. In practical terms, Genet is accepted by society, admired, and incidentally rendered incapable of committing any more crimes: as a famous author-thief he has become, in a sense, beyond the law: 'On l'a gracié: rien ne le menace: il vit dans une "honnête" aisance'.[167] Genet then has *'liquidé le Sacré;* il ne croit plus à la Sainteté ni au Mal et pourtant il ne peut écrire sur rien d'autre'.[168] It would appear that the previous solutions are now closed to him: he cannot continue to be a thief, nor can he continue to write as he has done for the sources of his imagination have necessarily been exhausted. Sartre sees two ways out: Genet will become a Trappist or an 'écrivain tout neuf'.[169] We know that genius is, for Sartre, a choice made when all other issues are closed, and he seems to suggest that Genet might make this choice a second time, and write a further series of novels

totally different from the first: more reflective, and self-conscious at a second degree.

> Bref, Genet, s'il écrit, reprendra l'aventure d'*Igitur;* il tentera d'atteindre l'instant suprême, c'est-à-dire le plus haut degré d'Abstraction et de réflexion . . . il verra l'occasion d'établir une symbolique universelle. Du Mal il ne conserve plus qu'une composante et c'est la Beauté.[170]

Genet can no longer be an aesthete creating beauty in order to do Evil: 'Il peut rêver sans doute de faire une œuvre *encore* plus belle: mais c'est un souci d'artiste, non de criminel'.[171] In fact Sartre suggests that it might be Genet who would be capable of writing a 'roman mallarméen' in which language would become in a sense equivalent to silence and silence equivalent to speech.

As we have seen elsewhere in *Saint Genet* Sartre tends to use Mallarmé in order to explain Genet, he is thus in a sense writing not only about the latter but also about the former. Between the lines of his discussion of Genet we can find an implicit (and sometimes explicit) discussion of Mallarmé which probably incorporates material from the lost study of the poet referred to by Simone de Beauvoir[172]: in particular his description of Genet as caught in the impossible *tourniquets* of *L'Être* and *le Néant,* with all the ambiguities attendant upon these two terms.

From Sartre's brief description of what he imagines Genet's future aims to be, it would seem that he envisages a work of extraordinarily coherent internal and self-referring symbolism: 'où cet ensemble symbolique serait à la fois *le* symbole de tous les symboles et le symbole de Rien'.[173] In other words, a symbol to end all symbols in both senses of this expression: both culminating and terminating. The multiplicity of the real would thus be essential to his work rather than a hindrance, for the work would gain in stature the more apparently disparate elements it contained in a unified whole. It is clear that this unification of the real would be the supreme example of a retractile imagination: the whole world brought together in one book. Sartre borrows from Mallarmé a very picturesque image to convey this unifying process: 'La Beauté, pour lui, est dans le mouvement qui referme le monde comme un éventail'.[174] The result of this process Sartre suggests, in a perhaps uncharacteristically Hegelian mood, would be both *l'Être* and *le Néant:* 'L'Être identique à soi qui dissout et ronge en son sein les douleurs, les couleurs, le temps, l'événement et l'espace.'[175] The whole world, all that exists, would be included. But the contraction of this infinite multiplicity would necessarily be infinite also: 'Transposée, purifiée, sublimée, Genet retrouvera sur ce plan sa passion d'anéantir le monde et de s'anéantir. On comprend qu'il ne sache encore s'il va parler ou se taire: à ce niveau d'abstraction la parole et le silence ne font qu'un'.[176] 'A ce niveau d'abstraction'—Sartre is indeed working in exceedingly ethereal realms, where all ideas are carried through to their logical conclusions. The problems of art itself are being posed in their most radical form: realism and idealism would seem to come

together in an idea of art which could include the whole world and thereby reduce it to nothing. Sartre does not pose these questions directly, but he leads the reader to ask whether in fact all art must not be ultimately reductive in so far as it reduces natural multiplicity to a verbal unity. However he has answered us elsewhere in the work: this is retractile art, 'right-wing' as he calls it, and its opposite, expansive art, reintroduces verbally the multiplicity which language itself tends to annul by its power of universalizing. Neither Genet nor even Mallarmé is *the artist:* he is only a certain individual artist, representing, at most, one type of art.

We have not yet completed our examination of the effect on Genet of the success of his art according to the *qui perd gagne* mechanism. Delivered through his art from his alienation, Genet is able to reflect upon his situation and to examine the mainsprings of his art and his sensibility. He is no longer defined by other people's judgements of him and can himself see therefore what Sartre hopes we too will learn from his works: that men cannot be categorized as either just or unjust, and that those we name evil are merely scapegoats of a society afraid of its own potential for destruction. 'Le sacré a déserté son univers',[177] says Sartre. If the *Sacré* has gone, Genet's identification of Beauty and Evil must also disappear and with it his aestheticism: indeed a new alignment, at first sight more traditional, would seem to be emerging. Even in the work Genet has already written Sartre sees a change of moral emphasis: 'La tentation de la morale revient à plusieurs reprises . . . déjà il tire de son expérience des recettes, des maximes'.[178] This temptation however starts out by adding fuel to the fire of Genet's intention to harm: he is still writing false prose, and the morals he draws belong to this false communication, but nonetheless Genet has changed: 'Sa prose est une fausse prose . . . mais quel que soit l'usage qu'il en veuille faire, Genet a réintroduit en lui des vertus; il n'est *déjà plus le même.*'[179] Even when Genet is describing imaginary sexual games between Paulo and Hitler in *Pompes funèbres,* 'le contenu de ces imaginations est *moral;* moraux les commentaires qui s'y attachent'.[180] Sartre quotes from the passage which abounds with words like 'intégrité', 'générosité sans égale', 'systématique travail'. The subject-matter may be intended to be morally objectionable, but a respect for more recognizable values has crept in. 'Ainsi l'acte sexuel devient, dans l'imaginaire, une dramatisation des valeurs.'[181] Sartre sees Genet as using his experiences to enrich his own understanding of himself and to enable himself to progress. Genet will go through these stages, these different relations to morality, to emerge at the end with a far deeper understanding of authentic moral choice:

Autrefois, il substituait, pour mieux détruire, les canons de l'esthétique aux règles de la morale. Aujourd'hui qu'il est délivré du Mal, le mouvement s'est inversé: puisque c'est le Verbe qui l'a sauvé par sa magnificence, puisque l'enfant méchant en suivant jusqu'au bout son esthétisme s'est changé en homme, il faut que les valeurs esthétiques contiennent en quelque mesure et relèvent des valeurs de l'éthique. Il ne s'agit plus de nier celles-ci au profit de celles-là mais d'approfondir les premières jusqu'à y trouver les secondes, bref, d'écrire, en s'appuyant sur

l'examen de son propre histoire, un traité du Beau qui soit un traité du Bien.[182]

We are evidently far removed here from a simple equation of *le Beau* and *le Bien.* We have already discussed Sartre's own ideas on the interrelationship of Beauty and Goodness, moving from his early rejection in *L'Imaginaire* of any connection between them, through a stage when, because of his somewhat narrow early definition of committed art, he risked identifying the two in an aesthetically oversimple fashion, towards a subtle appreciation of the interrelationship of the two elements which I have compared with the subtlety and complexity of Baudelaire's own position in his critical essays. This complexity is evident in *Saint Genet;* the process would appear to have been dialectical. A similar process, starting from the opposing position, but ending in a similar synthesis, has been undergone by Genet also, for having turned away from a childhood identification of Goodness, Beauty and Truth, he created works in which Beauty stood apart from Truth and Goodness and was identified with falsehood and Evil, eventually to emerge from this creation, Sartre suggests, with a renewed sense of the interconnection of art and morality: not now as a facile acceptance of unthinking bourgeois assumptions, but rather on a deeper level on which values from different spheres can relate meaningfully to each other because they are seen to be humanly created rather than static objectified rules.

Like Baudelaire, Genet starts out by rejecting the values of the bourgeois society in which he lives; indeed he is in this respect like Flaubert also who once wrote, depriving the bourgeois of even a grammatical humanity: 'j'appelle bourgeois tout ce qui pense bassement'. In some sense all three writers could be called nihilists for they have no recognizable system of values or morality to put in place of the old. Sartre also has frequently been called a nihilist,[183] or a 'philosophe de la contestation',[184] implying that he too rejects accepted human values but gives us nothing with which to replace them. We know Sartre's answer to this: that each individual invents his own values and that objectified morality implies a rejection of human freedom and potential for choice. This perhaps helps explain his interest in these three apparently uncommitted writers; their very lack of conventional commitment protects them from the pitfalls of the *esprit de sérieux,* and gives Sartre a chance to look for a morality on a level deeper than that envisaged by an abstract notion of ethics. The values of these three writers are fundamental to their 'projects': not easily accepted, ready-made values, but values even more basic in Sartre's eyes than so-called 'goodness', hard to conceptualize except in Sartre's own terms of liberty and authenticity. It is according then to their own values that Sartre judges them: Baudelaire was at first found wanting but later, as we have seen, redeemed by an older and more sensitive Sartre; Genet has been elevated to sainthood; and we shall see in the next chapter the eventual fate of Gustave Flaubert.

CHAPTER 5

L'IDIOT DE LA FAMILLE

L'Idiot de la famille is arguably the most maligned, the most admired, and the least read of all Sartre's works. It is a work of dual purpose: a study of methodology as much as a study of Flaubert. 'Mon but est de montrer une méthode et de montrer un homme'.[1] Indeed for Sartre it is perhaps the method itself which is, theoretically at least, the essential: he recognizes that 'aller chercher quelqu'un du XIX^{e} siècle et puis s'occuper de ce qu'il a fait le 18 juin 1838, on peut appeler cela une fuite',[2] but considers that this apparent escapism is redeemed by his central aim: 'mon but est de proposer une méthode sur laquelle on pourra ensuite construire une autre méthode, et cela, selon moi, c'est contemporain.'[3] Sartre's method is once again the progressive-regressive, synthetico-analytic approach already discussed in the previous chapter, but applied here with a rigour and thoroughness unmatched even by *Saint Genet.* Not only does Sartre interrogate the final years of Flaubert's life to illumine his childhood choices and attitudes, but the regressive analysis takes him back to Flaubert as a suckling, and he even regrets having no knowledge of the foetus's life in the uterus.

Why does Sartre consider his method to be contemporary and, by implication, committed? The first answer is simply that Sartre is working not only within extentialism but also within historical materialism which he claims to extend to language and even thought. In other words he is putting his work within a Marxist framework whilst extending the limits of Marxist analysis to incorporate studies of the imagination and of the individual which enrich and expand the field of knowledge. The *Idiot* has, however, been given no warmer a reception by Marxists than the *Critique* of a decade earlier. More interesting is the more precise answer to the question of Sartre's commitment in the *Idiot:* 'Le projet profond dans le *Flaubert,* c'est celui de montrer qu'au fond tout est communicable et qu'on peut arriver, sans être Dieu, en étant un homme comme un autre, à comprendre parfaitement, si on a les éléments qu'il faut, un homme.'[4] This profoundly rationalist statement perhaps belies the subtlety of Sartre's discussion of knowledge and communication in the *Idiot,* where, although a rational attitude still prevails, the categorical and over-confident rationalism of *L'Être et le Néant* has been left far behind. It has, furthermore, important implications for both Sartrean psycho-analysis and aesthetics which will be discussed in some detail at a later stage.

We come now to the question we asked previously of Baudelaire and of Genet: why Flaubert? Sartre himself has given us the answers this time, two slightly different sets of answers: firstly in the preface to the *Idiot* itself, and secondly in an interview with the *New Left Review*. 'J'ai eu le sentiment d'un compte à régler avec lui':[5] this first answer in the preface has given rise to much controversy as to the nature of Sartre's involvement with Flaubert, and we must return to it in more detail shortly. Secondly in the preface Sartre says that Flaubert 's'est objectivé dans ses livres',[6] in such a way as to provide an ideal subject in whom to examine the complex interrelationship between man and work. Thirdly Sartre sees Flaubert's early works and letters as providing 'la confidence la plus étrange, la plus aisément déchiffrable: on croirait entendre un névrosé parlant "au hasard" sur le divan du psychanalyste'.[7] The belief that written texts can provide material for psychoanalysis forms part of a wider attitude to analysis which has been hotly disputed and which we shall be discussing later. Finally, Sartre adds, as if in an afterthought, that Flaubert 'créateur du roman "moderne", est au carrefour de tous nos problèmes littéraires d'aujourd'hui';[8] and in fact the aesthetic analyses which arise from this aspect of Flaubert's work provide what may be seen as the most rewarding sections of the *Idiot* for a reader more interested in literary criticism than in historical materialism.

The reasons Sartre gives in his interview overlap the preface to some extent, but also expand upon it. His first reason is the circumstantial one of the enormous amount of information Flaubert left about himself in his correspondence. Secondly we find, rather strangely, the three reasons of the preface combined in one answer: 'Flaubert représente . . . l'opposé exact de ma propre conception de la littérature: un désengagement total et la recherche d'un idéal formel qui n'est pas du tout le mien . . . je voyais en lui, à tous points de vue, le contraire de moi-même.'[9] However, Sartre adds, Flaubert has had a great literary influence and is therefore an ideal object of study. Moreover Sartre see Flaubert as writing about himself through his characters: 'le témoignage de Flaubert sur lui-même—cette confession boudeuse et déguisée, nourrie de cette haine de soi . . . est une chose exceptionnelle'.[10] The personal, the aesthetic and the psychoanalytic are here unified in the 'seconde raison de choisir Flaubert'.[11] Thirdly, 'il est imaginaire . . . l'étude de Flaubert représente, pour moi, une suite à l'un de mes premiers livres, *L'Imaginaire*'.[12] The *Idiot* gives Sartre another opportunity to discuss the relations between the real and the imaginary, and the two opposing ways in which literature can make use of the imaginary. Finally, Sartre says, 'à travers tout cela, il est possible de poser la question "Quel était le *monde social imaginaire* de la rêveuse bourgeoisie de 1848? " '.[13] and this is Sartre's first reference to the sociological discussions which are to be found chiefly in volume III.

Sartre's reasons are then personal, psychoanalytical, aesthetic and sociological. The latter three reasons correspond broadly speaking to the three major aspects of the *Idiot* and the three headings under which we shall be discussing the work. Let

us look now at the 'personal' reasons for Sartre's choice and the interest which they have aroused. Sartre has declared quite categorically: 'je ne pense pas qu'il y ait un intérêt à dire que je me découvre dans Flaubert . . . j'ai très peu de points communs avec Flaubert'.[14] In general however critics have taken Sartre's denials of his affinities with Flaubert as further proof of their existence and interpreted the *Idiot* as a kind of self-exorcism. And indeed Sartre himself seems to confirm such a notion in his interview with Jacqueline Piatier when, having declared that his choice of Flaubert depended on the latter's being 'à l'opposé de ce que je suis. On a besoin de se frotter à ce qui vous conteste', he continues immediately, as if the two ideas were one and the same, 'j'ai souvent pensé contre moi-même . . . C'est ainsi qu'il faut penser: se soulever contre tout ce qu'on peut avoir d'"inculqué" en soi'.[15] The implication is clearly that in contesting Flaubert Sartre is contesting something *inculqué* in himself. And this is doubtless the case: the situation of a 'committed' writer in present-day society is a paradoxical and ambiguous one, requiring constant vigilance against adopting the attitudes of a bourgeois public which tends, like Flaubert, to set art on a pedestal and to see the writer as part of an élite. Sartre of course rejects entirely any notion of the artist belonging to what has contemptuously been called the *vedettariat.*[16] Man is what he does, not the sum of his temptations, though these may of course influence his activities, and despite his long-lived belief in literature as an absolute, which ended apparently in the early 1950s and was repudiated in *Les Mots,* Sartre has never indulged in uncommitted writing any more than he has countenanced the idea of an artistic élite.

But if art is not an absolute, it is still a necessity, and Sartre has declared himself to be in agreement with Marx's notion that in an ideal society all men would write.[17] Moreover, if Sartre opposes the ideal of committed art to that of pure art, the latter remains nonetheless an ideal. Indeed, as we have seen, the original radical opposition between the two poles of Sartre's aesthetics has been gradually eroded: Sartre's criticism represents a persistent and increasingly subtle attempt to reunite them. Flaubert will prove the test-case of the reunification. Depending on his perspective and his polemical intent, Sartre will describe Flaubert as either totally uncommitted or as totally committed. Both Sartre and his critics would seem to express only half the truth: Flaubert is indeed the opposite of Sartre as a writer, but he represents a kind of art which has always fascinated Sartre and which he is not prepared to abandon. The *Idiot* is not so much an exorcism as a reconciliation.

As well as self-exorcism, the *Idiot* has been described as autobiography. Parallels have been pointed out between the social backgrounds, family situations, status, reading-public, and anti-bourgeois feeling of Sartre and Flaubert; and more superficial similarities have been seen for example in the attitude of Flaubert to the Académie and of Sartre to the Nobel prize, in Flaubert's attitude to Napoléon III and in Sartre's to de Gaulle.[18] But the autobiographical dimension of the *Idiot* lies rather on a level which is both deeper and more significant: like any artistic or critical work the *Idiot* contains a coalescence of subject and object. And the more

total the portrait of the object, the more total the revelation of the subject. Claude Burgelin gives a suggestive account of the way in which the *Idiot* can be seen as contributing to our knowledge of Sartre as much as to that of Flaubert. He rejects criticism which accuses the work of being 'autobiographie mal déguisée, psychanalyse tronquée, argumentation truquée', and describes such attacks as revealing a facile, positivistic approach, formulated 'au nom de l'idée implicite d'une parole critique "vraie" où le discours trouverait son "vrai" centre'.[19] Burgelin explains:

Après que Marx et Freud ont ruiné une représentation de l'individu hérité de l'idéologie bourgeoise (l'idée d'un sujet autonome, maître de son langage, capable de rendre compte de son histoire dans un discours autobiographique) l'entreprise littéraire de cerner ce que l'on croit avoir été la vérité doit nécessairement passer par d'autres cheminements. Si l'homme est un 'universel singulier' (Hegel et Sartre *dixerunt*) on ne peut parler de sa singularité qu'à proportion qu'on appréhende en soi autrui et tout le réel social et historique qui nous conditionne . . . On ne peut se dire qu'en passant par le discours sur autrui: l'autobiographie passe par l'anthropologie. Que se dire soi signifie une réflexion critique sur la société et les moyens de connaissance que nous en avons, qu'on ne puisse se dire qu'en excentrant au maximum le discours sur soi, tout cela ne peut, par une dialectique réciproque, que renouveler le discours critique, qui en reçoit de nouvelles résonances.[20]

In other words the most objective writing must necessarily meet the most egocentric. Sartre must reveal himself through his criticism as he has himself recognized both explicitly and implicitly on numerous occasions. Of the artist for example, he writes: 'par la figuration de l'être du dehors, il présente aux autres l'être du dedans, *sa* chair, la leur,'[21] and in the *Idiot* itself he affirms that 'le totalisateur est lui-même totalisé.'[22] As I have already indicated,[23] this is no Sartrean version of subjective idealism, but rather the recognition, increasingly present in his philosophy since *L'Être et le Néant,* that all truth is situated, human, and historically relative. In 1966 Sartre applies the notion of 'situation' explicitly to philosophy itself: 'La philosophie–elle-même située–fait l'étude [des] situations d'un point de vue dialectique'.[24] Subjective and objective cannot then be rigorously separated; but equally insufficient are the facile identifications of Sartre and Flaubert which tend to reduce the complex examination of man and processes of knowledge to a simple self-portrait.

The complexity and size of the *Idiot* make any comprehensive account of it impossible. To follow Sartre's order would result in repetition and fragmentation of discussion, unless the writer was competent to attempt a dialectical criticism of a dialectical work. It therefore seems better to take the three aspects which have already been referred to: psychoanalysis, sociology and aesthetics, and discuss each of these in turn. The first two sections correspond broadly speaking to the two poles around which Sartre is creating his new anthropology (psychoanalysis and Marxism): and the third to the more purely literary notions which Sartre has

perhaps played down in his own accounts of the *Idiot*. Some topics will therefore be dealt with in two sections: for example language and the real-imaginary distinction will be discussed from a different angle in Sections I and III. The divisions perhaps falsify the effect of the *Idiot* in that they may mask the interdependence of the various aspects, but they are not arbitrary, and are moreover general enough to allow something approaching a comprehensive discussion.

I: Psychoanalysis

Sartre's declaration of his intention to draw extensively on both psychoanalysis and Marxism, together with his use of Freudian terminology, has necessarily re-opened the question of the relations between his own existential analysis and traditional or Freudian analysis. Sartre's most extended discussion of this point was unfortunately written thirty years before the *Idiot*, but it is nonetheless to *L'Être et le Néant* that we must turn first. We have, in the previous chapter, already looked at Sartre's account of the principles, aim and method of his own analysis, at the end of which he says:

L'esquisse première de cette méthode nous est fournie par la psychanalyse de Freud et de ses disciples. C'est pourquoi il convient ici de marquer plus précisément en quoi la psychanalyse existentielle s'inspirera de la psychanalyse proprement dite et en quoi elle en différera radicalement.[1]

It would seem useful to sum up here the points of similarity and difference as Sartre saw them in 1943.

Firstly, both analyses consider all manifestations of 'la vie psychique' as relating symbolically to the fundamental structures of the individual. Secondly, neither believes in 'données premières', in the sense that nothing precedes human liberty for the existentialist, or personal history for the Freudian. Here Sartre manages to bring even the *libido* over into his camp: 'La libido n'est rien en dehors de ses fixations concrètes, sinon une possibilité permanente de se fixer n'importe comment sur n'importe quoi.'[2] Both analyses therefore consider the human being as an 'historialisation perpétuelle' and attempt to uncover the meaning, direction and transformations of this history. A fourth similarity follows from this: the importance of man's situation in the world:

Les enquêtes psychanalytiques visent à reconstituer la vie du sujet de la naissance à l'instant de la cure; elles utilisent tous les documents objectifs qu'elles pourront trouver: lettres, témoignages, journaux intimes, renseignements 'sociaux' de toute espèce. Et ce qu'elles visent à restituer est moins un pur événement psychique qu'un couple: l'événement crucial de l'enfance et la cristallisation psychique autout de cet événement.[3]

Facts of personal history are thus seen both as factors contributing to the psychic

evolution and as symbols of that evolution.

Both analyses, says Sartre, seek a fundamental pre-logical attitude which can only be reconstituted according to 'des lois de synthèse spécifiques'. For Freudians this attitude is the *complex* whose very name Sartre sees as indicative of its polyvalence. For existentialists it is the original choice which is also prelogical and cannot therefore be interrogated according to logical laws. Neither analysis sees the subject as in a privileged position to undertake his own analysis: both desire a totally objective method in which the fruits of personal reflexion are treated as documentary evidence in much the same way as the comments of other people. Here Sartre recognizes the fundamental difference between himself and Freud over the existence of the unconscious, but emphasizes the non-rational aspect of his own notion of consciousness: the 'projet fondamental' is '*vécu* . . . et, comme tel, totalement conscient' but it is not 'connu'.[4] Consciousness then is not necessarily knowledge. Reflexion[5] does not reveal the original project in its pure form but rather 'le désir singulier et daté dans l'enchevêtrement touffu de sa caractéristique'.[6] Reflexion does not necessarily have the instruments or the techniques for isolating the choice itself which is symbolised, or for conceptualizing the choice:

> Il ne s'agit point d'une énigme indevinée, comme le croient les freudiens: tout est là, lumineux, la réflexion jouit de tout, saisit tout. Mais ce 'mystère en pleine lumière' vient plutôt de ce que cette jouissance est privée des moyens qui permettent ordinairement l'*analyse* et la *conceptualisation.*[7]

Psychoanalysis permits the subject to know what he already in a sense 'understood'. (Sartre's distinction between natural, unconceptualized *compréhension* or awareness and a more formulated *connaissance* or knowledge is of great importance for his notion of *le vécu*, and we need therefore to bear constantly in mind the specific and perhaps even idiosyncratic senses which he attributes to these two words).[8] Analysis, whether Freudian or existentialist, can only reveal complexes or projects from an external viewpoint, it cannot reveal 'le projet tel qu'il est pour soi, le complexe dans son être propre'.[9] However the self-knowledge acquired will illumine the subject's reflexion upon himself and can lead him to a 'jouissance qui sera quasi-savoir'.[10]

Sartre proceeds next to examine the chief differences between his analysis and that of Freud. He rejects firstly what Eveline Pinto[11] calls Freudian monism which reduces the immense diversity of human reality by envisaging all psychic activity as rooted in either the *libido* or the Adlerian will-to-power. Sartre's chief objection to these notions is that they are not 'des irréductibles' of which one has an 'intuition évidente'. Here Sartre could be seen as using his own phenomenology to escape discussion of the two psychoanalytic originating principles by declaring his own to be self-evident. It could be argued that existentialist choices also come down to a universal desire to be *en-soi-pour-soi*. Is this not, like the *libido*, 'un terme abstrait et général . . . qui serait différencié et concrétisé en complexes',[12]

or rather, in Sartre's case, choices? This argument is perhaps plausible but there is surely a difference in status between the *libido* and the desire to be *en-soi-pour-soi*; for the latter, whilst not mentioned here by Sartre, is one with the basic human desire to *be*, of which Sartre can justifiably claim to have a direct intuition.

Fourthly, Sartre rejects what he sees as the mechanism of traditional psychoanalytical discussions of the relations between man and his *milieu*. According to Sartre: 'Le milieu ne saurait agir sur le sujet que dans la mesure exacte où il le comprend, c'est-à-dire où il le transforme en situation. Aucune description objective de ce milieu ne saurait donc nous servir.'[13] As a consequence of the existentialist stress on individual choice, a fifth difference emerges: namely that existential analysis rejects any notion of a universal symbolism but rather suggests that even individual symbolism is open to change.

Sartre reiterates here his rejection of the suggestion that consciousness is in some sense 'inhabited'; the object of analysis is, for Sartre, one with consciousness itself; he insists that were this not so the subject would be unable to recognise his so-called 'unconscious' desires and impulses when they were revealed to him: 'Si vraiment le complexe est inconscient, c'est-à-dire si le signe est séparé du signifié par un barrage, comment le sujet pourrait-il le *reconnaître*?'[14] Sartre is returning here to the topic already tackled from another angle in his discussion of *mauvaise foi*: if the unconscious and the conscious are radically separated then what is the origin of resistance to analysis, and, moreover, how is recognition of the 'complex' possible? The conscious mind cannot resist analysis for it is presumed unaware of the contents of the unconscious; and the unconscious mind itself is supposedly attempting not to resist analysis but rather to express itself and avoid the activity of the censor-mechanism. The resistance must come from the censor-mechanism itself therefore, Sartre suggests, and the problem is thus merely displaced: if the censor does not know what it is repressing how can it perform the repression? If it *does* know its object it must also be aware of its function: 'Il faut qu'elle soit conscience (d')être conscience de la tendance à refouler, mais précisément *pour n'en être pas conscience*. Qu'est-ce à dire sinon que la censure doit être de mauvaise foi?'[15] This is indeed problematical, but Freudians would doubtless reply that Sartre's own distinction between *conscience* or *compréhension* and *connaissance* poses equally serious problems.

Finally, Sartre concludes, existential psychoanalysis will not examine merely 'les rêves, les actes manqués, les obsessions et les névroses, mais aussi et surtout les pensées de la veille, les actes réussis et adaptés, le style, etc.'[16] It is perhaps the *surtout* which has contributed to much of the Freudian outrage at the psychoanalytic elements of the *Idiot de la famille*.

In 1943, then, all the elements of Sartre's attitude to Freud are already present, though they will perhaps change in importance as his own ideas develop. Sartre's later discussions of Freud centre chiefly on the notions of finality, the *vécu* and the unconscious. In 1966 Sartre criticizes traditional psychoanalysis for remaining 'sur

un plan non-dialectique':[17] 'Vous pouvez considérer que tout projet est une fuite mais vous devriez aussi considérer que toute fuite est un projet.'[18] In an interview with the *New Left Review* in 1969 Sartre admits that he accepts many of the facts which Freud revealed, such as 'les *faits* du déguisement et de la répression',[19] but that he finds their expression unacceptably mythological and mechanistic because of the use of the language of physiology and biology. (Let us note in passing that in 1960 Sartre refers to this mythology as 'parfaitement inoffensive'[20] when he is concerned to show that psychoanalysis does not conflict with Marxism). Here we see again Sartre's total rejection of any 'résidu psycho-biologique'[21] which in 1943 he accused Freud of retaining. According to Sartre, Freud has intuitions of the truth when he describes processes as part of a subjective finality, but this too often degenerates into a merely mechanistic description. A serious consequence of this 'syncrétisme' is, then, the lack of a dialectical structure. Sartre means of course the kind of structure which permits more than an unquestioning acceptance of both an idea and its opposite with the vague explanation that 'après tout, "les opposés s'interpénètrent" '.[22] A dialectical approach would, he thinks, present a far more logical and structured account of the mass of facts at present seen as linked only loosely.

In the same interview Sartre declares that he has replaced his old notion of *conscience* by that of *le vécu*. As I have already indicated, this notion is of vital importance to a full understanding of Sartre's account of Flaubert in the *Idiot* and should therefore be looked at closely. The term *vécu* can best be explained rather than paraphrased for it does not correspond to any area of experience previously demarcated in the French language; it rather covers several areas previously separated by Freudian analysis, and included by Sartre within 'consciousness' despite the evident conflict with the established usage of this term. The *vécu*, Sartre explains,

> Ne désigne ni les refuges du préconscient, ni l'inconscient, ni le conscient, mais le terrain sur lequel l'individu est constamment submergé par lui-même, par ses propres richesses, et où la conscience a l'astuce de se déterminer elle-même par l'oubli . . . Ce que j'appelle le *vécu*, c'est précisément l'ensemble du processus dialectique de la vie psychique, un processus qui reste nécessairement opaque à lui-même car il est une constante totalisation, et une totalisation *que ni peut être consciente de ce qu'elle est*. On peut être conscient, en effet, d'une totalisation extérieure, mais non d'une totalisation qui totalise également la conscience. En ce sens, le vécu est toujours susceptible de compréhension, jamais de connaissance.[23]

We have here an expansion of notions previously expressed in *L'Être et le Néant* but involving a very important reformulation: the totalisation referred to is not *conscious* of what it is. The *conscience/connaissance* distinction (according to which the *vécu* was 'totalement conscient' but not 'connu')[24] would seem to have been replaced by its counterpart the *compréhension/connaissance* distinction. This is evidently due to the increasing flexibility of Sartre's attitude towards the

unconscious, and his increasing awareness of the need to make distinctions within his all-pervading notion of 'consciousness'. He goes so far as to say that he will discuss Flaubert's relations with 'ce qu'on appelle ordinairement l'inconscient et que j'appellerais plutôt une absence totale de connaissance doublée d'une réelle compréhension.'[25] This implies that the phenomenon referred to is the same despite its different expression. The *vécu* is then neither 'préconscient', nor 'inconscient' nor 'conscient', not in the sense of being *other* than these areas but rather in the sense of subsuming them all. Indeed in an interview in *Le Monde* Sartre says that the *vécu* represents for him 'l'équivalent de conscient-inconscient, c'est-à-dire que je ne crois toujours pas à l'inconscient *sous certaines formes*, bien que la conception de l'inconscient que donne Lacan soit plus intéressante.'[26]

This evident change of emphasis is clearly at the root of Sartre's new terminology. His interest in Lacan's version of the unconscious will moreover prove of great significance to his analysis of Flaubert and must therefore be examined here. Lacan is the Structuralist founder of an extremely controversial 'return to Freud'. He considers traditional Freudian analysis to have grown progressively further away from Freud's original insights which have been bowdlerized and popularized until they are now almost unrecognizable. Analysts nowadays, Lacan claims, read not Freud himself but accounts which neglect his theories and take only his methods with any seriousness. Lacan emphasizes the side of Freud's teaching which sees language as the most important source of revelations about the unconscious, and declares that although Freud preceded Saussure it is Saussurean discoveries about the relation of *signifiant* and *signifié* which best illumine Freud's own doctrines. For Lacan, then, the Freudian unconscious is embedded in language, indeed it *is* language in so far as this escapes the conscious control of the speaker:

L'inconscient est cette partie du discours concret en tant que transindividuel, qui fait défaut à la disposition du sujet pour rétablir la continuité de son discours conscient. Ainsi disparaît le paradoxe que présente la notion de l'inconscient, si on le rapporte à une réalité individuelle.[27]

Or in the form in which the notion is most usually quoted: 'l'inconscient, c'est le discours de l'Autre'. This is a formulation which Sartre now accepts wholeheartedly, indeed he says:

Pour moi, Lacan a clarifié l'inconscient en tant que discours qui sépare à travers le langage ou, si l'on préfère, en tant que contre-finalité de la parole: des ensembles verbaux se structurent comme ensemble practico-inerte à travers l'acte de parler. Ces ensembles expriment ou constituent des intentions qui me déterminent sans être miennes.[28]

Such a statement of course represents a radical difference from Sartre's earlier position.

It is true that in an interview with *L'Arc* in 1966 Sartre attacks certain elements

of Lacan's teaching. He condemns for example the constructed and passive nature of the Freudian ego, and apparently rejects out of hand the Structuralist notion of a 'décentrement du sujet', according to which 'l'homme ne pense pas, il est pensé, comme il est parlé pour certains linguistes'.[29] This attack was however made almost inevitable by the explicit intention of the interview itself, in which Sartre was supposed to counter the Structuralists who were allegedly luring his followers from him. Sartre's real attitude to Lacan is in fact far more positive than he will reveal in the 1966 interview, to precisely the extent that Lacan's real position is more subtle than the presentation which Sartre gives of it in *L'Arc*. Lacan's notion of the 'décentrement du sujet' for example is far from being a wantonly cynical toppling of man from his pedestal as it is often presented. In fact Lacan, like Sartre himself, recognizes that if indeed 'l'homme est parlé' this is a measure of his alienation. It is whilst speaking of 'la folie' that Lacan tentatively suggests that 'l'absence de la parole s'y manifeste par les stéreotypies d'un discours où le sujet peut-on dire, est parlé plutôt qu'il ne parle.'[30] As we shall see, Sartre makes full use of this notion in his study of Flaubert's relations with language.

Moreover, with respect to the ego, Sartre has himself always recognized its constructed nature though he sees this construction as actively undertaken rather than passively undergone. In 1936 he writes for example 'Cet Ego, dont Je et Moi ne sont que deux faces, constitue l'unité idéale (noématique) et indirecte de la série infinie de nos consciences réfléchies.'[31] In the interview in *Le Monde* in 1971 Sartre agrees that his description of the constitution of the *moi* of Flaubert corresponds fairly closely to Lacan's own notion of the *moi* as 'une construction imaginaire, une fiction à laquelle on s'identifie après coup.'[32] We may mention here a parallel between Lacan's account of the *stade du miroir* in the development of the child's construction of its own ego, and Sartre's analysis of the young Gustave's experiences in front of a mirror in 'Le Miroir et le Rire' and 'Le Miroir et le Fétiche': 'Les miroirs le fascinent. S'il s'y surprend il sera pour lui l'objet qu'il est pour tous'.[33] For Lacan the child's sight of itself reflected in a mirror enables it to perform a socially necessary albeit falsifying self-unification. Lacan dates this between the sixth and the eighteenth month of the infant's existence. Sartre's account of Flaubert's fascination with mirrors adds a Lacanian dimension to his description of the child's *être-pour-autrui*.[34] The fact that Flaubert's fascination continues at a later stage in his life can be explained in terms of an unsatisfactory original self-unification, for as we shall see Gustave can never identify fully with his *moi* which he experiences as alienating.

Furthermore Lacan insists that for Freud the ego, superego and id form a totality and reproaches traditional analysts for their contribution to a further alienation of the subject: 'C'est ce qui fait notre responsabilité redoutable quand nous lui apportons, avec les manipulations mythiques de notre doctrine, une occasion supplémentaire de s'aliéner, dans la trinité décomposée de l'*ego*, du *superego* et de l'*id*, par exemple.'[35] Although Lacan rejects any notion of easy

access to the unconscious mind, he maintains that the original aim of Freudian analysis was the reintegration, indeed the reconciliation of conscious and unconscious mind, Freud's pre-1920's terms for the ego and the id. It is in this sense that Lacan interprets Freud's famous formula: 'Wo es war, soll ich werden'.[36] In this respect too Lacan's 'return to Freud' must prove more acceptable to Sartre than the interpretations of analysts who lay more stress on the 'trinité décomposée' than on its reintegration.

In *L'Être et le Néant* Sartre set out his idea of the necessary conditions for a full psychoanalytic account, which should interpret not just 'les rêves, les actes manqués, les obsessions et les névroses mais aussi et surtout les pensées de la veille, les actes réussis et adaptés, le style, etc'[37] Since 1943 when Sartre set out his somewhat vague programme, Freud has come into his own in France, largely through Lacan's persistent attempts to demonstrate the superiority of Freud's original texts over later bowdlerized versions of 'Freudianism'. In his reinterpretation of Freud Lacan deliberately departs from the exclusive attention paid by traditional analysts to privileged revelations of the unconscious such as dreams, obsessions, parapraxes etc. His more integrated view of the person leads him to propose instead a kind of analysis which concentrates just as much on the day-to-day or 'normal' aspects of a patient's life:

L'inconscient est ce chapitre de mon histoire qui est marqué par un blanc ou occupé par un mensonge: c'est le chapitre censuré. Mais la vérité peut être retrouvée; le plus souvent déjà elle est écrite ailleurs. A savoir:
–dans les monuments: et ceci est mon corps, c'est-à-dire le noyau hystérique de la névrose où le symptôme hystérique montre la structure d'un langage et se déchiffre comme une inscription qui, une fois recueillie, peut sans perte grave être détruite;
–dans les documents d'archives aussi: et ce sont les souvenirs de mon enfance, inpénétrables aussi bien qu'eux, quand je n'en connais pas la provenance;
–dans l'évolution sémantique: et ceci répond au stock et aux acceptions du vocabulaire qui m'est particulier, comme au style de ma vie et à mon caractère;
–dans les traditions aussi, voire dans les légendes qui sous une forme héroïsée véhiculent mon histoire;
–dans les traces, enfin, qu'en conservent inévitablement les distortions, nécessités par le raccord du chapitre adultéré dans les chapitres qui l'encadrent, et dont mon exégèse rétablira le sens.[38]

In simpler terms my body, childhood memories, speech-habits, life-style and personal myths constitute clues to an original neurosis which is not directly discernable but which can be seen through the distortions it imposes on the way I reconstruct my own story. The account which the *Idiot de la famille* seeks to provide in the 'case' of Flaubert corresponds closely in all particulars with the Lacanian programme for a comprehensive psychoanalytic account.

One cannot of course assimilate the ideas of Sartre and Lacan: any assimilation would tend to involve a misrepresentation of both theories, and would almost

certainly be rejected by both thinkers. But it is useful to point out the similarities which seem to have contributed to Sartre's rapprochement with Freudianism, and to have influenced his use of psychoanalysis in the *Idiot*. Sartre claims not to be very familiar with Lacan's work except 'à travers des lectures indirectes'.[39] (i.e. probably through the contribution of Lacan to some aspects of 'la nouvelle critique')[40] but his frequent references to Lacan show that he has digested and assimilated what he has read. In 1969 Sartre admits that his early distaste for Freud was in part due to his own 'Cartesian formation':

Quand on vient de passer son bachot, à dix-sept ans, après avoir reçu un enseignement fondé sur le *'je pense donc je suis'* de Descartes, et qu'on ouvre la *Psychopathologie de la vie quotidienne*, où l'on trouve la célèbre histoire de Signorelli, avec les substitutions, déplacements et combinaisons qui impliquent que Freud pensait simultanément à un patient qui s'était suicidé, à certaines coutumes turques et à bien d'autres choses encore . . . on a le souffle coupé.[41]

What Sartre objected to was then not simply the notion of the unconscious but the apparent lack of rigour and definition with which Freud handled such notions. Lacan's interpretation of Freud has the inestimable advantage of emphasizing what can possibly be called the 'Cartesian' side of Freud's doctrines, and revealing him as desiring to 'annuler les profondeurs de la subjectivité'[42] and to maintain the primacy of the conscious mind or ego. According to Lacan, Freudian psychoanalysis is a science and therefore unthinkable before the seventeenth-century birth of modern science:

Car le corrélat de la science, c'est la position cartésienne du sujet qui a pour effet d'annuler les profondeurs de la subjectivité. Souvenez-vous que Freud n'a pas hésité à rompre avec Jung lorsque celui-ci a tenté de les restaurer dans la psychanalyse. Il était absolument nécessaire que [Freud] fût un scientiste.[43]

Lacan is here referring to Jung's notion of the 'métamorphoses de la libido' which he says Freud rejected because the consequence of the accompanying notion of an archetype was to 'faire du symbole le fleurissement de l'âme', whereas for Freud 'le symbolique' was rather *exterior* to man: 'ce n'est pas l'âme qui parle mais l'homme qui parle avec son âme'.[44]

A consequence of this emphasis on the rationalism of Freud is that Lacan, like Sartre, insists that the *vécu* can be communicated. Lacan speaks disparagingly of the

fausses pensées de la cuistrerie, quand elle argue de l'ineffable du vécu, voire de la 'conscience morbide', pour désarmer l'effort dont elle se dispense, à savoir celui qui est requis au point où justement ce n'est pas ineffable puisque ça parle, où le vécu, loin de séparer, se communique, où la subjectivité livre sa structure véritable, (celle où ce qui s'analyse est identique à ce qui s'articule).[45]

It is an essential tenet of Sartre's philosophy that everything can be communicated; indeed, as we have already seen, he states that the 'projet profond dans le *Flaubert*

c'est celui de montrer qu'au fond tout est communicable'.[46] Here again then, Lacan's version of Freudianism must prove more acceptable to Sartre than the account of those traditional analysts whose 'cuistrerie' Lacan is attacking. Whereas certain traditional Freudians have attacked what they see as the excessively rationalistic foundations of Sartre's analysis in the *Idiot*, Lacan would appear to share, at least in part, Sartre's assumptions of communicability.

If we turn now to the *Idiot* itself it comes as no surprise to note that Sartre's multidimensional and tantalising account of Flaubert, drawing as it does on all the major human sciences, begins with a discussion of Flaubert's relations with language. Indeed language now appears to Sartre to be crucial. It provides not only the starting point for his discussion, but is presented as a *point d'articulation* between the psychoanalytic and aesthetic dimensions of the work. Flaubert's relations with language are shown firstly as a consequence of the child's early relations with his family and especially his mother, and secondly as the basis for Flaubert's decision to become a writer. The emphasis on the role of language in the formulation of a writer is something which dates from *Saint Genet* and has been growing steadily in importance. Genet's alienation from language was revealed as vital to his progression from aesthete to poet to artist. Later in *Les Mots* Sartre's own early relations with language are seen, as the title indicates, as perhaps *the* determining factor in his own career. Sartre relates his childhood identification of words and things, and describes how his belief in the power and influence of writing depended in part on his semi-magical view of the correlation between language and reality. This progressive stressing of the relevance of language to his discussion of a writer's options corresponds to a growing awareness on Sartre's part of the importance of certain developments in linguistics which he was previously inclined to disregard. As we shall see later, the work reveals a Sartre not only fully aware of modern trends in criticism but also adapting certain of these to his own purposes, which in the case of linguistics involves an emphasis on the dialectical relationship between *signifiant* and *signifié*. Briefly speaking, these developments, which affect fields as diverse as philosophy (Derrida) psychoanalysis (Lacan) and literary criticism (Barthes, Kristeva, Sollers), all depend on an initial distinction, elaborated by Saussure, between two aspects of language, that of the *signifiant* and that of the *signifié*. The implications of this distinction provide a common concern through which an immense amount of cross-fertilization has taken place between hitherto distinct disciplines. As far as literary criticism is concerned, emphasis on the *signifiant* at the expense of the *signifié* has perhaps masked the validity of certain insights, and no doubt accounts for Sartre's resistance to this aspect of new criticism. As we shall see, however, the terminology of Sartre's discussion of Flaubert's relations with language is heavily indebted to the followers of Saussure. Indeed, this is an instance of Sartre's startling ability to recuperate notions from thinkers whose basic premises appear at odds with his own brand of humanism.

Sartre begins his discussion of Flaubert with the information that he was slow in learning to read, and deduces from this that he suffered from a 'mauvais rapport initial au langage'[47] which he proceeds firstly to analyse, and secondly to explain. Even a normal child, says Sartre, takes some time before he can distinguish a word's 'puissance magique' (i.e. its materiality and affective power) and its 'pure valeur signifiante'. This process was unnaturally prolonged in the case of Flaubert who remained fascinated by the word itself at the expense of what it signified. This implies for Sartre 'une mauvaise insertion de l'enfant dans l'univers linguistique, cela revient à dire: dans le monde social, *dans sa famille*'.[48] Man's use of language is indicative of his relations with other people; language comes to him originally from the other, 'l'autre, en moi, fait mon langage'.[49] But Flaubert has, as a child, Sartre considers, split words from their meanings, the *signifiant* from the *signifié*, he does not connect the material sound with its object except by a convention which he accepts but does not internalize. The young Flaubert feels that life and language are different realms, a lack of reciprocity inhibits his communication of his feelings which thus remain for him 'inexprimables'.[50] Here Sartre remarks that in Lacan's terms the content of Gustave's feelings is probably *inarticulable*, but suggests that this is because of an original difficulty in articulation, reinforced by 'une option secrète pour l'inarticulé'.[51] Articulation involves expression in verbal form – Sartre is not of course suggesting that Flaubert's feelings cannot be communicated, merely that he has problems with self-expression which are reinforced by his preference for the *inexpressible*. When Gustave speaks it is not so much an integral part of a project of communication as an imitation of the speech of others which he therefore finds inadequate. Sartre here adopts Lacan's translation of the Freudian term *Unheimlichkeit*, to express Gustave's unease with language: '*L'estrangement* n'a qu'une explication: il n'y a ni commune mesure ni médiation entre l'existence subjective de Gustave et l'univers des significations; ce sont deux réalités parfaitement hétérogènes dont l'une visite l'autre parfois . . . Vie et paroles sont incommensurables.'[52] Although Flaubert speaks then, 'les mots ne désignent jamais vraiment à ses yeux ce qu'il éprouve, ce qu'il ressent.'[53] Of course Flaubert does not escape the ordinary human fact of self-expression: 'Gustave . . . est signe, signifié, signifiant, signification dans la mesure même où ses plus élémentaires impulsions se manifestent par des projets.'[54] It is with language in its narrowest sense or perhaps its 'proper' sense, ('le langage articulé') that Gustave has problems.

Sartre backs up his account with reference to *Quidquid volueris* where Flaubert expresses his mistrust of language through the inarticulate Djalioh, and to *Mémoires d'un fou* where we find more explicit exclamations: 'Comment rendre par la parole cette harmonie qui s'élève dans le cœur de poète? . . . par quelle gradation la poésie s'abaisse-t-elle sans se briser?'[55] For Flaubert then 'la réalité . . . se place en decà ou au-delà de l'analyse verbale'.[56]

Throughout his account of the young Gustave Sartre takes the opportunity of explaining in detail his own ideas on language which we will be examining in due

course. For the moment however it is simply Sartre's analysis of Flaubert himself which is relevant. We are given here a foretaste of Sartre's later deductions: 'à neuf ans, Gustave a décidé d'écrire parce qu'à sept, il ne savait pas lire',[57] but given no explanation of how this process will come about. Sartre insists that Gustave's supposedly wordless pantheistic ecstasies were in fact haunted by words: 'A quinze ans Gustave *veut ne pas voir* les mots qui hantent sa poésie.'[58] In other words, although Flaubert liked to think of his privileged states as wordless Sartre believes that he was already interpreting them through terms such as 'Infini', 'Monde', 'Création'[59] assimilated from early Romantic writing. Sartre's theory of language ensures that, within his own terms, he cannot be proved wrong on this point, for he explains that 'le silence est lui-même un acte verbal, un trou creusé dans le langage et qui, en tant que tel, ne peut être maintenu que comme une nomination virtuelle dont le sens est défini par la totalité du Verbe'.[60] The young Flaubert's rêverie is verbal, says Sartre, but he is not speaking: he is using words not for their meanings but for their 'puissance de suggestion'.[61] We can recognise here Sartre's familiar distinction between prose and poetry, though this is not made explicit; Sartre does however refer to poetry as the name which Gustave gives to his pantheistic ecstasies: 'puisque l'hébétude est sa tentation, il la valorisera . . . sous le nom de Poésie'.[62] Sartre describes Gustave as passive ('pour lui vivre est *trop fatigant*'[63] and discusses his references to a 'plaie profonde', a 'mélancolie native',[64] which are again clichés from the Romantic *mal de siècle* but which Sartre interprets as referring obliquely to Gustave's 'constitution passive'. It is in fact Flaubert's passivity, Sartre now tells us, which is behind his difficulties with talking and reading. This does not precede Flaubert's linguistic problems, it is one with them:

> Puisque la parole peut être muette et le mutisme bavarder, puisque Nature et Culture ne sont pas discernables et se retrouvent ensemble dans l'unité du signifiant, du signifié et de la signification, si loin que nous remontions dans nos préhistoires, il est clair que rien ne précède le langage et que nous sommes passés sans effort, par notre simple affirmation pratique de nous-mêmes, de l'âme parlée à l'âme parlante.[65]

(The child hears himself spoken about before he speaks). Gustave then remains an excessively long time at the stage of an 'âme parlée'—in Sartre's terms he cannot move easily from *pathos* to *praxis*. Sartre speculates as to whether the cause of this problem could be physiological, but says that even if we could prove some bodily malfunctioning, which is of course impossible over a hundred years later, this would not necessarily be causative: 'Ces dispositions biologiques, à supposer qu'elles existent, qui prouve qu'elles soient premières?'[66]

Sartre has then given a general picture of the young Flaubert in his passivity and his 'mauvaise insertion dans le langage'. He now proceeds to a progressive synthesis in which he attempts to reconstruct the early family life of Gustave, especially his relations with his mother, and to deduce from these the causes of Flaubert's problems. His account mixes objective fact and pure speculation: it is drawn both from the history of Flaubert's family and from Flaubert's early works and

correspondence which Sartre analyses from a psychoanalytic viewpoint.

It would be evidently unnecessary and indeed tedious to attempt to repeat here in any detail Sartre's account of the structure and composition of the Flaubert family. A very brief summary will suffice to remind the reader of Sartre's closely argued account. He tells us first that his initial mistaken supposition was that the close-knit nature of the Flaubert family was the chief factor in Gustave's passivity:

Je tentais de *comprendre* son 'activité passive' à partir de l'unité sans faille de son groupe familial. Et je n'avais pas tous les torts: nous verrons comment le petit garçon, mode inessentiel de la substance Flaubert, est acquiescement dans le profond de son être et que cet acquiescement incarne l'adhésion orgueilleuse de la famille à elle-même par la médiation de chaque membre individuel. Mais cette explication vient beaucoup trop tard: l'enfant s'est déjà pénétré de l'arrivisme fier et sombre que le médecin-chef a communiqué, plus tôt, à son aîné; il a fait l'apprentissage des structures familiales, son inertie vient à la fois de ce qu'il accepte la hiérarchie des Flaubert et ne peut tolérer d'y occuper le dernier rang. L'œuvre est déjà née, le ressentiment peut être, en tout cas, un conflit paralysant: individu, il est sans valeur aucune; incarnation de la cellule sociale, il partage avec ses proches une valeur absolue mais commune . . . Telle était mon erreur. Je l'exagère à dessein: si les choses devaient être si tranchées, l'explication de l'inertie par l'acquiescement serait superflu. On verra qu'elle ne l'est pas. Par cette raison, justement, que la passivité ne *subsiste pas;* elle doit se faire sans cesse ou se défaire peu à peu.[67]

This is an important passage, both because it summarizes in a conveniently short space much of what Sartre is going to tell us about the structures of the Flaubert family, but also because in it Sartre reveals both the extent to which he was tempted to accept the Marxist notion of social determinism, and also his modification of such determinism into the less radical notion of conditioning. Sartre has not, needless to say, returned to his original notion of a free choice, but has rather evolved a more dialectical conception of the interaction between situation and freedom:

L'apathie est d'abord la famille vécue au niveau psychosomatique le plus élémentaire – celui de la respiration, de la succion, des fonctions digestives, des sphincters – par un organisme *protégé*; après des transformations que nous essaierons d'entrevoir, Gustave l'assume pour en faire une conduite plus évoluée et pour lui assigner une fonction nouvelle: l'action passive devient tactique, défense élastique contre un danger mieux compris, le pur *ressentir* aveugle devient ressentiment. Nous verrons cela bientôt: mais ce qui compte ici, c'est de rejeter l'idéalisme: les attitudes fondamentales on ne les adopte que si d'abord elles existent.[68]

Of the meaning of Gustave's 'inertie pathétique' Sartre concludes:

Conservé, dépassé, traversé de significations neuves et complexes, le sens ne peut manquer de s'altérer. Mais ses altérations *doivent être comprises:* il s'agit, en effet, de reproduire une totalisation nouvelle à partir de contradictions internes d'une totalité antérieure et du projet qui naît d'elles.[69]

We must note here that Sartre seems to be extending the notion of *facticité* from

simple *données* such as race, class, sex etc. to include now fundamental personal structures which cannot be changed or eradicated, but which can be variously combined, used, and interpreted as new experiences reveal new possibilities of behaviour, or as new projects imply new attitudes towards the structures themselves. Moreover these structures are established extremely early, Sartre now reveals: 'Le dur noyau sombre de ce sens est la petite enfance . . . le passé préhistorique revient sur l'enfant comme Destin'.[70] We can see clearly here how Sartre has moved much closer to a Freudian psychoanalytic viewpoint, for although in the case of Baudelaire and Genet the early years were indeed seen as formative, Sartre's interpretation of the relevant period of time has in the *Idiot* moved further back towards babyhood rather than childhood. Freudian analysis is of course concerned with the whole of a patient's childhood but the first two or three years (even according to some analysts the first twelve months[71]) are seen as of special importance, and the physical facts of these years are interpreted symbolically. Like the Freudians then, Sartre desires information about 'l'allaitement, les fonctions digestives, excrétoires du nourrisson, les premiers soins de propreté, le rapport avec la mère'.[72] Sartre recognizes that these early experiences are more or less directly influential in individual cases: 'il est des hommes que l'histoire a forgés beaucoup plus que la préhistoire, écrasant en eux sans pitié l'enfant qu'ils ont été,'[73] but is certain that in the case of Gustave the 'préhistoire' was, in more than one sense of the word, vital.

We shall look firstly at Sartre's account of Flaubert's relations with his mother, which starts with a general statement of the major role of these relations in universal personal development:

> Je rappelle les généralités: quand le mère allaite ou nettoie le nourrisson, elle s'exprime, comme tout le monde, dans sa vérité de *personne* . . . du même coup . . . par la personne même [de la mère], adroite ou maladroite, brutale ou tendre, telle enfin que son histoire l'a faite, l'enfant est manifesté à lui-même . . . Pour commencer, il intériorise les rythmes et les travaux maternels comme des qualités vécues de son propre corps . . . Sa propre mère, engloutie au plus profond de ce corps, devient la structure *pathétique* de l'affectivité.[74]

It is of some interest to note in passing that Sartre here appears to be assimilating, though not explicitly, the Freudian notions of introjection and of partial objects. His synthesis is convincing and could well be an example of what he means by the enriching of Freudianism which would result from a less purely analytic and more dialectical approach. On the other hand, however, although *traditional* Freudianism separates the stages of partial objects (early infancy) and of introjection of the parents to form the super-ego, most modern contemporary analysts (e.g. Fairbairn and Guntrip) envisage the latter as preceded at least by internalization of the mother at a pre-Oedipal stage. Sartre's account therefore can be seen as following contemporary trends in its assimilation of the two stages.

It is not, however, only the affectivity of the child which is dependent on the

relations with the mother, but also his later aggressivity, says Sartre, who backs up his statement with reference to the research of the American anthropologist Margaret Mead.[75] Sartre is not ignoring the role of the 'dispositions organiques' of the infant which can conflict with, or work together with, the influence of the mother's attitude. In a sense of course this interaction is a result of chance, but Sartre's interpretation of chance integrates it into a dialectic in which it is given a certain significance:

> Cette dialectique de la chance et de la nécessité se réalise librement et sans gêner personne dans la pure existence de chacun . . . Ce que nous cherchons ici, nous, c'est l'enfant chanceux, la rencontre d'un certain corps et d'une certaine mère: rapport non-compréhensible puisque deux séries se rejoignent sans qu'on puisse rendre raison du croisement; et dans le même temps, compréhension première, fondement compréhensible de toute compréhension: en effet, ces déterminations élémentaires, loin de s'ajouter ou de s'affecter l'une l'autre en extériorité, sont immédiatement inscrites dans le champ synthétique d'une totalisation vivante; inséparables, elles se donnent, dès qu'elles surgissent, pour les parties d'un ensemble: cela veut dire que chacune est dans l'autre, au moins dans la mesure où la partie est une incarnation du tout.[76]

Sartre then will look at the 'Détermination originelle de Gustave – qui n'est *rien de plus* au départ que l'intériorisation de l'environnement familial dans une situation objective qui la conditionne du dehors et *dès avant* sa conception comme singularité'.[77] The notion that the child is determined even before conception (it is named, discussed etc.) is also to be found in Lacan, but it is perhaps more importantly a transposition into the realm of psychoanalysis of the sociological notion (in *Critique de la raison dialectique*) that a man's future possibilities are already sketched out for him before his birth in the social possibilities of his family and in the objective structures of the world into which he will be born. The child is seen in the *Idiot* as conditioned not merely by the restricted domain of his future choices but also by his organic structure and his internalization of his mother, 'Génétrix tout entière'.[78] As will become increasingly apparent, Sartre's psychoanalytic method in the *Idiot* has been influenced as much by his *rapprochement* with Marx as by his *rapprochement* with Freud. The notions of internalization and externalization as used by Sartre are basically Marxist: through the internalization of his family structure and tensions Flaubert will internalize indirectly the external situation of the society into which he is born. It could be considered that the individual's personal freedom has been progressively curtailed so much as to be now almost non-existent, but a more accurate account would recognize that rather than curtailing the freedom of the individual, Sartre has clarified its domain: the insufficiencies of the *Critique* in performing its intended function have been supplemented by the *Idiot* in both theoretical and practical terms. Sartre is both explaining and showing in action the dialectical relationship between situation and freedom, or, in his present terminology, the non-mechanistic nature of the

internalization-externalization process in which it is the *décalage*[79] between the two which reveals man's creative freedom.

The young Flaubert, then, according to Sartre, will internalize the already existing family trinity 'Père-Mère-Fils aîné'. In so far as each member of the trinity implies the other two, this internalization will take place firstly through Gustave's relations with his mother (e.g. by internalizing a dominated mother he internalizes a dominating father). Sartre sets the historical scene, revealing Gustave's father as born into a royalist family practising veterinary surgery, and rising to become a doctor: an atheist embodying in himself a contradiction between the analytic method of his profession and the repetition and ritual of his rural family life-style. Achille-Cléophas retains the old aristocratic family hierarchy, he dominates his wife, and envisages the family as essential rather than its individual members. Flaubert's mother Caroline is, according to Sartre, a virtuous, docile woman, totally devoted to her husband, and sharing his view of the primary importance of the family unit. Furthermore Sartre's hypothesis is that she loves Achille, her first-born, as the embodiment of her husband, but does not consider her later children, some of whom died in infancy, as irreplaceable individuals. Gustave is then, for her, just another son who must be cared for but who might not live. Her daughter Caroline on the other hand is a substitute-self and receives therefore more real motherly affection than either of her elder brothers. Sartre describes Flaubert's mother as caring more for nappies and cradles than for the babies themselves: more for the means than the ends. As the first-born, Achille has undeniable advantages: he will take over his father's job, he identifies willingly with his father, works hard and is praised for his good results, but his intelligence is docile not original and his successful career in medicine is largely a matter of his ability to follow and adapt to changing methods rather than involving any real contribution to medical research.

This then is the preexisting family into which Gustave is born. His mother probably envisages the new baby as a 'recommencement des précédents',[80] says Sartre, and overprotects him whilst expecting him to die. This excessive protection gives Gustave no reason for developing his aggressivity, and he therefore remains passive. Moreover as he is not loved in his own right, as an individual, an end in himself, he feels inessential; or as Sartre puts it 'il a brûlé l'étape de la valorisation.'[81] Flaubert then has no reason for living, for although man invents his own reasons in later life, this is only possible, Sartre suggests, on the basis of an early feeling of self-justification resulting from true mother-love. We may be reminded here of Fairbairn's notion of the central self or ego which is underlain by both a libidinal self and a rejected self, which arise from the two main aspects of the infant's early relationship with the mother (as exciting and rejecting respectively). Fairbairn believes that if the rejected self is too prominent it leads to passivity, and prevents the libidinal self from being properly assimilated into the central ego, thus resulting in a feeling of unreality as if the central ego were purely false. Flaubert, then, is passive, he cannot distinguish knowledge from belief, for knowing requires an

active participation in the process of verification. He is estranged from language, accepting the names of objects but unable to internalize their active nomination. His passivity leads him to believe in Fate rather than in responsibility, for his contribution to his own destiny is a negative acceptance of it. He cannot believe fully in his own *moi*, and is thus led to play roles and to see himself through the eyes of others. As is the case with all of us, Sartre suggests, Flaubert's ego comes to him from the outside – Sartre himself for instance in *Les Mots* describes how he accepted to become *l'enfant prodige* which his family considered him to be – but Gustave is unable to identify with his ego: instead of ratifying his 'self' he plays roles. He is therefore in a sense at a double remove from authenticity. We have already seen how, for Sartre, this was also a distinctive feature of the early childhood of Jean Genet.

Sartre sums up his account thus:

Ce premier tableau est enfin terminé: passivité, stupeurs, crédulité, mauvais rapports avec le langage et la vérité, comédies, croyances intentionnellement suscitées et, au bout du chemin, cette possibilité déjà probable: le fossé, la culbute dans l'hystérie; tout forme un système embryonnaire commandé par un double refus: l'Amour se dérobe et cette fuite est intériorisée par l'enfant comme sa propre inertie végétative; la valorisation par la mère n'a pas eu lieu et Gustave vit cette carence de l'Autre comme son propre écoulement sans but et sans cause, c'est-à-dire comme la stupéfiante contingence d'un être de mauvaise qualité.[82]

This brief summary can give no real impression of the richness and detail of Sartre's original account. His analysis is both exciting and convincing. However, is it true?

Je l'avoue: c'est une fable. Rien ne prouve qu'il en fut ainsi.[83] Et, pis encore, l'absence de ces preuves – qui seraient nécessairement des faits singuliers – nous renvoie, même quand nous fabulons, au schématisme, à la généralité: mon récit convient à *des* nourrissons, non pas à Gustave en particulier. N'importe, j'ai voulu le mener à bout pour ce seul motif: l'explication *réelle*, je peux m'imaginer, sans le moindre dépit, qu'elle soit exactement le contraire de celle que j'invente; *de toute manière* il faudra qu'elle passe par les chemins que j'indique et qu'elle vienne réfuter la mienne sur le terrain que j'ai défini: le corps, l'amour.[84]

And this is basically the crux of much of the criticism of the *Idiot*: so many pages of detailed, apparently factual statements are in reality speculation, hypothesis. And indeed the reader expecting a mammoth biography would be ill-advised to turn to Sartre. But Sartre's work is not simple biography: 'Que peut-on savoir d'un homme, aujourd'hui?',[85] this question would be trivial if it referred principally to the *facts* of a man's life. But facts are not at stake here. Sartre's aim is the totalization of Flaubert's life and experience, as Flaubert lived it, not as it can be stated in a day-to-day log-book of events. It is with the personal structures of the young Flaubert: his passivity, his apathy and his *hébetudes*, and with his experience

of himself and of the world about him that Sartre is concerned, not with the minutiae of the events of his early life. Sartre's description of Gustave's relations with his mother may then be a 'fable', but the account of his relations with language and with the outside world which Sartre is attempting to explain cannot be seen in the same light. These are rather the essential elements of Flaubert's formation revealed in his early writings and for which Sartre's various hypotheses are constructed to account. As we shall see shortly, Freudian analysts have rejected Sartre's version of psychoanalysis on various counts, but his projected description of the baby's first few months of life cannot validly be criticized by them on the grounds of lack of evidence. Freudian theories of childhood are themselves based almost entirely on interpretations of the revelations of adult patients rather than on direct observations of children. Whereas Freudians however obtain their information through an intensive analysis of the patient during which he is encouraged to speak freely, and in which revealing preoccupations with certain childhood occurrences or fantasies present themselves for interpretation according to a fairly rigorous set of symbols, Sartre cannot of course listen to the revelations of Gustave. He is therefore dependent on speculation and on the writings of the young or indeed the older Flaubert. We shall return to this difference and its implications shortly. But the method of working backwards from the adult to form a hypothesis as to the development of the child is common practice with general psychoanalytical respectability. Although some modern research[86] is attempting to verify, by observation of children, the original concepts of infantile sexuality etc., these concepts are now so familiar that one may lose sight of the fact that they were originally derived from analysis of adult patients.

Sartre's argument is then not circular; it is simply an example of the progressive-regressive method. In the first place analysis of Flaubert's writings is used to procure information about his psychology. Sartre's hypotheses simply attempt to construct a picture of a childhood likely to have produced such psychological structures. In other words, Flaubert's childhood is built up on the basis of his works; this hypothetical construct is in turn checked against his other writings and against the known facts of his life, and progressively verified. It illumines his writings and its 'truth' is judged by the value of this illumination. Sartre admits that the evidence concerning Flaubert's early years is scanty, but insists that the research is worthwhile and indeed essential, and that as the analyses and syntheses progress and include later periods of Flaubert's life, the probability of the original hypothesis will become increasingly apparent:

> Tentant d'éclairer le vécu par la lumière noire du premier âge, nous verrons si la lente expérience de l'adolescent, du jeune homme et de l'adulte est allergique à notre hypothèse, la tolère ou l'assimile et se change par elle en soi-même. Ainsi l'aventure de Flaubert, à mesure qu'elle s'approchera de sa fin, fera l'épreuve de cette enfance retrouvée et décidera rétrospectivement de sa vraisemblance.[87]

We can turn now to Sartre's analysis of the juvenilia of Flaubert. His interest in them is primarily psychoanalytical, and it is chiefly on the basis of these works that Sartre forms his conception of Flaubert's relations with his father and his elder brother. The correspondence which Sartre establishes between the characters in the juvenilia and members of Flaubert's family is not a simple one-to-one equation: different aspects of Flaubert's awareness of himself and his family are embodied in various ways in various characters. In Sartre's terms:

La complexité 'indisable' de ses pulsions ne peut se résumer en un seul protagoniste . . . Chacun d'eux est plural car il joue docilement le rôle qui lui est attribué mais Flaubert s'est glissé en lui et c'est en tant que Flaubert qu'il pense ce que l'autre fait . . . Un en plusieurs, plusieurs en un.[88]

Sartre makes his position on this point quite explicit:

L'écrivain, même lorsqu'il envisage *dans l'objectif* tel ou tel de ses personnages, demeure seul avec lui-même. Non qu'il lui soit impossible – comme le subjectivisme bourgeois l'a trop souvent prétendu – de parler d'un autre que soi ni que ses créatures soient nécessairement la projection de lui-même dans le milieu de l'altérité: la question est plus complexe et l'on n'y peut répondre que par un traitement dialectique de ses données premières . . . Mais, de toute manière, l'auteur, dans la mesure où il invente, reste en commerce avec soi: ses fictions ne sont pas toujours lui-même en tant qu'autre mais elles ne cessent d'être *siennes* et il ne cesse, quant à lui, de sentir, en créant, la 'mauvaise odeur' de son imagination.[89]

As we might have guessed then, the question can only be resolved by a dialectical approach: whilst the author need not be projecting himself directly into his characters he cannot, nevertheless, escape from the fact that they are his creation, and that he is thus, in some sense, responsible for them and for their actions. Of course Sartre has already discussed this same question in the *Critique de la raison dialectique* where he claimed that:

La vie est éclairée par l'œuvre comme une réalité dont la détermination totale se trouve hors d'elle, à la fois dans les conditions qui la produisent et dans la création artistique qui l'achève et *la complète en l'exprimant.* Ainsi l'œuvre – quand on l'a fouillée – devient hypothèse et méthode de recherche pour éclairer la biographie: elle interroge et retient des épisodes concrets comme des réponses à ses questions. Mais ces réponses *ne comblent pas*: elles sont insuffisantes et bonnes dans la mesure où l'objectivation dans l'art est irréductible à l'objectivation dans les conduites quotidiennes: il y a un hiatus entre l'œuvre et la vie.[90]

Moreover Sartre states categorically that 'l'œuvre ne révèle *jamais* les secrets de la biographie: elle peut être simplement le schème ou le fil conducteur qui permet de les découvrir dans la vie elle-même.'[91] Sartre might still of course stand by this opinion in theory but his use of Flaubert's juvenilia would rather seem to go against this, for the notions of parricide and hatred of Achille are derived almost entirely from the early works.

In the *Idiot* then, Sartre rejects both bourgeois subjectivism which establishes a

facile equation between author and the characters he creates, and also, implicitly, the notion of a 'text' cut off from its author and to be studied without reference to him. But even the subtlety implied by Sartre's dialectical view does not fully answer the question of the relations between a writer and his characters. Sartre does not expound his theory in any greater depth than we have already seen, and although he of course shows the approach at work in his analyses themselves, it would appear based on intuition rather than on any more rigorous theory of how a text signifies. We are tempted to ask on what basis the processes of symbolization, condensation and displacement (the Freudian categories for dream analysis) are applied by Sartre to literary works; or in other words what mediations allow Flaubert to embody aspects of himself and his family in his writings, and enable Sartre to disentangle and interpret these. If Sartre's account is based in phenomenology, and the inter-character relationships are considered to be self-evident, then this should perhaps be clarified. Sartre is normally quite explicit about his methods and we may wonder whether he is not perhaps being somewhat evasive on this issue.

Moreover the whole question of what we analyse when we apply psychoanalysis to a text is controversial. Sartre assumes, as does Charles Mauron for example, that it is the author. Recent theories of textual analysis suggest that this can no longer be taken for granted. André Green for instance argues that a text which is definitive, detached from its author, i.e. from which he is 'absent', cannot be interpreted in the same way as the data furnished in a real-life exchange between, for example, an analyst and his analysand who is present. To mention only some evident differences, the latter situation permits various accounts of the same incident which would necessarily be fixed once and for all in a written text. There is moreover the question of the reader's contribution to the creation of the text he is reading. Sartre's own ideas on this point, as we have seen, go some way towards facing the problem raised, from a slightly different angle and in a more radical fashion, by Green. Green asserts that an analyst's interpretation necessarily distorts a text: 'puisqu'elle est cette "déliaison délirante" du texte, lui faisant dire sans appel ce qu'il n'a jamais dit'.[92] One can sense that Green is trying to find his way out of an impasse: to acknowledge both that criticism is a distortion of the original text whilst asserting that a psychoanalytic approach in criticism is justifiable. His way out is to invent the idea of the unconscious of a text as something distinguishable from that of its author. The text is better seen as 'speaking out' rather than as 'spoken' by its author who is necessarily absent. Green introduces a further subtlety into his account of the system of mediation operating between writer and reader; the reader too is double. He is on the one hand simply an individual who picks up a book as one amongst many activities, but he is also the Reader casting himself in the role envisaged for him from the outset by the author. On this point too we find in Sartre's account of reading a similar awareness of the dual nature of the reader[93] though this is not developed in the systematic way attempted by Green

who defines the text as the 'lieu d'une communication trans-narcissique où le double de l'auteur et le double du lecteur – ces fantômes qui ne se montrent jamais – communiquent par l'écriture.'[94] It is in a way pointless to ask in what theoretical sense a text can be described as having an unconscious: this is, rather like Sartre's own 'esprit objectif', a 'concept opérationnel', and is part of a practical attempt to face up to the complexities of the writer-reader relationship. Despite the thoroughgoing humanism of Sartre's attitude to meaning there is nothing in Green's approach which he could not usefully adapt. Our conclusion must be that Sartre's failure to secure one of the premises he is working from is more in the nature of a lacuna than a matter of antagonism towards developments he is undoubtedly aware of, and which may even have originated, at least where the theory of reading is concerned, from his own earlier insights.

Sartre then envisages the relations of an author to his own creation as complex but *relatively* straightforward, and apparently revealed through intuition rather than a precise method. He sums this up as follows with respect to Flaubert: 'Tel est donc Gustave en ses contes: omniprésent, méconnaissable. Il n'est pas une de ses créatures dont il ne soit complice, pas une qui ne lui fasse horreur.'[95] For Flaubert, Sartre believes, 'écrire . . . c'est se défouler'. Gustave is able to express the *indisable,* the unspeakable facts of his feelings towards his family,[97] in writing because he is creating something which is *other* than himself: if he projects complex and horrifying sentiments outside himself on to the characters of his *contes*, he can satisfy these feelings at the same time as consciously repudiating them, disowning them. Sartre's account is here dependent on his theory of the dialectical relationship between reader and writer which we shall be examining in the final section of this chapter. Suffice it to say here that Flaubert can re-read what he has himself written from the outside, as if passive before 'la résurrection des signifiants',[98] and envisage the characters born in his imagination as distinct from himself in their 'irréductible matérialité'.[99]

We can now look briefly at what Sartre in fact deduces from the *contes* as to Flaubert's attitude towards himself and his family. Gustave is revealed primarily as passive, inarticulate, suffering, passionate and convinced of his premature senility and inferiority. His father is portrayed as cold, calculating, inhuman, brutal and guilty – chiefly for causing Gustave's suffering. Achille is seen alternatively as bourgeois, hateful and to be eliminated; or as originally sharing Gustave's own aspirations but later taken over by Achille-Cléophas and therefore to be pitied. As has already been made clear however, Flaubert's feelings are almost all ambivalent: firstly towards the question of his innocence, for he feels both determined and yet responsible for his destiny, constituted by his family and hence entirely innocent, yet at the same time responsible for his inferiority and therefore guilty. Moreover his inferiority itself is seen simultaneously as a sign of superiority in another realm: Achille may be superior in the positive domain, but he cannot compete in the opposite domain which Sartre names 'négativité'. Thus Gustave's infinite longings

appear negative but paradoxically superior in his own eyes, and also, of course, as a function of the negating power of consciousness in Sartre's eyes. Their dual perspective can therefore be understood on two levels. Flaubert's domineering father does not escape unscathed either: he is punished indirectly by the death of his children or wife and the ensuing guilt, or by betrayal on the part of Achille (as Pedrillo is betrayed by Isabellada). He is humiliated in the person of Doctor Mathurin, and later, Sartre asserts, in Homais, Charles Bovary and even Larivière. Flaubert's aggression is however also self-directed and he masochistically participates in the sadistic treatment meted out to his symbolic counterparts, Djalioh, Mazza, Marguerite etc.

Besides these general characteristics Sartre also reveals suicidal, fratricidal and parricidal tendencies in the tales. 'Achille' is murdered, albeit between the lines, in *Une Peste à Florence*, and more violently in *Ivre et mort*, though in neither case is the younger brother able to enjoy his triumph. Even within the *contes* Flaubert's own suicide is more often dreamed of than carried out: Mazza and Marguerite may eventually suit action to the word, but Djalioh, Almaroës etc. are never capable of this escape. Suicide would be defiance of the Creator, Sartre suggests, because here the real father (Achille-Cléophas) and the symbolic father are amalgamated. Gustave is too passive to be disobedient, and will therefore carry obedience to its limits and replace real death by symbolic death 'par la pensée', in his *hébétudes* and later, as we shall see, in his crisis. Many of the *contes* reveal also Gustave's parricidal intentions: chiefly, Sartre suggests, because Flaubert resents his status as younger brother and blames his father for this; and moreover because he desires intensely to eliminate the surgical, analytic stare of Achille-Cléophas, which he feels penetrates into his most intimate thoughts and removes all privacy from him.

In conclusion to this summary we must note that Sartre interprets the tales also on the level of Flaubert's experiences at school, of his relationship with Alfred le Poittevin, and of his different approaches to the aesthetic question of literary totalization. Whilst interesting, these aspects are not of immediate psychoanalytic importance and will not therefore be discussed here. This brief account must suffice to remind the reader of the various aspects and levels of Sartre's interpretation of the juvenilia. (The chart between pp. 120 and 121 reproduces schematically and in tabloid form Sartre's account of the various levels of symbolization in Flaubert's early works).

Despite the richness and complexity of the interpretations, there are however certain puzzling aspects which should be examined. Of primary importance is the question of Gustave's relations with his mother as portrayed in the *contes*. According to Sartre, Madame Flaubert rarely appears except to be excused of all blame for Gustave's suffering, since this blame is relegated in its entirety to his father. The Freudian analyst Marthe Robert[100] and the critic Claude Burgelin[101] both remark on the absence of any reference to an Oedipal situation in Sartre's interpretation. A truly Freudian analysis would, in Burgelin's opinion, have examined:

La façon dont, à travers l'histoire de l'individu, ont été symbolisées un certain nombre de relations fondamentales. Comment la triangulation des rapports enfant – figure paternelle – figure maternelle est vécue symboliquement, comment donc a été résolue la crise de l'œdipe ou quels conflits sa non-résolution a fait naître, ce sont là toutes questions que Sartre refuse de poser. En ce sens, son ouvrage est le plus anti-psychanalytique qui soit. Dans la structuration de la personnalisation de Flaubert qu'il propose, la relation œdipienne est totalement absente.[102]

At first sight this may appear as merely a matter of special pleading on the part of a group with a traditional axe to grind. But unless we refuse all notion of psychoanalysis and thereby repudiate Sartre's analyses into the bargain, we must look again at this question.

Sartre has of course admitted Flaubert's parricidal intentions, though, according to M. Robert, Sartre mistakenly believes that Flaubert was 'trop imaginaire et surtout trop conformiste pour aller jamais au bout de son idée',[103] Robert's feeling of dissatisfaction is evidently due to Sartre's apparent failure to draw any real consequences from the parricidal wish. The automatic association of parricide with the Oedipal situation is witnessed to by Harry Levin[104] who, evidently misled by the habitual association of the two elements, describes Sartre's account as portraying an *Oedipal* parricide wish, despite there being no real development of such a notion in the *Idiot* itself. We may then suspect a *parti-pris* on Sartre's part, especially when we look at the *contes* themselves and note that he explains an attempted rape (of Adèle by Djalioh) as representing Flaubert's ambivalent sexual feelings towards Elisa Schlésinger, whom Sartre recognizes as a mother figure, without drawing the evident conclusion. Even more startling is his interpretation of what he calls the 'cycle maternel',[105] in which mother-son incest is linked to parricide, as evidence not of any sexual desire of Gustave for his mother, but rather of his passivity and the imaginary nature of his sexual life:

J'ai insisté sur ces différents thèmes 'maternels' pour montrer la *problématique sexuelle* du jeune garçon: il comprend obscurément que sa mère *n'est plus* la moitié active de l'androgyne dont il est la moitié passive. Elle l'a été, pourtant, illusoirement: marquant sur lui son empreinte, elle l'a condamné pour toujours à n'avoir qu'une vie sexuelle *imaginaire*.[106]

Similarly in *Saint Julien*, in which Julien, the future saint, murders both his parents whilst they are sleeping in the conjugal bed, Sartre's final and deepest interpretation is in terms of a generalized genocide and of the complexities of the 'qui perd gagne' schema. He does however note here, for the first time, the parallel with the Oedipus myth, which he now relates retrospectively to others of Flaubert's early works. Julien's rage when he thinks his wife is sleeping with another man is described as: 'l'écho d'une fureur lointaine, dont nous avons trouvé les traces dans beaucoup de

ses premières œuvres, "un homme couché dans le lit de ma mère", aspect classique de l'Œdipe'.[107] The notion is explored no further however, and it is once again the element of parricide rather than that of incest which is stressed.

Sartre moreover accepts the traditional interpretation of Flaubert's dream related in chapter four of *Mémoires d'un fou* as a dream of castration, whilst adding the rider that 'le mot "castration" n'est pour moi que l'expression des faits *dans un certain discours*',[108] in order to defend himself against any accusation of participating in what he sees as the unacceptable side of Freudian mythology. But his own interpretation of the accompanying dream of Gustave's mother drowning as her son lies looking down on her, unable to save her, must surely appear insufficient: 'Madame Flaubert est punie par où elle a péché: elle s'enfonce, réclamant la protection d'un fils qu'elle n'a su ni protéger . . . ni rendre tel qu'il la protège un jour . . . l'assouvissement[109] est complet quand le fils *condamne à mort* sa mère',[110] Sartre does not explore the evident link between water and sexuality, although his own paraphase surely makes the symbolism clear: 'Sa mère *est devenue fleuve*; elle était debout à ses côtés, elle s'étale au-dessous de lui, plate et couchée'.[111]

We are therefore driven to ask why Sartre has apparently chosen to ignore or at least to minimize all evidence of an Oedipal situation in Flaubert's childhood. There would seem to be three possibilities: the rejection could be a matter of convenience, an Oedipus complex could not perhaps be fruitfully assimilated into Sartre's own analysis, he may believe that the notion would unbalance the delicate interrelationships of the various elements and thus weigh down the analysis with overtones which are too distinctly Freudian. This interpretation however does less than justice to Sartre's intellectual honesty; moreover within a work of the size and scope of the *Idiot* the Oedipal situation could certainly be assimilated without causing any serious imbalance. Secondly we might surmise that Sartre's rejection of the Oedipus complex is a general one, based either on subjective distaste (in which case a psychoanalysis of Sartre himself would be necessary to illumine the reasons for this) or, less speculatively, on the fact that it is part of Freudian fatalism and therefore unacceptable to a philosopher of liberty. But Sartre's view of man has been able to incorporate progressively more deterministic elements without losing its stress on some form of freedom, and an Oedipus complex is unlikely to prove inassimilable in this respect either. Moreover, Sartre does make use of the notion in his account of Alfred le Poittevin who he says: 'vit une certaine situation œdipienne de deux manières à la fois'.[112] (i.e. 'anoraxie'/'ataraxie'). The third supposition is perhaps more fruitful: namely that Sartre is once again taking account of modern developments in pyschoanalytic theory which has become, since 1930, progressively more aware of the importance of the pre-Oedipal relationship with the mother, and thus tended to 'regard the Oedipus complex as a psychic structure itself requiring interpretation in terms of earlier conflicts rather than as a primary source of neurosis itself.'[113] This would explain why Sartre does not attempt to account for Flaubert's *earliest* constitution in terms of an Oedipal situation, but it does not

fully account for the omission of such an explanation of later stages of Flaubert's development.

We must conclude ultimately that Sartre's apparent omission of any serious consideration of an Oedipal situation is a result of his concern to give an existential analysis of Flaubert's subjectivity rather than a clinical categorization of his 'complexes'. The notion of an Oedipus complex can easily be merely reductive terminology, a peg on which to hang a variety of differing situations and thus avoid a detailed account of the individual situation itself. Indeed there is in the *Idiot* as a whole a systematic refusal to rely on categorization as a means of explanation. Sartre is unwilling for example to define Flaubert as a homosexual 'par cette raison d'abord que notre parti pris de nominalisme nous interdit les classifications'.[114] It is in the same spirit that he claims to make no definitive decision as to whether Flaubert's crisis was hysterical or epileptic:[115] 'On admet aujourd'hui que certaines épilepsies ont pour origine l'hystérie. Alors, pour serrer les faits de plus près, nous serons franchement nominalistes'.[116] Sartre's apparent rejection of the notion of an Oedipus complex can thus perhaps be seen as a refusal to rely on Freudian terminology, rather than as a thoroughgoing rejection of the Oedipal situation itself, since this situation can often be sensed between the lines of Sartre's account. In an interview with the *New Left Review* in 1969 Sartre declared: 'Je suis entièrement d'accord sur les *faits* du déguisement et de la répression, en tant que faits. Mais les *mots* de "répression", "censure", "pulsion" – qui expriment à un moment une sorte de finalisme et, le moment suivant, une sorte de mécanisme – je les rejette.'[117] We may surmise that his attitude to the Oedipus complex is likely to be very similar: his phenomenological standpoint can accept the findings of psychoanalysis as processes but not as explicative categories.

It would seem fruitful at this point to examine certain other criticisms which Freudian critics have levelled at Sartre's analysis. In their different emphases these can all be interpreted as stemming from Sartre's refusal to recognize an inaccessible unconscious region of the mind. We have seen Sartre avowedly more open to Lacan's interpretation of the inconscious whilst still however rejecting any notion of this being *barré*. The Freudian critic Marthe Robert insists that Freud, unlike Sartre, did not believe that knowledge of a patient's childhood could provide knowledge of the man himself, but rather that 'L'enfance, domaine de l'oubli et du refoulement, reste pour la pensée consciente un livre rigoureusement scellé.'[118] Her picture of the *Idiot* is however somewhat inexact for she apparently ignores Sartre's attempts at analysis of the juvenilia and remarks ironically:

Ainsi, tout est clair, à un an, 5 ans, 20 ans, Gustave s'explique entièrement par le schéma familial sans ombres, quoique sinistre, que le philosophe obtient en chiffrant simplement *des circonstances, un milieu, des caractères* (père tyrannique, milieu bourgeois, mère sèche et diligente), ce qui démontre pratiquement que la psychanalyse freudienne est décidément superflue. A quoi bon en effet analyser des rêves, des symboles, des symptômes puisque les sentiments des personnages en

cause sont connus, et qu'on sait même comment Flaubert les a profondément ressentis.[119]

In fact of course Sartre's account of Flaubert's feelings towards his family is, as we have seen, heavily dependent upon his analytic interpretation of Flaubert's writings, and it is with insight from these that he reconstructs Flaubert's family history in its full complexity.[120] However we must agree with Robert that Sartre's account does not witness to the deep symbolic probing, or the difficulties of interpretation which should result from the resistance of the text to analysis, which we might expect from a psychoanalytic account. Sartre says for example that '*pour nous*, lecteurs du XX^{e} siècle, les rêves de Flaubert sont déchiffrables'.[121] which apparently assumes the possibility of widespread and adequate amateur analysis, and thus renders redundant all the long and arduous training of professional psychoanalysts. This is a necessary consequence of Sartre's rejection of a separate unconscious mind, for if all is ultimately accessible to the conscious mind, then problems of interpretation are considerably reduced. Indeed, Sartre describes Flaubert's juvenilia and correspondence as providing 'la confidence la plus aisément déchiffrable'.[122] Our final attitude on this matter must necessarily depend on our own convictions as to the truth of Freud's account and of Sartre's own. Sartre's aim of thoroughgoing totalization also goes against the grain of Freudian analysis: totalization can only be possible if there are no 'failles dans le savoir',[123] no 'ruptures', no 'trous',[124] whereas Freudian analysis is in fact based on these very lacunae themselves, the identification of which is the first step in the psychoanalytic 'cure'.

Marthe Robert has other minor objections also which should be noted for the sake of completeness but which need not be discussed here. Firstly she rejects Sartre's contention that Flaubert's murderous desires are purely imaginary and verbal, despite Sartre's careful discussion of the precise way in which Flaubert's 'parricide' is more imaginary than that of other children,[125] but she does not make clear what status she would like to attribute to these desires. She objects also to Sartre's account of the inauthentic nature of Gustave's love for Elisa Schlésinger, insisting that the obscenity of Flaubert's descriptions of her in fact witness to his love, but she does not take into account Gustave's own admission that his love was in fact retrospective, and it is on this that Sartre's account is primarily based. Furthermore, Robert supports the physical interpretation of Gustave's crisis as epileptic, rather than Sartre's interpretation of it as hysterical, and insists that Sartre does not in any case take the hysteria seriously enough; she emphasizes that hysteria has in fact been given 'un statut théorique précis' by Freud. In fact Sartre appears to be familiar with Freud's ideas on hysteria for he refers to him at one point to back up his interpretation of the hysterical nature of Gustave's *chute*.[126] Robert also mocks Sartre's use of the vieille notion de pithiatisme, abondonnées dès longtemps' which she sees as depriving Flaubert of 'la dignité reconnue à toute

souffrance vraie'. Finally she sees Sartre as condemning rather than understanding Flaubert, and it is to this final and most serious accusation that we must return later.

In its most extreme forms the rejection by Freudians of Sartre's *Idiot* has been almost total: 'Cet Himalaya verbal se dresse comme un barrage *contre Freud*'[127] says Burgelin; and Sartre's avoidance of the Freudian unconscious is compared to the 'édifices d'idées claires qu'élevaient les cartésiens face à cette "qualité occulte": l'attraction'.[128] We must of course reject any such simplistic attitude towards Sartre's work. As we have already seen Sartre was originally indebted to Freud and has indeed drawn progressively closer to Freud and in particular to Lacan's version of Freudian ideas. The psychoanalysis of the *Idiot* is quite clearly indebted to Freud: in so far as it is 'antipsychanalytique'[129] this can be in certain limited domains only.[130] The answer is quite evidently that, as is so often the case, Sartre has assimilated what he finds both acceptable and useful from Freudian analysis whilst rejecting without scruple elements which he cannot or does not wish to integrate into his account. Traditionalists will therefore attempt to play down Sartre's admission of his debt to Freud by stressing all that he has chosen not to assimilate. As we have already seen however the debt is clear as well as avowed; but its limits are clear also and cannot be ignored if we are to offer an exact account of the psychoanalytical dimensions of the *Idiot de la famille.*

We must turn now finally to Sartre's interpretation of Flaubert's crisis at Pont l'Evêque in January 1844. As I have indicated, Sartre sees this crisis as hysterical in origin rather than as epileptic, but argues that it is the reality which is important rather than the name given to it, and asserts that in any case epilepsy is now frequently seen as a hysterical phenomenon. Sartre refuses all mechanistic interpretations of Gustave's fall: it was not *caused* by the shock of passing another carriage unexpectedly: this was rather the pretext for it, the circumstantial event which allowed it to take place. Sartre makes a parallel between the inner drama of Flaubert and the events of the ride itself which in a sense symbolize this drama, summed up in the phrase 'emporté, il conduit'.[131] The *chute* is then presented by Sartre as *intentionnelle* but not in the sense of having been consciously decided upon: 'Je ne veux pas dire que Flaubert ait cyniquement décidé de choir publiquement',[132] Sartre emphasizes, warding off any simplistic reading of his account. Indeed he asserts that Flaubert's 'croyance organique lui masque son option passive',[133] and goes so far as to say that when Flaubert's crisis is later repeated it is 'sans la moindre complaisance consciente de sa part'.[134] This remark illustrates once again how far Sartre has moved from his original radical position of *L'Être et le Néant,* according to which all processes of the mind were *conscients* even if not *connus*. Sartre's notion of the *vécu* and his distinction between *compréhension* and *connaissance* here come into their own, and he describes Flaubert as obscurely *aware* of the meaning of his crisis. Indeed, Sartre believes that whilst hovering between a causal and a finalistic explanation, Flaubert always

recognizes the nervous, indeed the psychosomatic, basis of his crisis. Moreover he describes the later repetition of the scene as 'revécue *dans l'imaginaire*'[135] and adds: 'En un sens elle est *jouée*, et surtout *parlée*: l'agression psychopathique que Flaubert a subie, voici qu'il la restitue comme un rôle,'[136] and we are reminded of the contention of *L'Imaginaire* and the *Esquisse* that even hallucinations are in some sense *voulues*.

Sartre's interpretation of Flaubert's crisis is finalistic. The crisis is described as having a meaning from the beginning rather than being used or interpreted by Flaubert *après coup*. This meaning is moreover double: it is both a means of escape from a difficult situation and also, more positively, a strategy which will eventually allow Flaubert to fulfil his ambition of becoming an artist. Sartre's interpretation is an example of what he means when he calls the *Idiot* a work of anti-psychiatry, in the interview with Contat and Rybalka in *Le Monde*: 'L'analyse de la névrose, c'est de l'antipsychiatrie: j'ai voulu montrer la névrose comme solution à un problème'.[137] Previously, in *Cahiers de Philosophie* in 1966, Sartre had stated 'Vous pouvez considérer que tout projet est une fuite mais vous devriez aussi considérer que toute fuite est un projet. Chaque fois qu'il y a fuite il faut voir s'il n'y a pas affirmation de l'autre côté.'[138] Sartre's antipsychiatry rejects causalistic explanation in favour of phenomenological discussion, and interpretation in terms of intentions and finality.[139] His interpretation of the Pont l'Evêque crisis is positive and polyvalent. Flaubert is not merely opting out of intolerable pressures: he is creating a new situation which will allow him possibilities previously refused him by his father. Sartre's account is complex. He describes Flaubert's decision to drive the carriage home as the first major step towards the crisis and interprets this decision on six levels.

Ainsi, en allant du plus clair au plus complexe, nous pouvons déceler, à la racine de son activité, plusieurs niveaux intentionnels:
(1) Obéir à son père coûte que coûte. (2) Se faire dans la rage l'artisan de son destin bourgeois en complicité avec ceux qui le lui ont assigné. (3) Dompter la révolte obscure qui gronde, faute de pouvoir l'assumer dans une action négative. (4) Se réfugier dans ce rôle d'agent qui l'absorbe pour oublier la résistance qui s'organise et pour laisser le champ libre à la croyance, bref, courir à la mort dans l'innocence. (5) Exaspérer cette résistance passive dans la mesure même où le rôle d'agent – ici, la conduite de la voiture – symbolise l'activité générale qu'on lui impose et qu'il ne peut supporter. (6) Plus profondément encore: restituer, à la faveur de circonstances propices, et condenser dans un moment si court qu'il puisse la vivre tout entière, la situation d'ensemble dans laquelle il se débat depuis son adolescence de manière à susciter en lui une réponse globale à ses problèmes, bref mettre en présence *par la soumission absolue et partiellement jouée* les deux volontés contradictoires de l'Autre – celle du bourgeois Achille-Cléophas qui lui assigne un destin bourgeois, celle du Père symbolique qui l'a condamné au néant – et les laisser (ou les faire) s'entre-dévorer.[140]

We must note that on the most superficial level and on the deepest level Flaubert's

intentions coincide: he will obey his father, and by so doing will precipitate the conflict implicit in his father's two contradictory demands: the explicit desire of Achille-Cléophas that Flaubert should lead a 'normal' bourgeois life, and the conflicting constitution of Flaubert as passive and worthless arising in part through his feeling of having been rejected by his father at an early age. This conflict would seem to be a subtle example of Bateson's double-bind ('double-lien') theory,[141] according to which incompatible contradictory emotional demands are made usually on a child by his mother, creating an impossible and inescapable situation which can result in the child's opting out of social interaction and losing confidence in the accuracy of his thought and perceptions. Bateson sees this as a possible cause of schizophrenia but Sartre appears to reveal the same mechanism resulting here rather in neurosis. We shall see a form of 'double-bind' at work elsewhere also, in Flaubert's internalization of the conflicting ideologies of his parents.

Flaubert's crisis is then his response to impossible and contradictory demands. It is also an option in its own right, for it symbolizes a refusal of *praxis* and a return to the passivity which Gustave thinks of as his true nature. It thus symbolizes a refusal of the human in so far as this involves practical activity. Sartre sees Flaubert as attempting to effect a return to the protective situation of childhood: 's'il se fait objet, c'est pour *devenir objet de soins* . . . A travers la mort et la folie, il vise à *régresser* jusqu'à sa protohistoire'.[142] Flaubert is then attempting to escape what Sartre calls the vectorial time of history and destiny in order to enter the almost motionless time of eternity.[143] Here Sartre returns to the ontological categories of *L'Être et le Néant* to describe Flaubert's option: 'Flaubert choisit *d'être* plutôt que *d'exister* et *d'avoir* plutôt que de *faire*.'[144] The *chute* then involves an attempt to become *en-soi*, it is a false death, an imaginary totalization which Gustave cannot effectuate practically. It is also however, a symbolic murder, Sartre suggests: 'Le suicide mimé de janvier 44 est, comme tant de suicides réels, un meurtre déguisé.'[145] It is in fact an imaginary parricide. Sartre here makes use of the Freudian notion of a symbolic father (Moïse) whom, before his crisis, Flaubert had never succeeded in distinguishing from his real father Achille-Cléophas: 'Jamais père empirique n'a été plus proche du père symbolique et n'a contribué si fort à le personnaliser.'[146] By confronting the two, the crisis succeeds in separating the real and the symbolic, but the real father nonetheless remains 'la contestation radicale de Gustave'.[147] Despite his passive defiance of his father, Flaubert is then only partially liberated from him: it is, Sartre suggests, only the death of Achille-Cléophas himself two years after the crisis which frees Gustave from his domination, and Sartre describes him living his father's death in January 1846 as a real deliverance. However, even death cannot eliminate a powerful influence, and after Achille-Cléophas's death, Flaubert's 'délivrance' in fact depends on his internalization of his father (in which the real and the symbolic are once again united) and his success in convincing himself that he has in fact replaced him. Gustave then is a

parricide, but, as Sartre says, passive and 'imaginaire': 'Comme tous les petits d'homme, il lui a fallu tuer son géniteur et prendre un moment sa place pour s'en débarrasser. Simplement, comme les actes qu'il a cru faire n'étaient en réalité que des gestes, le crime sacré s'est réduit à une imagination criminelle.'[148] Sartre goes on to explain that Flaubert's 'meurtre rituel du père' was more imaginary than that of other young people in so far as the usual 'dethroning of Moses' is accompanied by a liquidation of paternal values which involves such practical activities as the founding of a new family, the replacement of the father at the head of the family business, or the attempt to rise higher than the father in the social hierarchy: 'Ainsi l'intention homicide est soutenue par une praxis symbolique mais vraie qui lui donne de la consistance.'[149] Flaubert, on the other hand, must await the actual death of his father and even then can replace him in no practical sphere.

Sartre turns next to the positive side of Flaubert's crisis. This cannot be examined in detail at this point as Sartre's study of this aspect has not been completed and his analysis so far relates more to aesthetics than to psychoanalysis. Moreover we have not yet discussed Flaubert's desire to be an artist and cannot therefore realize the full implications of the crisis in this respect until the final section of this chapter. Sartre whets our appetites but proceeds to leave us for the moment at least unsatisfied. He reveals that Flaubert's crisis was a profound strategy enabling him to become an artist: 'S'il tombe à Pont l'Evêque, c'est donc à la fois *contre* la Destinée et *pour* l'Art'.[150] This strategy is easy to understand on the simple level of Gustave's succeeding in avoiding law studies and indeed all professional activity, and staying at home to write, but the real significance goes in fact far deeper and is obscurely related to Flaubert's literary style:

> Longtemps Flaubert a lutté avec son double: Almaroës, froide raison analytique, se bagarrait avec Satan la pleurarde, mémoire torturée. La chute les sépare . . . Origine et résultat de la crise, la distanciation n'en serait-elle pas, en profondeur, la fin positive? Cela voudrait dire qu'elle s'identifierait à la crise elle-même, comme son intention téléologique, son orientation et son sens. De fait, Gustave, malgré quelques rechutes, va bientôt rompre avec l'éloquence passionnée de ses premières œuvres: l'Art, dès les derniers chapitres de *l'Education*, s'affirmera comme la distanciation suprême; ne serait-ce pas *pour renaître Artiste* que Gustave a rompu les amarres qui le retenaient à la vie immédiate? [151]

This then is Sartre's conclusion, but he stresses that it cannot be arrived at immediately but rather depends on a thorough analysis and interpretation of three years of Gustave's life: 'Si les intentions tactiques, dont l'objectif est à court terme, peuvent se livrer immédiatement à l'analyse existentielle, les intentions stratégiques ne peuvent être saisies que dans leur développement temporel.'[152] Sartre asks whether the 'projet névrotique' and the 'projet littéraire' were linked by the 'unité totalisante du vécu', in which all our activities form a meaningful whole, or if in fact the unity is not deeper and more significant:

La névrose apparaîtra, alors, *à un certain niveau* comme une réponse tactique et négative au père, suscitée par une urgence quoique préparée de loin, et *au niveau le plus profond* comme une réponse stratégique et positive à la question posée par la nécessité et l'impossibilité, pour Gustave, d'être Artiste.[153]

If the reader of volume II is by now expecting an analysis of the crisis as a 'stratégie positive' similar to that of the crisis as a means of escape from bourgeois demands, he is to be disappointed. The regressive-progressive method does not follow a pattern predictable to those more familiar with chronological or thematic criticism, and instead of a psychoanalytic account we find a discussion of Sartre's famous 'qui perd gagne' notion and its relevance to Flaubert's art. This discussion is a fascinating one and must be examined in due course, but it would not be in place here in an account of Sartre's use of psychoanalysis. Indeed, Sartre never explains in any detail how Flaubert's crisis of 1844 in fact initiated him into the 'qui perd gagne' *tourniquet*, and the crisis is therefore never clearly revealed as the 'stratégie positive' essential to Flaubert's self-liberation. Sartre would seem to have chosen to hold back the key to this mystery until the last possible moment: 'La maladie de Gustave exprime dans sa plénitude ce qu'il faut bien appeler sa liberté: ce que cela veut dire, nous ne pourrons l'entendre qu'à la fin de cet ouvrage, après avoir relu *Madame Bovary*'.[154]

However, owing to the recent deterioration in Sartre's eyesight, volume IV is of course highly unlikely to appear, and *L'Idiot de la famille* seems doomed to remain, in common with the majority of Sartre's major works, incomplete.

II: Sociology

We must now turn our attention to the sociological dimension of the *Idiot de la famille*. We have discussed Sartre's application of psychoanalysis in elucidating the nature of Flaubert's personal conflicts; we must now examine his use of a Marxist method of analysis which situates the individual dimension in a historico-sociological context and examines the dialectical relationship between the two.

As we know already from the *Critique de la raison dialectique*, Sartre's chief objections to contemporary Marxism as a heuristic method centre on its schematic and simplistic presentation of complex events and people. Sartre's ideal is a Marxism which reveals in full all the mediations between sub-structure and superstructure, and which, whilst never falling into the trap of bourgeois subjectivism, always retains an awareness of the singularity of each individual life or historical event which it attempts to express as fully and objectively as possible.

Sartre's theory of sociology has, of course, been previously examined by W. Desan[1] and C. Audry,[2] and a further full-scale analysis would be out of place here. I propose therefore to concentrate rather on what would appear to be the central sociological problem raised by the *Idiot*, and on its implications for theories of art and the nature of artistic communication. The problem in question is the

crucial one of the nature of totalization: precisely how is totalization effected? This question is essential to a thorough understanding of the aesthetic as well as the sociological notions of the *Idiot.* It can best be tackled in three sections: firstly individual totalization, secondly extra-individual totalization, and thirdly the articulation between the two. In practical terms this means that we shall examine firstly the individual totalization effected by Flaubert; secondly the collective yet, according to Sartre, subjectless, totalizations of art and history; and thirdly, their articulation through the notion of *l'art névrose* with its triple dimensions of subjective, aesthetic and historical neurosis.

We will look firstly then at Flaubert's internalization of his historical situation through the mediation of his family. Sartre presents the situation primarily in terms of external and irreconcilable conflicts which Flaubert attempts to internalize and which thereby impede his own personal integration. As I have indicated, Sartre's psychoanalysis of Flaubert is influenced on this point by Marx rather than Freud: Flaubert's personal structures are formed by what Marx would call introjected conflict. The objective socio-historical conflicts are closely paralleled by the 'double-bind' family contradictions already examined in the previous section. Flaubert then, internalizes conflicts already present in his father's situation and life-pattern. Achille-Cléophas is himself a product of contradictory elements: as a member of the *classe moyenne* under Louis XVIII certain of his interests are served by the very monarchical system which excludes him from participation in the elections. At the time, members of his class, says Sartre 'ne luttent guère . . . contre des maîtres dont ils sont en même temps serviteurs et complices. C'est d'abord qu'ils vivent sur la rente des uns et sur le profit des autres'.[3] More fundamentally, the *classe moyenne* is in no position to militate for it is torn by internal contradictions incarnated for example in Flaubert's father himself. Achille-Cléophas, is, on the one hand, a doctor and an atheist, yet on the other is linked to the landed classes by his royalist provincial background. He envelops the latent conflict of industrialists and *ex-émigrés*. His rural family life-style contrasts drastically with his scientific profession, and his thought and life-style therefore remain unintegrated.

Within the family itself moreover there are implicit contradictions. The Flaubert family is 'feudal': it is not based on what Sartre calls a *conjugal* marriage in which the husband and wife have equal rights and respect, but Achille-Cléophas is rather head of the family as if by divine right. The family is in fact neither truly bourgeois in structure nor truly aristocratic: the outmoded notion of hierarchy is adapted to bourgeois individualism and Achille-Cléophas is seen as the most worthy member of the family, whilst Gustave, as the youngest son, is seen as its least worthy member. The family structures are of course implicit, and since Gustave cannot therefore see their irrationality he feels confirmed as fundamentally unworthy. This is, of course, the historical correspondence of Madame Flaubert's 'non-valorisation' of her infant son. Sartre describes the Flaubert family as fifty years behind the times, and suggests that this 'hystérésis' will make of Gustave a *névrosé* and also a great

novelist. We have already discussed the psychoanalytic aspect of Flaubert's neurosis; we will look now at the sociological reasons behind it, and in the next section we will examine Flaubert's progress towards art.

Flaubert's father then envelops latent conflicts within himself, and the family he has set up is similarly contradictory. Moreover, Gustave's internalization of his family will be further complicated by his mother Caroline. We have seen Flaubert internalize inactivity and *pathos* from his mother which conflicts with the ambition and *praxis* of his father, and leads to a form of unsatisfactory passive ambition, and to his feeling that he has been given a mission which he is not capable of fulfilling. I have described this as a form of the double-bind situation. We can now see a further conflict between the ideologies of Gustave's parents. Achille-Cléophas is by profession a scientist, he is analytical, a materialist and an atheist. Flaubert's attempts to internalize these characteristics are abortive, in the first place because he cannot identify satisfactorily with his father since this is felt to be the privilege of his elder brother, and also because, as we have already seen, his passive constitution renders him incapable of a truly analytic attitude. Furthermore, the religion of Gustave's mother conflicts, though not openly, with the atheism of Flaubert's father; and on a still deeper level the feudal family structure itself is fundamentally 'religious' in the sense of being dominated by 'le sacré': it is by the same token hostile to analysis. Achille-Cléophas's scepticism however undermines all Gustave's natural religious leanings and denies him any outlet for his feudal propensity to adoration. Even at prayer Gustave still sees himself through the sceptical eyes of another, namely his father, and is compelled unwillingly to laugh at himself: 'Je dirais', says Sartre 'qu'on *l'a fait pour croire* et qu'on lui en a, au dernier moment, ôté les moyens'.[4]

Sartre interprets the juvenilia as expressing Flaubert's feeling that 'la malédiction paternelle a fait de [lui] ce monstre qui ne peut ni vivre avec Dieu ni sans'.[5] In a sense then we find here a further double-bind situation: the contradictions are in fact implicit within Flaubert's family itself, they reflect the broader issues of social industrialization, the growth of the bourgeoisie, the class struggle and the development of science. But within Flaubert himself they are translated into personal issues, aspects of his very being, which produce irreconcilable demands and insoluble conflicts. Sartre suggests that Flaubert might have resolved his dilemma in another way, if he could have been made familiar with the concepts of negative theology which makes a radical separation between the domains of faith and science, and shields faith from the onslaughts of scientific materialism. But the church of his day actively discourages 'agnostic' forms of theology. Negative theology, Sartre suggests, would have allowed Flaubert to see his despair and disbelief as proofs of God's existence ('tu ne me chercherais point si tu ne m'avais déjà trouvé') and would have freed him from the temporal church with its unacceptable mundanity and failings which cannot satisfy Gustave's thirst for the infinite. Indeed, Sartre describes Flaubert as defining himself in the juvenilia by his deprivation of the

infinite and declares that 'il s'est fait . . . le témoin du terrible Dieu caché dont l'absence lui dévore le foie. On voit qu'il est au bord de la théologie négative. Mais avant 44, il ne l'inventera pas.'[6] What Sartre means by Flaubert's invention of negative theology in 1844 is closely related to his notion of Flaubert's art as 'qui perd gagne', and will become clearer when we examine Flaubert's progression towards the ideal of a prose-art which communicates, like poetry, through the 'non-signifiant' side of language.

Sartre sums up Flaubert's internal contradictions and conflicts in terms of alienation to forms of the *sacré*:[7]

Aliénation religieuse et primitive à la famille ou *Fatum*; aliénation rationnelle et laïque en apparence – en profondeur irrationnelle et sacrée – à l'idéologie du *pater familias*; aliénation à la hiérarchie monarchique et théocratique qui se refuse et pourtant l'asservit: trois systèmes, trois types d'interprétation qui se proposent à la fois pour chaque expérience et, du coup, l'écartèlent.[8]

These diverse and conflicting systems of thought interact and produce *tourniquets*, 'où *Fatum*, Scientisme, Foi, Dieu, Néant, hiérarchie féodale et bourgeoisie égalitaire s'organisent en caroussels, obligeant le jeune homme, fourbu, à "tourner autour de sa pensée" comme il dit dans la première *Tentation*.'[9]

Flaubert has then internalized insoluble conflicts and this internalization has a result which refers us back to the title of Sartre's work: 'Gustave *est bête*'.[10] The statement is disconcerting, but the word *bêtise* has for Flaubert and indeed for Sartre himself a special meaning and complex implications. Basically Sartre is giving an account of Flaubert's own notion of *bêtise* as a bourgeois phenomenon: in Gustave's own eyes he is *bête* in so far as he is bourgeois, though he hates his bourgeois nature and tries to hide it: 'Sur un point, tous les intellectuels bourgeois du XIX[e] siècle sont d'accord: le bourgeois, c'est le philistin.'[11] For Flaubert however the question is more complex: he sees stupidity as a positive and oppressive force rather than as a negative lack, and moreover includes within the notion of *bêtise* the very criticism of stupidity itself: 'Flaubert réunit sous le même nom deux Bêtises contradictoires dont l'une est la substance fondamentale et l'autre l'acide qui la ronge.'[12] Bourgeois ceremonies, rituals and clichés, which Flaubert both participates in and at the same time hates, are the basic stuff of *bêtise*, but the bourgeois analysis attacking such stupidity is mocked and hated by Flaubert even more fiercely, for this is the *bêtise* of his father and is felt by Flaubert to be eating away at his very soul. Sartre reveals his own agreement with Flaubert's notions of *bêtise* when he describes him as obscurely sensing that the inadequacy of bourgeois thought lies in the fact that it is analysis without synthesis: 'Finalement la Bêtise, c'est la Raison décapitée, c'est l'opération intellectuelle privée de son unité, autrement dit de son pouvoir d'unification.'[13] To appreciate fully the implications of this dual notion of stupidity we must turn now to Sartre's discussion of Flaubert at school, and in particular his invention of *Le Garçon*.

Flaubert's relations with his schoolfellows were, it appears, ambivalent. He was

popular and a fairly good student, but he was dissatisfied as he wanted to be recognised as superior: the most popular and most intelligent pupil. His invention, sometime between 1835 and 1837, of *Le Garçon*, a mythical role acted out by Flaubert and his school-friends, was, Sartre indicates, intended to demoralize. *Le Garçon* represented the dual nature of *bêtise*: as both mocker and mocked it embodied the stuff of stupidity itself and also the bourgeois analysis which was thereby equally ridiculed. The *Garçon* then mocked all that the bourgeoisie stood for: it mocked also Romanticism through the equally fictional figure of Monsieur Loyal; it permitted a means of totalization through laughter, reducing life to mere buffoonery. By participating in the creation of *Le Garçon*, by taking the role of *Garçon* at times, and by laughing with and at him, Flaubert's school-friends were, apparently, laughing at their future bourgeois selves, and at their present Romantic aspirations. Sartre analyses the different levels of meaning of the *Garçon* but these need not concern us here; what is more relevant in this context is his explanation of why the other schoolboys should join in a process designed to demoralize them.

Sartre's account is historical: he describes how in 1831 the boys' liberal parents, afraid of the proletariat and desiring to protect their links with the Catholic Royalist aristocracy, help to quell their children's revolt against compulsory school confession. The result is that the boys feel betrayed by their parents and hence become forcibly awakened to their true bourgeois status. As temporary escape the schoolboys retreat into the world of Romantic literature, identifying with heroes such as Hernani and Chatterton. At this juncture yet another irreconcilable conflict undergone by Flaubert and his fellows emerges, for Romantic literature demands of the reader at least an imaginary hatred of the bourgeois, whilst at the same time permitting no possibility of his escaping from his class of origin. The bourgeois readers, then, though brought up to hate the real aristocracy, are led by their reading to admire what Sartre, following Freud, calls 'symbolic nobility', and to despise the bourgeois. Inverting the Nietzschean formula Sartre describes this as resulting in a 'tu dois, donc tu ne peux pas'[14] situation: apparently yet another example of a kind of double-bind, this time on a far more general scale. The children cannot of course really hate themselves or their parents at will; they are in an unreal situation and the butt of contradictory demands, for they can neither be truly noble, nor can they hate their fathers or their own class.

A result of this insoluble dilemma is an inability to identify with either element in the conflict, and the adoption of a comic stance directed equally at both elements in an intolerable situation. The positive reception of the *Garçon* and Monsieur Loyal now becomes clearer. In laughing both at Romanticism and at the bourgeoisie the boys avenge themselves on the Romantics at the same time as attacking the bourgeois. They thereby externalize their imaginary self-hatred. Borrowing Camus's term Sartre describes them as 'juges-pénitents'. Despite his timely invention, however, *Le Garçon* is born of a misunderstanding: Flaubert's original intention was to demoralize, but the very universality of his mockery

allows his friends to feel less ashamed of their bourgeois status. Like their fathers before them, the children still consider the bourgeois as the universal class, though they now despise it and see it as valueless. The *Garçon* unintentionally reinforces this belief, and so directs attention away from the specificity of bourgeois *bêtise* towards the universal nature of human stupidity. Flaubert's school-friends are thus enabled to turn from their anti-bourgeois rebellion to a universal mockery which connives with the bourgeois in so far as it excuses the *status quo*. Sartre concludes with the rueful statement that the eventual destiny of these schoolboy rebels will be to stifle the 1848 revolution. As Sartre promises to show when he examines the parallel misunderstanding of *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert's role will be once again unwittingly to pour balm on bourgeois wounds, to permit them to universalize their self-hatred, and to allow them to blame fate and the world itself, rather than accept personal responsibility for their actions.

Sartre has moved away from Flaubert's personal internalization of history, towards a more extended discussion of post-Romantic adolescents. His discussion of individual totalization was both clear and explicit; but when he turns his attention away from the individual as the focal point of historical trends and conflicts, towards the constitution of these trends and conflicts into some kind of collective awareness, the matter becomes more problematical. Sartre's concern with the question of totalization is already evident in, for example, *Le Sursis*, and it culminates in his analysis of groups, series and totalities in the *Critique de la raison dialectique*. His renewed interest in the question of totalization in the *Idiot* can be seen as arising from his desire to give a theoretical basis, for example, to his examination of how art-for-art's-sake formed as a movement, as well as to account for phenomena such as public taste and public reaction.

Sartre's account of extra-individual totalization centres on the implicit literary demands made on aspiring post-Romantic writers of Flaubert's generation. The analysis in volume III is complex and lengthy, for it reviews not merely the effect of Romantic literature, but also that of seventeenth and eighteenth-century literature, and, moreover, the demands of the public itself. This section is essential for an understanding of firstly Sartre's ideas on Flaubert's art; secondly his interpretation of the role of Flaubert's neurosis, in its objective as well as its subjective dimension; and finally, as I have indicated, his conception of supra-personal totalization. Sartre's account, then, takes the form of a discussion of the various conflicting demands faced by a young post-Romantic author, arising from previous literature, and embodied in what Sartre, following Hegel, calls the *Esprit objectif*.

The notion of the *Esprit objectif* is crucial; it is in a sense the king-pin of the whole work, since it is what allows Sartre to fulfil the programme sketched summarily in *Question de méthode*. It enables him to show how the personal and historical dimensions are linked not merely, as we have already seen, in the sense that Flaubert internalizes the historical and social conflicts of his generation, but

also in the sense that his personal career is itself subsumed within a wider, non-personal form of totalization. *L'Esprit objectif* as an extra-personal totalization is not perhaps as clearly expounded as one would like to see, given its capital importance; it remains rather a tantalizing notion, the philosophical status of which needs to be examined.

Firstly we must be quite clear that although Sartre is using the terminology of Hegel, his *Esprit objectif* is not in any sense Hegelian, for it is not, Sartre claims, idealist. As we know for example from the *Critique*, Sartre believes not in totalities but in *totalités détotalisées*, and it is into this category that the *Esprit objectif* must fall. In the first instance, and at its most pragmatic level, *l'Esprit objectif* is described by Sartre as 'la culture comme pratico-inerte',[15] not living thought but thought which has been verbalized, categorized and objectified, and thus distanced from its originators, until it becomes part of the prevailing ideology. The *Esprit objectif* is thus always, in a sense, behind the prevailing creative *praxis*. As *pratico-inerte*, culture presents itself as a series of imperatives to be fulfilled, and thereby perpetuated. Sartre draws three conclusions about the *Esprit objectif* which can be summarized as follows. Firstly, the various totalizations which people effect individually of the same or of different works are themselves totalized. Unfortunately Sartre does not explain the mechanics of this process, but merely states 'Il serait trop long d'expliquer ici comment, en dépit de cette atomisation apparente, la conjoncture effectue sans cesse une totalisation exhaustive mais sans totalisateur.'[16] We shall return to this aspect in more detail shortly. Secondly, the *Esprit objectif* is in a sense outside individuals, 'non point le produit présent d'un effort de pensée mais avant tout dans les livres'.[17] By this Sartre means that the literary work of art seems, despite the fact that its very essence depends on my reading it, to contain more than what I, as an individual, can get out of it. This is because of my awareness of other readers, and of the riches they can obtain which are unattainable by me:

> La profondeur est donc un abstrait qui me hante . . . La dualité devient trinité: le rapport lecteur-auteur renvoie au rapport le plus souvent sériel des lecteurs entre eux . . . L'Esprit objectif nous découvre notre finitude et nous contraint à la considérer comme une faute.[18]

Finally, he concludes that the *Esprit objectif* is internalized as imperatives which may well be contradictory, for 'Il n'y a pas de tout; tout juste des disjonctions, des thèses contraires mais dont les auteurs, faute de se connaître, ignoraient souvent qu'il se contredisaient l'un l'autre.'[19] Any internalization involves an attempt to totalize these conflicts:

> Ainsi l'Esprit objectif, réalité externe-interne qui – sur le plan qui nous occupe – a pour origine l'aspect duel de l'écriture se caractérise à la fois comme une somme d'exigences inertes et comme un impératif suprême, issu de partout et qui réclame au lecteur de dissoudre les contradictions dans l'unité d'une totalisation en cours.[20]

Before we move on to discuss the relevance of this to Flaubert and his contem-

poraries we must pause for a moment to examine the notion of the *Esprit objectif* itself. And indeed the notion is more complex and also more important than it might at first sight appear. The existence of the notion in the Flaubert essay does not arise simply out of Sartre's desire to give a total account of Flaubert. It arises also out of his awareness of trends in contemporary thinking to which he is in many ways opposed. In essence the notion of an *Esprit objectif* as outlined in the *Idiot*, whilst on the one hand steering clear of Hegelian-type synthesis, is proposed as an alternative to the Structuralist account of how the 'subjective' relates to the 'objective'. For Sartre, the account given by the Structuralists of collective phenomena (e.g. myths, language etc.) emphasizes their objective nature at the expense of individual consciousness. The Structuralist account of culture implies a 'décentrement du sujet' which results in the radical assertion that 'l'homme est pensé'. This is partly the result of a philosophical *parti-pris* arising out of Marxism, but is also to be seen in terms of the specific aim of enquiring into the collective aspect of meaning. If we turn to the first chapter of Lévi-Strauss's *Le Cru et le Cuit* where he discusses Paul Ricœur's description of his methods as 'kantisme sans sujet transcendental',[21] we find him arguing that in the case of myths men are not generally or necessarily aware 'de leur structure et de leur mode d'opération'.[22] His aim is not, therefore, 'Montrer comment les hommes pensent dans les mythes, mais comment les mythes se pensent dans les hommes et à leur insu.'[23] He continues: 'Et peut-être, ainsi que nous l'avons suggéré, convient-il d'aller encore plus loin, en faisant abstraction de tout sujet pour considérer que d'une certaine manière les mythes se pensent *entre eux*.'[24] The latter formulation is of course extreme, and in fact only tentatively expressed here. Sartre, for his part, would certainly reject as one-sided even the former notions of myths 'thinking themselves out' in men. Both Sartre and Lévi-Strauss would seem, however, to be attempting to explain the same phenomenon: that of processes which are apparently supra-personal, extra-individual. If a myth in its totality is present in no individual's mind how does it have its existence; if the 'sens objectif' of a work of art is not a meaning which can be understood by one person, in what mode can it be said to exist? The Structuralist answer is to take the responsibility away from man and to give it to the structure (here myth) itself. Sartre's answer is not the simple inverse of this: like Lévi-Strauss he rejects Kant's transcendental subject, neither does he believe in a totality, 'humanity', which creates myths and gives works of art objective meanings. But his answer is still man-centred: for despite his borrowing of Hegel's terminology, the *Esprit objectif* is, as I have already said, like humanity itself, a *totalité détotalisée*. It exists *'en acte'* only 'par l'activité des hommes et, plus précisément, par celle *des individus*'.[25] To be more precise it is a *totalisation détotalisée*,[26] for each individual totalizes in his own way, and these totalizations are in their turn totalized. Sartre appears to be relatively clear as to the manner in which this totalization is effected by future generations: our present totalizations will be united by others in the future, and will thus form the totality which we

cannot at present see. However, as we may have guessed, he is less assured when speaking of the present 'totalisation en cours', for this cannot be seen to be in fact effected. Sartre says, as we noted, that it would take too long to show how 'la conjoncture effectue sans cesse une totalisation exhaustive mais sans totalisateur'.[27]

Sartre, then, does not reveal the process by which *la conjoncture* effects a totalization, but the implications of the *Idiot* as a whole make it clear that the process, for Sartre, must be dialectical: neither exclusively objective as in the Structuralist theory, not yet wholly dependent on individual subjective totalizations. Sartre is evidently attempting to incorporate Structuralist insights within a more subtle system which, whilst acknowledging the objective dimension, would leave room for the individual subjectivity. It is disappointing that the theoretical basis of the *Esprit objectif* is not explored more fully, but the reason for the omission may lie, paradoxically, in the very importance of the notion. We may surmise that a further development might have involved Sartre in a digression even more far-reaching than any of those yet encountered in the *Idiot*. It seems clear that, under the influence of Marx, Sartre has become progressively more open to Structuralism, but has not yet worked out in detail his final attitude to Structuralist theories. His own premises are of course radically different, but, as in the case of Freud, he seems prepared to accept many of the findings of Structuralism and to be able to bring these within his own existential humanism. This conjecture is supported in the first place by his avowed intention to make use of Structuralist techniques in his account of *Madame Bovary:* 'Je veux faire une critique totalisante: c'est pourquoi le dernier tome sera une étude textuelle ou littéraire, si vous voulez, de *Madame Bovary*, et j'essaierai d'y utiliser des techniques "structuralistes".'[28] And secondly, as we shall see later, Sartre has already incorporated certain Structuralist notions into his own aesthetics as the antithesis of his original subjectivist thesis, from which a new and more powerful synthesis will be derived dialectically.

We can now turn to the *Esprit objectif* as Flaubert and his contemporaries experienced it in the 1840s. The imperatives received by the post-Romantic writer owe little to the seventeenth century, which was studied academically and appeared remote, with no more relevance than as a guarantee of the possibility of beauty in art. The real imperatives come rather from the philosophical literature of the eighteenth century and the literature of the first-generation Romantics. Sartre shows how the post-Romantic author feels unable to fulfil the conditions for the production of either type of literature. Since the eighteenth century, the fields of art and science have been separated so that the domain of the creative artist is no longer 'savoir' but rather the irrational; furthermore the eighteenth-century ideal of the writer as classless was dependent on an ignorance of class conflict no longer possible after the violence of the French Revolution. A true emulation of the early Romantic writers is equally impossible: their aesthetic ideal is fundamentally aristocratic: the 'beau idéal', a norm perceptible to all men, has been rejected in favour of the élitist notion of 'taste', or an ideal of beauty produced within one's

individual awareness, and from which the bourgeois is automatically excluded. The ideal of analysis seen, as we know, by Sartre as eminently bourgeois, has been replaced by that of non-rational synthesis; the classical ideal of universal communication, by a notion of incommunicability resulting in a higher form of communication; and the whole is watched over, for the Romantics, by a God who is denied intellectually but who is felt as guaranteeing inspiration and as turning apparent failure into success.

The bourgeois adolescents of the 1840s are thus incapable of fulfilling either the demands of eighteenth-century philosophical literature, or the conflicting demands of non-rational, élitist, Romantic writing. The imperatives of the *Esprit objectif* cannot therefore be satisfied practically even incompletely, and the eventual solution arrived at by the post-Romantic writers is the unreal, imaginary synthesis of these conflicting imperatives baptized as *l'art pour l'art*. When rational solutions fail the way out can only be through the irrational. The author is thus forced in a sense to 's'irréaliser pour écrire'. Sartre calls this procedure neurotic but insists: 'Cette névrose est elle-même *objective*, c'est un *moyen* d'écrire: moyen douteux, suspect mais unique.'[29] *L'art absolu* is also then *l'art-névrose*. We need now to ask in what sense the notion of neurosis can be applicable to art.

Sartre, as Evelyn Pinto[30] points out, is at pains to emphasize that it is not the work itself which is neurotic. *Madame Bovary*, for example: 'Pour être incontestablement l'œuvre d'un névrotique, n'est en aucune façon, à la prendre *en elle-même* – c'est-à-dire sans la rapporter à l'auteur – une *œuvre névrotique*.'[31] On the contrary 'ce qu'on y découvre d'abord c'est la rationalité comme règle de la *praxis* littéraire'.[32] Sartre indicates moreover that *l'art-névrose* is a choice ('les post-romantiques ont choisi l'imaginaire *pour pouvoir écrire*'),[33] rather than an inevitable result of circumstance, and indeed he says of Flaubert: 'il oriente son pithiatisme *névrotique* vers l'imitation du refus *psychotique* qu'un schizophrène oppose à la réalité'.[34] It is clear that Sartre's model is here yet again Bateson's model of the double-bind situation which results in schizophrenia, or, according to Sartre, in a neurosis which imitates certain schizophrenic features. On the other hand, the choice is in some sense imposed, and Sartre continues that 'la nécessité de ce choix représente en elle-même un élément de la névrose objective'.[35] It can thus be best described as an 'option subie'. Pinto suggests that the neurosis is both the operational principle of art at the time, and also its objective condition. She shows that Sartre's use of the notion of the *névrose objective* has in fact three different aspects: firstly it is a real *ensemble* of post-Romantic works and artistic behaviour; secondly, it is a working hypothesis, suggesting an intelligible principle behind a multiplicity of symptoms: 'Structure structurée et structurante, la névrose est donc à la fois l'outil théorique de l'historien de la littérature et le principe opérationnel des écrivains eux-mêmes.'[36] Thirdly, it is a norm, an imperative which artists give opaquely to themselves. Sartre in fact says that 'tout est inscrit dans l'objet',[37] but he nonetheless sees the neurosis as a principle of the internalization of the objective.

L'art-névrose can thus be summed up as a 'conduite finalisée et visant à dépasser le conflit résultant d'exigences sociales insatisfaites'.[38] It is a way by which an 'impossible' art can in fact exist. Pinto's analysis is helpful in sorting out the various strands of Sartre's account. Having looked briefly at the different elements of meaning of the *névrose objective* we can now look at the qualities of *l'art-névrose* or *l'art absolu* itself.

As we have just seen, a real and rational reconciliation of the conflicting demands of the *Esprit objectif* is impossible. The reconciliation must be imaginary and irrational. The impossibility of art must become the condition of art itself. Basically Sartre is offering us a detailed and thorough analysis of how, in the mid-nineteenth century, literature, having been divorced from its moral or utilitarian function, is forced to set itself up as a value in its own right. No longer the handmaid of the Good, Beauty is itself promoted to the role of transcendent value. In the preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, 'le beau' and 'l'inutile' are interchangeable terms. A little later this notion of the gratuitousness of art is carried to its logical extreme, and art is seen as not only totally solipsistic, its own end with no external reference or function, but as anti-humanistic and positively harmful. In this sense of course the wheel turns full circle, and in Baudelaire for example, the question of the morality/immorality of the work of art comes back in through the kind of moral bad-faith which is Satanism. Or looked at from a slightly different but closely related standpoint, the demand for an autonomous literature is satisfied only by a refusal of communication, and the Romantics are accused by the second-generation writers of prostitution. Here of course Sartre's *qui perd gagne* schema comes into its own. We need not examine this schema in detail at this point: it is enough to state briefly that it appears, from a rational viewpoint, a procedure of bad-faith by which the artist chooses failure in the three domains of his status as artist, his personal life, and the work of art itself, in order to be surreptiously recuperated in all three. It is then only through failure that the imperatives of the *Esprit objectif* can be satisfied.

In appearance at least *l'art-névrose/absolu* has no subject and moreover no public, for it communicates nothing, and indeed to nobody. But paradoxically, it turns out to be a huge success with the bourgeois public which it spurns, and Sartre sets himself the task of explaining this phenomenon. His explanation, as we shall see, centres on the very neurosis which should supposedly make communication impossible. His account of the success poses, however, certain major theorectical problems which will have to be examined. In short, Sartre's hypothesis is that since literature is always dual, involving a writer and a reader, communication with the reader in *l'art-névrose* must take place via a brief neurosis provoked during reading. Sartre's explanation of the reasons why the bourgeois reader should accept and indeed need the neurotic outlet is once again historical. He describes the neurosis as stemming from the 1848 revolution, during which the middle class *capacités* and *demi-nantis* renege on their desire for reform because of their intense fear of the rising proletariat. They join the forces of order in a violent and oppressive blood-

bath which they later wish to erase from their memories. As adolescents, they attempted to diminish awareness of their bourgeois status by escaping into Romantic literature: now their need is for a more radical form of escape. *L'art officiel* provides an idealized and optimistic universe, but one which is nonetheless related to life and can therefore give only superficial relief from guilt. *L'art absolu* on the other hand corresponds to their more fundamental needs. As we have seen, *l'art absolu* is misanthropic and anti-humanistic; the bourgeois public thus find their homicidal intentions embodied in it: in a sense it is an art which reveals the secret of its readers: hatred, alienation, and radical negation. As we saw with respect to Genet, even the aesthetic beauty of the work of art itself can be seen as evil, in so far as it opposes the unreal and the imaginary to the real and the human. But if *l'art-névrose* reflects the hatred of its readers, it also helps them to conceal and excuse it. In the first place the reader imagines that he is merely a passive recipient of the world-view of the author, whereas, according to Sartre's theory of literature, he is in fact actively participating in the creation of the work. The public therefore christen the writers of *l'art-névrose* by the inappropriate title of 'realists'. The term, Sartre feels, reflects the desires of the reading public rather than the true nature of the works themselves. Sartre is here pointing the way to an explanation of Flaubert's own resentment of the term 'realist', but also the conditions of his success. There is furthermore, a second important factor in the positive reception given to *l'art-névrose* by the bourgeois public. As we have seen, their hatred is not merely a universal and necessary result of bourgeois structures, but a precise historical phenomenon which they wish to deny. *L'art-névrose* universalizes hatred and misanthropy to the extent that such hatred can be seen as a fundamental human feature rather than as part of a specific and dateable event. It is for this reason, Sartre reveals, that response to Leconte de Lisle was, at this period, so unfavourable. His misanthropy, unlike that of Flaubert, has the experience of 1848 at its base, and even the absence of this event in his poetry becomes significant as a positive omission, reminding the reader once again of his unmentionable guilt. Moreover, Leconte de Lisle is not even fully involved in the pessimism and failure which he portrays: the themes of *l'art-névrose* are all present in his work, but as artistic themes rather than as deeply felt personal discoveries. In Sartre's terms, he internalizes *l'art-névrose* but does not incarnate it. His *échec* is *joué*: his neurosis neither personal nor subjective.

We are thus led to the inevitable conclusion that *l'art-névrose*, in its true form, must depend not merely on the neurosis implicit in the *Esprit objectif* but also a subjective neurosis:

> Pour que la littérature se pose en Absolu, non pas en théorie mais dans l'object imaginaire qu'elle produit, il faut découvrir en l'oeuvre une qualité singulière attestant chez l'auteur l'indissoluble unité de la névrose objective – comme intériorisation d'impératifs contradictoires et dépassement, par l'Art-Echec, de toutes ces contradictions – et d'une névrose subjective bien caractérisée dont les racines plongent dans sa petite enfance.[39]

As Sartre told us earlier then: 'Le "génie" dépendra ici, de la coïncidence du subjectif et de la subjectivation proposée par la névrose objective.'[40]

The notion of the necessity of a subjective neurosis behind the objective neurosis of art itself is both fascinating and also highly problematical. It brings us, in fact, to the third aspect of the present section: that of the articulation between the individual internalization of history and the supra-individual totalizations which we have already examined. This articulation is discussed by Sartre through the notion of a neurosis to be found in the three domains of individual subjectivity, art and history. We here come up against three major questions which, if unresolved, would seem, partially at least, to invalidate certain of Sartre's theses. What exactly is implied by the correspondence firstly between the *névrose objective* of art and that of history: secondly between Flaubert's subjective neurosis and that of the 1848 public; thirdly between Flaubert's subjective neurosis and that of *l'art-névrose*? These neuroses are seen as interrelating variously, and the implications of this process are explored by Sartre who insists that the correspondence cannot be explained satisfactorily by resorting to a simple notion of chance coincidence which offends not merely against Marxist tenets but also against general intellectual principles. Sartre is quite clear that the correspondence is not merely coincidental, but he does not develop his explanation fully. The *névroses objectives* of art and of history would both appear to depend on a class neurosis: in both cases the bourgeois have proved unable to satisfy demands made upon them by the *Esprit objectif* which have been internalized as personal aesthetic or historical imperatives. The inability to create a classless literature is closely paralleled by the inability to create a classless society, the first step towards which would be universal suffrage. Both failures arise basically out of the false belief in bourgeois man as universal. For Sartre, of course, the proletariat is the 'truth', in the Marxist sense, of the bourgeoisie.

How though does Flaubert's personal neurotic experience correspond to the two interrelated neuroses of art and history, the latter of which it in fact precedes by several years? Sartre describes Flaubert's neurosis as oracular and prophetic, and insists that its relationship with the historical and aesthetic neuroses is far more than a 'lien fortuit', resulting from the misunderstanding of *Madame Bovary*. To explain its prophetic aspect Sartre returns to the notion (which he feels has been excessively simplified in Marxist arguments) of a writer *expressing* his time. He stresses that the work of art 'rend compte d'une collectivité entière, avec ses déchirements et ses luttes, mais dans une perspective partielle qui brouille tout et qui est commune, *en général* . . . à l'écrivain lui-même et à la classe dont il est issu;'[41] and also that

Ce qu'on nomme une époque est le lieu de rencontre de nombreuses générations qui se distinguent les unes des autres par des avenirs et des passés différents tout en s'unifiant dans une synthèse contradictoire parce qu'elles *ont le même présent* – que la force des choses leur impose même s'ils l'interprètent différemment.[42]

Since people with different pasts and different expectations of the future share the

same present, the author can only fully reflect the mentality of his contemporaries if he is, in a sense both 'en retard sur eux et en avance': 'Bien souvent d'ailleurs – pour ne pas dire toujours – l'avance est déterminée par le retard. Et c'est justement le cas de Flaubert.'[43]

Sartre's analysis is fascinating and suggestive, but also perhaps rather vague: how does the process work in practice, how does it work in detail for Flaubert? Sartre suggests that it would be as untrue to suggest that Flaubert's personal neurosis results simply from an internalization of the 'névrose objective' of art (in any case his neurosis preceded his reading) as it would be to envisage the two as unconnected. Flaubert's neurosis is in fact, says Sartre, 'surdéterminée'.[44] But how are the determining factors in fact interrelated, Sartre asks:

Comment cette affectation, si rigoureusement individuelle, devait-elle déboucher sur l'intériorisation de l'Art-Névrose? Et comment l'Art-Névrose, ensemble axiologique de dogmes, de normes et de techniques a-t-il pu devenir la *vérité* de la névrose subjective? Est-il permis, du reste, de parler ici de vérité? Dirons-nous que *Madame Bovary*, ce centre de déréalisation, est la vérité de la crise de 44? Pourquoi pas? Mais il faudrait alors établir que Gustave est venu névrotiquement (ou prénévrotiquement) à la littérature-névrose par des motivations subjectives qui la contenaient déjà comme ensemble inaperçu de déterminations objectives . . . Il s'agit donc de comprendre comment les déterminations individuelles et préhistoriques ou proto-historiques de Flaubert peuvent correspondre aux transformations pratico-inertes de l'Esprit objectif assez rigoureusement pour que *sa* névrose se développe - sans cesser d'être son aventure singulière - en liaison avec les impératifs contradictoires qui esquissaient la figure du nouvel Art et comment, par l'échec qu'elle s'est longuement préparé, elle s'extériorise et s'universalise par la doctrine de l'Art-Absolu de telle manière que celle-ci, qui, pourtant, est inscrite dans l'objectivité culturelle, apparaisse, non sans raison, à ses contemporains comme le produit singulier de son génie.[45]

I have quoted at length in order to reveal the detail and explicitness of Sartre's question, and to stress his awareness of the problems arising from his theory. However we are once again to be frustrated of an answer, apparently by the progressive-regressive method which holds the final solution in abeyance. Sartre makes it quite clear that he does not propose to enter at this point into such detailed analysis, but rather to deal with the question from the more general standpoint of the dialectical relationship between a man and his epoch, according to which 'un homme . . . totalise son époque dans la mesure exacte où il est totalisé par elle'.[46] In this way, Flaubert's neurosis would be seen as totalizing bourgeois society under the bourgeois monarchy. Flaubert's family and French literature would thus express, in their different ways, the same evolution of French society, in such a way that *l'art-névrose*, already a solution to cultural problems, could be lived out by the adolescent Gustave as the solution to his family difficulties; and so that eventually, his 'névrose hystérique d'échec' could develop 'comme conduite radicale d'échec, dépassant conjointement l'impossibilité d'être homme et

l'impossibilité d'écrire, par l'intention – cette fois pleinement névrotique – de la littérature-échec.'[47] Sartre emphasizes that since man is an *universel singulier,* a microcosm (man)/macrocosm(society) correspondence is often possible, but that this is merely superficial unless external history is actually condensed within the individual biography:

Mais ce rapport . . . n'est valable que comme illustration *rhétorique* du macrocosme par le microcosme (et réciproquement) . . . *à moins* que, dans le *raccourci* d'époque que prétend être une biographie singulière, l'histoire ne se soit *en effet condensée.*[48]

If this condition is satisfied, the man/society correspondence need not be synchronic so long as it is based on 'le rigoureux conditionnement dialectique de deux finitudes *l'une par l'autre* à travers le milieu du pratico-inerte.'[49] Sartre gives a brief account of the interrelationship using the notions of *praxis*, the *pratico-inerte*, and the *totalités détotalisées* of history and humanity, familiar from the *Critique de la raison dialectique*. He concludes:

La finitude relative des séries historiques se fonde sur la finitude absolue des agents historiques. Inversement, la finitude et la singularité d'une *époque* . . . rejaillissent à leur tour sur l'agent qui se trouve défini *non seulement* par des caractères généraux . . . mais aussi dans sa singularité, comme un certain moment d'une temporalisation plus vaste mais singulière.[50]

It is in this sense then, Sartre considers, that a life like Flaubert's and a period of history like that of Louis-Philippe can enter into a truly reciprocal relationship. Both must be conditioned by the same factors and must totalize these factors in a parallel manner, directed towards the same end. This enables us to understand how a life can be oracular, i.e. 'un raccourci diachronique de l'évolution générale de la société'.[51] Different individuals then live their lives, and the factors which condition them, at different rates:

Des facteurs biologiques, sociaux, métapsychologiques – universaux qui se font vivre par nous dans leur réalité singulière – sont pour chacun à l'origine d'un *programme de vie* qui naît des contradictions intériorisées et que freine ou accelère le mouvement général de la Société.[51]

We may note again in passing Sartre's incorporation of the Structuralist contention that certain universal factors 'se font vivre par nous' within his dialectical framework. In a picturesque image, Sartre concludes: 'Il y a des vies qui brûlent comme du nylon, d'autres comme des bougies, d'autres comme un charbon qui s'éteint doucement sous la cendre.'[53] Sartre has been accused of avoiding the real issues by use of metaphor, but the image is in fact merely a final vivid simplification of a point he has already made with theoretical, if not practical, precision.

Sartre is then evidently lucidly aware of the problems posed by his ideas on the interrelationship of art, history, and personal neurosis. He has moreover laid down the terms for a resolution of these questions, and for a detailed study of their effect

in practice. What we are given however is something less than we were led to expect. Sartre starts book two of volume III with the promising statement that: 'Si la vie de Flaubert est programmée, ce ne peut être qu'à partir dĕ sa névrose. Et si celle-ci est oraculaire, cela signifie qu'en janvier 44, il a définitivement choisi l'environnement social qui n'existe pas encore mais qui deviendra *sa* société pour quelques années.'[54] What Sartre in fact proposes to show now, however, is merely that 'le Second Empire, dans sa période libérale, peut être considéré comme cette société *optima*'.[55] Volume IV was apparently to have shown the other facets of the interrelationship of subjective and objective, art and history, present and future, in greater detail.

Sartre's account of the Second Empire as unreal and imaginary is a fascinating one. We have not the space to summarize it here, but must remind the reader of certain aspects of the analysis. Sartre reveals Flaubert's feelings towards the Empire as ambivalent: 'Flaubert *condamne l'Empire* et *s'en déclare négativement solidaire.* C'était, pour le meilleur et le pire, *son époque*.'[56] Like Flaubert in his art, the Second Empire prefers the realm of dreams and the imaginary to the harsh facts implied by bourgeois reality. The liberal Empire is in fact the bourgeois ideal. Being a dynasty it allows the bourgeois to ignore their social responsibility; but being in fact a bourgeois society it moreover allows the bourgeoisie to think of itself as the universal class and thus in a sense, not recognise itself as a class whose 'truth' is the deprivation of the proletariat. Flaubert is aware of the eventual downfall attendant upon this escapism and is fascinated by it: 'Flaubert, spécialiste du "Qui perd gagne" a deviné au début le "Qui gagne perd" de la comédie impériale; on peut même dire que cette fatalité l'a séduit: la société faisant le même chemin que lui mais *à l'envers*.'[57] The attraction of the Empire for Flaubert lies then in it insolidity, its dreamlike quality, and its inbuilt failure, but Flaubert nonetheless had no real desire to be present at its eventual downfall. The end of the Empire heralds the end of the unreal realm in which Flaubert's art received real acclaim: the Prussian victory of 1871 witnesses to the victory of science and the real over the realm of the imaginary. Sartre goes so far as to suggest that, for Flaubert, the implications of the Prussian victory necessarily reinforce the personal invalidation previously laid upon Flaubert by his own father, long since dead. In Sartre's terms: 'Un Autre s'est réinstallé, triomphant, en Flaubert.'[58]

Sartre then makes out an excellent case for the Second Empire as Flaubert's ideal society. We remember however that, at the beginning of his account, he proposed to show firstly that Flaubert is uninterested in the revolution of February 1848 because 'il a fait sa révolution d'avance'[59] and secondly that

> La névrose de Flaubert [est] oraculaire en ceci qu'elle indique et réclame d'avance le régime de pouvoir personnel comme le seul où le jeune névrosé pourra *vivre*, dans toute l'acception du terme, cette inerte Eternité qu'il nomme son aristocratie et qui est le fondement de son attitude esthétique.[60]

The main bulk of this section of the *Idiot* is, however, devoted to a fairly straight-

forward account of Flaubert's relationship with the Second Empire and the third Republic, and it is not until the last few pages that Sartre returns to the crucial question of the articulation, within the two objective neuroses of art and history, of Flaubert's personal neurosis:

Essayons de voir comment les exigences de la littérature-à-faire (pratico-inerte ou littérature-faite) doivent le conduire nécessairement à choisir l'Art-Névrose, comme un certain nombre de ses confrères, et comment, à l'inverse du républicanisme de Leconte de Lisle – ou anti-esclavagisme déguisé – la crise de Pont-l'Evêque, comme réalisation de la Névrose, appelait et prophétisait le Second Empire.[61]

The three themes are thus brought together once again to be finally articulated, but Sartre has left himself only four pages in which to do this and his long-awaited account is no more than a brief outline. We are reminded once again that the young bourgeois generation, born around 1820, refuses its class of origin which it considers 'ignoble'. This refusal, Sartre claims, should logically involve adopting the point of view of the less-favoured classes, but this option is unfeasible for those reactionary bourgeois, like Flaubert himself, who retain a belief in hierarchical order. The *real* alternative is then rejected along with bourgeois utilitarianism, and the only remaining choice lies once again in the domain of the unreal and the imaginary.

But Flaubert's relationship with his class of origin is in turn rendered even more complex by his choice of the imaginary: he is condemned to be, in bourgeois terms, a mere 'montreur d'ombre', his rejection of utilitarianism implies not only that he is *inutile* but more radically, as we have seen, positively harmful. His art is condemned by the bourgeois in the name of science and Flaubert retaliates by a condemnation of the bourgeois in the name of the imaginary. Art-for-art's sake is then 'une féodalité noire dont le principe, le Beau, est caché mais dont les Artistes sont, imaginairement, les chevaliers du Néant. Le rapport de Flaubert au réel (bourgeois) est la *destruction imaginaire*'.[62] In fact, however, Sartre claims, Flaubert is not really free of his own class, but rather hopes to be eventually reintegrated into it as part of its artistic élite. The hope is however doomed to failure, and it is for this reason that Flaubert masks it, under the equally impossible cloak of imaginary 'déclassement'. Flaubert then desires to hide all his links with the bourgeoisie and especially those most vital links through private property. It is in fact this aim which Sartre now reveals as the ultimate motive factor behind both his personal crisis and his art itself:

Si Gustave réclame une couverture, c'est qu'il veut voiler la *propriété* réelle et l'intérêt, base de l'utilitarisme, qui est cette même propriété en tant qu'elle développe objectivement ses exigences par un objet impossible, le Beau, qu'on ne possède pas et dont on doit seulement, parfois, réaliser comme une prescience, l'œuvre. Bref, à Pont-l'Evêque, par la réalisation de la névrose objective à travers une crise subjective, il réclame une couverture objective de son être-propriétaire, quatre ans avant que la bourgeoisie n'en veuille une.[63]

The three neuroses are thus finally revealed as linked through class: not only is the objective historical neurosis which follows the 1848 revolution a result of the self-hatred of the bourgeois who attempt to hide the shame of their own status: *l'art-névrose* also depends on the inability of the bourgeois as bourgeois to satisfy demands internalized from previous art; and Flaubert's own neurosis is finally revealed in its objective dimension as an imaginary rejection of bourgeois property-owning status. Sartre has thus shown, but very briefly, what he set out to reveal. He summarizes his analysis in his conclusion:

Il est donc clair que Gustave, en 44, tombe, frappé, tout à la fois, d'une crise dont les motifs sont subjectifs et dont le sens objectif – venant du conflit de deux générations bourgeoises et des exigences, saisies dans cette perspective, de l'Esprit objectif – est comme une réclamation prophétique de la société du Second Empire, la seule à la rigueur où Jules, le Solitaire, pourrait vivre. Cette société, que les bourgeois choisiront, à l'occasion d'événements réels dont l'origine est à chercher dans la lutte des classes, est une société imaginaire, le rêve éveillé de la bourgeoisie des années 50, avec les avantages et les inconvénients que comporte un pareil accident social. Il y a donc bien, chez les tenants de l'Art pour l'Art, une sorte d'avance diachronique. En particulier Gustave, en 44, se constitue déjà comme sujet de Second Empire. Voilà pourquoi il a manqué le rendezvous de 48. Tout se passe pour lui comme si *sa* révolution de février avait eu lieu en janvier 44.[64]

I have however suggested that despite his brief concluding summary of the interrelationship of Flaubert's subjectivity and the objective dimensions of art and history, this was not intended to be Sartre's last word on the subject, and does not fulfil completely his proposed aims. It would perhaps be interesting finally to look at Sartre's proposals for the final volume of his work, to surmise whether this would in fact have filled the gap still remaining in his sociological account. We find four indications as to the contents of volume IV:

1. Quand l'assouvissement dépasse de loin le scandale – comme ce fut le cas pour *Madame Bovary* – if faut comprendre *à la fois* qu'il y a *malentendu* (nous verrons dans le quatrième tome Gustave étiqueté réaliste et hurlant sa rage) et que, sous ces erreurs d'interprétation, lecteurs et auteurs se découvrent synchrones.[65]

2. Sur tout cela, nous reviendrons: l'histoire de ces hommes et leur destin ne peuvent se comprendre que par l'évolution des classes moyennes. Cela nous permettra, dans notre dernier volume, d'aborder ce problème difficile, jamais traité: quel est *l'être-de-classe* d'un écrivain né au milieu des capacités et qui produit *Madame Bovary*? [66]

3. Dans quelle mesure la forme romanesque, dans sa généralité, exprime au XIXe siècle des contradictions infrastructurelles de la société bourgeoise prises, comme ensemble *synchrone*, c'est ce que nous étudierons quand le temps sera venu de proposer notre 'lecture' de *Madame Bovary*.[67]

4. 'Je suis écrivain', dit [Flaubert]. Que faut-il entendre par là? Comment expliquer que l'idée, commune à tous, de l'Art pur ait produit chez lui *ces* œuvres? C'est ce que nous tenterons de décider en relisant *Madame Bovary*.[68]

Volume IV was then evidently intended to resolve finally the question of Flaubert's *synchronic* relationship with his era.

III: Aesthetics

The aesthetic notions of the *Idiot* revolve around several central issues which recur in various forms throughout the three volumes. One of the most important of these, the nature of language and our relationship with it, will not be discussed at this juncture, but rather reserved for inclusion in an account of Sartre's ideas on language as a whole. The other main issues are firstly that of the nature of the imaginary, its relation to the real and to being and non-being; secondly the question of aesthetic totalization and its relation to *le beau*; thirdly the distinctions between prose, poetry, literature and art as revealed in Sartre's account of Flaubert's progress towards being what he finally calls an 'écrivain'; and lastly the relationship between certain notions explored in the *Idiot* and similar notions to be found in the first place amongst Structuralist critics such as Roland Barthes, and secondly amongst critics whom Sartre terms 'Formalist'.

Sartre's account of the nature of the imaginary in the *Idiot* is in many respects a continuation and development of his earlier analysis in *L'Imaginaire*. The perspective has however shifted from a relatively straightforward and neutral phenomenological account to one which is at the same time more practical (because related to a specific author) and also more metaphysical. The metaphysics are, of course, Flaubert's and not Sartre's own, but as was the case with Genet, and indeed to some extent with Baudelaire, Sartre attempts to enter into and describe from the inside the aesthetico-metaphysical system of the author. As we have seen already, there are elements in Sartre's own system which allow him to interpret mid-nineteenth-century aesthetics with a peculiar sympathy.

If we look back to *L'Imaginaire*, we find the following aspects of the imaginary which will recur in rather different form in the *Idiot* as they are filtered through Flaubert's own notions of art and imagination:

La conscience imageante pose son objet comme un néant.[1]

En s'affirmant il [i.e. object of image] se détruit.[2]

[Les images] semblent se présenter comme une négation de la condition *d'être dans le monde*, comme un anti-monde.[3]

L'irréel ne peut être vu, touché, flairé, qu'irréellement. Réciproquement il ne peut agir que sur un être irréel.[4]

Le réel s'accompagne toujours de l'écroulement de l'imaginaire.[5]

Ainsi l'irréel – qui est toujours double néant: néant de soi-même par rapport au monde, néant du monde par rapport à soi – doit toujours être constitué sur le fond du monde qu'il nie.[6]

Il ne saurait y avoir une intuition du néant précisément parce que le néant n'est

rien, et que toute conscience – intuitive ou non – est conscience de quelque chose.[7]

We find then in *L'Imaginaire* the image described as an *irréel* and a *néant*, both in the sense of having no reality and in the sense of negating the world. The words are free from any specific metaphysical connotations however, indeed Sartre goes so far as to say that 'le néant n'est rien'. Moreover, the consequences of imagination negating the world are rendered undramatic by the equation of imagination and 'la conscience tout entière en tant qu'elle réalise sa liberté'.[8] which means that 'poser le monde comme monde ou le "néantir", c'est une seule et même chose'.[9] Even the choice of the imaginary over the real appears without any serious threat to the real world since the imaginary life is described as 'factice, figée, ralentie, scolastique'.[10]

In the *Idiot* however Sartre's notion of the imagination as an integral part of consciousness has faded into the background. He is now interested in using his own conceptions to understand and explore the drama of imagination as lived out by Flaubert, who sees imagination attempting not only to rival the real world but indeed to do away with it altogether. As we have seen already from *L'Imaginaire* the imaginary is double-sided: 'si vive, si touchante, si forte que soit une image, elle donne son objet comme n'étant pas . . . En s'affirmant, il se détruit'.[11] In general, then, this unreality is the inevitable and unsatisfactory side of the imagination. Flaubert, however, Sartre reveals, is fascinated not only by the vividness of images but also by their very inconsistency: 'l'inconsistance peut devenir une vertu positive'.[12] Images are important not in spite of their *non-être* but because of it. Flaubert's predilection for the unreal is a function of his rejection of the real. The adult writer carries his preference to the point of inverting the dependence of the one on the other: 'L'image était pour lui parasite de l'être [i.e. before he became a writer] ; il disqualifie l'être en le traitant comme un parasite de l'image.'[13] It is to this inversion that Sartre is referring when he describes the post-Romantic artist as 'celui qui prend sur l'Être le point de vue du Néant',[14] as someone for whom, as for Valéry, the world 'n'est qu'un défaut presque imperceptible dans la pureté du non-être.'[15] If the unreality of the image then ensures that to write a book is to 'donner à la mort ce qu'on crée',[16] this condition of art, which is tragic for Sartre, is made by Flaubert and his contemporaries into its very end. The unreal is not then for Flaubert merely the absence of reality but the *contestation*[17] of it. This is what Sartre means when he says of Flaubert: 'Il donnera l'être au non-être dans l'intention de manifester le non-être de l'être.'[18] Formulae like these appear confusing but become clearer once one realizes that Sartre is playing with the familiar paradoxes of negative theology: *le non-être* is in fact pure virtuality, *l'être* for all its apparent solidity is, in this perspective, deficiency. A further set of paradoxes is brought in to complicate the picture with the familiar Romantic comparison between the creative activity of the artist, and the creative activity of God. For Flaubert, Sartre suggests, the artist is a rival creator, but with an important difference: in traditional (i.e. 'positive') Christian theology God is thought of as 'l'Être par excellence',[19]

whereas for Flaubert the mind of the creative artist is God-like rather in the sense that it is a transcendent *néant*. A further step in this kind of logic brings us to the Promethean notion of art as a 'contre-création'[20] rivalling the Creator in a domain which He, as positivity, can never enter: that of 'le non-être'. It is precisely Flaubert's non-belief which is the condition of his exalted view of art: 'Dieu n'étant pas, nous témoignons par le néant qui est en nous de notre vain refus inconsolable de sa Non-Existence; c'est en nous faisant imaginaires que nous nous rendons le plus semblables à lui.'[21]

So then, the opposition real/unreal or imaginary, in the *Idiot*, involves in turn other oppositions such as *être/non-être*, *être/rien*, *être/néant* etc. The articulation of these oppositions is not always clear. Frequently the terms appear to be used with distinct senses, but in other contexts to be practically interchangeable. The truth of the matter would seem to be that at times Sartre is thinking through the neutral terminology of *L'Imaginaire* in which the image is a simple *irréel* or *néant*, and at other times is using these words with the metaphysical implications attached to them by Flaubert. In Flaubert's usage there appears to be a hierarchy:

Être
Irréel, Imaginaire,
Néant

According to this hierarchy *le Néant* itself is permanently unattainable, it can only be known indirectly through the negation of *l'Être*. Sartre speaks of 'le non-réel' as the symbol of 'le Néant',[22] for *le Néant* itself must necessarily preclude any direct intuition of its nature. Sartre's account of Flaubert's metaphysics is peculiarly sympathetic, because he can transpose it easily into the terms of *L'Imaginaire*: 'Il ne saurait y avoir une intuition du néant, précisément parce que le néant n'est rien et que toute conscience – intuitive ou non – est conscience de quelque chose.'[23] We can only posit *le Néant* indirectly through the imagination and negation of *l'Être*. Flaubert's art then aims to '*manifester* le glissement inéluctable de l'être vers le néant',[24] although the final transformation of *être* into *néant* can never be fully realized since man and all his creation participate inescapably in *l'Être* itself. *Le Néant* is then an unattainable ideal.

As I suggested earlier, however, Sartre's account does not merely enter into and explicate Flaubert's metaphysical theories. It is also practical, revealing the human basis for Flaubert's aesthetic attitudes. Sartre's first indication that Gustave will be 'rongé par l'imaginaire'[25] places the notion firmly within a practical context: 'Nous verrons bientôt que cette disqualification de toute la réalité . . . est à l'origine de son option irréalisante.'[26] The 'disqualification de la réalité' is at this stage in Gustave's life (ten to fifteen years old) an attitude of resentment against the privation which he feels to be his lot. Put at its most basic level, it is a case of 'sour grapes': 'L'intention de Gustave . . . n'a rien de métaphysique: il s'agit de disqualifier *l'être* du genre humain, en tant que les hommes prétendent avoir des droits qui manquent

à Gustave.'[27] Flaubert then is 'méchant *contre le réel qui l'écrase*'.[28] Indeed even his later aesthetics of *non-être* depend on a similar attitude of resentment: 'Toute l'esthétique flaubertienne du Non-Être se fonde paradoxalement sur le cuisant regret de ne pouvoir *créer* la réalité.'[29] Furthermore, Sartre sees also that the theme underlying all Flaubert's metaphysical posturings is the rejection of *praxis*. Even Gustave's 'méchanceté' itself is not part of the active realm: 'Loin d'y voir une *activité* précise dont l'objectif serait de nuire, il [i.e. Flaubert] la tient pour un pathos dont on l'a infecté.'[30] Seen from this perspective, literature turns out to be not just 'le point de vue du néant sur l'être' but 'le point de vue de la mort sur la vie',[31] i.e. 'la forme la plus élevée du suicide'.[32]

Sartre then is attempting to give a thorough analysis of the various levels of Flaubert's nihilism: from the most elementary to the most metaphysical. On the simplest level it involves Flaubert's rejection of bourgeois values; then by extension his rejection of reality in the name of the *irréel*, in other words the preference of art to life. Thirdly, at its deepest level, Flaubert's nihilism implies that both the world proper and the world of art are built around an absence or *Néant*: the world around the absence of God, the work of art around the 'absence' which is Flaubert's own soul, and which Sartre sees precisely as his creative capacity.

The notion of *le Néant* is also the key to Sartre's analysis of Flaubert's conception of the beautiful. He describes the aim of Flaubert's art as being to '*manifester* le glissement inéluctable de l'être vers le néant'.[33] The formula will remind the reader of his account of Genet's notion of beauty as 'la transformation de l'être en apparence'.[34] Beauty then appears to both Flaubert and Genet invested with a 'metaphysical' status which is obviously not part of Sartre's own conceptions. In *L'Imaginaire* Sartre gives us his phenomenological analysis of beauty: 'Le réel n'est jamais beau. La beauté est une valeur qui ne saurait jamais s'appliquer qu'à l'imaginaire et qui comporte la néantisation du monde dans sa structure essentielle.'[35] In other words, as we have seen already, to perceive beauty in real objects involves, according to Sartre, switching from the perceptive attitude to an imaginative attitude which envisages the object as an analogon, or 'ghost version' of itself. According to Sartre, Genet and Flaubert intuitively grasp this aspect of the beautiful, but erect it into a false metaphysic which they use to justify the nihilism of the aesthete. Sartre described Genet's notion of beauty as 'cette illumination douloureuse: le Néant est la fin absolue de l'être.'[36] He analyses Flaubert's own conception of the beautiful in a similar way but with a slightly different emphasis which comes from the fact that he is accounting for a different aesthetic production. He analyses the beautiful for Flaubert in terms of a dialectic between *Être* and *Néant*, or more simply between the sensuous richness of reality and man's creative freedom vis à vis the real. Glossing one of Flaubert's well-known letters to Louise Colet ('l'Art m'épouvante') Sartre writes:

Certes il met au premier plan de ses préoccupations les énigmes *techniques* de la

création et de la composition, mais il ne peut s'empêcher d'y voir l'expression d'un mystère impénétrable et sacré, qui ressortit à l'*ontologie du Beau*, difficile dialectique de l'Être et du Non-Être. Pour que l'œuvre soit belle, en effet, il faut, se dit-il, une telle densité de l'imaginaire qu'il semble – la Beauté se révélant alors comme la *sur-apparence* ou l'apparence absolue – que l'être vienne aux chefs-d'œuvre à travers le non-être, allusif, insaisissable. Au point que, si, dans un premier moment, le Néant vampirise l'Être, on peut, à la réflexion, se demander si ce n'est pas l'Être qui vampirise le Néant. Ainsi, au-delà de la contestation du réel par l'irréel, totalité transfinie des possibles, le Beau apparaîtrait comme le chiffre de l'Être véritable, qui, ne coïncidant ni avec l'imaginaire, ni avec la réalité, nécessiterait et produirait d'abord l'illusion pour s'y annoncer à la fois comme une absence et par un *don* (la cohésion interne *donnée* au Mal). Ainsi retrouverons-nous dans le 'Qui perd gagne' originel un 'pressentiment' *exploité* que nous avons rencontré de bonne heure chez Flaubert: l'image, par son néant même, est la seule voie de communication avec Dieu qui, en elle, se donne comme celui qui doit se dérober pour toujours en cette vie, et dans ce monde. D'où ce tourniquet qui 'épouvante' Gustave: à travers l'irréalisation des 'étants', l'Être se manifeste dans son absence comme ce qui fonde la possibilité même de cette irréalisation.[37]

In other words, it is the vertiginous perspective which opens up within the aesthetic experience itself, that really explains why Flaubert is terrified by 'les affres de l'art'.[38] Flaubert feels his mind drawn into an endless spiral of ever-deepening *tourniquets*. Sartre's gloss may appear obscure, but once we see through the paradoxes of negative theology and the possible reference to neo-platonist cosmogony, we realize that he is in fact translating into his own terms particular convictions about the beautiful which are part of the common currency of Romanticism.

From Madame de Staël through Lamartine and Baudelaire into Symbolism we find recurring the idea that beauty is an essentially ambiguous experience, involving both presence and absence. This is what Baudelaire for example implies when he writes: 'C'est cet admirable, cet immortel instinct du Beau qui nous fait considérer la Terre et ses spectacles comme un aperçu, comme une *correspondance* du Ciel'.[39] Sometimes absence is seen as predominating, and sometimes rather presence. This varying perspective, Sartre would claim, is due to the dialectical nature of the intuition: presence is made into absence which is felt in turn to be an even more real presence. The real world is transformed by the imagination into something simultaneously more and also less real than itself. We might point out here that for the nineteenth-century writers in question the paradox depends on the philosophical ambiguities surrounding the notion of the real. It arises in a sense out of an indecisive hovering between realism and idealism. Baudelaire is playing on this paradox when he writes that Samuel Cramer's (i.e. his own) aesthetic tastes involved a 'matérialisme absolu [qui] n'était pas loin de l'idéalisme le plus pur'.[40] This same ambiguity sometimes involves Flaubert himself in contradictions, as for example in his letter to George Sand, where he catches himself 'talking like a Platonist'.[41]

In one perspective then beauty is for Flaubert, as for Genet, allusive, absent, a 'gouffre insondable',[42] 'l'impossible'; its fundamental characteristic is, Sartre says, 'de *n'être pas*'.[43] In this sense the imagination is a *manque* and 'c'est la Beauté, cette absence amèrement ressentie, qui en est le levain'.[44] But in Flaubert's case a dialectic is involved, in which Sartre sees an aesthetic example of the 'qui perd gagne' schema which is frequently, as is the case here, shown by Sartre to be indistinguishable from what he calls 'la théologie négative'. According to this dialectic, the transcendent *Néant* of God and the transcendent *néant* of Beauty, which are in fact pure virtuality, rejoin *l'Être*, not in its positive bourgeois sense, but in its highest metaphysical form. Put simply, Sartre claims that although Flaubert's art is based on the idea of *néant*, nonetheless his deepest and most secret wish is in fact to escape the ultimate implications of his own nihilism, to be redeemed by a God whose absence is 'l'éblouissante manifestation de sa présence'.[45]

But there is of course another side to imagination, for imagination is not only that which *negates* the world, it is also that which *creates* the world, at least in the sense of our world: 'Poser le monde comme monde ou le "néantir", c'est une seule et même chose.'[46] Sartre in *l'Imaginaire* is of course talking about human consciousness in general; in the *Idiot* he is more specifically concerned with aesthetic totalization. Imagination is what enables the world to be taken up in art and presented as a *Tout*. This, Sartre says, is the aim of art for Flaubert, and provides another way of defining his conception of the beautiful: 'La totalisation . . . dans la mesure où elle est le règle des apparences ou, si l'on veut, la norme de l'imaginaire . . . n'est que l'autre nom de la Beauté.'[47] Consciousness then 'totalizes' as soon as it steps back from its immediate perceptual involvement with the world. But the expression of this natural totalization can take various forms in art, more or less close to complete totalization. In literature of course totalization takes place through language, but this involves 'cultivating' rather than using language.[48] When language is used primarily referentially it refers outside itself to an aspect of the real world which is necessarily limited; but it can also be used in another way, which Flaubert would call 'style', to create a self-contained whole which is 'son propre fondement': 'Autrement dit, l'unité du langage comme totalisation perpétuelle donne à la disperson réelle de l'univers l'unité imaginaire d'une *Création.*'[49] Flaubert will not of course come to this realization immediately, particularly as his relations with language are strained and his trust in its powers limited.

Sartre interprets Flaubert's life as a groping towards aesthetic totalization: this begins with the child wanting to undertake *all* aspects of his own plays, writing, directing, acting etc., and moves through various stages ('totalisation en extériorité', 'totalisation en intériorité') to the final realization that true totalization involves a synthesis of objective and subjective and is only achieved by rendering the world imaginary through art: 'L'œuvre totale est celle qui se donne pour objet la déréalisation de Tout.'[50] The most evident form of totalization is what

Sartre calls 'la totalisation en extériorité': an all-embracing objective and impassive view of the world, seen through the well-named 'conscience de survol'. Flaubert attempts this form of totalizing in *La Danse des morts*, *Smarh*, *Ivre et mort* and the first *Tentation de Saint Antoine*, for example, but it is unsatisfactory, since true totalization should include an awareness that objectivity is impossible, and that the totalizer is part of his totalization. For the converse reason 'la totalisation en intériorité' is also unsatisfactory: *Mémoires d'un fou, Novembre* and the first *Education sentimentale* are limited, autobiographical, and concentrate on the unity of subjective feeling. Flaubert is desperately aware that they fall short of his ideal, but is unable, within this form, to fulfil his own demands. The answer is, as we might have expected, dialectical: the singular must be made to reveal the universal, the universal must be contained within the singular. 'Or la totalité est une forme d'unité très particulière: le Tout y est la synthèse de toutes les parties et de leurs *relations d'intériorité* mais il est également présent en entier dans chacune [d'elles].'[51] *Voyage en enfer* represents Flaubert's first attempt at the creation of an 'universel singulier' but in fact involves rather an oscillation between interior and exterior totalizing.

Absolute totalization defines Flaubert's ideal of absolute beauty. An implicit opposition with Baudelaire's conception of beauty seems to underly Sartre's definition of Gustave's 'idéal':

> Loin que le divers s'unifie – ou qu'il soit unifié du dehors par quelque démiurge–, c'est l'unité originelle et synthétique qui se diversifie sans jamais cesser d'être une ni de se manifester en chacune de ses hypostases à la fois comme le sens fondamental de celles-ci et les affinités mystérieuses et pourtant sensibles qui les unissent, établissant entre les lumières, les parfums, les sons des harmonies, révélant à travers des vies diverses le même malheur attaché à tous les hommes, la même malédiction d'Adam. Voilà ce que serait la Beauté, pour Flaubert.[52]

Put more prosaically: 'Le livre est simultanément la subjectivation de l'objectif et l'objectivation du subjectif.'[53] The implicit reference to Baudelaire is reinforced by an explicit reference to Mallarmé ('Nous ne sommes pas fort loin de l'orphisme mallarméen'[54]) who, as we have already seen in *Saint Genet*, is always present in Sartre's mind, not only as expressing the essence of the nineteenth-century religion of art, but also as the writer whose intuitions correspond most closely to Sartre's own conception of imagination as negation and totalization.

Totalization then also involves what Baudelaire would call 'une magie suggestive, contenant à la fois l'objet et le sujet, le monde extérieur à l'artiste et l'artiste lui-même'.[55] It is the interpenetration of macrocosm and microcosm.[56] Art succeeds *to a degree* in unifying what ordinary consciousness gives us as tragically distinct. The full realization of this totality must obviously remain an impossible ideal, since it would involve of course the abolition of all individuation and therefore activity. As Sartre puts it, in terms which seem reminiscent of Hegel:

Si *on pouvait l'atteindre* ce ne serait même plus une vision du tout, puisque–à chaque degré – le contenu est l'objet même mais idéalisé et conscient de soi, ce serait le Tout en personne, l'absolu-sujet. Ce dont Flaubert est sûr, c'est qu'on n'y atteint jamais, si haut qu'on s'élève.[57]

Sartre then goes on to indicate how Flaubert's intuitions of *le Tout* which are necessarily indirect, rejoin his so-called intuitions of *le Néant* which are similarly indirect: 'Le Tout, bien entendu, ce n'est point l'Être mais l'équivalence de l'Être et du Néant et, finalement, le triomphe de celui-ci sur celui-là.'[58] Sartre is still pursuing a Hegelian train of thought. *Le Tout* and *le Néant* are convertible terms in so far as both are beyond individuation, or as Hegel puts it: 'In fact, Being, indeterminate immediacy, is Nothing, neither more nor less'.[59] Totalization then was bound sooner or later to rejoin the Être/Néant dialectic since it can be seen, in a sense, as starting from this point: 'poser le monde comme monde ou le "néantir", c'est une seule et même chose'.[60]

If the tenor of Sartre's analysis becomes increasingly abstract, it is nevertheless born out of, and returns to, his attempt to account for both the sensuous immediacy and the implicit nihilism of works such as *Madame Bovary* in terms which are as close as possible to those suggested, for example, in Flaubert's correspondence.[61] In totalizing the world, Flaubert's art reduces it to nothingness. Flaubert gives the world to his reader only to reveal its inconsistency and unreality: the very sensuous richness by which the work of art itself exists serves primarily to point to the absence at the heart of all beauty. It is thus in a sense self-nihilating. 'En s'affirmant, il se détruit'.[62]

Sartre sums up his analysis in these terms:

Nous nous demandions tout à l'heure quel était, pour Flaubert le fondement absolu de l'attitude esthétique. Il nous a donné la réponse: c'est l'idée totalitaire, entendons la conviction que le tout est présent dans la partie à la fois pour l'exaltation de celle-ci et pour son abolition et que cette présence monstrueuse la maintient aux limites de l'être et du non-être, c'est-à-dire dans les limbes de l'apparence pure. Mais le tout lui-même étant finalement le néant, la partie, par sa richesse concrète, lui donne une consistance trompeuse dans l'exacte mesure où il lui confère une trompeuse inconsistance.[63]

We have given an account of Sartre's analysis of Flaubert's aesthetic ideas. These aesthetic ideas constitute Flaubert's definition of art as Sartre interprets it, but they represent a final synthesis of intuitions which are only partial and not interrelated in the younger man. We need now to take a step backwards in time in order to see practically how Flaubert grows from partial intuitions about the imaginary, the poetic and the beautiful towards the *activity* of the artist proper; and in order to understand in turn the nature of the final moral judgement which Sartre is bringing to bear upon his subject.

Three major factors emerge from the *Idiot* as contributing to Flaubert's progression towards art. These correspond, broadly speaking, with the stages of

Jean Genet's similar progression, though the emphasis is somewhat different. Flaubert is revealed firstly as an imaginative child, dreaming of becoming an actor, and creating his first literary works in the form of plays. He is shown secondly as a poet who becomes an artist; and thirdly as an aesthete who comes to express his intuitions through art. These three processes are in fact more or less contemporaneous; they represent therefore not three chronological phases, but, as Sartre sees them, three distinguishable aspects of the same evolution.

Sartre's account of Flaubert's transition from imaginative infant to writer is perhaps the least interesting aesthetically, though fascinating from a psychological standpoint. We have already seen how Flaubert's early relationship with his parents gave him no sense of his own worth or identity: it rendered him passive, unable to internalize language normally, to think analytically, or to formulate conceptual ideas for himself. As a child, Sartre tells us, Gustave was alienated from language, speaking the words of others, pretending to feel what he tried to express. In a sense then Flaubert is an actor from a very early age. According to Sartre, of course, all men play at being what they are, but this is not what he is alluding to in Flaubert's case. Flaubert is histrionic. Since he has no normally constituted Ego with which he identifies, like an actor 'il joue à être ce qu'il n'est pas.'[64] He uses a language which is not his own in order to move or to convince his parents, but does not feel he is really in control of their response: 'Bref l'enfant et le comédien ont la même impuissance et les mêmes visées'.[65] Flaubert of course has feelings but he is not expressing these through his words, for he believes they are incommunicable and language inadequate: 'l'affection vécue, quelle qu'elle soit, sert d'*analogon* à l'affection jouée'.[66] At a very early age Gustave becomes even more like an actor for he starts to *assume* this aspect of his existence: 'l'enfant se produit délibérément *comme image*'.[67] To take one concrete instance, in his relations with his sister Caroline, Gustave is not simply dominant, he acts the role of loving overlord. In his eyes this casts his sister in the corresponding role of vassal, but this relationship is enjoyed by Gustave as a kind of psycho-drama: it enables him also to identify imaginatively with the role of vassal, and thus recapture vicariously the longed-for state which he had once known in his father's love and favour. This projection is far from straightforward: Sartre points out that it in fact involves three levels of unreality: 'le seigneur généreux se transforme en bouffon pour se rejoindre en une autre . . . à sa vassalité perdue'.[68] Flaubert's 'cabotinage'[69] does not always please moreover: he feels false, often irritates his parents, and is accused of overexciting his sister. Like Jean Genet, Flaubert finds that the only way out is to consecrate his disability: 'De huit à dix ans, il intériorise les reproches qu'on lui adresse et fonde sur eux une conviction nouvelle: il *est* acteur.'[70] Sartre speculates that the original suggestion that Gustave would make a good actor must have come from outside; putting Flaubert's role-playing into words and thereby changing its nature. Once suggested, the idea is irresistible to Flaubert: no longer would his feeling of unreality be a secret vice, his role-playing a form of lie: they would become his

proclaimed end, and his purpose in life would be ratified. Flaubert's childhood dreams are thus, like Genet's, doubly unreal: most children dream, Sartre says, of being, for example, a conqueror or a heroic doctor: 'Leur désir porte sur *l'être* et pas un instant ils ne se détournent en intention du réel et du vrai.'[71] But for Gustave on the other hand: 'le rêve se fait rêve d'un rêve futur',[72] he will become a great actor, an 'irréel': he will ratify his imaginary constitution and become publicly the actor which he is forced to be in secret.

Gustave, then , would seem to have found his vocation, but this is not to be. Acting is considered by his parents a socially inferior profession, and Flaubert is discouraged from furthering his interest in it. On the other hand his attempts at being his own playwright are received rather more warmly. Flaubert, says Sartre, slides gently here from *pathos* to *praxis*: at first his activity is limited to choosing the plays he will act in; later he adapts these to his own needs and capabilities, and finally, encouraged by his parents and their friends, he will write his own plays as well as producing them. Flaubert, then, accepts the social scale of values which holds writing to be superior to acting; but his acceptance is accompanied by resentment, and his secret feelings are that writing is rather a 'pis-aller'. Sartre describes Gustave's acting as a 'vocation contrariée',[73] and sees its termination as having three major consequences. Firstly, Flaubert's original reason for acting is not removed: he feels no more 'valorisé' now than before, and he will therefore continue to play roles in his everyday life (e.g. le Garçon, St Polycarpe), once again attempting surreptitiously to capture his elusive ego. Secondly, adapting psychoanalytic vocabulary, Sartre describes the enforced ending of Gustave's histrionic vocation as a 'castration' which causes him to remain in a sense fixated on the oral stage of language (speech rather than writing). And finally, most relevant for our interest in Flaubert as an artist, this fixation means that Flaubert's first written works will be on an oratorical model, and that even the later great works will retain elements of the early oral preference.

Flaubert's first works are then far from his later 'impersonnalisme'. Like the actor he dreamed of becoming, he still thinks of literature as a means of presenting himself to an audience: 'Le futur doctrinaire de l'impersonnalisme ne peut se tenir à l'époque, de se *montrer*.'[74] Moreover Flaubert still hankers after the impression of rigorous fatality, the escape from contingency to be found in acting plays already written. His early literary works are derivative, Sartre suggests, not for lack of inspiration but out of a desire for a feeling of inevitability:

> Si Gustave, à cet âge, use encore de modèles, c'est délibérément: il veut intérioriser un ordre objectif et rigoureux pour le réextérioriser, modifié, à travers le mouvement subjectif d'une inspiration fondée sur la mémoire. Le jeune auteur écrit comme l'acteur joue: il restitue un inflexible schéma *appris* . . . A treize ans, l'enfant, écrivant pour sa voix, ne sait pas encore s'il est auteur ou interprète.[75]

Indeed the third and most lasting effect on his literary production derives from the

fact that Flaubert is writing 'pour sa voix'. It is this temptation which Flaubert will fight all his life, and which produces the particular resonances of the typical Flaubertian phrase. In Sartre's terms:

Le secret du style dans les grandes œuvres de Flaubert, c'est qu'il est éloquence refusée. Et refusée *par l'autre*: Gustave écrit *Madame Bovary* dans l'abandon oratoire puis taille et coupe sous le contrôle de Bouilhet. Ainsi l'orateur est là, partout, mais censuré, refusé, douloureux: on le chasse, on le comprime, mais il revient *dans la compression même* pour donner une étrange vibration sonore aux phrases les plus dépouillées. Ce qu'il faut . . . indiquer ici . . . c'est que la *voix* demeure jusqu'a bout *l'achèvement de l'écriture*. Non que le style des grandes œuvres soit oral, bien au contraire. Mais plutôt parce que l'écriture même est à double face et qu'elle devient un moyen audio-visuel de communication: comment comprendre sans cela qu'il 'fasse passer au gueuloir' toutes les phrases qu'il écrit? [76]

Eloquence is condemned, then, by 'l'Autre', not only in the sense of other people, by friends who replace his parents in the role of censor, but also, as we shall see, by 'l'Autre' in the sense of Flaubert, finally distanced from himself by the crisis of 1844. The supreme moment of completion of a work is for Flaubert the moment when he can read it aloud to his friends: but he is aware that the public itself will have to read his books not listen to them: that they will be affected not by the sound of the words but rather by their form, and more particularly by the *sens* of the work, the mysterious flavour given to the reader by the power of totalization of the work of art. He comes to see that sonority will have to be sacrificed to other qualities which may be broadly termed formal:

Le livre sera lu par des milliers d'*yeux*; pour ces lecteurs, la sonorité du texte, si elle existe confusément, n'est qu'une agréable rémanence, l'essentiel demeure le silence. Non pas seulement celui du cabinet mais avant tout le *sens* au-delà le langage qui est la totalisation muette de l'ouvrage écrit, c'est-à-dire de tout ce qui s'y est exprimé par des mots. En d'autres termes, bien que l'aspect audio-visuel du vocable lui reste toujours présent, ce n'est qu'une tentative assez vaine de récupération: Gustave, renvoyé sans ambages aux graphèmes subit une perte sèche qu'il ne pourra jamais compenser suffisamment.[77]

Sartre then sees Flaubert's early acting, and his original *estrangement* from written language in particular, as one of the basic psychological factors behind his eventually superlative style. Flaubert is attempting to compensate for his inability to speak directly to his reader. Indeed, Sartre says explicitly that 'C'est une des intentions profondes de Flaubert *styliste* que de trouver un équivalent écrit de la séduction orale.'[78] Flaubert, then, will come to discover 'un *autre usage* du langage',[79] and we shall examine this in detail when we have looked at the other two major factors in his art: his poetic experience and his aesthetic intuitions.

We have now examined the first aspect of Flaubert's journey towards art, and must look next at its complement: his transition from poetry to art. It is necessary to note that Sartre is not here using the term 'poetry' in its usual literary sense, nor

indeed in the sense he gave it in 1947 in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* when he distinguished between poetry which served words and prose which used them. 'Poetry' is used in the *Idiot* in the sense which Flaubert gives it: to designate a passive state of mind, a form of mental ecstasy which is essentially non-verbal. We must then bear constantly in mind that Sartre is adopting Flaubert's own usage, if confusion is to be avoided. For the young Gustave 'la poésie est *subie* . . . elle est innée',[80] an 'aventure silencieuse de l'âme'. Poetry is not entirely wordless but is not verbalized, for in fact 'Gustave veut *ne pas voir* les mots qui hantent sa poésie'.[81] Sartre considers that as a young child Gustave experiences certain 'hébétudes' which he later baptizes poetry: 'Puisque l'hébétude est sa tentation, il la valorisera, il en fera, sous le nom de Poésie, cet anéantissement noble qu'on pourrait, en parodiant un mot de Marx, appeler le "devenir-monde" de Gustave Flaubert'.[82] Flaubert's experience of poetry is very different also from the experience of Jean Genet. The poetic for Genet was dynamic: it was not passive but involved, Sartre suggested, a tension between the human and the inhuman, mind and nature. Poetry for Genet was tense with an internal contradiction, never a static contemplation of the imaginary. The difference between poetry as defined in *Saint Genet* and in the *Idiot* once again depends on the fact that Sartre is dealing with two different types of poetic experience. The poetic for Genet was basically surreal, for Flaubert it is quasi-mystical.

The first step from poetry to art occurs when Flaubert writes his juvenilia: but in these ostensibly prose pieces Flaubert is still, in fact, 'anti-prose' and 'anti-vérité'. He is attempting to express his poetic moods in words, although these moods are still seen as an 'opéra fabuleux qui se joue dans sa tête et dont il pense souvent qu'il ne pourrait l'écrire sans le dégrader.'[83] Flaubert, at this stage, makes use of the incantatory power of words; he uses them to evoke rather than to describe. In this sense he is already writing poetry of the sort Sartre outlined in *Situations II* which used words for their *sens* rather than their *signification*, although, of course, the dual nature of language ensures that *signification* can never be expunged: 'l'entreprise consiste à utiliser simultanément la fonction signifiante et la fonction imageante du mot écrit'.[84] Flaubert is still not however a true artist for the experience he is evoking is more important to him than the words he uses to describe it: literature is being used as a means of giving permanence to his ecstatic day-dreams rather than being an end in itself: 'Il est *poète* et cela signifie que l'extase compte plus pour lui que la parole qui l'exprime.'[85] Poetry then for Flaubert is a feeling of passive oneness with the world in 'l'imaginaire'. It is not the same as art which is activity: 'Aussi faut-il distinguer entre l'expérience extatique du totalisé et la tâche du retotalisateur. Gustave fait la distinction *lui-même*: il nomme celle-là *poésie* et celle-ci littérature (ou Art, comme on veut).'[86]

Sartre's account of Flaubert's development from poet to artist takes us for a moment out of aesthetics into the realm of sociology, for it is related also to his general account of the bourgeois adolescents of the 1840s. Sartre suggests that once

Flaubert realizes his bourgeois nature he can no longer be a poet, for the poet's vocation is, in his mind, an aristocratic nature which he can never attain. He has to accept the bourgeois ethic of effort, and create works of art which are, like the effort towards sanctity, based on 'la misère intérieure'. The poet is an élitist, confident of the value of the personal subjective experience which he expresses; the artist, on the other hand, is not such an individualist: he objectifies himself in his work only *'en tant qu'artiste*,'[87] his subjectivity is a *'pur moyen d'ouvrer'*.[88] Flaubert, says Sartre, 'juge indispensable que l'artiste se mette dans son objet, ce qu'il lui défend c'est de s'y montrer'.[89] Sartre sees the lack of aristocratic self-confidence and the bourgeois ethic of effort as the first vital step towards Flaubert's eventual *impersonnalisme*. This *impersonnalisme* will be finally confirmed by Flaubert's crisis in 1844, for his illness distances him radically from himself, completing the dissociation in evidence since early childhood, and enabling him to give himself the more easily up to art. Indeed, Sartre suggests:

> Origine et résultat de la crise, la distanciation n'en serait-elle pas, en profondeur, la fin positive? De fait, Gustave, malgré quelques rechutes, va bientôt rompre avec l'éloquence passionnée de ses premières œuvres: L'Art, dès les derniers chapitres de *L'Education* s'affirmera comme la distanciation suprême; ne serait-ce pas *pour renaître artiste* que Gustave a rompu les amarres qui le retenaient à la vie immédiate? [90]

Sartre, then, gives Flaubert's progression towards art a sociological and a psychological explanation. He will also give it an aesthetic explanation. But before we can understand this we need to look first at the third factor in his development: namely the transition from aesthete to artist. We have already described Flaubert's intuitions of cosmic unity/nothingness and his nihilism which leads him to see 'le néant' eating away the solidity of 'l'être'. These intuitions are at first, however, like his poetic experience, non-verbalized. It is the realization that art is an activity not a state which will lead Flaubert not only from poetry but also from the trap of the aesthete's inactivity to art itself. The transformation begins in 1838; taking up once again the categories of *L'Être et le Néant* Sartre suggests: 'au lien dialectique de l'avoir et de l'être, [Gustave] va substituer celui de l'être et du faire'.[91] Sartre is here opposing Flaubert to his friend Alfred le Poittevin; Alfred persists in thinking of the artistic as a quality of soul, 'possessed' by the elect, Flaubert outgrows this way of thinking and comes to view art as an activity: 'Pour l'un [Alfred] qui n'est qu'un esthète . . . l'artiste est celui qui *est*; pour l'autre [Gustave] celui qui *fait*.'[92] Flaubert the artist will make practical literary use of his aesthetic intuitions of totalization and negation of the world: his contemplation of the world will not remain purely mental but will be embodied in a work of art: 'En mettant ses passions de côté pour réduire le monde à un spectacle, il crée les matériaux dont son Art se servira. L'attitude de l'esthète est un moyen nécessaire à l'Artiste: peut-être est-ce là qu'il faut chercher le remplaçant de l'inspiration détronée.'[93]

The aesthete's experience and that of the poet both then evolve from being ends in themselves to becoming means to another end, which is art. But the process is neither simple nor automatic: Flaubert's poetic ecstasies were felt to be beyond language: as we have seen already his aesthetic intuition of the identity of *Tout* and *Rien*, his vision of the transformation of *Être* into *Néant* are, like Beauty itself, felt to be inexpressible. This is then the fundamental problem of Flaubert's art, and indeed its very source: he must 'rendre indirectement l'indisable'. From 1838 onwards Flaubert's view of art changes: Sartre situates him briefly within the terror/rhetoric distinction of his earlier essays. He shows how Flaubert abandons the Romantic notion of literature as a vehicle of inspiration in favour of a terrorist ideal of literature which sees the work of art as essentially self-referring and autocritical (an 'idée réflexive et critique de la littérature'[94]). This transition means that Flaubert's vocabulary also acquires different connotations: 'art' evidently gains in importance over 'poetry', but his notion of imagination itself changes radically: 'L'imagination, ici, n'a plus rien de commun avec l'évasion du poète dans l'imaginaire: c'est une technique exacte qui trouve sa justification dans l'œuvre.'[95] In other words we are witnessing the transformation of the kind of imagination evoked in *Madame Bovary* into the kind of imagination which produced *Madame Bovary*.

Flaubert then knows by this time what he wants to express: his poetic 'knowledge' of *la sensation nue* and *l'indisable*, and his aesthetic intuitions of cosmic unity and *néant*, but he has not yet sensed the interconnection between the two and he cannot see how either can be verbalized. The problem is that he still retains a 'serious' (in Sartre's sense) view of language and of the world: he is still preoccupied with conceptual meaning. He will gradually realize that as long as language is envisaged as communicating *significations* it cannot communicate *l'indisable*; nor indeed are his glimpses of cosmic unity expressible through the clearly defined and therefore finite meanings of language. It is then Flaubert's attitude to language which needs to change, not language itself. Flaubert must realize in the first instance that writing involves becoming imaginary and making the world imaginary, and that it is only in this way that it can allow writer and reader to enter a world not subject to the limitations of ordinary practical meanings:

> D'une part il demandait aux vocables d'exprimer *en tant que signifiants* ce qui échappe par principe au domaine de la signification, la trame qualitative du sensible; d'autre part, bien qu'il ait eu, dès cette époque, par son intention totalisante, un pressentiment abstrait de l'unité cosmique, il n'avait pas encore fait descendre les *transfinis* dans la réalité concrète comme facteurs permanents de déréalisation; en d'autres termes il n'avait pas encore assimilé l'"indisable' profondeur du sensible à la présence du tout en chacune de ses parties.[96]

Flaubert, in order to write, has to come to a totally new notion of style. 'L'écriture artiste', in the sense of a piecemeal, random coupling of concrete and abstract, is not the answer. Flaubert will come to see that the only 'style' adequate

to his needs involves using language not primarily for its *signification* but for its *sens*. As we have seen, Flaubert had already made a partial use of this side of language in his earlier works, but this was neither systematic nor radical. Literature then 'commence avec la décision de voler le langage, de le détourner de ses fins et, sans abandonner les significations directes, d'en faire les moyens de *présentifier l'inarticulable*.'[97] Sartre puts the problem clearly in an earlier passage:

Pour tous les hommes les mots *signifient* à condition de suivre l'intention verbale en négligeant la matérialité non signifiante qui en est le support; pour l'Artiste ils sont, à ne les considérer que comme signes non-signifiants, ils ne rendront sa pensée que s'il utilise en eux la matérialité non-signifiante pour rendre exhaustivement le *sens* qu'il veut transmettre.[98]

Sartre still uses the *signification/sens* distinction which was made as early as *Situations II*, but passages such as these indicate clearly that this no longer coincides with his original radical distinction between prose and poetry (as *genres*). We will suggest in the next chapter that Sartre has moved on to more satisfactory distinctions closer to, though more complex than, the categories of *écrivain/écrivant* proposed by Roland Barthes. At the same time, it is only fair to point out that Barthes in fact originally formulated his distinction on the basis of Sartre's own earlier analysis of the differences between prose and poetry.

Flaubert's 'style' thus relegates 'signification' to a secondary role and conveys rather 'l'indisable'. The notion that Flaubert uses his material (i.e. language) in order to express something other than conceptual meaning becomes much clearer if we consider the analogy Sartre draws with Romantic painting. Flaubert is described as writing as a painter paints: on two levels at once. These two levels are, broadly speaking, representation and style:

Flaubert ressemble aux peintres de son époque qui avaient besoin d'un 'sujet' – fût-ce une simple nature morte – pour enflammer leurs couleurs et pour en faire *autre chose et plus* que des couleurs mais dont le but principal était à travers la signification (le thème traité) de révéler un être plastique et non signifiant, une certaine chose qui est une combinaison de valeurs et de tons.[99]

Language then is used in two different ways simultaneously, it makes statements, reports facts, conveys a message, through its evident meanings; but the 'style', in so far as this can be abstracted, is intended to transmit 'l'indisable par l'irréalisation du langage'.[100] *L'indisable*, or what Flaubert also calls paradoxically enough *l'Idée*, in the sense of abstract pattern, is thus conveyed *indirectly*. We might mention here the parallel with Baudelaire's notion, expressed in the 1846 Salon and already discussed in a previous chapter, of how and what art expresses, and in particular of his adoption of Heine's contention that art conveys 'la Symbolique innée d'idées innées, et au même instant'.[101] One of the clearest statements of what Flaubert meant by 'style' is contained in his letter to George Sand where he asks:

Dans la précision des assemblages, la rareté des éléments, le poli de la surface, l'harmonie de l'ensemble, n'y-a-t-il pas une vertu intrinsèque, une espèce de force divine, quelque chose d'éternel comme un principe? (Je parle en platonicien) . . . La loi des nombres gouverne donc les sentiments et les imàges, et ce qui paraît être l'extérieur est tout bonnement le dedans.[102]

We are back once again within the familiar notions of mid-nineteenth-century aesthetics which Sartre is attempting to gloss in his own terms. The work of art for Flaubert, as indeed for Baudelaire, in construed in terms of richness, harmony and unity; it creates an imaginary world which, precisely because it is imaginary, is, paradoxically, more sensuously satisfying than the real. It is a harmonious whole in which each part implies all the others. Art then enables Flaubert to bring together, through *style*, the poetic and the aesthetic, and to convey *l'indisable* at the same time as creating an imaginary cosmic unity. This unity is a *Tout* but it is also a *Néant*, both in the sense that, being imaginary, it negates the real world, and in the sense that it is haunted by the consciousness that produced it.

We are now in a position to understand what Sartre means when he asks, rather mysteriously, if, 'le choix passif de déréaliser l'expérience ne revient pas à celui d'*imaginariser le langage*'.[103] This is in fact the key to Flaubert's art, and indeed to Sartre's claim that he is a great artist even according to Sartre's own criteria. As we know, literature for Sartre is primarily communication, and always involves therefore a writer-reader relationship. But the important thing to note is that his conception of the nature of this communication and the matter to be communicated has become progressively more subtle since his early essays. Flaubert is, in a sense, a test-case of Sartre's more flexible approach to literature, and ultimately, if not explicitly, to the nature of literary commitment. In Flaubert's case, according to Sartre, it is paradoxically through the derealization of language that communication will take place. As we have indicated, style transmits 'l'indisable par l'irréalisation du langage'.[104] 'Mis entre parenthèses, le monde et le langage ne sont réels ni l'un ni l'autre: tous deux sont des imaginaires: on rend l'image des choses par des images-mots.'[105] As we know from *L'Imaginaire* and elsewhere: 'L'irréel ne peut être vu, touché, flairé qu'irréellement. Réciproquement il ne peut agir que sur un être irréel.'[106] In other words then, the reader of novels, like the spectator of a painting, must imagine rather than perceive; he must become unreal if he is to reach the *indisable* which can come only through the non-utilitarian side of language. Flaubert, says Sartre,

Ne transmet rien au lecteur réaliste sinon la fascinante proposition de s'irréaliser à son tour. Si celui-ci, qui n'est en aucun cas l'interlocuteur direct de Flaubert, cède à la tentation, s'il se fait lecteur *imaginaire* de l'œuvre – il le faut, pour saisir le sens derrière les significations – alors tout l'indisable, y compris la saveur du plum-pudding, lui sera révélé allusivement.[107]

It is paradoxically through the unreal and the imaginary that the most real communication between Flaubert and his reader can take place. Flaubert then

exemplifies the dilemma of all art which can reveal the true only through creation in the domain of the unreal. This notion throws further light on the paradox which Sartre proposed to discuss in volume IV: namely that the words of the so-called 'realist' are in fact totally imaginary. Flaubert, Sartre tells us, is neither a poet nor a novelist: '"Je suis écrivain" dit-il. Que faut-il entendre par là? '[108] Sartre asks. The attentive reader of the first three volumes should not be at a loss to reply.

The question of how and what art communicates has brought us finally back to the problem of commitment, and therefore out of the aesthetic sphere into the moral one. As we have seen in previous chapters the two domains are for Sartre distinguishable but interconnected and ultimately interdependent. So that we need now to ask what is the nature of Sartre's moral judgement of Flaubert, as this emerges from the different types of analysis (psychological, sociological, aesthetic) which we have been examining. 'Je tiens Flaubert et Goncourt pour responsables de la répression qui suivit la Commune parce qu'ils n'ont pas écrit une ligne pour l'empêcher.'[109] wrote Sartre in 1947. Yet in 1971 he can say with apparent conviction: 'On constate ensuite un engagement sur un second plan que j'appellerai politique, malgré tout.'[110] A full discussion of this change of attitude would involve an account of Sartre's critical, political and philosophical development which would be quite outside the scope of this chapter. It would moreover repeat certain arguments of Chapter 2 about the evolution of Sartre's conception of commitment, and would anticipate the conclusions of the final chapter on the relevance of Sartre's changing notions of language to his changing notions of literature. Indeed the reasons behind Sartre's change of attitude are implicit in all that we have said before, but since certain curious misconceptions seem to persist among critics it would seem fruitful to recapitulate. The *Idiot* has been seen by certain critics as a tribunal[111] set up against Flaubert, who thus becomes Sartre's 'monitory scarecrow, familiar and whipping boy'.[112] Such misrepresentations of Sartre's attitude arise chiefly out of the fact that these writers are still thinking in terms of the 'classical' Sartre, without taking into account certain very important changes, primarily in his notions of liberty and commitment.

Most important perhaps is the change in Sartre's notion of liberty since 1947, when his conceptions of *facticité* and indeed of *situation* were still in their infancy, and man's freedom was seen as limited primarily by his own bad-faith. The *Critique* of course gives a very different picture, and today Sartre will go so far as to say that:

D'une certaine façon, nous naissons tous prédestinés. Nous sommes voués à un certain type d'action dès l'origine par la situation où se trouvent la famille et la société à un moment donné . . . Dans certains cas, l'histoire condamne d'avance. La prédestination, c'est ce qui remplace chez moi le déterminisme: je considère que nous ne sommes pas libres – tout au moins provisoirement, aujourd'hui – puisque nous sommes aliénés. On se perd toujours dans l'enfance: les méthodes d'éducation, le rapport parents-enfant, l'enseignement etc., tout cela donne un moi, mais un moi

perdu . . . Cela ne veut pas dire que cette prédestination ne comporte aucun choix, mais on sait qu'en choisissant on ne réalisera pas ce qu'on a choisi: c'est ce que j'appelle la nécessité de la liberté. Par exemple Flaubert n'était pas tout-à-fait conditionné à choisir l'écriture.[113]

Sartre then rejects determinism for it implies that fatality is external to man. Predestination, on the other hand, we might note, in so far as it has been defended theologically, by the Jansenists for example, implies fatality internalized as an orientation for which one is responsible. Sartre adopts the theological term in order to retain his tragic view of the human condition; it allows him to maintain that although man is not free, he is responsible even if predestined. As he stated as early as 1947: 'On ne fait pas ce qu'on veut et cependant on est responsable de ce qu'on est: voilà le fait.'[114] With the *Idiot* itself the Lutheran notion of *serf-arbitre* recurs on several occasions: it is presented in the first place as a description of Flaubert's notion of the human situation:

Il n'en faut pas plus pour que nos vies irrémédiables renvoient toutes à des intentions étrangères et pour remplacer en chacun l'extériorité du déterminisme par l'intériorité d'un *serf-arbitre*, appliqué en dépit de lui-même, à réaliser *l'intention-autre* qui a décidé de sa destinée.[115]

But the notion is taken up subsequently by Sartre on a number of other occasions[116] to describe his own view of the way in which man is 'predestined'. Without of course taking Sartre's use of the theological terms too literally, it is nonetheless more illuminating to see him as a Pelagian moving gradually towards Jansenism, than as an exponent of freewill eventually recognizing determinism.

Sartre then has come to recognize the limitations of Flaubert's potential choices. The *Idiot* can be seen as revealing these limitations, and indeed Flaubert's conditioning in such a way as to remove some of the blame, if not all the responsibility, for his 'inadequacies' from Flaubert's shoulders. In so far as any responsibility or blame is still attached to Flaubert, this is, paradoxically, a measure of Sartre's humanism: it is in fact his retention of a vestigial human liberty which permits him to judge rather than merely to analyse Flaubert, and moreover which permits him to give credit to Flaubert when credit seems to be his due. Sartre described Gustave as insufficiently loved by his mother, *non-valorisé*, estranged from language, and alienated to the feudal structure of his family. His first two attempts at rendering his impossible situation bearable, through his poetic *hébétudes* and his project of acting, are both doomed to failure because of his bourgeois status: he is neither aristocratic enough to be a great poet, nor yet poor enough to be an actor. Flaubert's option to write is thus partially conditioned by two very different aspects of his childhood life. He can be seen, in this sense, as making the best of a bad job.

Flaubert then cannot be fully integrated into society for he is not fully integrated into its basic unit, the family. By the same token he does not share the

general social alienation to Profit and Production, although he cannot of course avoid alienation altogether. Indeed Sartre asserts of Flaubert and the art-for-art's-sake movement that 'En voulant fuir l'aliénation bourgeoise, ils ont dû lui opposer une autre aliénation . . . l'Art pour l'Art, en effet, n'est rien d'autre que le parti-pris d'aliéner l'écrivain à sa production littéraire.'[117] In an alienated society, according to Sartre, all activities necessarily participate to some extent in the alienation: they are interrelated in so far as all are influenced by the basic infrastructural deformations: 'Dans une société aliénée, toutes les aliénations, quel que soit leur niveau structurel, symbolisent entre elles'.[118] Despite these strictures however, Flaubert does not seem to be tarred with the same brush as the bourgeois in Sartre's account. The bourgeois are of course alienated to a Means, and Flaubert to an End (Art, Beauty) but this difference would not itself suffice to redeem Flaubert. In what way then is the alienation of the artist less degrading than the alienation which characterizes the society he is living in? This is perhaps, on one level at least, the crux of Sartre's rehabilitation of Flaubert. The answer is not explicit in the pages of the *Idiot*: it is left implicit because Sartre has stated it clearly elsewhere. The solution to the problem lies in Sartre's own account, which we have analysed in Chaper I, of the proper meaning to be attached to the notion of art as its own end. The most important feature of this account is his idea that the work of art, even when it is apparently divorced from moral or utilitarian ends, is nevertheless pointing to an absolute beyond itself which is the freedom of the reader. For Flaubert, art as an end in itself means that the work of art must be totally useless and deny the real world altogether. Art thus becomes an unhuman and irrelevant self-referring structure, far from Sartre's literary ideal. Flaubert then may misunderstand the real sense of art as its own end, but for all that, his art, like all art 'se propose au [lecteur] comme un impératif catégorique';[119] it calls on the reader to bring it, the imaginary object, into being. Flaubert then is alienated, paradoxically, to an Ideal which by its very nature militates against alienation, since it requires free readers to participate freely in its creation. Flaubert's alienation to an End can thus be seen as helping to reveal man to himself as his own end. He is not therefore caught up in the degrading spiral of endless means to means, which not only alienates the individual, but also involves him in the further alienation of his fellow men.

A further critical factor in Sartre's rehabilitation of Flaubert depends on his present more radical view of the nature of individual deviation from the norm. Sartre suggests explicitly that Flaubert's inability to integrate himself into bourgeois society may be, in a very real sense, his salvation. Comparing Flaubert with his friend Ernest Chevalier, Sartre raises the question of degree of adaptation to reality:

De fait, à prendre les choses en leur principe, il est impossible de décider, en ces domaines, ce qu'est la *réalité* sans disposer d'un système de valeurs. Qui donc en effet est plus adapté au réel? Gustave, qui tente par tous les moyens d'interrompre ses études de droit parce qu'il sait, en profondeur, qu'elles le mèneront à prendre un état, donc à devenir ce 'bourgeois' qu'il a en horreur? Ou Ernest, qui fut, lui aussi,

romantique et méprisa tout son saoul les 'philistins' mais sans avoir nourri, pour autant, l'intention d'échapper à sa classe, qui a gravi habilement, souplement tous les degrés de sa carrière . . . et dont le premier soin, quand on lui demanda les lettres de son ami mort aux fins de publication, fut de les expurger? [120]

Reality is then not objectively, but socially determined, and inadaptation to reality is therefore simply a form of deviation from a *social* norm. Sartre would appear here to be taking in an attenuated form the Laingian position already referred to, according to which a lack of adaptation to society may reveal the shortcomings of that society, rather than of the person concerned: according to which, in other words, neurosis is merely a reaction to the evils of bourgeois society, an intelligible response to an intolerable situation, and madness, in a sense, is a higher form of sanity. In the last analysis it is the social values that are built into a certain kind of psychiatry that are being questioned:

Pour un psychiatre, pour un analyste bourgeois – ils le sont tous – Ernest est le type même de l'adulte: social, sociable, adapté à sa tâche et même à l'évolution de la société française. Gustave, dont ces practiciens sont trop bien dressés pour nier la personnalité exceptionnelle, reste un homme à guérir. Je le veux bien, mais *de quoi*? [121]

Behind Sartre's affixed reasonableness a hard-core of bitter irony can be sensed:

Aucun d'entre eux, certes, ne songerait à l'empêcher d'écrire. On chercherait des aménagements, voilà tout. Mais pour quoi faire? pour lui permettre d'aller à Paris plus souvent? d'y résider? de passer toutes ses nuits dans le lit de la Muse? de faire d'autres livres que ceux qu'il a faits? d'être, comme son ami, Maxime le photographe, élu quelque jour à l'Académie? [122]

It is at this point, I believe, in his irritation at bourgeois notions of what is right and proper ('un concept douteux de normalité'[123]), that Sartre feels closest to Flaubert. Though his own life-style is very different from that of Flaubert it has nonetheless an unconventional element which he would seem to be defending implicitly in his almost angry defence of Flaubert. Moreover, Sartre is proposing to show that it is because of Flaubert's neurosis, not despite it, that he became a great writer. Flaubert's neurosis is thus seen in a sense as a triumph rather than a defeat: it represents both an admirable refusal of false bourgeois values, and also, as I have indicated, a positive strategy, designed, at various levels, to permit him to create aesthetic masterpieces.

It is of course the masterpieces themselves which provide the final key to Sartre's rehabilitation of Flaubert. We have already seen how, by their very nature as art, Flaubert's works must necessarily reveal the reader to himself as his own end. But they are also committed in a more specific sense. Sartre's position on this point varies according to his polemical intent. In his 1969 interview with the *New Left Review* he declared: 'Flaubert représente, pour moi, l'opposé exact de ma propre conception de la littérature: un désengagement total et la recherche d'un idéal

formel qui n'est pas du tout le mien.'[124] An unreflective judgement might indeed expect this to be the nature of Sartre's opinion of Flaubert. But Sartre is here in fact regressing to the more superficial side of his 1947 notion of commitment which he has long since left far behind, but which reappears spasmodically when he is speaking hastily or polemically, or attempting to simplify his ideas. Nine years earlier, in 1960, he had already explained to Madeleine Chapsal that: 'Flaubert . . . me sert à montrer que la littérature, prise comme un art pur, et tirant ses seules règles de son essence, cache une prise de position farouche sur tous les plans – y compris le plan social et politique – et un engagement de son auteur.'[125] It is quite clear from the context that Sartre is not referring to a reactionary 'prise de position': he never, moreover, uses the term 'engagement' in such a conservative sense.

Flaubert does not however provide Sartre with the same possibility of illustrating the rehabilitation of the alienated writer as did Jean Genet. Genet was described as a thief who succeeded in liquidating his obsessions through his work, and in eventually delivering himself from his alienation. His works revealed to the public the truth of their own condemnatory attitude: that evil is merely a projection of man's own potential for destruction on to certain socially inadequate scapegoats. Sartre can show Genet as passing through a series of very different relations with morality to emerge finally with a profound awareness of the true meaning of moral choice and authenticity. Flaubert, on the other hand, does not evolve in this manner. He must therefore be committed in a less evident and more purely aesthetic manner. On one level Flaubert can of course be seen as committed in a manner very similar to Genet: his intention was to demoralize. In Sartre's schema, demoralizing the bourgeois can be the supremely moral act: 'le but de l'enterprise littéraire est de réduire le lecteur au désespoir'.[126] And as we know from *Les Mouches* 'la vie humaine commence de l'autre côté du désespoir'.[127]

To use Sartre's own earlier terminology, Flaubert's art is committed in so far as it is *dévoilement*. It reveals the world to its readers, a world based on hatred and misanthropy, a world where nothingness eats away at the heart of being, the very world in fact which his readers are trying not to see. His masterpiece, *Madame Bovary*, has of course no immediate political effect, it is even misunderstood in the sense that its particular message (the bourgeois is evil) is generalized ('le pire est toujours sûr'), but it is all the more insidious for its apparent harmlessness. Flaubert is communicating with his public in the domain of the unreal: he is luring his reader from the comfortable security of *being* and exposing him to the deeper terror and reality of *non-being*. To put it another way, the aim of Flaubert's art is to '*manifester* le glissement inéluctable de l'être vers le Néant'.[128] A false notion which extends the solidity of being to human values and intentions is at the base of bourgeois *mauvaise foi* for Sartre. Any writing which will undermine this unjustified and mystifying attempt at self-justification must necessarily be, in an important sense, committed.

Flaubert's commitment to his aesthetic project is moreover absolute. This is why

Sartre can describe him as *engagé* in the fullest sense in his interview with Contat and Rybalka. We will then leave Sartre to express in terms more radical even than any we have so far seen, his final rehabilitation of Gustave Flaubert, 'idiot de la famille'.

Le désengagement total est ce qui apparaît si l'on considère en surface tout ce qu'il a écrit. Mais on constate ensuite un engagement profond sur un second plan que j'appellerai politique, malgré tout: il s'agit de l'homme qui a pu, par exemple injurier les communards, un homme dont on sait qu'il est propriétaire et réactionnaire. Mais si on s'arrête à cela, on ne rend pas justice à Flaubert. Pour le saisir vraiment, il faut aller jusqu'à l'engagement profond, un engagement par lequel il essaie de sauver sa vie. L'important, c'est que Flaubert se soit engagé à fond sur un certain plan, *même si celui-ci implique qu'il ait pris des positions blâmables pour tout le reste*.[129] L'engagement littéraire, c'est finalement le fait d'assumer le monde entier, la totalité. Prendre l'univers comme un tout, avec l'homme dedans, en rendre compte du point de vue du néant, c'est un engagement profond, ce n'est pas seulement un engagement littéraire au sens, où l'on '*s'engage à faire des livres*'. Comme pour Mallarmé, qui est un petit-fils de Flaubert, il s'agit là d'une véritable passion, au sens biblique.[130]

We have examined Sartre's aesthetics in *L'Idiot* as an organic whole integrated into his account of Flaubert's development, and leading to a final evaluation. There is a further point of interest which needs to be examined separately since it involves Sartre's assimilation of ideas from theorists belonging to the movement generally known as *la Nouvelle Critique*. We have already seen Sartre's incorporation of certain ideas from Structuralism into his own philosophy: these ideas are not taken over uncritically, but are frequently used as an antithesis to Sartre's earlier individualist thesis, and transcended in a generally dialectical synthesis. Sartre is prepared, for example, to express his notion that language is to some extent opaque to our intentions, that all speech has a residual *pratico-inerte* which is not necessarily in accordance with the speaker's thought-processes, in the Lacanian formula 'l'homme est parlé'. But if Sartre describes this as *as true as* the fact that 'l'homme parle' he would certainly not recognize it as more true.[131] Similarly we have suggested that Sartre's *Esprit objectif* can be seen as an answer to certain Structuralist conceptions, which utilizes their intuitions whilst at the same time giving them a dialectical emphasis. In the next chapter we shall see in more detail Sartre's gradual adaptation of his own early rigorous position on language towards a more nuanced conception which once again owes a certain amount to notions familiar through French New Criticism.

Besides these three areas there are also certain other areas in the *Idiot* where Sartre would appear to have incorporated into his own account ideas familiar to him through the writings of, for example, Roland Barthes. Very frequently the Structuralist notions can be seen to have originated in Sartre himself, to have been made more radical but often more rigid and expressed in paradoxical and controversial formulae by the Structuralists, before being taken back by Sartre in their new form with all their radicalness but none of their rigidity. The first example

is a case in point. In *Situations II* we already saw Sartre insist that the work of art was brought into being not only by the author but equally by the reader. His awareness that reading is more than a mechanical direction of perception towards the printed page, that it involves ordering and imagination, leads him to define reading as

La synthèse de la perception et de la création . . . En un mot, le lecteur a conscience de dévoiler et de créer à la fois, de dévoiler en créant, de créer par dévoilement . . . Et si l'on me dit qu'il conviendrait plutôt d'appeler cette opération une ré-invention ou une découverte, je répondrai que d'abord une pareille réinvention serait un acte aussi neuf et aussi original que l'invention première.[132]

This notion of the reader's creation of the work of art has of course found favour with Marxist critics who wish to dethrone the writer from his position of privilege. Indeed, though it is not systematic, Sartre makes use already in 1947 of the notion of *production* of a literary text,[133] a notion which critics with Marxist leanings such as Barthes and Julia Kristeva later prefer to that of *creation* with its semi-mystical overtones. The term 'production' makes it easier to assert that the reader in his turn produces the work of art: production is then the bringing into being of the work in the Sartrean sense of the *objet imaginaire*.

The work produced by the reader is not however necessarily the same as that intended by the author. Sartre discusses for example, the various interpretations of Vercors's *Le Silence de la mer*; intended to show that despite the common humanity of the Germans during the second World War resistance was essential, the work was later interpreted as pro-German because it refused to portray the Germans as 'des brutes sanguinaires', and will eventually be read as 'un conte agréable et un peu languissant'.[134] Although in no doubt as to the author's intentions, Sartre does not appear to give any one interpretation priority over the others; he implies that the work itself has changed in nature through having a different public. Since then moreover, Sartre's position has become more radical. In 1964 he states, with respect this time to the theatre: 'Ce qui arrive . . . le jour de la "générale" et les jours suivants, crée une certaine réalité objective de la pièce que, très souvent, l'auteur n'avait ni prévue ni voulue.'[135]

In the *Idiot* Sartre discusses the process by which a work of art can come to appear a natural object rather than a result of human intentions:

Ainsi les anciens livres, autrefois produits tout neufs de l'artisanat littéraire, tendent de plus en plus à ressembler à des choses; ils ont bu, comme un buvard boit l'encre, les pensées diverses et contradictoires d'un public changeant et, à présent, ils les imposent sans en indiquer la provenance, comme leurs qualités propres.[136]

Sartre stresses that, despite its 'reified' appearance, the objective reality of a work of art arises in fact from an interaction between the intentions of the writer and the interpretations of the readers. It is a human product, theoretically open to change: 'Car l'absolu littéraire existe, sans aucun doute mais il faut le chercher dans la

totalisation *duelle* de l'auteur et du lecteur par l'objet manufacturé *tout en signifiant que le moment d'existence plénière de l'œuvre est celui de la lecture.*'[137] The term *absolu littéraire* must not mislead us: just as the *Esprit objectif* was made up of individual cultural totalizations, so the *absolu littéraire* is made up of individual interpretations. We would appear to be fairly close here to Barthes's categories of literary studies, according to which literary criticism is a movement towards an individual reading of a work, and the science of literature takes as its object the plurality of different readings which parallel what Sartre calls 'l'absolu littéraire'. Of course, Barthes rejects the notion of 'un *tout* du texte, (qui serait, par reversion, origine d'un ordre interne, réconciliation de parties complémentaires, sous l'œil du Modèle représentatif).'[138] but neither is Sartre's *absolu littéraire* a *tout;* it is rather, like the *Esprit objectif* itself, a *totalité détotalisée* full of conflicts and irreconcilable contradictions. Sartre's attitude to the diversity of interpretation is not static: in the *Critique*, for example, as we shall see in the next chaper, he clearly envisages it as an aspect of human alienation and of the general problems of communication. In the *Idiot*, on the other hand, his discussion of the question is more factual and also perhaps more positive: he appears to have taken over Barthes's notion of plurality together with at least some of its connotations of potentiality and freedom:

La pluralité des lectures – en tant qu'elle doit toujours être possible – ne naît point d'une indétermination de l'œuvre mais, tout au contraire, d'un libre dépassement de la nécessité par la dualité des créateurs, l'un *préparant* le travail de l'autre, l'autre dépassant cette préparation – considérée comme le champ actuel de ses possibles – vers un produit-à-venir.[139]

Sartre is here closer to Barthes than is perhaps immediately apparent. Barthes's repeated insistence on the infinite plurality of a text tends to give the impression that he believes a work can be interpreted at random in any way the individual whim might happen to suggest. The impression is however misleading: the infinitely plural text is for Barthes one extreme of literature, perhaps even unrealizable, of which the other extreme, hopefully equally inexistent, is the work so limited that only one interpretation is ever possible. Barthes is empiricist enough to recognize that in practice works of art fall somewhere between the two theoretical extremes: they are 'modérément pluriels, c'est-à-dire, simplement polysémiques'.[140] and can best be approached through the notion of connotation. The notion is a complex one, but in this context one element of it is particularly relevant: 'Sémiologiquement, toute connotation est le départ d'un code (qui ne sera jamais reconstitué), l'articulation d'une voix qui est tissée dans le texte.'[141] The notion of *code*, which is so important not only for Barthes but for other contemporary Marxist critics such as Pierre Macherey, provides moreover a further minor instance of Sartre's willingness to interpret his own ideas within the current terminology of New Criticism. Of the *Esprit objectif* for example, he writes:

De toute manière la lecture est une tentative de transformer une chose en idée: il faut que l'œil retrouve l'acte idéatif de l'autre à travers ses vestiges, qu'il resserre l'éparpillement des signes et *recompose*, selon des codes appris, discursivement ce qui fit l'objet, autrefois, d'intuitions peut-être fulgurantes.[142]

To interpret these coded meanings we must of course possess the codes already. And here Sartre's fundamental disagreement with the Structuralists surfaces once again. In Sartre's terms our subjectivity can be defined as: 'Le petit décalage dans une opération par laquelle une intériorisation se réextériorise elle-même en acte.'[143] Barthes too sees man's subjectivity as made up of codes through which he interprets the messages of both literary texts and everyday activities:

Ce *moi* qui s'approche du texte est déjà lui-même une pluralité d'autres textes, de codes infinis, ou plus exactement: perdus (dont l'origine se perd) . . . La subjectivité est une image pleine . . . dont la plénitude, truquée, n'est que le sillage de tous les codes qui me font.[144]

The difference between Sartre and Barthes is of course philosophical, and is indicated by Sartre's use of the notion of *décalage* which leaves room, however small, for the transforming power of human liberty. The codes then, which I have internalized and which constitute my subjectivity, must partially at least condition my reading of the text: even on this most elementary level the work of art is bound to have different meanings for different people belonging to different classes at different times. In Sartre's terms: 'La partialité de classe et le décalage diachronique . . . ont pour effet de brouiller le message et, dans le même temps, de lui donner un sens *plural*.'[145] Once individual family history and personal choice are taken into account the possibility of varying readings, and therefore various meanings of a text, would appear indeed to become almost infinite. But Sartre moves away from Barthes in his insistence on the writer-reader dialectic, considering it an 'absurdité manifeste' to 'privilégier l'acte de lire aux dépens de celui d'écrire'.[145] His position on this point is however very complex, for he continues:

Et, naturellement, cette absurdité est *toujours possible*. Mieux, elle fait partie de chaque lecture effective, dans la mesure où celle-ci, facticité transcendée de part et d'autre, est aussi facticité conservée dans le mouvement qui la dépasse – ce qui veut dire que la communication la plus radicale est *aussi* non-communication. La gamme des non-communications est riche, puisqu'elle va de la *résonance* (fait complexe qui naît de l'egocentrisme – le lecteur se soucie moins de comprendre que de résonner, il se projette dans le livre pour objectiver son image et pressentir le plaisir ému de la réintérioriser) – jusqu'à l'*herméneutique* (le lecteur interprète simultanément le message selon deux codes *au moins*, dont l'un est explicitement utilisé par l'auteur et dont l'autre – ignoré de celui-ci, inventé, peut-être, après sa mort – lui est appliqué sans autorisation en *rupture de connivance*).[147]

In the last analysis then Sartre's attitude to the polysemy of a text remains ambiguous: he envisages it as witnessing both to the alienation of the author and to the freedom of the reading public. But freedom must ultimately predominate since,

as we have seen, Sartre now states unequivocally that 'le moment d'existence plénière de l'œuvre est celui de la lecture'.[148]

A further point of interest in the *Idiot* lies in a related domain of rather different status. Once again, without accepting the basic premises of the critics involved, Sartre makes use of their insights: this time to illumine his account of Flaubert's style. The critics in question are *les formalistes*,[149] a term apparently preferred by Sartre to that of 'semioticians', since he has said: 'Je ne vois pas ce que le nouveau formalisme – la sémiotique – ajoute à l'ancien'.[150] In any case, terminology aside, Sartre is referring to those critics who give the formal qualities of a work's language and construction pre-eminence over the meaning, paying attention, in current terminology, to the *signifiant* rather than the *signifié*.

Sartre's use of notions from this area of New Criticism is not perhaps surprising: his strictly functionalist idea of language applied from the start only to prose, and the non-referential nature of poetic language was always recognized. We shall of course be examining this in more detail in the next chapter. Suffice it to say here that Sartre has extended his notion of the *primary* role of the non-referential side of language to include certain areas of prose, and that he now seems prepared to make use of the insights of contemporary linguistic theory to throw light on his own analyses.

Sartre's intention is to explain Flaubert's aim to 'Ecrire pour dire le Rien',[151] in literary not simply metaphysical terms. He reveals firstly the psychological basis behind Flaubert's choice: it is his way of judging the world: 'Le pire est toujours sûr, je crois à Rien'.[152] Content and form, says Sartre, become one: and at this point his account hovers between metaphysics and literary analysis:

> Le contenu de l'œuvre sera donc sa forme: il s'agit de reproduire le Monde comme s'il était l'œuvre d'une liberté s'étant donné pour but de réaliser le Mal radical, ce qui suppose que toute chose, d'elle-même et sous l'action conjuguée de toutes les autres, doit aller au pire. Et cette entreprise exige une telle rigueur dans l'écriture, une telle multiplicité de liaisons entre les éléments du récit, une telle habileté à faire entrevoir le Tout sauvage et menaçant à travers chaque partie, puis à les supprimer toutes pour que la Totalité se manifeste nue et révèle à cet instant final qu'elle est tout simplement le Néant, il y faut tant d'efforts, de soins et de calculs que le Mal radical n'est qu'une désignation éthique de cette autre norme absolue, la Beauté.[153]

Sartre is here still speaking in terms which correspond fairly closely to Flaubert's own intuitions of his work. Flaubert is of course obliged by the nature of language itself to write *about* something: his method however is to *'Paraître* traiter un sujet et en traiter un autre tout différent – en qualité comme en ampleur – ou n'en point traiter du tout.'[154] For Flaubert the real subject of his work is *l'Idée*: 'La conception totalisante de l'œuvre, et par conséquent, le sujet unique de la littérature.'[155] Literature is then pure totalization: the form of Flaubert's art is also its true content. Indeed Sartre describes Flaubert's works as an example of 'l'Art-Absolu se prenant lui-même pour objet'.[156] The apparent content is merely 'Ce que les

formalistes appellent la forme du contenu, c'est-à-dire ce peu de matière informée sans quoi l'Idée s'évanouirait.'[157]

Flaubert's mysticism can then be seen in purely linguistic terms as 'un attachement démentiel au *signe*, indépendamment du signifié'.[158] Flaubert's works are self-referring structures, language-systems cut off from the exterior world, solipsistic centres of totalization and indeed *néantisation*. They are in a sense an example of the kind of literature which certain contemporary French critics would like to see as the only true literature: a literature of the *signifiant*:

Flaubert . . . s'appliquait, nous l'avons vu, à déréaliser le langage; loin de l'utiliser pour désigner un signifié extérieur au Verbe, il mettait son art à faire passer la chose dans la matérialité du mot en sorte que la phrase, sonore et close, coupée de ses références au monde, tendant à se poser pour soi, à devenir ce qu'on appelle aujourd'hui un *texte*, renvoyait à tout le langage et seulement à lui.[159]

'Je m'oppose complètement à l'idée de texte',[160] Sartre has declared, indicating his refusal to cut a work of art off from its author. But he is evidently prepared to make use of the notion to help explicate Flaubert's own conception of literature. Indeed Sartre's desire to interpret a writer's works without distortion leads him to make use of whatever critical terminology seems most illuminating: if he rejects the premises of Flaubert and the 'formalists', he nonetheless recognizes the validity of the formalist idea of literature in so far as it helps account for the productions of writers such as Flaubert.

Without then wishing to over-emphasize the importance of these elements – some of which are obviously more central than others – in Sartre's theory of literature, it is nonetheless clear that, quietly and almost unnoticed, Sartre has extended his critical notions to include those elements of Structuralism or indeed formalism which can usefully enrich his analyses. Indeed he claims to be 'au courant des recherches actuelles inspirées par le formalisme et la rhétorique',[161] and admits that, as in the case of Lacan, he has also 'assimilé certaines idées à travers des lectures indirectes'.[162] It seems certain that, under the influence of Freud and more particularly of Marx, Sartre's present-day dialectical approach is increasingly capable of incorporating ideas in many respects incompatible with his earlier, more purely analytical, way of thinking. Sartre's proposed use of 'des techniques "structuralistes" ' in the 'étude textuelle . . . de *Madame Bovary*', planned for Volume IV, would have shown his broadening conceptions in practice on a wider scale.[163]

CHAPTER 6

SARTRE'S IDEAS ON LANGUAGE

Sartre's ideas on the nature of language and on man's relations to it are distributed widely throught his philosophical, critical and even his autobiographical writings. In these writings we can discern a spectrum of interests: at one end of this spectrum, as a critic of poetry for example, or in his account of certain aspects of Flaubert's style, Sartre is concerned with linguistic patterns and images; at the other end, as a philosopher and moralist, he is interested in language as human behaviour, and this interest sets him sharply off against those thinkers who see language as an abstract logical structure of formal relations. The dispersal of Sartre's writings on language, together with the exceptionally broad-based nature of his interests and of his own competence as a writer, has resulted in a comparative neglect of his linguistic views on the part of most critics. Linguisticians may ultimately judge Sartre's account of language to lack the rigour and originality of his other philosophical and psychological analyses, but it forms nonetheless an important and coherent set of ideas, and one which moreover illumines the evolution of his literary criticism. The development of Sartre's philosophy is accompanied by a parallel development of his ideas on language, and, as I hope to show, upon closer examination language can in fact be seen as the link between his philosophy and his literary criticism. In this chapter we will attempt to give an account of Sartre's ideas on language, at the same time situating these with respect to other linguistic theories, and indicating their importance for his notion of the role of literature and the nature of literary commitment.

In so far as we can trust the accuracy of a retrospective account, Sartre's earliest feelings with respect to language are revealed to us in *Les Mots* and in an interview given to Pierre Verstraeten in 1965. Sartre describes himself as a child and a young man envisaging language as a form of possession of the world, believing nomination to be a form of appropriation: 'J'ai toujours pensé que le mot était une manière de posséder la chose'.[1] Indeed, as we shall see later, Sartre now thinks of this early illusion as the key to his own desire to write, and indeed to the irrational belief behind writing in general: 'Toute chose humblement sollicitant un nom, le lui donner c'était à la fois la créer et la prendre. Sans cette illusion capitale je n'eusse jamais écrit.'[2] As a child, Sartre tells us, he did not merely see language as possession of the world: it was for him, in a sense, more real than the world itself:

Platonicien par état, j'allais du savoir à son objet; je trouvais à l'idée plus de réalité qu'à la chose.[3]

Je tenais les mots pour la quintessence des choses.[4]

Pour avoir découvert le monde à travers le langage, je pris longtemps le langage pour le monde.[5]

In *Les Mots* Sartre presents his own childhood impressions of the magical power of language as if they were unique, and as contributing to what he calls his *neurosis*. In fact however, as Sartre is of course aware, they would appear to correspond to the generally accepted evolution of attitudes to language, as related for example by Jean Piaget or Georges Gusdorf. Gusdorf, like Foucault in *Les Mots et les choses* sees a magical view of language as something that is entertained not merely by children but also by primitive cultures and civilisations:

La signification du nom chez les primitifs est liée à l'être même de la chose. Le mot n'intervient pas comme une étiquette plus ou moins arbitrairement surajoutée. Il contient en soi la révélation de la chose elle-même dans sa nature la plus intime. Savoir le nom, c'est avoir puissance sur la chose . . . Le domaine de la magie du nom apparaît immense. Il s'étend à l'humanité primitive dans son ensemble. Il réapparaît d'ailleurs aux origines de chaque vie personnelle, car l'enfance de l'homme répète l'enfance de l'humanité. M. Piaget a décrit une période de *réalisme nominal* où l'enfant qui vient d'accéder à la parole donne à cet outil une valeur transcendante. Savoir le nom, c'est avoir saisi l'essence de la chose et pouvoir dès lors agir sur elle.[6]

Sartre's self-criticism is then perhaps over severe in this respect: he demands of the young Jean-Paul a maturity out of keeping with universal psychological development. On the other hand, if the child can be exculpated, this does not necessarily apply to the young man, for whom the implications of the magical view of language as possession continue long after the belief itself has been theoretically discarded. It is in fact the young writer, rather than the child, that the older Sartre is reproaching.

A further aspect of Sartre's earliest conception of language is its solipsistic nature. Language as appropriation is radically opposed to language as communication. If words are seen as identifiable with the objects they refer to, if they are seen as objects in their own right, as magical rather than functional, then use of language is bound to be self-referring, self-centred, at best solitary expression rather than social communication. Sartre's earliest ideas on the nature of literature were, he now believes, vitiated: literature was seen as saving the artist through the creation of better, more satisfying and more real worlds and experiences:

Ecrire, ce fut longtemps demander à la Mort, à la Religion sous un masque d'arracher ma vie au hasard. Je fus d'Eglise. Militant, je voulus me sauver par les œuvres; mystique, je tentai de dévoiler le silence de l'être par un bruissement contrarié des mots et, surtout, je confondis les choses avec leurs noms: c'est croire.[7]

Sartre compares his early attitude to language with that of a child who builds a

sandcastle for the pleasure of building it, and for whom his parents exist to admire the castle, rather than the castle's existing for the sake of his parents: 'les parents diront: "Oh, comme il est beau ce château de sable!" et le rôle du lecteur n'a d'abord que cette fonction-là.'[8] Indeed originally, Sartre reveals, his writing was for its own sake so entirely that the notion of a reading public was totally absent from his conceptions: 'l'idée ne me vint pas qu'on pût écrire pour être lu'.[9] Sartre presents the awakening from these illusions as an entry into the harsh reality of human existence, as a 'désenchantement':

Alors, petit à petit, l'aspect magique du langage disparaît, mais ça représente aussi un désenchantement. A partir du moment où vous savez que le mot n'est pas fait pour posséder la table, mais pour la désigner à l'autre, vous avez un certain rapport collectif de translucidité qui vous renvoie à l'homme, mais qui vous décharge de l'Absolu.[10]

Comme elles sont tristes, les guérisons: le langage est désenchanté.[11]

We shall look later at what Sartre now sees as the positive side of the magical view of language and its importance for the literary artist, but first we must examine his earliest explicit linguistic notions, as expressed in both his critical writings and in his philosophical discussions in *L'Imaginaire* and *L'Être et le Néant*.

We must state from the outset that Sartre is concerned with the language of the mature adult rather than the development of linguistic competence in the child; and that, apart from the personal observations of *Les Mots*, it is not until his study of Flaubert that he will reveal any real interest in the mechanism of language acquisition. As we shall see, however, this interest remains, even in the *Idiot*, on a relatively superficial level.

The ideas which occur in the first essays of Sartre's *Situations* reflect and exemplify many of the notions discussed explicitly in *L'Imaginaire* and a few years later in *L'Être et le Néant*. It is therefore to these works of philosophy that we must turn first in order to comprehend fully the import of certain of Sartre's analyses as these are found in his literary criticism.

Sartre's remarks on language in *L'Imaginaire* are far from comprising any sort of theory. They are given in a sense incidentally, in an account of the nature of the image, to provide a contrast with the mental image which 'n'apprend rien'.[12] Sartre makes only two points, but, as we shall see later, both points are of central importance for they contain the germ of his most recent linguistic theories as expressed for example in the *Idiot*. Sartre refers firstly to the role of language as clarifying and defining thought:

C'est souvent en parlant de notre pensée que nous en prenons connaissance; le langage la prolonge, l'achève, la précise; ce qui était une vague 'conscience de sphère', un savoir plus ou moins indéterminé prend forme de proposition claire et nette en passant par les mots. De sorte qu'à chaque instant notre langage – qu'il soit extérieur ou 'intérieur' – nous rend notre pensée plus et mieux définie que nous ne

la lui avons donnée; il *nous apprend* quelque chose . . . Si le langage, donc, nous apprend quelque chose, ce ne peut être que par son extériorité. C'est parce que les mécanismes selon lesquels sons et phrases se disposent sont en partie indépendants de notre conscience, que nous pouvons lire sur ces phrases notre pensée.[13]

Sartre will return to this notion once again in *L'Être et le Néant* where he explains the difference between language for the speaker and for the listener: 'On peut aussi apprendre sa pensée par sa phrase. Mais c'est parce qu'il est possible de prendre sur elle, dans une certaine mesure, le point de vue d'autrui, exactement comme sur notre propre corps.'[14] He also emphasizes the interdependence of thought and language in his discussion of the interrelationship of liberty and facticity in the human situation: 'On ne saurait pas plus séparer l'intention de l'acte que la pensée du langage qui l'exprime et, comme il arrive que notre parole nous apprend notre pensée, ainsi nos actes nous apprennent nos intentions.'[15] Sartre then can be situated in the apparently unending debate as to the exact relationship between language and thought, traced by Croce from Aristotle and Plato through the Middle Ages and Renaissance to Rousseau, Humboldt and Bergson. As Vygotsky points out:

A look at the results of former investigations of thought and language will show that all the theories offered from antiquity to our time range between identification or *fusion* of thought and speech on the one hand, and their equally absolute, almost metaphysical disjunction and segregation on the other.[16]

In this perspective Croce's ideas on language, for example, come fairly close to the first position (identification of thought and language), although the broad nature of his notion of thought means that his conception of 'language' is equally broad, including not merely words but other 'expressions',[17] such as mathematical symbols. At the opposite extreme, Bergson for example envisages thought as preceding language, preceding even ideas:

Remarquez que la pensée réelle, concrète, vivante, est chose dont les psychologues nous ont fort peu parlée jusqu'ici . . . Ce qu'on étudie d'ordinaire sous ce nom est moins la pensée qu'une imitation artificielle obtenue en composant ensemble des images et des idées . . . L'idée est un arrêt de la pensée.[18]

Despite their opposed views, both Croce and Bergson agree however on the role of language in clarifying thought: 'Language . . . springs from the wholly internal thirst for knowledge and the struggle to reach an intuition of things.'[19] 'Pour que la pensée devienne distincte, il faut bien qu'elle s'éparpille en mots.'[20] Although neither thinker, nor indeed the more recent theorists such as Gusdorf and Vygotsky, refer in this context to Hegel, the latter's ideas would seem to form the earliest expression of what these various writers are, from their opposing directions, all attempting to formulate:

We only know our thoughts, only have definite, actual thoughts, when we give

them the form of objectivity, of a being distinct from our inwardness, and therefore the shape of externality, and of an externality, too, that at the same time bears the stamp of the highest inwardness. The articulated sound, the *word*, is alone such an inward externality. To want to think without words as Mesmer once attempted, is, therefore, a manifestly irrational procedure which, as Mesmer himself admitted, almost drove him insane. But it is also ridiculous to regard as a defect of thought and a misfortune, the fact that it is tied to a word; for although the common opinion is that it is just the *ineffable* that is the most excellent, yet this opinion, cherished by conceit, is unfounded, since what is ineffable is, in truth only something obscure, fermenting something which gains clarity only when it is able to put itself into words. Accordingly, the word gives to thoughts their highest and truest existence.[21]

Intelligence expresses itself immediately and unconditionally by speaking.[22]

This more dialectical view of the relationship between thought and language is later expressed in a more specifically psychological context by Vygotsky, who claims: 'Thought is not merely expressed in words: it comes into existence through them . . . Thought undergoes many changes as it turns into speech. It does not merely find expression in speech, it finds its reality and form.'[23] This appears to be Sartre's own position on the relationship between thought and language. Rather than being rooted in metaphysics like Hegel's ideas, or in experiment like Vygotsky's, Sartre's position on language depends on the nature of his conception of human reality as a whole. In *L'Être et le Néant*, although Sartre does not refer to Saussure by name, he adopts the latter's notion of a hierarchy leading from the most abstract *langage* through *langue* to *dialecte, argot* and *patois*; but for Sartre as a philosopher the most basic concrete reality is not Saussure's *parole* but rather *'l'acte libre* de désignation par lequel je me choisis *désignant'*.[24] It is then ultimately through my free act of designation that language itself comes into being. This can help explain further the relationship between thought and language as Sartre sees it: the two are interdependent for the speaker, though separable and analysable for the listener:

Aussi, la phrase est arrangement de mots qui ne deviennent *ces mots* que par leur arrangement même. C'est bien ce qu'ont senti linguistes et psychologues et leur embarras peut nous servir ici de contre-épreuve: ils ont cru découvrir, en effet, un cercle dans l'élaboration de la parole, car, pour parler, il faut connaître sa pensée. Mais comment connaître cette pensée, à titre de réalité explicitée et fixée en concepts, si ce n'est justement en la parlant? Ainsi, le langage renvoie à la pensée et la pensée au langage. Mais nous comprenons à présent qu'il n'y a pas cercle, ou plutôt que ce cercle—dont on a cru sortir par l'invention de pures idoles psychologiques, comme l'image verbale ou la pensée sans images et sans mots—n'est pas spécial au langage: il est la caractéristique de la situation en général. Il ne signifie pas autre chose que la liaison ek-statique du présent, du futur et du passé, c'est-à-dire la libre détermination de l'existant par le non-encore-existant et du non-encore-existant par l'existant.[25]

Sartre's ideas on the relationship between thought and language are then an

inevitable consequence of his ideas on the nature of human reality. They are also, of course, rooted in phenomenological introspection. As a writer, Sartre is necessarily particularly aware of the interdependence of thought and language, and the role of the latter in the formulation and clarification of the former.

The formation of Sartre's ideas on the relationship between thought and language appears, moreover, to have been strongly influenced by his association with Merleau-Ponty. It is in the *Phénoménologie de la perception* of 1945 that Merleau-Ponty gives his earliest extended account of this relationship, and although this work post-dates *L'Être et le Néant* by two years it seems clear, nonetheless, that the direction of influence was from Merleau-Ponty to Sartre and not vice-versa, for the elaboration and richness of Merleau-Ponty's discussion convince us that his was the originating rather than the derivative thought. The kernel of Merleau-Ponty's argument is as follows:

Si la parole présupposait la pensée, si parler c'était d'abord se joindre à l'objet par une intention de connaissance ou par une représentation, on ne comprendrait pas pourquoi la pensée tend vers l'expression comme vers son achèvement, pourquoi l'objet le plus familier nous paraît indéterminé tant que nous n'en avons pas retrouvé le nom, pourquoi le sujet pensant lui-même est dans une sorte d'ignorance de ses pensées tant qu'il ne les a pas formulées pour soi . . . Ainsi, la parole chez celui qui parle, ne traduit pas une pensée déjà faire [*sic* = faite?], mais l'accomplit.[26]

His analysis is subtle and rewarding but cannot of course be examined in detail here. Suffice it to indicate that, as we shall see, further aspects of his analysis will be taken over by Sartre into his own account at a later stage of his development.

In *L'Imaginaire* Sartre also considers language briefly from an aesthetic as well as a philosophical point of view. But before returning to this work we must continue our examination of Sartre's linguistic ideas as they are to be found in *L'Être et le Néant*. As I have indicated, Sartre envisages language as an integral part of human behaviour, expressly dependent upon what he calls *l'être-pour-autrui*. Having discussed various modes of self-expression, and of relations with other people, Sartre continues:

On dira que ces diverses tentatives d'expression supposent le langage. Nous n'en disconviendrons pas; nous dirons mieux: elles *sont* le langage . . . Le langage n'est pas un phénomène surajouté à l'être-pour-autrui: il *est* originellement l'être-pour-autrui, c'est-à-dire le fait qu'une subjectivité s'éprouve comme objet pour l'autre . . . Ce langage . . . fait partie de la *condition humaine.*[27]

In so far as language is part of the human condition then it is in a sense alienating and alienated. Like all human activities it is open to interpretation by other people; it witnesses not only to the intentions of the speaker but also has meaning in so far as it is received by the listener. Once articulated, my thought becomes part of the *en-soi*, static, formally immutable but vulnerable to the interpretation of others:

Du seul fait que, quoique je fasse, mes actes librement conçus et exécutés, mes

pro-jets vers mes possibilités ont dehors un sens qui m'échappe et que j'éprouve, je *suis* langage . . . Le surgissement de l'autre en face de moi comme regard fait surgir le langage comme condition de mon être.[28]

Sartre is here speaking of all modes of human expression, not merely speech, though of course this is the most easily analysed expressive phenomenon. He suggests that man is not fully the master of the impression he makes upon other people through his speech, gestures or general behaviour:

Le 'sens' de mes expressions m'échappe toujours; . . . Et, faute de savoir ce que j'exprime en fait, pour autrui, je constitue mon langage comme un phénomène incomplet de fuite hors de moi . . . Autrui est toujours là, présent et éprouvé comme ce qui donne au langage son sens. Chaque expression, chaque geste, chaque mot est, de mon côté, épreuve concrète de la réalité aliénante d'autrui.[29]

It is not then, Sartre claims, merely the 'psychopathe' who can say, 'on me vole ma pensée'.[30] This is the condition of all human expression and communication. At this stage however, Sartre's view of alienation is not as far-reaching and all-pervasive as it will later become. Alienated by others we nonetheless retain our liberty. Our activities are partly conditioned by the already humanized world which we enter at birth, a world already invested with human interpretations, meanings and implicit commands:

Moi par qui les significations viennent aux choses, je me trouve engagé dans un monde *déjà signifiant* et qui me réfléchit des significations que je n'y ai pas mises . . . [*Sortie, Entrée* etc.] viennent ajouter au coefficient d'adversité, que je fais mettre sur les choses, un coefficient proprement humain d'adversité.[31]

Each man is then born into a ready-constituted language through which he will think. He is also born with a certain sex, class and nationality. These elements of his *facticity* are, for Sartre, in a sense ambiguous. They are necessary limitations to man's freedom, yet means by which he realizes his humanity and liberty:

Chaque pour-soi, en effet, n'est pour-soi qu'en se choisissant au delà de la nationalité et de l'espèce, de même qu'il ne parle qu'en choisissant la désignation au delà de la syntaxe et des morphèmes. Cet 'au-delá' suffit à assurer sa totale indépendance par rapport aux structures qu'il dépasse; mais il n'en demeure pas moins qu'il se constitue en *au-delà* par rapport à *ces* structures-ci . . . Le sens du monde lui est aliéné . . . Il ne s'agit pas ici d'une limite de la liberté mais plutôt que c'est *dans ce monde-là* que le pour-soi doit être libre . . . Cette historialisation qui est l'effet de son libre choix ne restreint nullement sa liberté . . . Pourtant l'existence de l'Autre apporte une limite de fait à ma liberté.[32]

Sartre then, in the domain of language as in the domain of all other human behaviour, insists at this stage that the conditions of our freedom do not limit it in any real sense, and that the only important element of alienation comes through the freedom of the Other to interpret my activities in a way contrary to my intentions. It is clear however that although I can go 'beyond' ('au delà') my

language in so far as I use it to express my individual project, I can nonetheless work only within it. Here Sartre's position can be usefully situated with respect to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. For Whorf language is the cause rather than merely the expression of particular world-views, and is therefore the chief means of maintaining the permanence and stability of such world-views. This hypothesis tends to overemphasize the conservative power of language and can provide no truly convincing account of linguistic change. Moreover it does not take non-linguistic factors into account: the seventeen Eskimo words for snow, for example, are arguably not a cause but rather a result of the importance of this element in Eskimo life! On the other hand, if language is seen merely as an epiphenomenon reflecting but not affecting experience and outlook then its major role in acculturation, in initiation into the norms of a society, cannot be satisfactorily accounted for. A more comprehensive account of the relation between language and world-view is then necessarily dialectical, and Sartre's own conception of man's dependence on, yet transcendence of, pre-existing structures and language would seem to satisfy the conditions necessary for incorporation within a dialectical viewpoint.

To return now to Sartre's analysis of language as behaviour: like all behaviour it is, as we have seen, different in nature for the agent and for the onlooker. The speaker is aware of the power of the other to interpret his utterances: in this sense language witnesses to the liberty of the listener, to *his* transcendence: it is in this sense, Sartre says, *sacré*.[33] But for the listener on the other hand language need not witness to the liberty of the speaker: he becomes merely an 'objet signifiant' whose words effect what Sartre calls a kind of 'action à distance'.[34] For the listener, then, language is magical rather than sacred: 'Ainsi le mot est *sacré* quand c'est moi qui l'utilise et *magique* quand l'autre l'entend.'[35] It is for the listener also, or for the speaker who considers what he has said, or for the linguist who considers language apart from utterances, that language has laws. But to consider language in this light alone is, according to Sartre, to ignore its essential nature. Sartre defines himself in opposition to Brice Parain who envisages language as part of nature, with its own order, laws and impersonal life. Such a view, in Sartre's eyes, is false; it results from the fact that 'on a considéré le langage *une fois qu'il est mort*'[36] Sartre insists that in fact language has no life of its own outside its usage: 'On a fait du langage *une langue qui se parle toute seule*. Voilà bien l'erreur à ne pas commettre . . . On réduira le rôle de l'homme à celui d'un pilote'.[37] As we shall see, Sartre's position on this point will be modified, though never totally abandoned: it will be incorporated into a broader dialectical approach. In 1943 however Sartre claims: 'C'est en parlant que nous faisons qu'il y ait des mots'.[38] The speaker then creates the laws of language in so far as he (re)creates them freely in each speech act:

Aussi est-ce à l'intérieur du projet libre de la phrase que s'organisent les lois du

langage; c'est en parlant que je fais la grammaire; la liberté est le seul fondement possible des lois de la langue. Pour *qui*, d'ailleurs, y a-t-il des lois de la langue? Paulhan a donné les éléments d'une réponse: ce n'est pas pour celui qui parle c'est pour celui qui écoute. Celui qui parle n'est que le choix d'une *signification* et ne saisit l'ordre des mots qu'en tant qu'il *le fait.*[39]

As we know, however, we can take the point of view of the other and look at our speech from outside. From this point of view we too become aware of 'la part du diable', the relations between words which we did not intend when we spoke:

La rapprochement sera *multivoque*. La saisie du sens *vrai*, c'est-à-dire expressément voulu par le parleur, pourra rejeter dans l'ombre ou se subordonner les autres sens, elle ne les supprimera pas. Ainsi le langage, libre projet *pour moi*, a des lois spécifiques *pour l'autre.*[40]

As we shall see, the importance given by Sartre to 'la part du diable' will become correspondingly greater as his awareness of the all-pervasive nature of human alienation increases. This evolution will prove of vital importance in his conception of the nature and role of literary style.

The notion of verbal relations unintended by the speaker leads us away from langage as *praxis* into the realm of language as pattern, or language in the form of literature. As a part of *praxis* words can function only as signs; in their own right, or from an external viewpoint, they can function also as images. This is the second point raised by Sartre with respect to language in *L'Imaginaire*, and one which will prove progressively more fruitful, culminating as we shall see in a lengthy exposition on the graphic configuration of the word in *L'Idiot de la famille*. In *L'Imaginaire* Sartre's position would appear to be intuitive rather than rigorously worked out, but the central notion of the word as an *analogon* rather than a mere *sign* is already present:

D'abord, comme tout savoir tend à s'exprimer par des mots, il y a dans toute image une espèce de tendance verbale . . . De même que, lorsque je perçois la lune et que je pense le mot 'lune', ce mot vient se coller à l'objet perçu comme une de ses qualités, de même si je produis seulement la conscience imageante de lune, le mot viendra se coller à l'image. Est-ce à dire qu'il fonctionne comme analogon? Cela n'est pas nécessaire; souvent le mot garde sa fonction de signe . . . Il conviendra, dans une étude plus complète, de définir les rapports qu'entretiennent son ancienne fonction de signe et sa nouvelle fonction de représentant. Mais ce n'est pas ici le lieu d'entreprendre ces recherches. Il nous suffisait de marquer que, si l'on appelle image le système total de la conscience imageante et de ses objets, il est faux de dire que le mot s'y ajoute extérieurement: il est dedans.[41]

We can now turn to the essays collected in *Situations I* to see the application of Sartre's early ideas on language to individual writers, and also his further exploration of these ideas within the essays themselves. Sartre's chief preoccupation in these essays is with writers who do not entertain easy, natural relations with language conceived as a part of human behaviour, but who rather see it as a separate realm,

inadequate to human requirements. Sartre does not agree intellectually with these writers but he is fascinated by their theories, just as he is fascinated by the many writers who fall outside his early definition of literary commitment. Sartre moreover uses these essays as an opportunity first to pose and then to solve the 'problems' of language which he sees as arising chiefly from a faulty view of the nature of language and its relations to human reality. As we know from *La Nausée* Sartre thinks of language as a system of categorization whereby the real is made to appear assimilable to consciousness. He does not believe it to correspond fully or exactly to external reality. Indeed this is the basis of his criticism of the 'Aristotelian' Giraudoux who creates imaginary worlds which do not recognize 'cette pâte molle parcourue d'ondulations . . . où l'événement résiste par nature à la pensée et au langage'.[42] On the other hand it provides one of the reasons for his appreciation of the work of Albert Camus who attempts to convey 'l'impuissance où nous sommes de *penser* avec nos concepts, avec nos mots, les événements du monde'.[43]

The idea that language does not correspond to reality so much as impose categories upon reality is of course part of the heritage of Romanticism and Symbolism. It is given its most complete philosophical expression, as Emeric Fiser points out, in the works of Henri Bergson who describes language as 'symbolizing' (in the sense of conceptualizing) the real:

> Il symbolise le réel et le transpose en humain plutôt qu'il ne l'exprime.[44]
>
> Le mot aux contours bien arrêtés, le mot brutal, qui emmagasine ce qu'il y a de stable, de commun et par conséquent d'impersonnel dans les impressions de l'humanité, écrase ou tout au moins recouvre les impressions délicates et fugitives de notre conscience individuelle.[45]

For Bergson of course, who believes thought to precede language, it is language which is held responsible for the inadequacy of expression. For Sartre on the other hand, at least at this stage, the inadequacy lies not in language itself but in the human mind: language can express no more than our thought processes allow, and it is these which cannot fully grasp all the flux and contingency of existence.

In attempting to convey the gulf between original reality and reality filtered through thought and language Camus is then in a paradoxical position. He must use language and thought to convey their own inadequacy: 'Il lui faut décrire avec les mots, en assemblant des pensées, le monde avant les mots'.[46] Because of this, Camus's work provides an example of what Sartre calls 'la hantise du silence', that is, it reveals a mistrust of language, labelled *terroriste* by Jean Paulhan, accompanied by a belief in the deeper truth provided by silence. Like Heidegger then Camus envisages silence as 'le mode authentique de la parole'.[47] At this stage Sartre refrains from passing comment on the validity of this notion, but as we have already seen in the *Idiot* and shall see again shortly, he in fact considers it irrational and based on false premises.

Sartre's account of Georges Bataille centres also on the latter's love of silence and his hatred of language. For Bataille, language, which necessarily depends on past and future, retention and protention, memory and anticipation, devalues the present moment, and splits man by making him depend upon a temporal sequence. 'Bataille veut exister tout entier et tout de suite: dans l'instant', Sartre tells us. Language moreover, according to Bataille, devalues the real:

Les mots, d'ailleurs, sont 'les instruments des actes utiles': par suite, nommer le réel, c'est le couvrir, le voiler de familiarité, le faire passer du coup au rang de ce que Hegel appelait 'das Bekannte': *le trop connu,* qui passe inaperçu. Pour déchirer les voiles et troquer la quiétude opaque du savoir contre l'ébahissement du non-savoir, il faut un 'holocauste des mots'.[48]

Bataille is, in a sense, following Bergson in his conception of everyday perception as rooted in action, as seeing merely what is essential in a utilitarian sense, and opposed to the purer perception of the artist who perceives in order to perceive.[49] Surrealist poetry, Sartre suggests, also attempts this 'holocauste des mots', but it does not propose 'de communiquer une expérience précise'.[50] Bataille, on the other hand, wants to discuss the reasons behind the holocaust, 'et c'est avec des mots qu'il doit nous exhorter à sacrifier les mots'.[51] Bataille is then caught up in the same vicious circle as Camus. Like Camus, Sartre explains, his solution cannot be intellectual, but merely stylistic: silence is *suggested* through a linguistic technique. Having analysed Camus's style Sartre concludes: 'Voilà pourquoi M. Camus, en écrivant *L'Etranger* peut croire qu'il se tait: sa phrase n'appartient pas à l'univers du discours, elle n'a ni ramifications, ni prolongements, ni structure intérieure'.[52] Bataille's style is very different, but it serves the same purpose–he attempts to 'lighten' words, says Sartre:

les pénétrer de silence pour les alléger à l'extrême . . . Il insérera dans le discours, à côté des mots qui signifient–indispensables malgré tout à l'intellection–, des mots qui suggèrent . . . qu'il détourne de leur sens originel pour leur conférer petit à petit un pouvoir magique d'évocation.[53]

We will discuss Sartre's ideas on the function of style when we analyse his linguistic ideas as expressed in *Situations II* and more particularly in the *Idiot*, but it is important to note here that style is already seen as playing a vital role in conveying something which lies beyond the limits of rational, conceptual language.

Sartre sees Jules Renard as the earliest writer to be possessed by the 'hantise du silence', but he considers Renard to have lived too early to have desired the destruction of language: 'Il ne vise pas à conquérir un silence inconnu par delà la parole; son but n'est pas d'*inventer* le silence. Le silence il s'imagine le posséder d'abord.'[54] According to Sartre, Renard is unwittingly attempting to escape from the fact (first pinpointed by Saussure, although Sartre does not mention him here) that utterances depend ultimately on the whole of language for their comprehension:

J'ai besoin de tout le langage pour comprendre ce qui n'est qu'un moment incomplet du langage . . . Mais si, comme Renard, je pense par phrases abruptes qui enserrent l'idée totale entre deux bornes, chaque phrase, ne renvoyant à aucune autre, est à elle seule *tout* le langage.[55]

In fact of course our dependence on language as a whole is not related to the connected or disconnected nature of our speech or writing: once again style is being used to suggest something which is intellectually impossible. Sartre's admiration of Renard's style is not however unqualified: in a sense he sees Renard's art as vitiated by his false view of the nature of language. Renard inverts what Sartre sees as the natural hierarchy: he speaks not in order to express something, but rather in an attempt to create silence. His ideas are therefore merely means to an end which is the sentence, and his sentences means to an end which is silence: 'Il pense pour mieux se taire, cela signifie qu'il "parle pour ne rien dire" . . . On peut bavarder en cinq mots comme en cent lignes. Il suffit de préférer la phrase aux idées.'[56]

Ponge is cited as another example of a writer whose ability is to some extent limited by a false view of language. Like Sartre, Ponge considers that 'l'homme est langage'[57]; but as a materialist and behaviourist he refuses to recognize the unique nature of human language as *signification:* 'Ponge va même *naturaliser* la parole, en en faisant une sécrétion de la bête humaine, une bave comparable à celle de l'escargot . . . Le tissu des mots est pour lui une existence réelle, perceptible: il voit les mots autour de lui, autour de nous.'[58] Ponge's dehumanization of language is of course just one aspect of his dehumanization of men: 'il prend les hommes délibérément pour des choses'.[59] Similarly then he looks at words not as part of meaningful behaviour, as they are spoken, but rather in their 'étrange matérialité'.[60] In a sense then the word becomes for Ponge strangely autonomous: 'échappant ainsi à l'homme qui l'a produit, le mot devient un absolu'.[61] It becomes a thing amongst other things, it acquires its own meaning and resonance apart from the utterances it is used in. This is the belief behind Ponge's poetic output: he is creating word-objects which parallel the natural objects of the external world: 'Il faut . . . rendre "les ressources infinies de l'épaisseur des choses . . . par les ressources infinies de l'épaisseur sémantique des mots".'[62] Words then are used by Ponge not merely to convey but in a sense to *create* objects:

Après les tâtonnements et les approximations qui lui ont livré les noms et les adjectifs qui conviendront à la chose, il faut les ramasser en une totalité synthétique et de telle manière que l'organisation même du Verbe en cette totalité rende exactement le surgissement de la chose dans le monde et son articulation intérieure. C'est là précisément ce qu'il nomme le poème . . . Et ce poème précisément à cause de l'unité profonde des mots en lui, à cause de sa structure synthétique et de l'agglutinement de toutes ses parties, ne sera pas simple copie de la chose, mais chose lui-même.[63]

Ponge's materialism however encourages him in the futile attempt to convey the

world *as it is*, objectively, refusing any pre-eminence to human conceptions or activities: 'On y mentionne tout au long les relations de l'homme avec la chose, mais en ôtant à celles-ci toute signification humaine.'[64] Sartre is prepared to recognize that this device provides a certain 'mystère charmant' when animals or natural objects are concerned, but he insists that it reduces the quality of Ponge's descriptions of human beings such as the gymnast or the young mother: 'Regardez la pierre, elle est vivante. Regardez la vie, elle est pierre . . .'[65] S'il prête aux minéraux des conduites humaines, c'est afin de minéraliser les hommes'.[66] Ponge attempts to see the world as already significant apart from man; Sartre insists that meaning comes into the world only through human thought and activity. He cannot agree with Ponge that 'l'objet précède ici le sujet',[67] and sees this false materialism as a harmful core of belief which is only prevented from spoiling Ponge's poetry because his art itself frequently succeeds in transcending his thought: 'Son art nous paraît, comme il est de règle, aller plus loin que sa pensée. Car Ponge penseur est matérialiste et Ponge poète . . . a jeté les bases d'une Phénoménologie de la Nature.'[68]

The essays we have discussed so far all furnish examples of the way in which Sartre's ideas on language help to determine his judgement of certain literary works. The final essay which we will discuss from *Situations I* does not fall into this category, it provides rather a further amplification of Sartre's own conception of the nature of language. This is *Aller et Retour*, his discussion of Brice Parain's work *Recherches sur la nature et les fonctions du langage*. The essay is complex for it provides an early example of Sartre's willingness to enter into the structures of thought of his subject, and the consequent difficulty for the reader of disentangling Sartre's own opinion from the ideas he is discussing. In this case, the matter is further complicated by the fact that Sartre declares: 'J'accepte tout crûment la plus grande part des analyses de Parain: je conteste seulement leur portée et leur place.'[69] Parain, according to Sartre, is, like Bataille, alienated from language: 'il a mal aux mots . . . Il souffre de se sentir décalé par rapport au langage'.[70] His study of language is not an objective account of abstract linguistic structures, but in the first place of language 'tel qu'on le parle',[71] when word and idea are, in a practical sense, indistinguishable. So long as words are links in a chain of expression, they are, says Sartre, transparent and unnoticed. But when communication breaks down 'le mot . . . se montre, il se découvre *comme mot.*'[72] It is Parain's own sense of a failure to communicate with other people which leads him to look at language in itself, when 'le mot s'est isolé de lui-même'.[73] Parain is of peasant stock but moves, through the experience of the army in World War I, into a society which is both urban and middle class; he finds that language cannot correspond to what he wants to convey, it corresponds rather to a reality which is not his own, the oppressive reality of bankers and middle-class business men. In this sense, says Sartre, 'le langage devenait le plus insinuant des instruments d'oppression'[74] and we will see this notion recur with increasing frequency in Sartre's criticism. Sartre returns here

to the notion discussed in *L'Être et le Néant* that language not merely expresses our thought, it also, in a sense, distorts it, and steals it from us by its very exteriority:

C'est l'aventure de chacun de nous: les mots boivent notre pensée avant que nous ayons eu le temps de la reconnaître; nous avions une vague intention, nous la précisons par des mots et nous voilà en train de dire tout autre chose que ce que nous voulions dire.[75]

Sartre traces Parain's journey firstly towards a terrorist view of language, and later back towards a more nuanced rhetoric, and a limited trust in language. He shows Parain discovering the two possible complementary inadequacies of language. Firstly words appear to Parain as too unstable, too fluid, having different meanings in different mouths, unable to cope with the constants of human reality: nature, freedom, the life-cycle; but secondly Parain finds language also too static, inadequate to express the flux and complexity of a changing society, the uncertainty, depth and individuality of human experience. Parain's solution is a form of synthesis: he recognizes that man can neither do without language nor direct it completely, and concludes that nomination is essential to stabilize the fluidity of things, and that in this sense words are in command of men: 'ce sont les mots qui nous apprennent ce que nous voulons dire avec les mots'[76] On the other hand he sees the meaning of words in the abstract as a mere schema, given concrete significance and richness by the individual experience. Finally Parain turns to God to guarantee the full correspondence of words with reality, and although this appeal to a transcendent guarantor is fundamentally unjustifiable in Sartre's eyes, it enables Parain to recognize a truth about the nature of silence which Sartre himself sees as basic; silence is in no way the privileged form of speech which Heidegger, Camus and Bataille believe it to be: 'Se taire, c'est sous-entendre les mots, voilà tout',[77] says Sartre; a notion expressed more poetically by Merleau-Ponty: 'ce silence prétendu est bruissant de paroles, cette vie intérieure est un langage intérieur'.[78] The idea of silence implying words has been taken up and elaborated by a philosopher of language, Georges Gusdorf, who owes a great deal to existentialist thought. In *La Parole* Gusdorf writes:

De même l'apologie du silence, plus éloquent que toutes les paroles, plus riche et plus définitif, se fonde sur une confusion. Le silence n'est pas de soi une forme d'expression particulièrement dense. Il n'a de sens qu'au sein d'une communication existante, comme contrepartie ou comme sceau d'un langage établi. Il est des silences de pauvreté et d'absence aussi bien que des silences de plénitude, et ce n'est pas le silence qui fait la plénitude . . . Le silence ne possède donc aucune magie intrinsèque; il est un blanc dans le dialogue où les harmoniques de l'accord ou du désaccord existant peuvent se manifester.[79]

Sartre's critique of Parain's ideas allows him to explore further his notion of the interrelationship of thought and language. He agrees with Parain that if thoughts

without words exist: 'que nous importe', but could be seen as exhibiting disingenuous bad-faith in his attempt to transfer the onus of proof on to the shoulders of those who disagree with his theories: 'Il faudrait prouver que ces pensées sans mots ne sont pas encadrées, limitées, conditionnées, par l'ensemble du langage.'[80] Like silence then, thought, for Sartre, depends on a basis of language and cannot be conceived apart from language. But Sartre does not consider language as a privileged form of knowledge: as I have indicated he sees it as limited by and dependent upon man's thought processes. Nomination is not the process by which I distinguish objects in the amorphous flux of existence, but Sartre seems uncertain as to whether it in fact succeeds or is contemporaneous with my act of objectification: 'Ce n'est pas en les nommant que je leur confère l'objectivité: mais je ne puis les nommer que si déjà je les ai constitués comme ensembles indépendants, c'est-à-dire que si j'objective *en un même acte synthétique* la chose et le mot qui la nomme.'[81] If the word is not privileged, conversely neither does it interfere with my comprehension of my experience in this context:

Pour universaliser, il faut d'abord que *je* l'universalise, c'est-à-dire que je dégage le mot *faim* de la confusion désordonnée de mes impressions actuelles . . . Le mot s'intercale entre mon amour et moi, entre ma lâcheté, mon courage et moi, non entre ma compréhension et ma conscience de comprendre.[82]

In other words, if language comes between me and things, it does not come between me and my awareness of things. Language then cannot lead me astray against my will, it will be neither more nor less accurate than my thought itself, and I can refer back to my unformulated experience as a check of the accuracy of both. The possibility of distortion comes in the minute *l'Autre* enters the picture, whether as an external listener, or as me hearing my own words as if from outside. Once spoken, my words enter, as we have already seen, the world of the *en-soi*, open to interpretation or misinterpretation by the Other. Sartre's criticism of Parain is that he is not sufficiently aware of the role of the Other in the constitution of language:

Dès que je parle, j'ai l'angoissante certitude que les mots m'échappent et qu'ils vont prendre là-bas, hors de moi, des aspects insoupçonnables, des significations imprévues . . . il appartient à la structure même du langage de devoir être compris par une liberté qui n'est pas la mienne. En un mot, n'est-ce pas l'Autre qui fait le langage? . . . Je suis langage, car le langage n'est rien que l'existence en présence d'autrui . . . Le langage, c'est l'être-pour-autrui.[83]

Parain then, Sartre believes, discusses language from a false point of view, isolated from the rest of human behaviour: this leads him to blame language for impeding communication when it is our relations with the Other which are in fact at fault: 'Si l'Autre ne me comprend pas, est-ce parce que je parle ou parce qu'il est autre?'[84] Similarly Parain is led to give language a false importance, and to see it as cataloguing reality. Sartre cannot agree:

Le langage forme une couche constitutive de la chose. Mais ce n'est pas lui qui

lui donne sa cohésion, sa forme, ni sa permanence . . . Le langage se situe entre des objets stables et concrets qui ne l'ont pas attendu pour se dévoiler . . . et des réalités humaines qui sont parlantes par nature . . .'[85]

This does not of course mean that Sartre envisages man as merely reflecting a pre-existing world. As we know from *L'Être et le Néant* he believes that it is through the *néant* of consciousness that the world exists as a world, in other words that man creates a humanized world from the amorphous flux of the natural and the inhuman. But it is not language itself which performs this task originally, but rather the human mind, working *through* language in so far as the latter brings thought into focus, clarifying and formulating obscure intuitions and intentions. For Sartre, the so-called 'problems' of language are merely part of the problems of human reality in general; in his terms: 'il n'y a pas de problème métaphysique du langage . . . Les questions qu'il pose sont techniques, politiques, ésthétiques, morales.'[86]

Language then for Sartre constitutes a section of human activity in which some of the most fundamental human questions are most clearly posed. It is in this perspective that he discusses language in *Situations II*. The essay does not increase our knowledge of Sartre's ideas on the fundamental nature of language: it rather exploits the implications of these ideas within a political context. Paradoxically however, it is at this point that Sartre gives his most extended early discussion of language as pattern and image in poetry. Sartre's overall intention is, nevertheless, frankly polemical and it leads him, even in the domain of language as communication, away from the subtlety of his earlier analyses towards a more cut-and-dried simplistic approach. Sartre considers once again the 'hantise du silence' of the terrorists, not now in the spirit of interested if critical enquiry, but rather to attack views which he sees as politically dangerous. The aim of destroying language, he believes, made it possible for writers to ignore the more specifically political effects of their works, and to pass over the whole question of commitment. Sartre is determined that the dignity of language as communication shall be restored; he has lost all patience with those who believe in some kind of *ineffable* beyond the bounds of language:

On a reconquis assez de probité pour ne pas vouloir être jugé sur je ne sais quel ineffable que ni les paroles ni les actions ne pourraient épuiser; on prétend ne connaître des intentions que par les actes qui les réalisent et des pensées que par les mots qui les expriment.[87]

Sartre is led in his eagerness to simplify his real position with respect to language and thought. Despite the sympathy for Parain which he expressed in *Situations I*, he now claims, with a certain contempt: 'Comme on n'a plus l'orgueil de séparer la pensée des mots, on ne peut même concevoir comment les mots trahiraient la pensée.'[88] Stated in this bald form Sartre's ideas lack, paradoxically, the persuasive power of his earlier more subtle analyses. His statement is of course politically

motivated, as becomes clear at the end of *Qu'est-ce que la littérature*? when he states:

Si l'on ne [*sic*] se met à déplorer comme Brice Parain l'inadéquation du langage à la réalité, on se fait complice de l'ennemi, c'est-à-dire de la propagande.[89] Notre premier devoir d'écrivain est donc de rétablir le langage dans la dignité. Après tout nous pensons avec des mots. Il faudrait que nous fussions bien fats pour croire que nous recelons des beautés ineffables que la parole n'est pas digne d'exprimer.[90]

Referring, it would seem, primarily to the 'mystique' behind Nazism, but also to what he sees as the 'mystifications' of Gaullism, Catholicism and French Communism, Sartre continues: 'Et puis, je me méfie des incommunicables, c'est la source de toute violence . . . notre pensée ne vaut pas mieux que notre langage et l'on doit la juger sur la façon dont elle en use.'[91] It is important however to notice that even at this stage when Sartre is at his most polemical, he is still in fact aware of an underlying complexity which he cannot, for rhetorical reasons, convey within the main body of this text. One example of this awareness is apparent from a footnote analysing the nature of interior monologue, in which Sartre recognizes that despite the interdependence of our thought and language, much of our psychic activity (feelings, moods etc.) is not strictly speaking *thought* in Sartre's sense, and remains therefore non-verbal: 'Les plus grandes richesses de la vie psychique sont silencieuses'.[92] But this does not mean that they *cannot* be verbalized, merely that the words used to express them are not identical with the reality of the experience: they are rather a verbal expression of that reality, an 'intermédiaire *signifiant* une réalité transcendante.'[93] This is Sartre's first indication that he recognizes a form of psychic activity which falls outside the realm of thought proper. The limitation of thought implicit in such a distinction will become progressively more explicit and finally, in the *Critique*, it will form the basis of a surprisingly restrictive definition.

As we have already seen in a previous chapter, Sartre makes, in the main body of his text, a radical distinction between the functions of language in prose and in poetry. He bases this on what he calls the ambiguity of the sign, which means that one can either: 'le traverser comme une vitre et poursuivre à travers lui la chose signifiée ou tourner son regard vers sa *réalité* et le considérer comme objet. L'homme qui parle est au delà des mots, près de l'objet;[94] le poète est en deça.'[95] For the prose writer he claims, words are tools, useful conventions; for the poet they are 'des choses naturelles'.[96] In Sartre's eyes, then, it is the prose writer who entertains normal relations with language:

Le parleur est *en situation* dans le langage, investi par les mots, ce sont les prolongements de ses sens, ses pinces, ses antennes, ses lunettes; il les manœuvre du dedans, il les sent comme son corps, il est entouré d'un corps verbal dont il prend à peine conscience et qui étend son action sur le monde . . . L'écrivain est un *parleur*: il désigne, démontre, ordonne, refuse, interpelle, supplie, insulte, persuade, insinue . . . Ainsi du langage: il est notre carapace et nos antennes, il

nous protège contre les autres et nous renseigne sur eux, c'est un prolongement de nos sens. Nous sommes dans le langage comme dans notre corps: nous le *sentons* spontanément en le dépassant vers d'autres fins, comme nous sentons nos mains et nos pieds; nous le percevons, quand c'est l'autre qui l'emploie, comme nous percevons les membres des autres. Il y a le mot vécu et le mot rencontré. Mais dans les deux cas, c'est au cours d'une entreprise, soit de moi sur les autres, soit de l'autre sur moi.[97]

Sartre then repeats here the notions already set out in a philosophical context in *L'Être et le Néant*: man *is* language, his relations to it parallel his relations to his body. Sartre also exploits in this context the role of language in clarifying our view of reality: not now as the neutral ground of understanding the world as a world, but on the more political ground of the implications of this understanding: 'Parler c'est agir: toute chose qu'on nomme n'est déjà plus tout à fait la même, elle a perdu son innocence . . . dévoiler c'est changer.'[98] Similarly he uses the previously neutral notion of silence as dependent on language, to emphasize the impossibility of avoiding some form of commitment: 'Le silence . . . est un moment du langage; se taire ce n'est pas être muet, c'est refuser de parler, donc parler encore.'[99] In *Qu'est-ce que la littérature*? then Sartre ignores almost totally the alienating side of language: he emphasizes rather the identification of thought and language, the possibility of communicating all our experience, and the primary role of language in creating an honest and clear-sighted political climate. In this realm then *Situations II* teaches us nothing about Sartre's ideas on language as communication, but rather situates these within a contemporary context and brings out their moral and social implications.

The work does however allow Sartre to explore further his ideas on language as pattern, creating objects rather than communicating ideas. By 1947 Sartre has elaborated further the notion already referred to in *L'Imaginaire* of the word functioning not as a sign but as an image or an *analogon*. According to Sartre, poets, like musicians and artists, create not meanings but *things*. And the things, or poem-objects, which they create are made up of words considered in their turn not as signs but as *things*, or images:

Faute de savoir s'en servir comme *signe* d'un aspect du monde, il [i.e. the poet] voit dans le mot *l'image* d'un de ces aspects. Et l'image mentale qu'il choisit pour sa ressemblance avec le saule ou le frêne n'est pas nécessairement le mot que nous utilisons pour désigner ces objets.[100]

For the poet words are not envisaged as 'des indicateurs' but rather 'comme un piège pour attraper une réalité fuyante'.[101] The sound and shape of the word form an important aspect of the meaning: 'Sa sonorité, sa longueur, ses désinences masculines ou féminines, son aspect visuel lui composent un visage de chair qui *représente* la signification plutôt qu'il ne l'exprime.'[102] Moreover, since clarity is not his aim, the poet need not choose between the different meanings of words, but can allow all the connotations to work together towards the desired evocation:

'le poète . . . ne choisit pas entre les acceptions diverses et chacune d'elles, au lieu de lui paraître une fonction autonome, se donne à lui comme une qualité matérielle qui se fond sous ses yeux avec les autres acceptions.'[103]

Sartre is here indicating briefly some of the ways in which language, rather than merely signifying conceptually, can go some way towards representing and evoking reality itself, as it appears to the individual consciousness. As we have seen, the problem of expressing reality was previously posed by Bergson, and Sartre's solution is similar to Bergson's own: to convey the so-called *incommunicable* through the suggestive powers of language. Fiser gives an account of Bergson's idea of how the poet can use the word or 'symbol' to convey indirectly states of mind or soul: 'Comment le poète pourra l'utiliser [i.e. the symbol] [104] pour *suggérer* cette vie intérieure que le symbole est incapable de représenter avec fidélité . . . Au lieu d'exprimer le sentiment, ce qui est impossible, il se contente de le suggérer.'[105] Fiser isolates four aspects of language usage which Bergson sees as putting the reader in contact with 'le mouvement profond de la vie':[106]

1. Par les *combinaisons nouvelles* qui font distinguer radicalement le symbole de son emploi habituel:
2. Par le *jeu des analogies* entre la combinaison nouvelle des symboles et la durée profonde de la vie qu'il symbolisent.
3. Par *l'émotion* qui naît de la découverte des analogies entre un moment de la durée des choses et un moment de la durée de l'esprit dans la chaude atmosphère de la rêverie poétique.
4. Par l'utilisation du *passé* qui sert de base à l'artiste et qui y puise la matière de son art. Les images, les symboles utilisés par l'artiste pour la construction de l'œuvre proviennent, en dernier lieu, des souvenirs vécus de l'artiste.[107]

Put simply, the artist uses new combinations of words in order to create sensuous analogues of mental states, whose power to affect us comes, Bergson thinks, from their relation to our past. These four aspects are not identical with those outlined by Sartre but both philosophers envisage poetic language as evoking the real *allusively*, through what Sartre would call *le sens*, rather than using the conceptual *signification* of words. Sartre's own notion of the ways in which poetry can communicate on a non-conceptual level through the sound and form of words may have been derived immediately from Merleau-Ponty who distinguishes between what he calls the 'différentes couches de significations' which range from 'la signification visuelle du mot jusqu'à sa signification conceptuelle en passant par le concept verbal'.[108] Merleau-Ponty moreover describes the way in which, in poetry:

On trouverait . . . que les mots, les voyelles, les phonèmes sont autant de manières de chanter le monde et qu'ils sont destinés à représenter les objets, non pas, comme le croyait la théorie naïve des onomatopées, en raison d'une ressemblance objective, mais parce qu'ils en extraient et au sens propre du mot en expriment l'essence émotionelle.[109]

The major part of Sartre's account however separates the different aspects of

language so completely that he removes from prose what might well be considered a major part of its domain. Since communication of conceptual *meaning* at this stage is, for Sartre, the ultimate aim of prose, its formal qualities are relegated to a subsidiary role, and Sartre describes prose as conveying 'des idées qu'on peut rendre adéquatement de plusieurs manières.'[110] His acknowledgement of the importance of prose-style is scanty in the extreme. Having admitted that: 'On n'est pas écrivain pour avoir choisi de dire certaines choses mais pour avoir choisi de les dire d'une certaine façon. Et le style, bien sûr, fait la valeur de la prose',[111] he continues: 'Mais il doit passer inaperçu . . . Dans la prose, le plaisir esthétique n'est pur que s'il vient par-dessus le marché.'[112] What has now become of the pages devoted to Camus and Renard in *Situations I* where Sartre analysed the role of style in suggesting experiences which transcended rational and conceptual language? This aspect has not been totally forgotten by Sartre but has been relegated once again to footnotes. Having explained that in poetry 'l'échec de la communication devient suggestion de l'incommunicable'[113], Sartre goes on to acknowledge that prose itself always contains an element of *échec*, and therefore, one may presume, a similar ability to communicate the incommunicable: 'Ainsi chaque mot est employé simultanément pour son sens clair et social et pour certaines résonances obscures, je dirai presque: pour sa physionomie.'[114] But Sartre is still not admitting a form of prose such as that of Proust or Flaubert in which the *primary* use of words can be seen as poetic. The fundamental distinction of the two realms and the two linguistic aspects is.still maintained: 'Si le prosateur veut trop choyer les mots, l'*eidos* "prose", se brise et nous tombons dans le galimatias . . . Il s'agit de structures complexes, impures, mais bien délimitées.'[115]

Most interesting of all perhaps in this respect, because of the later fortunes of the notion in the *Idiot de la famille*, is Sartre's brief but fascinating reference to the form of prose communication which comes not from the meanings of words, nor yet from their *physionomie* but in a sense from the silences between them:

> A l'intérieur même de cet objet il y a encore des silences: ce que l'auteur ne dit pas. Il s'agit d'intentions si particulières qu'elles ne pourraient pas garder de sens en dehors de l'objet que la lecture fait paraître; ce sont elles pourtant qui en font la densité et qui lui donnent son visage singulier. C'est peu de dire qu'elles sont inexprimées: elles sont précisément l'inexprimable. Et pour cela on ne les trouve à aucun moment défini de la lecture; elles sont partout et nulle part: la qualité de merveilleux du *Grand Meaulnes*, le babylonisme d'*Armance*, le degré de réalisme et de vérité de la mythologie de Kafka, tout cela n'est jamais donné: il faut que la lecteur invente tout dans un perpétuel dépassement de la chose écrite.[116]

We shall be discussing Sartre's increasing awareness of this form of literary communication, and his debt to Merleau-Ponty in this respect, at a later stage when Sartre's development of the idea is further advanced. But it is interesting to note that the first appearance occurs paradoxically in a work concerned chiefly with making a radical separation between the different domains of language, in

order to *commit* prose without becoming entangled in the more complex problems surrounding the commitment of poetry.

As I have indicated, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature*? ignores almost totally the alienating power of language. From this date onwards however, Sartre will be increasingly concerned with all forms of alienation, and in the literary domain his concern centres naturally on alienation by and from language itself. The theory behind his notion of alienation is expounded most fully in the *Critique de la raison dialectique*, and it is to this work that we must now turn in order to determine the fundamental reasons underlying Sartre's change of attitude towards language. One of Sartre's aims in the *Critique* is of course to show in detail how the results of man's free activity, his *praxis*, becomes rigid and objectified, part of the external situation of both himself and other men, eventually to turn back on their creators and to alienate them in the toils of what Sartre calls the *pratico-inerte*. Freedom then ultimately becomes un-freedom; a static structure to be overcome in its turn in an unending cycle of alienation transcended and then engulfed in a further alienation once again. Language is taken by Sartre as one of the many examples of the working of this process in practice. He explains how culture and language are forms of objectification of human reality which become part of each man's environment and of the conditions of his life and activities:

> Ainsi les catégories générales de la culture, les systèmes particuliers et le langage qui les exprime sont déjà l'objectivation d'une classe, le reflet de conflits latents ou déclarés et la manifestation particulière de l'aliénation. Le monde est dehors: ce n'est pas le langage ni la culture qui sont dans l'individu comme une marque enregistrée par son système nerveux; c'est l'individu qui est dans la culture et dans le langage, c'est-à-dire dans une section spéciale du champ des instruments. Pour *manifester* ce qu'il dévoile, il dispose donc d'élements à la fois trop riches et trop peu nombreux. Trop peu nombreux: les mots, les types de raisonnement, les méthodes ne sont qu'en nombre limité; entre eux il y a des vides, les lacunes et sa pensée naissante ne peut trouver d'expression appropriée. Trop riches: chaque vocable apporte avec lui la signification profonde que l'époque entière lui a donnée; dès que l'idéologue parle, il dit plus et autre chose que ce qu'il veut dire, l'époque lui vole sa pensée; il louvoie sans cesse et finalement l'idée exprimée est une déviation profonde, il s'est pris à la mystification des mots.[117]

It is clear that Sartre no longer envisages the individual listener as the chief source of the alienation of the speaker: the very structures and semantics of language itself are now held responsible. Sartre has not rejected his previous assertion of the interdependence of thought and language, but he now maintains that we are fundamentally incapable of thinking certain thoughts, which we might in a sense be groping towards, because our language cannot provide adequate expression for them. Once again Sartre is admitting a form of psychic activity distinct from thought as he understands it. Our thought is not distorted *après coup*, by its verbal expression, it is vitiated from the outset by the limitations of the language in which it is attempting to realize itself. My ultimate expression is then a true

expression of my ideas, but its 'truth' depends on its reflection of my fundamental personal alienation:

> Un système c'est un homme aliéné qui veut dépasser son aliénation et s'empêtre dans des mots aliénés, c'est une prise de conscience qui se trouve déviée par ses propres instruments et que la culture transforme en *Weltanschauung* particulière. Et c'est en même temps une lutte de la pensée contre ses instruments sociaux, un effort pour les diriger, pour les vider de leur trop-plein, pour les astreindre à n'exprimer qu'elle. La conséquence de ces contradictions c'est qu'un système idéologique c'est un irréductible: puisque les instruments, quels qu'ils soient, aliènent celui que les utilise, et modifient le sens de son action, il faut considérer l'idée comme l'objectivation de l'homme concret et comme son aliénation: elle est lui-même s'extériorisant dans la matérialité du langage.[118]

Understanding between men must depend then upon a similarity of assumptions, situation and experience. Men like myself will use words in a similar way to me, be more able than others to enter into my thought, and less likely to be misled by my language. Language is then in a sense no longer universally comprehensible for men of the same nationality: 'true' communication takes place within a far more restricted field; in the case of language as in the case of actions: 'les complications peuvent venir, en particulier, lorsqu'il s'agit de comprendre à partir d'une situation et d'une histoire qui nous sont étrangères.'[119] This is then one of the reasons why a work of art cannot, according to Sartre, be seen as having only the meaning which the author intended originally: the words he uses are not his, or at least are not his alone, they have different connotations for different sections of his fellow-countrymen. The author then cannot 'possess' his work: 'Le rapport du créateur à sa création—en tant qu'elle n'est que lui-même comme produit consommable—n'est pas celui de possession.'[120] In a sense the work intended by the author may never be read:

> Nous pouvons *d'une part* constater que cette œuvre ne peut être *réactualisée* à tout instant dans sa totalité par son auteur et que, par conséquent, l'ensemble détaillé des significations qui la composent reste purement matériel . . . mais que *d'autre part* cette perpétuelle réactualisation . . . se fait . . . par des êtres semblables à l'auteur mais qui le nient . . . et, surtout, qui, par la lecture, comme *praxis* de dépassement réactualisent des significations vers eux-mêmes et vers le monde matériel et social, transforment ces sens en les éclairant par un contexte neuf.[121]

We should note in passing that, in the *Critique* as least, Sartre's attitude to the potential diversity of interpretation of a text is opposed to that of Barthes: Sartre sees such a 'plurality' of meaning as an aspect of alienation; Barthes sees it rather as a rich medium for the play of individual creativity.

Sartre's view of communication has not however become totally pessimistic. He has not abandoned his initial contention that *man is language* or that language is *l'être-pour-autrui.* If language has become part of the *pratico-inerte* this can only be because it was, and is, originally *praxis.* Our awareness of a breakdown in communi-

cation can only come because we have a natural desire to communicate with others. Sartre previously described silence as taking place against a background of words, he now sees incommunicability as the reverse side of fundamental human communication. Language as *pratico-inerte* may alienate me, but each individual act of expression re-establishes the power of language as *praxis*:

Les mots vivent de la mort des hommes, il s'unissent à travers eux; chaque phrase que je forme, son sens m'échappe, il m'est volé; chaque jour et chaque parleur altère *pour tous* les significations, les autres viennent les changer jusque dans ma bouche. Nul doute que le langage ne soit *en un sens* une inerte totalité. Mais cette matérialité se trouve *en même temps* une totalisation organique et perpétuellement en cours. Sans doute la parole sépare autant qu'elle unit, sans doute les clivages, les strates, les inerties du groupe s'y réflètant, sans doute les dialogues sont-ils en partie des dialogues de sourds: le pessimisme des bourgeois a décidé depuis longtemps de s'en tenir à cette constation; le rapport originel des hommes entre eux se réduirait à la pure et simple coincidence extérieure de substances inaltérables; dans ces conditions, il va de soi que chaque mot en chacun dépendra, dans sa signification présente, de ses références au système total de l'intériorité et qu'il sera l'objet d'une compréhension incommunicable. Seulement, cette incommunicabilité—dans la mesure où elle existe—ne peut avoir de sens que si elle se fonde sur une communication fondamentale, c'est-à-dire sur une reconnaissance réciproque et sur un projet permanent de communiquer; mieux encore: sur une communication permanente, collective, institutionnelle de tous les Français par exemple, par l'intermédiaire constant, même dans le silence de la matérialité verbale, et sur le projet actuel de telle ou telle personne de particulariser cette communication générale . . . Le langage est *praxis* comme relation pratique d'un homme à un autre et la *praxis* est toujours langage (qu'elle mente ou qu'elle dise vrai) parce qu'elle ne peut se faire sans se signifier. Les langues sont le produit de l'Histoire: en tant qu telles, en chacune on retrouve l'extériorité et l'unité de la séparation. Mais le langage *ne peut être venu à l'homme* puisqu'il se suppose lui-même: pour qu'un individu puisse découvrir son isolement, son aliénation, pour qu'il puisse souffrir du silence et, tout aussi bien, pour qu'il s'intègre à quelque entreprise collective, il faut que son rapport à autrui, tel qu'il s'exprime par et dans la matérialité du langage, le constitue dans sa réalité même.[122]

In so far then as man's reality is defined by his relations with other people, he is not destined to an eventual solipsism: his very loneliness depends on the Other who is missing. Man can then never give up in his attempt to communicate: his failure is never total and never irremediable. For Sartre, autism must be the most fundamentally inhuman and unnatural state. Even an apparently ultimate breakdown in human relations is seen by Sartre within a context of communication. Referring to the works of Sade, Sartre writes: 'la seule relation de personne à personne est celle qui lie le bourreau et sa victime; cette conception est *en même temps* la recherche da la communication à travers les conflits et l'affirmation déviée de la non-communication absolue.'[123]

It is in the *Critique* also that we find the basis of Sartre's acceptance of the contention that *l'homme est parlé*, although, as I have already indicated, Sartre

dialectizes the notion by insisting that it is no more true than the fact that *l'homme parle*. He rejects explicitly the one-sided nature of the Structuralist view of man, which he suggests renders impossible 'toute compréhension dialectique du social'.[124] The *parle/parlé* opposition is not in fact used by Sartre in the *Critique*, though as we shall see it appears, surprisingly enough, in the earlier *Saint Genet*. In 1960 Sartre talks rather of man as both *signifiant* and *signifié*, and claims to be using 'le langage de la sémiologie moderne',[125] although in fact his usage differs radically from that of contemporary semioticians. We will return to this difference at a later stage: here we need merely note that Sartre uses the term *signifiant* in this context to mean meaning-giver, and *signifié* to mean that which is signified. From the outset Sartre situates his discussion within the terms of the Hegel–Kierkegaard opposition:

Pour Hegel le *Signifiant* . . . c'est le mouvement de l'Esprit . . . Le *Signifié*, c'est l'homme vivant et son objectivation; pour Kierkegaard l'homme est le Signifiant: il produit lui-même les significations et nulle signification ne le vise du dehors . . . il n'est jamais le *signifié* (même par Dieu).[126]

Sartre will go beyond this radical opposition to see man as both signifier and signified. In so far as man gives meaning to the world, creates humanized and humanly significant objects he is of course *signifiant*, but in so far as the humanized world, and humanly created objects, in their turn, suggest or indeed compel certain usages or activities upon their creators, man is in his turn 'signified' by them:

L'objet manufacturé se propose et s'impose aux hommes; il les désigne, il leur indique son mode d'emploi. Si l'on veut bien faire rentrer ce complexe d'indications dans une théorie générale des significations, nous dirons que l'outil est un *signifiant* et que l'homme est *ici* un *signifié*. En fait, la signification est venue à l'outil par le travail de l'homme et l'homme ne peut signifier que ce qu'il sait. En un sens, il paraît donc que l'outil ne réflète aux individus que leur propre savoir.[127]

Man cannot avoid being caught up in the *signifiant-signifié* dialectic because 'il est signifiant dans sa réalité même et il est signifiant parce qu'il est dépassement dialectique de tout ce qui est simplement donné.'[128] Man lives, inevitably, in a world of signs which he has himself created. It is then as part of the broader question of signification that language itself can be situated. Just as man creates objects which in their turn refer back to human activities, so he creates a meaningful language which then implicates him in its structures of signification.

It is in this perspective that we can understand Sartre's conception of alienated as opposed to free thought. For Sartre, in the *Critique*, only thought which is part of *praxis* is thought in any true sense: it is in fact *praxis* itself which gives birth to thought, although the latter is not always fully realized in verbal form: 'Quoique la *praxis* se donne ses lumières et soit transparente pour elle-même, elle ne s'exprime

pas nécessairement par des mots.'[129] Nonetheless *praxis* always involves language in the broad sense: 'La praxis est toujours langage (qu'elle mente ou qu'elle dise vrai) parce qu'elle ne peut se faire sans se signifier'.[130] We can perhaps clarify the question if we make use of Sartre's own distinction, and say that *praxis* always involves the kind of self-awareness, which Sartre calls *compréhension,* but that it may or may not become a fully articulated thought, part of *connaissance.* Despite these complexities it is clear that when the self-knowledge implicit in *praxis* is fully realized language and thought necessarily coincide completely. As an instance of *praxis* which has reached the level of fully articulated self-expression, we can take the example of any original thought which has helped to change the world, and Sartre's own philosophy no doubt comes into this category. In other cases however language may express not true thought, but merely part of the *pratico-inerte,* 'public opinion' which I may take over unreflectingly. This may take the form of what Sartre calls 'l'idée-exis', the very opposite of a true thought: 'ce n'est *en aucune façon une pensée.* Sa formulation même est impossible'.[131] Sartre takes the extreme example of racialist slanders which he claims: 'n'ont jamais été la traduction d'une pensée réelle et concrète, elles n'ont jamais fait *l'objet* d'une pensée'.[132] This would seem to form the clearest example in the *Critique* of the way in which man can be in fact *pensé* and *parlé.* The phrases he uses, when they do not express true thought-activity, as for example the remarks expressing contempt of the *colons* for the *colonisés,* may be no more than the system expressing itself through the individual:

Elles sont apparues avec la mise en place du système colonial et n'ont jamais été que ce système lui-même se produisant comme détermination du langage des colons dans le milieu de l'altérité. Et, sous cet aspect, il faut les voir comme des exigences matérielles du langage (*milieu verbal* de tous les appareils pratico-inertes).[133]

Et ces structures verbales, en tant qu'elles n'ont été inventées par personne, en tant qu'elles sont le langage même s'organisant comme activité passive dans le milieu de l'altérité sont, dans un collectif, ce collectif lui-même.[134]

We are forcibly reminded once again of Lévi-Strauss's notion that myths think themselves out through men. Sartre's argument is more plausible than it at first sight appears, as is clear when we remember that he is using *thought* in its fullest and most specific sense, as already defined in the *Critique*: thought is by definition for Sartre part of *praxis.*

Sartre's distinction between true thought and alienated so-called 'thought' is very similar to, though even more radical than, Merleau-Ponty's distinction between *la parole parlante* and *la parole parlée*,[135] between speech which is groping towards the expression of new ideas or a novel form of sensibility, and derivative speech which merely repeats previously formulated thoughts and feelings, between '[la parole] dans laquelle l'intention significative se trouve à l'état naissant' and '[la parole] qui jouit des significations disponibles comme d'une fortune acquise'.[136] For Merleau-Ponty only *la parole parlante* is identical with thought: 'Il y a lieu,

bien entendu, de distinguer une parole authentique, qui formule pour la première fois, et une expression seconde, une parole sur des paroles, qui fait l'ordinaire du langage empirique. Seule la première est identique à la pensée.'[137] Sartre's position is more radical because he considers some expressions not merely as second-hand, ready-made thought, but as never having been 'l'objet d'une pensée'.[138] In this sense then language and thought are no longer seen by Sartre as inseparable: language (even in the form of individual utterances) can exist and continue without true thought, but on the other hand fully realized thought always takes place through language. It is perhaps then more true to say that whereas thought proper is necessarily inseparable from language, language, even in the speech-act itself, is not inseparable from thought.

We have seen how Sartre has moved in the *Critique* far away from the rationalism and relative optimism with respect to language of *L'Être et le Néant*. He has become increasingly aware of the external limitations imposed on man by the world in which he lives, and in particular by the structures erected by other men and forming part of the *pratico-inerte* to which he is alienated. His conception of language as *pratico-inerte* has however, perhaps paradoxically, a liberating effect on his literary criticism. Having recognized the extent of language's power to alienate, Sartre becomes increasingly sensitive to the ways in which man succeeds in overcoming this alienation. Since self-expression and communication are no longer taken for granted, the techniques used by the literary artist to communicate even the most subtle impressions and feelings become a central rather than a subsidiary part of art in Sartre's eyes. In a sense Sartre's conception of the nature of literary communication will undergo a radical transformation. The *échec* which was previously seen as founding poetry, and as merely a subsidiary element in prose—the reverse side of the communication coin, as it were—will become a major part of all language. If communication is striven for rather than given, then the notion that 'l'échec de la communication devient suggestion de l'incommunicable'[139] must apply equally to poetry and to prose.

Having examined Sartre's theoretical account of the alienating power of language, we must now look at the practical implications of this notion in his works of literary criticism. The first essay in which the idea is extensively explored is Sartre's account of the works of the black African poets, which he sees as arising from their inability to express themselves adequately in straightforward French prose. In a sense then this essay is transitional: it is still poetry not prose which is seen as arising out of a failure to communicate conceptually; but the alienation underlying the poets' use of the French language, (already implied in *Situations II* but now explicit) is a notion belonging to the Sartre of the *Critique* rather than of *L'Être et le Néant*. In *Orphée noir* Sartre pinpoints language as the essence of nationality: 'Pour être Irlandais, il faut aussi penser Irlandais, ce qui veut dire avant tout: penser en langue irlandaise. Les traits spécifiques d'une Société correspondent exactement aux locutions intraduisibles de son langage'.[140] It is

this fact which Sartre sees as the basic contradiction behind the efforts towards liberation of the black Africans of the French colonies: revolutionary ideas are necessarily disseminated not in their native languages and dialects but in the more universally comprehensible French:

Ce qui risque de freiner dangereusement l'effort des noirs pour rejeter notre tutelle, c'est que les annonciateurs de la négritude sont contraints de rédiger en français leur évangile . . . Pour inciter les opprimés à s'unir ils doivent avoir recours aux mots de l'oppresseur.[141]

In a sense then the French oppression penetrates even their most secret thoughts: 'le colon . . . est là, toujours là, même absent, dans les conciliabules les plus secrets'.[142] This results not merely in the paradoxical situation of the black peoples' using French to reject French culture, but more seriously in a kind of deformation of the natural thought processes of the Africans:

Et comme les mots sont des idées, quand le nègre déclare en français qu'il rejette la culture française, il prend d'une main ce qu'il repousse de l'autre, il installe en lui, comme une broyeuse, l'appareil-à-penser de l'ennemi. Ce ne serait rien mais, du même coup, cette syntaxe et ce vocabulaire forgés en d'autres temps, à des milliers de lieues, pour répondre à d'autres besoins et pour désigner d'autres objets sont impropres à lui fournir les moyens de parler de lui, de ses soucis, de ses espoirs. La langue et la pensée française sont analytiques. Qu'arriverait-il si le génie noir était avant tout de synthèse?[143]

Sartre is not suggesting that the Africans are in effect attempting to use a language which is foreign to them; they are totally familiar with it and fluent in their use of it. He believes rather that French, 'cette langue à chair de poule, pâle et froide comme nos cieux' is an unsuitable medium for the black peoples to express 'le feu de leurs ciels et de leurs cœurs'.[144] In other words, there is a gap between intention and expression:

Il faudrait . . . parler du décalage léger et constant qui sépare ce qu'il dit de ce qu'il voudrait dire, dès qu'il parle de lui. Il lui semble qu'un Esprit septentrional lui vole ses idées, les infléchit doucement à signifier plus ou moins que ce qu'il voulait, que les mots blancs boivent sa pensée comme le sable boit le sang. Qu'il ressaisisse brusquement, qu'il se rassemble et prenne du recul, voici que les vocables gisent en face de lui, insolites, à moitié signes et choses à demi.[145]

As we know from Sartre's essay on Parain, it is the breakdown of communication which brings language itself to our attention and the result is that we see it as a 'mécanique détraquée, renversée, dont les grands bras s'agitent encore pour indiquer dans le vide'.[146] It is precisely this breakdown in communication which Sartre sees as the source of black African poetry: rational, conceptual communication is inadequate, it will be replaced by a different word-usage. The negro then:

ne dira point sa négritude avec des mots précis, efficaces, qui fassent mouche à tous les coups. Il ne dira point sa négritude en prose. Mais chacun sait que ce sentiment d'échec devant le langage considéré comme moyen d'expression directe est à

l'origine de toute expérience poétique.[147]

Prose then fails to communicate the non-conceptual, here the reality of *négritude* lived from the inside. Sartre's language takes on a certain Heideggerian resonance when he speaks of the unattainable and inexpressible essence of being which can only be equated with silence. Sartre's use of l'*être* might in the context appear slightly misleading: he is of course using the term to indicate not the *en-soi* of the chestnut-tree root for example, but the 'reality' of an experience lived from the inside. Both these senses of l'*être* are perhaps better covered by the term the 'non-conceptual'. We are returned once again to the Bergsonian problem of the expression of reality, which can be suggested allusively, Sartre considers, only through a poetic use of language:

Nous jugeons d'un seul coup la folle entreprise de nommer; nous comprenons que le langage est prose par essence et la prose, par essence, échec; l'être se dresse devant nous comme une tour de silence et si nous voulons encore le capter, ce ne peut être que par le silence: 'évoquer, dans une ombre exprès, l'objet tu par des mots allusifs, jamais directs, se réduisant à du silence égal'.[148] Personne n'a mieux dit que la poésie est une tentative incantatoire pour suggérer l'être dans et par la disparition vibratoire du mot: en renchérissant sur son impuissance verbale, en rendant les mots fous, le poète nous fait soupçonner par delà ce tohu-bohu qui s'annule de lui-même d'énormes densités silencieuses; puisque nous ne pouvons pas nous taire, il faut faire du silence avec le langage.[149]

Sartre is here far removed from the polemical attacks on the *hantise du silence* which we noted in *Situations II.*

Sartre then analyses the linguistic devices by which the black poets attempt to express the inexpressible. This is not of course the place to discuss in any detail his analyses; briefly though, he shows how, because the language of one culture is being used to express the reality of another, words are brought together in unfamiliar and surreal combinations, and natural connotations are reversed. In particular of course, the white-black, good-bad hierarchy is inverted, though not entirely, for the black poets still value daylight above night, and this contradiction is seen by Sartre as providing a further rich source of poetic tension: 'Ainsi le mot de noir se trouve contenir à la fois tout le Mal et tout le Bien . . . Il y gagne une poésie extraordinaire comme ces objets auto-destructifs qui sortent des mains de Duchamp et des Surréalistes.'[150]

Sartre then sees the black Africans' alienation to the French language as the mainspring of their poetry. He sees a similar aliénation at the heart of Genet's writings also. Indeed *Saint Genet* can be seen as an extended exploration of the alienating power of language. As we have seen, Sartre presents Genet as an individual who cannot express his values or feelings adequately through the language he inherits, since this belongs to other people in the sense of embodying attitudes and assumptions from which he is excluded. The language of the bourgeois alienates the thought of the thief: 'Les vocables fastes et pieux qu'on lui a fait apprendre

s'appliquent très mal à ce qu'il est et à ce qu'il ressent. Mais comme il n'en possède pas d'autres, il ne peut ni décrire ni fixer son malaise.'[151] Moreover Genet is not merely alienated from normal bourgeois language, he is alienated also, as we have seen, from all forms of underworld slang. There is then no section of language with which he can maintain a normal functional relationship. His thought is perpetually distorted by language which is not his own. Using a turn of phrase more familiar today than it was in 1952, Sartre says: 'il est vrai que Genet ne pense pas, qu'il est pensé'.[152] Sartre's formula must be understood in the light of the distinction, outlined in the *Critique*, between true thought and alienated 'thought' which merely reflects in language the structures of the *pratico-inerte*. In Genet's case, his position as *voleur* or outcast excludes him from the domain of creative *praxis* as completely as does the position of the *colon* or racist in the *Critique*. It excludes him moreover from any form of true communication. In general, says Sartre, man communicates his individuality and singularity by universalizing it in language: it therefore becomes assimilable, on a general level, by other people:

> Si je parle de moi, il faut que je m'universalise pour être compris . . . Les mots sont à tout le monde, ils sont l'homme lui-même comme universel-sujet. Si je dis que je suis malheureux, n'importe qui me comprendra car n'importe qui a pu et pourra dire qu'il est malheureux et, par suite, dans la mesure où je me *fais comprendre*, je suis n'importe qui.[153]

But as we have also seen in the *Critique*, the more individual the experience, the less related to the life of the listener, the harder comprehension becomes. Genet provides Sartre with a practical example of this fact: his feelings are unfamiliar, and are moreover generally considered undesirable: his family and acquaintances refuse to try and understand him because this would necessarily involve entering temporarily into his experience: 'Voilà justement qui n'est pas communicable . . . Comprendre le malheur d'un jeune voleur, ce serait admettre que je puisse voler à mon tour.'[154]

Saint Genet does not merely allow Sartre to illustrate his theory of linguistic alienation in practical terms: it is also a pretext for him to elaborate ideas on language for their own interest. It is in this work that Sartre defines his conception of the three possible human attitudes towards language: as *nature*, when it is seen from outside as a structure of laws and rules; as *outil* when it disappears from our awareness in its practical usage; and as *miracle*, when strange involuntary verbal interactions are looked at for their own sake, and the material aspect of language is seen as forming unintentional puns and ambiguities. Sartre has already discussed the idea of language as *nature* in *L'Être et le Néant,* in the context of his explanation of why man is not limited by pre-existing semantic and syntactic structures. Language as *outil* was also examined in *L'Être et le Néant*, in *Situations II* and to some extent in the essays of *Situations I.* Sartre now uses *Saint Genet* to examine the third aspect: language as *miracle,* implicit in *Situations II,* but not discussed in any detail. Genet provides another case of a breakdown in communication focussing

attention on words in their own right. He is frequently misunderstood and this sensitizes him to unexpected linguistic resonances and relationships: he is anxious to avoid looking foolish:

Il n'y a qu'un moyen d'éviter ces embûches: faire rapidement et avant les autres la revue de tous les sens possibles, au besoin briser les mots, associer les syllabes entre elles de toutes les facons . . . Bref, prendre vis-à-vis du langage l'attitude du paranoïaque vis-à-vis du monde, y chercher tous les symboles, tous les signes, toutes les allusions, tous les calembours, pour pouvoir, le cas échéant, les reprendre à son compte et les faire passer pour l'effet de sa volonté.[155]

Not only is Genet on the look-out for unintentional puns etc., he makes of these the primary aim or *sens* of his sentence: 'Ce qui est *non-sens* dans l'expression, calembour, coq-à-l'âne involontaire, c'est cela qui sera sens . . . et c'est le sens intentionnel qui, lui, sera non-sens.'[156] Genet then is obsessed by that aspect of language which Sartre referred to in *L'Être et le Néant* as 'la part du diable', the reverse side of language, which appears only when utterances are seen separated from the intention to communicate meaning. Sartre describes this obsession as the source of Genet's poetry:

La poésie est l'antidote de la condamnation originelle; elle apparaît quand le mot laisse soupçonner un ordre secret du langage et une convenance secrète du langage avec l'aspect caché des choses . . . Le mot prestigieux est celui qui provoque en Genet l'impression soudaine que nous sommes parlés plus que nous ne parlons.[157].

As we know, when Genet turns from poetry to works of 'prose', he will still use 'l'envers du langage', its materiality, puns etc., in preference to its prosaic conceptual meanings. In this sense then he creates a *false* prose, based on a poetic attitude towards language, a concentration on the word itself at the expense of the objects signified: 'Genet fait exprès de n'avoir d'yeux que pour le mot: capté et coulé dans la phrase l'univers s'évanouirait en fumée.'[158] Sartre concentrates on Genet's creation of false communication, of false prose, on his destruction of normal language usage, in a form of revenge on the bourgeois who originally 'stole' his thought from him and excluded him from their language. Genet will turn the tables, he will force words into an unnatural usage which renders impossible any real conceptual meanings. It is now the reader whose thought and language are stolen from him: 'Son [i.e. Genet's] entreprise sera donc de plier à sa propre glorification un langage tout entier conçu contre lui . . . il vole un mot, un seul et le lecteur s'aperçoit qui'il *est parlé*.'[159]

Although *Saint Genet* on the whole exemplifies rather than explains Sartre's ideas on language, we can nevertheless deduce from it the development of Sartre's attitude to language at this point. Like *Orphée noir, Saint Genet* is an intermediary work between *L'Être et le Néant* and the *Critique*, reflecting some of both Sartre's earlier and his later ideas on language. As we know from the *Critique*, Sartre envisages non-communication as dependent on the fundamental human desire to

communicate, and conversely sees even the fullest communication as necessarily partially inadequate. Genet's alienation is then an extreme example of the basic loneliness and singularity of each individual human experience:

[La] solitude . . . naît au sein même de la communication, comme la poésie au sein de toute prose, parce que les pensées les plus clairement exprimées et les mieux comprises recèlent un incommunicable: je puis les faire concevoir comme je les conçois mais non les faire vivre comme je les vis . . . Puisque toute parole rapproche par ce qu'elle exprime et isole par ce qu'elle tait . . . puisque nous échouons sans cesse à communiquer . . . il faut écouter la voix de Genet, notre prochain, notre frère.[160]

Man's inner moods, feelings and experiences are then fundamentally incommunicable: the only communication which can take place is conceptual, for, as Bergson demonstrated, the very universalizing power of language which permits communication destroys the individuality of the experience expressed. Language then can convey *le savoir* but not what Sartre will later call *le non-savoir* or *le vécu*.

In *Saint Genet*, Sartre is, by the very nature of his subject, primarily concerned with language as failing to communicate. He is also of course, for his own part, moving towards the idea expressed in the *Critique* of the alienating power of language. It is perhaps in *Saint Genet* that Sartre's attitude to the possibility of communication is most pessimistic: the rationalism of *L'Être et le Néant* has been whittled away and the notion of another kind of communication through style, which will come to the fore in the *Idiot de la famille*, has not yet been developed. As we have seen, Sartre has described poetry as communicating the 'incommunicable' through its powers of suggestion. There is no reason to think that he has abandoned this view in 1952, but it does not appear in *Saint Genet* since Genet's art is based rather on a vengeful non-communication. Genet's use of language is of course *poetic* in so far as he makes full use of the *sens* as well as the *signification* of words, but he is not attempting to capture reality, or to express his own personal experience, but rather to create strange and perhaps unrealizable images – images which, Sartre tells us 'ne sont pas des figures saisissables mais des métaphores,'[161] i.e. in the sense of the conjunction of irreconcilable elements designed to disorientate: 'Chez lui l'image est rarement visuelle, elle reste une fissure secrète des mots'.[162] Even Genet's evocations are primarily solipsistic: they are created for his own benefit rather than in an attempt to communicate with the reader: Genet is a poet who

se sert de l'Autre comme intermédiaire entre le langage et lui-même . . . entre le langage et le poète, c'est le lecteur qui tend à s'effacer pour devenir pur véhicule du poème; son rôle est *d'objectiver la parole* pour refléter au poète sa subjectivité créatrice sous forme de puissance sacrée.[163]

The narcissistic aspect of poetry will come to the forefront of Sartre's mind again in the mid-sixties, but by then his attitude towards it will, as we shall see, have

changed significantly. For the moment it is clear that Sartre considers Genet's art as solipsistic in intention: in so far as the reader is involved Genet hopes to disconcert rather than to communicate with him. At this stage then, Sartre still sees prose as the primary domain of communication, but he feels increasingly that its power is restricted to the communication of concepts rather than lived experience. Although *Situations II* and *Orphée noir,* as also to some extent the essays of *Situations I,* revealed the possibility of communication through a poetic use of language, in 1952 this usage is still restricted, in the main, to poetry proper, and its implications for prose communication have not yet been elaborated, still less systematically explored. In so far as the possibility of inter-subjective communication is concerned, *Saint Genet* is a work of considerable pessimism.

We have now come to the final phase of the development of Sartre's ideas on language. His latest ideas are expressed theoretically in a group of interviews and conferences given in the main in 1965 and 1966: namely *Plaidoyer pour les intellectuels, Jean-Paul Sartre répond, L'Ecrivain et sa langue, L'Anthropologie,* and also in *Sartre par Sartre* in 1969. The ideas are then explored further and used to explain aspects of Flaubert's style in the *Idiot de la famille.*

Many of the ideas expressed by Sartre in the 1965/6 interviews are restatements, in either a more popular or more up-to-date form, of ideas previously outlined for example in the *Critique*. Sartre reiterates his conception of the interrelationship between language and thought, not now simply in opposition to neo-Bergsonian 'terrorism', but also to the Structuralist dehumanization of language:

Pour moi, la pensée ne se confond pas avec le langage. Il fut un temps où l'on définissait la pensée indépendamment du langage, comme quelque chose d'insaisissable, d'ineffable qui préexistait à l'expression. Aujourd'hui on tombe dans l'erreur inverse. On voudrait nous faire croire que la pensée c'est seulement du langage, comme si le langage lui-même n'était pas *parlé*.[164]

Thought, according to Sartre, both transcends and yet depends on language. For this reason translation between languages is both possible and essential, yet problematical, since, as *pratico-inerte*, language resists the new thought structures which it must be made to express:

Il faut admettre, si nous voulons tout pouvoir dire . . . et si, en même temps, nous croyons, dans une certaine mesure, que les langues sont des touts qui se conditionnent intérieurement et qu'on ne retrouve pas nécessairement les mêmes choses d'une langue à une autre, nous devons admettre que nous devons pouvoir faire violence à la langue et lui faire dire des choses, qui ne seraient pas dans le sens français.[165]

It is also in opposition to the one-sided Structuralist position that Sartre reaffirms his notion of language as *pratico-inerte,* though he is prepared, significantly, to adopt Structuralist formulations to express man's alienation:

En réalité, il y a deux niveaux. A un premier niveau, le langage se présente, en effet, comme un système autonome, qui reflète l'unification sociale. Le langage est un

élément du 'pratico-inerte', une matière sonore unie par un ensemble de pratiques. Mais cette chose sans l'homme est en même temps matière ouvrée par l'homme, portant la trace de l'homme . . . Dans le système du langage, il y a quelque chose que l'inerte ne peut pas donner seul, la trace d'une pratique. La structure ne s'impose à nous que dans la mesure où elle est faite par d'autres. Pour comprendre comment elle se fait il faut donc réintroduire la praxis, et tant que processus totalisateur.[166]

Je fais la langue et elle me fait.[167]

Ainsi pour la langue commune: je la parle et, du coup, je suis, en tant qu'autre, parlé par elle.[168]

Moreover, as we have seen already in a previous chapter, Sartre now interprets his notion of language as *praticò-inerte* in a Lacanian perspective: when I speak, the structures of language itself cause me to say things which I did not consciously intend:

En ce qui concerne la structure inconsciente du langage, nous devons voir que la présence de certaines structures du langage rendent compte de l'inconscient. Pour moi, Lacan a clarifié l'inconscient en tant que discours qui sépare à travers le langage ou, si l'on préfère, en tant que contre-finalité de la parole: des ensembles verbaux se structurent comme ensemble pratico-inerte à travers l'acte de parler. Ces ensembles expriment ou constituent des intentions qui me déterminent sans être miennes.[169]

Sartre's ideas on the alienating power of language in the *Critique*, where words were seen as both 'trop peu nombreux' and 'trop riches',[170] as inadequate in Bergson's sense and alienating in Sartre's own, are repeated here:

Dans l'ensemble de la signification, il y a d'une part une visée à vide du signifié, visée conceptuelle, qui manque un certain nombre de choses de ce fait même, et il y a un rapport trop chargé au signifiant qui fait la surdétermination de la phrase: j'utilise des mots qui ont eux-mêmes une histoire et un rapport à l'ensemble du langage . . . des mots qui ont en outre un rapport historique à moi, également particulier.[171]

Ordinary usage is too conceptual and rigid to express the real adequately and also overlaid by secondary connotations which may interfere with my intended meaning:

Le mot du langage commun est à la fois *trop riche* (il déborde de loin le concept par son ancienneté traditionnelle, par l'ensemble de violences et de cérémonies qui constituent sa 'mémoire', son 'passé' vivant) et *trop pauvre* (il est défini par rapport à l'ensemble de la langue comme détermination fixe de celle-ci et non comme possibilité souple d'exprimer le neuf).[172]

Communication is distorted then in two very different ways. Sartre's eventual optimism with respect to language is based on his realization that the second form of distortion can in fact be *used* to compensate for the first:

j'utilise des mots pour me désigner, mots auxquels par ailleurs, mon histoire a déjà donné un autre sens, et qui, d'ailleurs, à propos de l'histoire de l'ensemble du langage, ont des sens différents. A partir de là on dit qu'il n'y a pas d'adéquation, alors qu'en réalité, je pense qu'un écrivain est celui qui se dit que l'adéquation se fait grâce à tout ça. C'est son travail. C'est ce qu'on appelle le style.[173]

In the *Plaidoyer* Sartre refers to the semantic and syntactic structures particular to any one language (e.g. gender, word-order etc.) as its *particularités*; they are essential to any communication, but are not part of what is communicated. In 'normal' speech these *particularités* do not draw attention to themselves. At times however they can hinder comprehension, and so become in this sense *désinformatrices*, to use Sartre's term. (Sartre cites as an instance of deliberate *désinformation*, a phrase of Genet where gender is used to disorientate the reader: 'les brûlantes amours de la sentinelle et du mannequin'.[174]) The *particularités* of language are then, in so far as communication is concerned, either 'superflues ou nuisibles: par les limites mêmes de la langue comme totalité structurée, par la variété des sens que l'histoire leur a imposés.'[175] They are not merely non-significant, but can convey a meaning at variance with the speaker's intentions. It is this aspect of language which the writer will turn to his own ends: 'L'engagement de l'écrivain vise à communiquer l'incommunicable (l'être-dans-le-monde vécu) en exploitant la part de désinformation contenue dans la langue commune.'[176] These *désinformations* are broadly speaking identifiable with the *sens* or the 'materiality' of words in so far as this hinders direct communication: 'L'écrivain s'intéresse à cette matérialité en tant qu'elle semble affectée d'une vie indépendante et qu'elle lui échappe – comme à tous les autres parleurs.'[177] As in *Situations II*, Sartre reaffirms the dual nature of the sign: both referring beyond itself and yet an object in its own right:

D'abord, les mots sont à double face, comme *l'être-dans-le monde*. D'une part ce sont des objets sacrifiés: on les dépasse vers leurs significations . . . D'autre part, ce sont des réalités matérielles: en ce sens, ils ont des structures objectives qui s'imposent et peuvent toujours s'affirmer aux dépens des significations. Le mot 'grenouille', ou le mot 'bœuf' ont des figures sonores et visuelles: ce sont des présences. En tant que tels, ils contiennent une part importante de non-savoir . . . Et ce n'est pas *malgré* cette lourdeur matérielle mais *à cause d'elle* que l'écrivain choisit d'utiliser le langage commun. Son art est, tout en délivrant une signification aussi exacte que possible, d'attirer l'attention sur la matérialité du mot, de telle sorte que la chose signifiée soit à la fois au-delà du mot et, en même temps, qu'elle s'incarne dans cette matérialité.[178]

In the *Plaidoyer* Sartre is mainly concerned with giving a theoretical abstract account of his ideas. Perhaps because of this, his explanations of the working of the process in practice are somewhat vague; he writes for example. 'Non que le mot "grenouille" ait une ressemblance quelconque avec l'animal. Mais, *précisément pour cela*, il est chargé de manifester au lecteur l'inexplicable et pure présence matérielle de la grenouille.'[179] The interview with Verstraten pursues a similarly abstract train

of thought: Sartre refers to word-order as one of the ways in which attention can be drawn to the *sens* rather than the *signification* of the word, but is not concerned with illustrating this in concrete form:

> Vous avez les significations, et: l'essence – le sens. Le fait qu'il y ait des mots que j'appellerais 'chargés de sens', qui sont d'ailleurs n'importe lesquels, dépend uniquement de la place que ceux-ci occupent dans la phrase . . . Donc la place du mot dans la phrase lui donne une valeur de présentification que j'appellerais son sens.[180]

Sartre claims that the connotations of the word often make present to the reader an object which is, in fact, signified as absent. For example nouns may continue to evoke reality vividly even in sentences where they are used in conjunction with verbs that are in the negative, or in tenses other than the present. Sartre's example is 'C'était la nuit',[181] which he says evokes the night, whilst informing the reader, through the past tense of the verb, that it is probably no longer night at the time of writing. 'Ce n'était pas la nuit' would of course illustrate the point just as well. Sartre's example comes perhaps as something of an anticlimax, but the point is made, and we shall see far more rewarding practical explanations of the process of communication via the *sens* of words when we turn to Sartre's discussion of Flaubert's use of language.

Just as he maintains the dual nature of the sign first emphasized in *Situations II*, so Sartre continues to insist that 'le prosateur a *quelque chose à dire*'.[182] However the nature of this *quelque chose* would appear to have undergone a radical transformation: 'Ce quelque chose *n'est rien de dicible*, rien de conceptuel ni de conceptualisable, rien de signifiant.'[183] Writing is still communication, but this communication comes not through the conceptual meaning of words as it did in 1947 but indirectly and allusively as was previously the case primarily with poetry: 'Si écrire consiste à *communiquer*, l'objet littéraire apparaît comme la communication *par-delà le langage* par le silence non-signifiant qui s'est renfermé par les mots bien qu'il ait été produit par eux.'[184] We may be reminded here of Merleau-Ponty's article on *Le Langage indirect et les voix du silence* where he claims that language expresses by what is between words as much as by what is in them; taking the example of Julien Sorel in *Le Rouge et le Noir*, he suggests: 'La volonté de mort, elle n'est donc nulle part dans les mots: elle est entre eux, dans les creux de l'espace, de temps, de significations qu'ils délimitent.'[185] Like so many other of Sartre's later notions this idea appeared first in *Situations II*, in respect, as we have seen, to the 'qualité du merveilleux du *Grand Meaulnes'* and the 'babylonisme d'*Armance*',[186] where it was briefly and tantalizingly referred to but never developed in any detail.

The writer then is concerned with the communication of the non-conceptual: 'De là, cette phrase: "C'est de la littérature" qui signifie: "Vous parlez pour ne rien dire". Reste à nous demander quel est ce *rien*, ce non-savoir silencieux que l'objet

littéraire doit communiquer au lecteur.'[189] It is interesting to note that Sartre is here formulating the writer's task in terms almost identical to those used by Jean Ricardou in the colloquium *Que peut la littérature?* in which Sartre himself also participated. Ricardou suggests that: 'L'écrivain n'écrit pas quelque chose . . . il écrit, voilà tout. Peut-être est-ce de cette façon également qu'il faut entendre Maurice Blanchot lorsqu'il avance que l'écrivain doit sentir, au plus profond, qu'il n'a rien *à dire*.'[188] Sartre's *rien* has however, like his *néant*, hidden depths:

Il est vrai que l'écrivain n'a fondamentalement *rien* à dire. Entendons par là que son but fondamental n'est pas de communiquer un *savoir*. Pourtant il *communique*. Cela signifie qu'il donne à saisir sous forme d'objet (l'œuvre) la condition humaine prise à son niveau radical (l'être-dans-le-monde) . . . L'écrivain ne peut que témoigner du sien en produisant un objet ambigu qui le propose allusivement. *Ainsi le vrai rapport du lecteur à l'auteur reste le non-savoir* . . . [189] Si l'écrivain n'a *rien* à dire, c'est qu'il doit manifester *tout*, c'est-à-dire ce rapport singulier et pratique de la partie au tout qu'est l'être-dans-le-monde . . . A partir de là, nous pouvons comprendre que l'unité totale de l'œuvre d'art *recomposée* est le silence, c'est-à-dire la libre incarnation, à travers les mots et au delà des mots, de l'être-dans-le-monde comme non-savoir refermé sur un savoir partiel mais universalisant.[190]

Man is *in* language, just as he is *in* the world: his relationship with both is dialectical. Just as Merleau-Ponty points out that 'le voyant *est* visible et il y a un rapport d'être entre la voyance et la visibilité'[191] so Sartre claims that 'le signifiant [i.e. man] est signifié'.[192] The relationship between the part and the whole can only be properly conceived dialectically, the part implies the whole and is in turn implied by it. Sartre follows Merleau-Ponty in accepting Saussure's claim that 'Tout mot est tout le langage'. The writer must then, according to Sartre,

faire de son être-dans-le-langage l'expression de son être-dans-le-monde . . . Le *style*, en effet, ne communique aucun savoir: il produit l'universel singulier, en montrant à la fois la langue comme généralité produisant l'écrivain et le conditionnant tout entier dans sa facticité et l'écrivain comme aventure, se retournant sur sa langue, ou assumant les idiotismes et les ambiguïtés pour donner témoignage de sa singularité poétique et pour emprisonner son rapport au monde, en tant que vécu, dans la présence matérielle des mots.[193]

Through the *sens* rather than the *signification* of words then, the writer creates the *universel singulier* which expresses man-in-the-world, man and the world, the subjective and objective dimensions of the real. This is what Sartre means by *le non-savoir*. It is then the *sens* of words which permits inter-subjective communication through the *universel singulier:* 'Donc le sens serait en quelque sorte le lieu de l'universel puisqu'il permettrait d'homogénéiser l'expérience de l'auteur et du lecteur? ' Verstraeten asks, and Sartre replies: 'Oui, c'est le lieu de l'universel singulier, ou le lieu de l'universel concret . . . C'est véritablement le lieu où peut se constituer le plus profond de la communication littéraire'[194]

We have now reached the point where we must pause to discuss the status of the

writer whom Sartre has referred to almost consistently throughout these interviews and conferences as *l'écrivain*. Is he the prose-writer referred to in *Situations II*; and if so has Sartre's conception of the nature of prose altered radically; or is he another kind of writer altogether? Sartre now claims that the poets referred to in *Situations II* are those who 'prennent le mot uniquement en tant qu'il a une configuration imaginaire qui renvoie par le mot de "Florence" à fleur ou à femme etc.'[195] The key word here is *uniquement* and by it Sartre appears to identify his *poète* with the *écrivain* as defined by Roland Barthes. Sartre sums up his understanding of what Barthes means by *écrivain* as follows:

L'écrivain est le gardien du langage commun mais il va plus loin et son matériau est le langage comme non-signifiant ou comme désinformation; c'est un artisan qui produit un certain objet verbal par un travail sur la matérialité des mots, en prenant pour moyens les significations et le non-signifiant pour fin.[196]

Jean Ricardou in fact pointed out the resemblance between Sartre's idea of poetry in *Situations II* and Barthes's or his own idea of *littérature:* 'On voit donc que ce que je propose de nommer littérature, Sartre l'appelle poésie – et ce que j'appelle domaine des écrivants ou information, il le nomme littérature.'[197] Sartre would appear to seal the identification by his own definition of the 'ecrivain contemporain' as 'le *poète* qui se déclare *prosateur.*'[198] But the matter is not in fact so simple. Sartre's poet is not strictly identifiable with the *écrivain*, nor is his prose writer identifiable with the *écrivant*. For a start, Sartre insists that his idea of the prose writer is not merely that of an author who transmits information. Of course, he would still claim that prose can be used simply to inform. In *Saint Genet* he declares that prose comprises several 'différentes espèces d'écriture',[199] and in the interview with Verstraeten he discusses the purely informative use of prose in philosophy and more particularly in scientific writings. We are of course concerned here rather with the evolution of his notion of the nature of prose literature. Sartre accuses Ricardou of forgetting the footnote in *Situations II*: 'où j'ajoutais que bien entendu, tout ce matériel d'images existe aussi dans la prose: sans cela il n'y aurait pas de style: le style est précisément fait de cela.'[200] Moreover the poet, despite Sartre's claim that he uses the word *'uniquement* en tant qu'il a une configuration imaginaire'[201] (i.e. concentrating attention solely on the *signifiant*), is elsewhere in the 1965 interviews consistently described as also using the *signification* of words. And this applies equally to the modern *écrivain* in Sartre's opinion. Having discussed in abstract terms what he calls the *style* of the hypothetical contemporary *écrivain*, Sartre states categorically: 'Cet usage fondamental du langage ne peut même être tenté si ce n'est, en même temps, pour livrer des significations. Sans significations, pas d'ambiguïté, l'objet ne vient pas habiter le mot.'[202] Sartre recognizes that 'le propos essentiel de l'écrivain moderne . . . est de travailler l'élément non-signifiant du langage commun pour faire découvrir au lecteur l'être-dans-le-monde d'un universel singulier,'[203] but explains that although this language is *fondamental* it

nonetheless remains *à l'arrière-plan*, for 'ce qui est donné en pleine clarté, c'est l'ensemble signifiant [i.e. in Sartre's sense of 'meaning'] qui correspond au monde du devant'.[204] In other words, in all writing the meaning of words is to the forefront and it is only in relation to this that *le sens* (i.e. image, connotation etc.) can make itself felt, in the form of what Sartre calls 'ambiguité', or tension between 'foreground' and 'background', between *signification* and *sens*. *Sens* then cannot exist independently of *signification* though as we shall see the two cannot coexist in exact simultaneity in the reader's mind.[205] Sartre then envisages the *écrivain* as using the *signification* of words as a means to the evocation of their *sens*. But both aspects are essential:

le langage . . . *signifié quand même quelque chose*; et c'est ça qu'on a oublié.[206]

Ainsi, pour le langage, la critique intérieure de la littérature que je trouve excellente dans le Nouveau Roman, ne devrait pas cependant nous empêcher de considérer l'objet signifié . . . la critique du signifiant supprime toute signification.[207]

Sartre's present position is then more satisfying and more subtle than his earlier point of view; it can, in a sense, be seen as an elaboration of the famous footnote of *Situations II*, since it recognizes that prose writer *and* poet use both the *signification* and the *sens* of words; but it has been extended to allow for prose writers whose use of language is primarily poetic. Moreover, Sartre's recognition of the major role of the *sens* of words in the communication of the *vécu* encourages him to extend the potential commitment of the poet.

Sartre has then to a large extent abandoned his original opposition between prose and poetry and moved towards a new opposition which is closer to the Barthesian destinction of *écrivain/écrivant*. At the same time, he finds Barthes's distinction itself too simplistic, since in his view it fails to take into account the interdependence of *sens* and *signification* and emphasizes only their divergence. Sartre then rejects the *écrivain/écrivant* distinction in so far as it opposes communication to non-communication. He defines the viewpoint of the *Tel Quel* group in his interview with Verstraeten, and describes its adherents as claiming that:

Il y a ceux qui expliquent, qui montrent les choses, qui écrivent pour désigner les objets, ce sont des *écrivants,* mais il y a ceux qui écrivent pour que le langage en lui-même se manifeste, et se manifeste dans son mouvement de contradiction, de rhétorique, dans ses structures, ce sont des *écrivains*. Je dirais, pour ma part, que ce qu'apporte une vie c'est le dépassement des deux points de vue. Je pense qu'on ne peut pas être écrivain sans être écrivant et écrivant sans être écrivain. Ainsi ce qui était originellement le refus de la communication, vu l'ignorance de la communication quand je faisais des mots, des châteaux de sable, reste comme résidu, comme une espèce de communication par-delà les organes de la communication.[208]

Sartre's main quarrel with *Tel Quel* is then over the question of communication; for Sartre the poet or *écrivain* is also communicating. Speaking of himself as an *écrivain-écrivant* he says (applying to himself a phrase of Mallarmé's):

Maintenant, ce qui m'intéresse c'est de communiquer au lecteur, ce n'est plus de faire un équivalent de la table par le rapport des mots entre eux, mais c'est que, dans l'esprit du lecteur, ces mots, par leur rapport réciproque, par la manière *dont ils s'allument réciproquement*,[209] lui donnent la table qui n'est pas là, non pas comme un signe seulement, mais comme une table suscitée.[210]

Il y a en quelque sorte un double travail littéraire qui consiste à viser la signification tout en l'alourdissant de quelque chose qui doit vous donner les présences.[211]

Sartre's distinction between *signification* and *sens* and the interrelationship he sees between the two is both subtle and convincing, but we could reproach him with having obscured the merits of his own case through his refusal to employ a precise and consistent terminology. This refusal is not based on strictly philosophical grounds for there is nothing in the triadic distinction between *signifiant, signifié* and *référent* which could not be taken over into Sartre's own system: he refuses rather for polemical reasons, out of a natural dislike for the terminology of the 'Critique du Signifiant' which he sees as attempting to do away altogether with man as the originator of meaning. In the interview with Verstraeten, Sartre defines his usage in somewhat defiant opposition to that of contemporary linguisticians:

Pour moi le signifié c'est l'objet. Je définis mon langage qui n'est pas nécessairement celui des linguistes: cette *chaise*, c'est l'objet, donc c'est le signifié: ensuite, il y a la signification, c'est l'ensemble logique qui sera constitué par des mots, la signification d'une phrase . . . et je me considère moi-même comme le signifiant.[212]

But Sartre's obstinate use of *signifié* to mean referent is not even consistently maintained, there are occasions when we find him using the term in the sense of the concept or mental image. The same inconsistency applies to his use of the term *signifiant*, which refers sometimes to man himself and sometimes rather to the physical form of the spoken or written word. Both usages are present together at one stage of his definition: 'l'articulation des *signifiants* donne la signification, qui à son tour vise le signifié, le tout sur le fond d'un *signifiant* originel ou fondateur'.[213] Sartre's unwillingness to use a commonly recognized terminology which is technical in a useful sense, and which is philosophically quite unobjectionable, results in his otherwise convincing arguments being taken with something less than the seriousness they deserve by contemporary semioticians.

The evolution of Sartre's conception of the nature of prose means that he formulates his opposition between prose and poetry in 1965 in terms which are more psychological than linguistic: in terms of the writer-reader relationship. He describes the communication of poetry as less direct than that of prose: it reveals the author to himself and by imaginative extension the reader to himself, but this too, says Sartre, involves communication:

Dans la prose, il y a réciprocité; dans la poésie je pense que l'autre sert uniquement de révélateur. Je crois que le projet poétique n'implique pas la communication au même degré, que dans la poésie le lecteur est essentiellement mon témoin pour me

faire surgir à ces sens . . . Il y a un narcissisme profond dans la poésie, mais il passe naturellement par l'autre. Dans la prose, au contraire, il y a un narcissisme mais il est dominé par un besoin de communiquer . . . La poésie est le moment de reconquête vraie de ce qui est chez nous tous un moment de solitude qui peut être constamment dépassé, mais auquel on doit revenir . . . Vous avez alors une autre espèce de communication par le narcissisme . . . La poésie, c'est le moment de respiration où l'on revient sur soi. Ce moment, comme je vous l'ai dit, me paraît indispensable. Je n'accepte pas du tout l'idée que la communication absolue ne supposerait pas des moments de solitude narcissique.[214]

When asked if poetry performs 'une fonction éthique' Sartre replies: 'Oui, dans la mesure où, pour moi, l'universel concret doit supposer toujours une connaissance de soi qui ne soit pas une connaissance conceptuelle.'[215] The paradox of communication through narcissism reminds us forcibly that it is not only Sartre's idea of poetry which has changed; the change is far more basic and involves a change in his conception of communication which broadens precisely to the same extent that his view of human alienation deepens. In 1943 his view of communication is rational and optimistic, communication is to some extent distorted by human interrelationships as these are described in *L'Être et le Néant* but not yet systematically falsified by that particular kind of alienation which is the *pratico-inerte*. The essay on Genet in 1952 marks a nadir in his view of the possibility of communication; but it is, in the last analysis, this very pessimism which leads him to elaborate his view of another kind of communication, which takes place paradoxically through all that is most opaque and resistant to meaning in human language.

Sartre then has elaborated his theory of communication to the point where *le vécu*, our personal, subjective, non-conceptual experience can be communicated in either prose or poetry by the *sens* of words. In the interview with Verstraeten Sartre confines his discussion of the way language communicates *le vécu* to a psycholinguistic level, but one can detect in his various statements an underlying psychoanalytic dimension which Verstraeten was sensitive to, and which any attentive reader of the *Idiot de la famille* would recognize. Sartre connects his own notion of *le sens* expressing *le vécu* with what Lacan calls the *inarticulable*. Desire, for example, for Lacan, is *inarticulable* since although I may state my desire *of* an object, I cannot state the unconscious forces, psychoanalytic and/or historical, which cause me to desire this and not that particular form of satisfaction. The *inarticulable* quality of desire is then referred by Lacan to the unconscious. Sartre, of course, who prefers the notion of *le vécu* to that of *l'inconscient*, is committed to the view that even *l'inarticulable* is communicable; and he thinks it is communicable precisely through *le sens*, through that aspect of language which is *surdéterminé* historically and psycho-analytically. Of human desire Sartre claims:

On en donne l'équivalent précisément dans la poésie et dans le dépassement du noyau de sens par la signification qu'est la prose; mais surtout, dans la poésie, on en donne l'équivalent par l'utilisation des mots en tant qu'ils ne sont pas articulés pour eux-

mêmes, mais en tant que l'articulable se joue dans leur réalité même, c'est-à-dire dans la mesure où l'épaisseur du mot nous renvoie précisément à ce qui s'est glissé en lui sans l'avoir produit: il n'y a pas de volonté d'exprimer le désir. L'articulation n'est pas faite pour exprimer le désir, mais le désir se glisse dans cette articulation.[216]

In other words *le vécu* is communicated through that aspect of language which escapes our intentions: we are reminded once again of Lacan's view that 'l'inconscient c'est le langage', but Sartre is using this notion to put forward a view about the communicability of *le vécu* which is more optimistic that the general tenor of Lacan's own ideas. We have here another instance of Sartre taking over the insights and the terminology of contemporary Structuralists, but using these to support a general thesis which remains, even in its most recondite aspects, unequivocally humanistic.

Sartre's reference to desire leads Verstraeten to make a parallel between poetry, which Sartre has called 'le moment d'intériorité . . . une stase',[217] and Freud's 'instinct de mort qui serait justement le moment du désir ou de recueillement sur le désir, que la poésie parviendrait à maîtriser avec ses propres moyens, c'est-à-dire sans le dépasser mais simplement en en témoignant',[218] and he goes on to speak of 'la seconde, l'instinct de vie qui serait la prose mais qui ne pourrait jamais s'émanciper entièrement de la poésie'.[219] Sartre does not deny this parallel but neither does he take it up. It opens up however another intriguing perspective on the relations that may exist between Sartre and modern interpretations of Freudianism. Rather than allow himself to be tempted into speculations of this kind, Sartre returns to his central preoccupation at this point: the relationship of prose and poetry, not as life-wish and death-wish but as interdependent aspects of communication. This interdependence is, he emphasizes, essential to communication:

C'est ce qui fait le vrai sens, c'est-à-dire ce qui donne l'universel concret. A ce moment-là vous utilisez vos désirs, vous utilisez la façon dont le monde est pour vous pour un dépassement vers autre chose – c'est la profondeur et l'épaisseur du mot. C'est pourquoi je pense qu'il n'est rien qui ne puisse se dire.[220]

Sartre repeats this total optimism about language later in the interview: 'Je considère, encore une fois, que tout doit pouvoir se dire'.[221] Nor is this notion merely of minor importance amongst Sartre's present preoccupations. It rather appears central to his intellectual and philosophical interests. Central moreover to his critical interests, for he states: 'Le projet profond dans le *Flaubert*, c'est celui de montrer qu'au fond tout est communicable.'[222] In a sense then, the *Idiot de la famille* can be seen as a gigantic demonstration of Sartre's latest ideas on the nature of language and of communication. It is from this point of view that we will now return to it briefly once again.

As we have already seen, Flaubert, like Genet, is shown to be *désadapté*, alienated from language because insufficiently integrated into society through his family:

'[cela] suppose une mauvaise insertion de l'enfant dans l'univers linguistique; cela revient à dire: dans le monde social, *dans sa famille*.'[223] Flaubert is passive: for Sartre this implies that he believes rather than knows, accepts rather than understands: he is incapable of the synthetic and analytic activity involved in normal thought which Sartre defines as follows:

L'intellection—ou la compréhension—quand elle est entière, définit une série pratiquement illimitée d'expressions verbales . . . La pensée . . . est à la fois la totalité de la série . . . [et le choix de][224] celle de ces expressions qui paraît le mieux adapté à la situation présente.[225]

Since man is in language, and *is* language, language is merely the perpetual expression of human reality: 'C'est moi . . . c'est l'indissoluble réciprocité des hommes et leurs luttes, manifestées ensembles par les relations internes de ce tout linguistique sans porte ni fenêtre, où nous ne pouvons *entrer,* dont nous ne pouvons *sortir, où nous sommes*.'[226] Flaubert's relations with language then reflect his relations with others. As we have seen he does not feel he possesses language, and does not believe it is adequate to express his feelings, which remain, he is convinced, inexpressible even for himself: 'faute de s'exprimer *aux autres,* elles restent pour lui-même inexprimables.'[227] For Gustave then, subjective èxperience and language are two distinct and irreconcilable realms: 'vie et paroles sont incommensurables'.[228] Sartre of course believes that nothing is inexpressible, and that Flaubert has made a myth out of his own inarticulateness in order to cover up the vacuity of his passive or 'poetic' moods:

Parler est . . . une expérience immédiate et spontanée, vécue; . . . inversement le vécu n'est jamais vierge de mots . . . Ainsi la conduite verbale ne peut se définir en *aucun cas* comme le passage d'un ordre à l'autre. Comment serait-ce possible puisque la réalité de l'homme vivant et parlant se fait à chaque instant par les deux ordres confondus. Parler n'est rien d'autre qu'adapter et approfondir une conduite déjà parlante.[229]

Sartre describes the relationship between language and experience as dialectical: on the one hand the growth of my feelings makes it easier for me to verbalize them, but on the other nomination can in turn clarify, modify and sometimes even distort my feelings. Verbalization enables us to

reprendre et corriger les babillages immédiats en vivant mieux la passion qui les produit; vivre avec moins d'entraves et plus radicalement la passion constitutive par l'effort libérateur qui l'éclaire en la désignant; quelquefois aussi, par une erreur double, dévier la nomination en faussant le mouvement passionnel, dérégler l'impulsion par une erreur de nomination.[230]

We may not individually succeed in finding the exact expression which satisfies our desire to convey our experience, for 'rien n'est promis'[231] but its formulation is nonetheless theoretically possible:

Il faut chercher: le langage dit seulement qu'on peut tout inventer en lui, que l'expression est toujours possible, fût-elle indirecte, parce que la totalité verbale, au lieu de se réduire, comme on croit, au nombre fini des mots . . . se compose des différentiations infinies . . . on peut dire en tout cas qu'il ne peut y avoir *a priori* d'inadéquation radicale du langage à son objet par cette raison que le sentiment est discours et le discours sentiment.[232]

Sartre is here using Saussure's notion of meaning existing through differentiation, together with Chomsky's notion of an infinity of potential utterances, to back up his linguistic optimism. The number of words may be finite, but their combinations are infinite. Moreover Sartre considers my attitude towards the possibility of self-expression to be itself part of my project: i.e. it depends on my choice of self:

Le mot n'est pas donné; il l'est; il n'y a pas de mots pour ce que je ressens, il faut des phrases: ces différents propos représentent simplement mon attitude envers moi-même: le mot, si je m'en contente, est toujours donné; le mot d'amour, si vieux soit-il, peut suffire longtemps: il éblouit encore de sa foudre des amoureux qui s'ignoraient; et si l'on veut raffiner, il y a des subdivisions infinies: amour-passion, amour-estime, que sais-je; tous les cas sont prévus pourvu que nous acceptions – qui ne le fait? – d'être prévisibles.[233]

The notion of the *ineffable* is then a myth arising out of Romantic alienation. Sartre contrasts this alienation with the belief explicit in Classicism that

La Vérité est toujours 'disable'. C'est le principe de toute la littérature classique: le langage est distinct de la pensée mais il peut l'exprimer *adéquatement*.[234]

La révolution flaubertienne vient de ce que cet écrivain, se défiant du langage depuis l'enfance, commence, au contraire des classiques, par poser le principe de la non-communicabilité du vécu. Les raisons de cette attitude sont à la fois, chez lui, subjectives et historiques.[235]

As we have seen in a previous chapter, the Romantic belief in the incommunicability of the *vécu* arises out of the lack, for historical and social reasons, of any consensus unifying writer and public in the nineteenth century:

Cent ans plus tôt, le langage est un instrument parfait, qui rend la pensée dans toutes ses nuances et la transmet intacte. A présent, le triomphe de la bourgeoisie met la communication en cause: il y a *des* langages; entre l'écrivain et ce public il n'y a plus de langage commun. La raison en est, bien sûr, que l'attitude du littérateur autonome et celle du bourgeois utilitariste sont inconciliables. Mais on en vient vite à penser que le discours est impropre à tout transmettre.[236]

Flaubert then is faced with a double-sided problem: he is alienated from language through his family situation, and he is living in a society which claims all individual subjective experience to be incommunicable, whilst at the same time seeing it as the only aspect of life worth communicating. Flaubert's neurosis with respect to language is then also explained in terms of the coincidence and interpenetration of personal and historical factors: he lives out in personal terms the problem implicit

in the aesthetics of the 1840s: that of using language to convey what is supposedly irreducible to language: to communicate the incommunicable:

Si . . . les mots ne sont plus utilisés pour la connotation et la dénotation des concepts et si, tout au contraire, il convient que le romancier exprime le vécu, le ressent en tant que tel, c'est-à-dire en tant qu'il n'est pas conceptualisable, comment approprier le langage à sa nouvelle destination littéraire? Ici, bien entendu, nous rencontrons le non-communicable: car je peux à la rigueur nommer ma souffrance ou ma joie, les faire connaître par leurs causes mais non point transmettre leur saveur singulière. Si pourtant, comme le romantisme l'a marqué aux yeux de ses successeurs, c'est cette saveur même qui est en question, si, en outre, le sensible, dans son idiosyncrasie même, soutient des structures non-conceptualisables mais *objectives* au cœur même de la subjectivité (le goût d'un 'plum pudding' est à la fois une singularité vécue, non-conceptuelle et une sensation commune dont on peut réveiller le souvenir chez tous ceux qui l'ont éprouvée) ce non-communicable est, malgré tout, susceptible d'être transmis d'une certaine manière. Il faut, pourrait-on dire, renoncer à faire du langage un moyen d'information ou, en tous cas, subordonner la fonction informative à cette fonction nouvelle qu'on pourrait appeler *participation*. Autrement dit, il ne faut pas seulement nommer le goût du plum-pudding mais le donner à sentir; et la phrase lue remplirait parfaitement ce nouvel office si, tout en *signifiant* le lien conceptuel qui unit ce gateau à sa consommation, elle *était* ce gôut lui-même, entrant par les yeux dans l'esprit du lecteur . . . Il s'agit de *renverser* le discours pratique et, par un plein emploi du signe, de l'amener, en le travaillant dans son être en fonction de l'indisable, à fournir ces surcommunications silencieuses qui ne transmettent aucune signification conceptuelle.[237]

As we have already seen in this chapter, Sartre has come to see prose as communicating through the *sens* of words, through their materiality, *le non-savoir, le vécu,* or, as he calls it in the *Plaidoyer, rien,* i.e. that which cannot be stated or talked *about*. This is what Sartre means when he says that 'Gustave . . . n'a, à la lettre, rien à . . . communiquer.'[238] What he wants to communicate is the *inarticulable*, his personal *vécu*, his *anomalie* – a 'moindre-être dont il n'y a rien à dire . . . Et c'est elle qu'il veut dire'.[239] But Sartre goes on to show Flaubert discovering that the 'inadequacy' of language is not absolute or irremediable. It is the problem of communicating *le vécu* which is the mainspring of Flaubert's art in Sartre's account: 'Ce problème est fondamental pour Flaubert . . . il est à la source de son Art dont le projet sera de *rendre indirectement l'indisable*'.[240] Flaubert then becomes aware that he must invent 'un *autre usage* du langage',[241] and that 'ce n'est pas le *dire* qui manifeste la pensée de l'artiste, mais la *manière de dire*.'[242]

This then is the basis of Flaubert's idea of style. It is also the basis of Sartre's own notion of the way in which non-conceptual experience is communicated. As we saw in the *Plaidoyer* it is the 'disinforming' aspects of language, language as *pratico-inerte*, which paradoxically provide the means of communicating the so-called *indisable*. Flaubert is particularly sensitive to these aspects since he tends to see language from outside, as speaking itself through men rather than as being spoken:

'Flaubert ne croit pas qu'*on parle*: *on est parlé*'.[243] For Sartre this is of course only half the picture: 'l'homme ne peut "être parlé" que dans la mesure où il parle – et inversement'.[244] He describes our thought as 'toujours déviée, toujours reprise et gouvernée puis déviée encore – ainsi de suite à l'infini'.[245] Flaubert's idea of language is referred to by Sartre as

une théorie anticartésienne du langage: pour lui la conception ne précède pas l'expression; c'est l'inverse: on parle et le sens advient par les mots. Thèse insuffisante, à la prendre isolément, mais juste correctif de l'intellectualisme classique: on est parlé dans la mesure même où l'on parle – et réciproquement.[246]

Flaubert then will make us of the *non-signifiant* aspect of words in order to 'couler une saveur dans les mots'.[247] He will use what Sartre calls their 'configuration graphique'[248] which can be made to function as an *analogon* or image of the thing expressed. Sartre's discussion of this process is largely theoretical, but in so far as it involves literary examples, he comes up against the problems always attendant upon the kind of criticism which attempts to analyse the *non-signifiant* aspect of language on a practical level. Firstly, economy precludes any pretention to a complete analysis; and secondly, inherent in the task itself is an inevitable element of failure, since by definition Sartre is discussing that aspect of language which eludes conceptualization. Theoretically at least, the question of completeness can be answered: as a phenomenologist, Sartre is not committed to the view that an accumulation of examples strengthens the point; his method is on the contrary to describe as integrally as possible one case which he thinks implies the whole. Of course this cannot protect him from the objections of readers who do not share the assumptions of his method, and who will insist that the examples he gives are not really chosen at random but rather ones whose potential for illustration is clear from the outset. But then neither does such a general objection prove that Sartre is wrong: his aim moreover at this point is simply to show in practice what he means by the *configuration graphique* of the word and its poetic effect. We should state here that Sartre's use of this term is relatively loose and that it in fact seems broadly equatable with the *sens* or the 'materiality' of the word, rather than referring specifically to any 'pictorial' value which the words might have. Sartre's remarks about the materiality of language are applicable of course not only to Flaubert but to other writers also, and his first example is in fact taken from a line of Mallarmé:

Si vous lisez: 'perdus, sans mâts, sans mâts . . . ', l'organisation poétique anime le mot: barré en croix, le *t* s'élève au dessus des autres lettres, comme le mât au dessus du navire; autour de lui les lettres se ramassent: c'est la coque, c'est le pont; certains – dont je suis – appréhendent dans cette lettre blanche, la voyelle *a*, écrasée sous l'accent circonflexe comme sous un ciel bas et nuageux, la voile qui s'affaisse. Le négation qui s'exprime par *sans* agit surtout dans l'univers signifiant; le bateau est démâté, perdu: voilà ce que nous *apprenons*. Dans le monde obscur du sens, elle ne peut déstructurer le mot de 'mât'. Disons qu'elle le *pâlit* jusqu'à en faire

l'*analogon* de je ne sais quel négatif de photo.[249]

Sartre is not suggesting that the word 'mât' really looks like the mast of a ship, rather that its context and position in the sentence can make the reader *imagine* that this is the case:

En vérité le mot de mât n'a aucune ressemblance objective et réelle avec l'objet qu'il désigne. Mais l'art d'écrire, ici, consiste justement à contraindre le lecteur, de gré ou de force, à en trouver une, à faire descendre l'objet dans le signe comme présence irréelle . . . N'importe quel mot – en dépit de son caractère conventionnel – peut avoir une fonction imageante . ... en effet, il ne s'agit pas de ressemblances dues au hasard entre le matériel signifiant et l'objet signifié, mais des bonheurs d'un style qui contraint à saisir la matérialité du vocable comme unité organique et celle-ci comme la présence même de l'objet visé.[250]

Another example, this time from *Novembre*, is examined by Sartre not so much in its own right, but rather as an example of how 'mystery', i.e. a sense of the immanence of the object in the word, may be suggested by verbal sonorities. 'Peste à Constantinople; Choléra à Calcutta' is an example of the use of alliteration and assonance which Sartre thinks is not necessarily 'délibéré' but which 'n'en demeure pas moins intentionnel'.[251] The result of this kind of internal reinforcement is to create a poetic 'truth': 'S'il n'était précédé de choléra, Calcutta aurait moins d'opacité, moins de mystère (par là, j'entends la présence irréelle et paradoxale du signifié dans le signifiant en tant que celui-ci est *aussi* non-signifiant).[252]

Secondly Sartre discusses the case of individual words which of themselves evoke a *sens* by their very internal structure; here then: 'le graphème, par sa configuration physique et *avant tout traitement* éveille des résonances. C'est qu'il contient en lui, en tant qu'organisme, tout ou partie d'autres organismes verbaux'.[253] Sartre's example is *le château d'Amboise* which suggests 'framboise', 'boisé', 'boiserie', 'Ambroise'.[254] These connotations, Sartre claims, are objective in the sense that they can, potentially, be apprehended by all readers. Sartre's example from *Situations II* of 'Florence, femme et fleur'[255] belongs to this category of objective connotations. But there is of course also the possibility that words may have subjective connotations which may be of one kind for the writer and another for the reader. Of these personal connotations Sartre writes: 'Elles constituent, chez chacun de nous, le fond singulier et incommunicable de toute appréhension du Verbe'.[256] If the writer encourages these personal resonances he will create the kind of obscure *semi-communication*[257] which Sartre thinks is more appropriate to poetry than to prose. The prose-writer tries to control and limit the personal connotations which the poet on the other hand may allow to proliferate both in his own imagination and in that of the reader. The 'incommunicability' Sartre refers to is, of course, not absolute. In the first instance the subjective connotations of a word may be communicated indirectly through the objective connotations of other words; and secondly, as we have seen,[258] the *semi-communication* of poetry

is itself accepted by the later Sartre as an indispensable means of contact between two narcissisms.

The use of the connotations, or the *sens* of words (whether subjective or objective) is for Sartre a language usage which implies a preference for the imaginary and purely verbal over the real: 'Choisir la somptuosité des noms, c'est déjà préférer l'univers du Verbe à celui des choses'.[259] Broadly speaking Sartre equates awareness of the word as a *signe* (by which he means the word used to point beyond itself to a *signification*) with the perceptual attitude, and awareness of its materiality or *sens* with the imaginative attitude: 'Appréhender [le vocable] comme signe, c'est une activité voisine et complémentaire de la perception. Le saisir dans sa singularité matérielle, c'est l'imaginer.'[260] As we know from *L'Imaginaire* imagination and perception are radically distinct, and the two aspects of words, although used simultaneously by the writer, ('l'entreprise consiste à utiliser simultanément la fonction signifiante et la fonction imageante du mot écrit')[261] cannot be present simultaneously in the reader's mind which passes rapidly from one to the other:

> On ne peut obliger le discours à exercer à la fois la fonction sémantique et la fonction imageante. L'écriture—et la lecture qui en est inséparable—impliquent, à ce niveau, une dialectique subtile de la perception et de l'imagination, du réel et de l'irréel, du signe et du sens.[262]

The two are then both distinct and yet interdependent: the *signe* cannot evoke any *sens* if its *signification* is unknown: 'Il faut bien, pour présentifier une Calcutta imaginaire et parée de tous les charmes de son nom, conserver au moins un savoir rudimentaire: c'est une ville située aux Indes, ses habitants sont indiens.'[263] Sartre's thought is subtle but consistent. Although he states that words cannot exercise simultaneously their *fonction sémantique* and their *fonction imageante*, he does not mean that the image is unrelated to information; on the contrary he thinks that without information there can be no image: but in order to become the essential base structure of the image the information too must cease to be *savoir* in order to become imaginary: 'Si l'on fait subir aux mots le traitement approprié, dans le moment de l'imaginarisation la signification devient structure implicite du sens verbal. Cette dialectique et ce traitement ne sont autre que la *littérature*, au moins telle que le XIX^{e} siècle la conçoit.'[264] Sartre's analysis of the dialectic between *signe* and *image*, which provides the third aspect of his account of the *sens* of words, is perhaps over-condensed, and the terms of the interaction at times uncertain. But two main points emerge clearly: firstly the interrelationship of *signification* and *sens*, and secondly the dependence of the *sens* of words upon the imagination. Sartre's stress on the dialectic between *signe* and *sens* (the word as meaning and the word as image) constitutes of course an implicit repudiation of what he sees as the exclusive and falsifying emphasis of the *Critique du Signifiant*. For Sartre literary communication must involve a dialectic involving not merely 'un sens indisable'[265]

but also 'une signification conceptuelle'.[266]

Sartre then has illustrated three aspects of the way in which the *sens* of words affects the reader. He calls these the 'trois niveaux de l'imaginarisation du vocable'.[267] In each case the *sens* cannot appear unless the imagination is given free rein. If the reader's mind will accept only the conceptual *signification* then the *indisable* cannot be conveyed. And this use of the imagination means, as always that the person imagining becomes in turn imaginary. Flaubert himself, when he writes, 'jouit dans l'irréel de son irréalisation *prochaine par l'imaginarisation* des graphèmes'.[268] Language itself must become imaginary if its materiality is to make itself felt: when Flaubert writers 'il veut *matérialiser* [le mot] et, tout ensemble, en pousser à fond l'*imaginarisation* . . . Le saisir dans sa singularité matérielle, c'est l'imaginer'.[269]

As we have seen already in Sartre's theoretical writings of the 1960s, man's *être-dans-le-monde* is conveyed through his *être-dans-le-verbe*:[270] like man, language is an *universel singulier* in which the part implies the whole and vice versa. Words do not simply designate objective realities, they imply the totality of language in its own right:

Quand les mots symbolisent autant qu'ils signifient, ils ne renvoient qu'aux mots par la double raison que le graphème par l'ensemble de ses fonctions signifiantes est déjà totalisation d'une absence, c'est-à-dire du langage tout entier et que, pris comme *analogon* d'un signifié [i.e. referent], cette totalisation sémantique a pour incidence de faire apparaître sa matérialisation *sur fond de montre* [*sic*]. Autrement dit l'unité du langage comme totalisation perpétuelle donne à la dispersion réelle de l'univers l'unité imaginaire d'une *Création*.[271]

The part contains the whole not in any real or actual way but as an absence. This is of course the mode of being proper to things in the imagination. In this way it is through the imagination that language totalizes, and Flaubert is aware of this from early on:

La caractère totalisateur du verbe . . . se manifeste à Gustave dans la mesure même où cet enfant imaginaire s'accommode de la présence irréelle du totalisé.[272]

Puisqu'il peut accéder directement au tout par l'intuition, son mandat sublime sera de retotaliser cette intuition fulgurante à travers le langage.[273]

Flaubert invente son style quand il décide de faire transparaître cet être à travers les significations comme un tout immanent à chacune de ses parties. Par là il nous donne à voir dans le discours l'affleurement silencieux du cosmos en chacun de ses modes finis; ou, si l'on préfère, le langage déjà totalisé, comme transfini, *devient le monde*, figure l'espace-temps, cet autre transfini. Le style, pour Flaubert, exige un dédoublement en permanence, c'est-à-dire une dialectique constante du sens et de la signification.[274]

Flaubert's task is difficult for it involves bearing constantly in mind the two aspects of the word: 'Viser toujours deux buts: la cohérence d'un discours orienté et

l'irréalisation de ce discours par la beauté formelle, ne jamais perdre de vue ni l'un ni l'autre sous peine de tomber ou dans l'incohérence ou dans l'information pure.'[275] But the *signification* remains merely a means to an end: the *sens*: 'La forme est un langage qu'on pourrait nommer parasitaire puisqu'il se constitue aux dépens du langage réel et sans cesser de l'exploiter, en l'asservissant à exprimer ce qu'il n'est pas fait pour nous dire.'[276] In this sense Flaubert's language usage is a form of trap for the reader: 'La forme, ce n'est pas d'abord une "belle" phrase, c'est la construction d'un piège avec les éléments du discours.'[277] The reader is forced to become imaginary in his turn: 'Tout sert, tout signifie et la signification directe n'est plus qu'une des fonctions d'un objet sur-signifiant. Mais, en même temps, c'est son irréalisation: la matérialité non signifiante ne peut fournir des sens que dans l'imaginaire.'[278] If the totality of language is to be actually sensed, rather than simply acknowledged as theoretically implicit in every utterance, the speaker must then imagine rather than perceive: 'Pour Flaubert, le langage est un transfini . . . ce qui implique . . . une relation imaginaire à l'ensemble linguistique . . . On comprend que le style . . . soit avant tout pour Flaubert une déréalisation systématique de la parole'.[279] Sartre goes on to explain what it means in practice to *imagine* language:

> Imaginer un vocable, c'est le contraire de l'observer: c'est se fasciner sur lui et, sans même le voir précisément, le prendre comme tremplin du rêve, saisir sa forme, son goût, sa couleur, sa densité, son visage – caractères eux-mêmes imaginés *à partir* d'une structure réelle – comme des révélateurs de son être caché, c'est-à-dire de la présence immanente du signifié dans le signifiant.[280]

Flaubert then, as we saw in the previous chapter, communicates with his reader primarily through the imagination:

> Certes, il ne transmet rien au lecteur réaliste sinon la fascinante proposition de s'irréaliser à son tour. Si celui-ci . . . cède à la tentation, s'il se fait lecteur *imaginaire* de l'œuvre – il le faut, pour saisir le sens derrière les significations – alors tout l'indisable, y compris la saveur du plum-pudding, lui sera révélé allusivement.[281]

Sartre then has come to see the imagination of language as the medium of inter-subjective communication. It is this evolution in his ideas on the nature of linguistic communication which has enabled him to commit writers such as Flaubert and Mallarmé who are now seen as communicating something less evidently universal than concepts or ideas but no less fundamental in human experience. Iris Murdoch in 1953 described Sartre as a 'Romantic Rationalist', intending to convey the absolute quality of his attachment to freedom, and his insistence on the tragic loneliness of the *cogito*. A study of Sartre's literary criticism adds another dimension to the question of his relationship to Romanticism. An examination of *L'Idiot de la famille* reveals how Sartre's own metaphysics permit him to enter into the spirit of Romantic aesthetics with a mixture of sympathy and detachment that is particularly productive. It also shows how he has been able to absorb into his own rational humanism certain fundamental Romantic values: belief, for example, in the

imagination as the means of communicating and receiving the kind of truth which is non-conceptual, as the means of access to the *vécu* of another person, and in the last analysis to the world as totalized by another project: belief, therefore, in the human relevance of the kind of art which does not set out directly to teach or change the world. He has moreover applied to his material the minute scrutiny of the phenomenological method and interpreted his findings within a comprehensive philosophical framework. The result is a rational analysis which affords an inimitably broad and original perspective on the Romantic experience of the imagination and Romantic/Symbolist intuitions about the nature of art.

NOTES

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

I. *Sit. II*, p.324.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. *Imag.*, p.17.
2. See *Imag.*, p.157.
3. *Imag.*, p.26.
4. *Imag.*, p.156. cf. *EN*: 'La perception, nous l'avons montré ailleurs, n'a rien de commun avec l'imagination: elle l'exclut rigoureusement, au contraire, et inversement' (pp.690-1).
5. *Imag.*, p.188.
6. *Imag.*, p.158.
7. *Imag.*, pp.235-6.
8. See *Imag.*, p.148.
9. *Imag.*, p.80; p.137.
10. *Imag.*, p.52.
11. *Imag.*, p.97.
12. *Imag.*, p.146.
13. *Imag.*, p.148.
14. *Imag.*, pp.150-1.
15. *Imag.*, p.151.
16. *Imag.*, p.35.
17. See *Imag.*, p.36.
18. 'En général' is not really expressing a qualification. Sartre is simply referring to a very specific type of image. See below.
19. *Imag.*, p.86.
20. *Imag.*, p.87.
21. *Imag.*, p.90.
22. *Imag.*, p.91.
23. *Imag.*, p.112.
24. *Imag.*, p.217.
25. *Imag.*, p.220.
26. *Imag.*, p.221.
27. *Imag.*, p.221.
28. *Imag.*, p.225.
29. *Imag.*, p.239.
30. *Imag.*, p.240.
31. *Imag.*, pp.260-1.
    On one occasion in *L'Imaginaire* we find Sartre himself slipping into an equation of *perception* with the aesthetic attitude: 'Si je décide de m'en tenir à la perception, si je me place en face du tableau au simple point de vue esthétique . . .' (p.36). This is however an isolated statement which contradicts his general thesis only accidentally.
32. *Imag.*, p.242.
33. E. Kaelin, *An Existentialist Aesthetic*, Madison, Milwaukeee & London, 1966, p.61.
34. *Imag.*, p.243.
35. *Imag.*, pp.243-4.
36. *Imag.*, pp.241-2.
37. E. S. Casey, 'Expression and Communication in Art', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, XXX (1971/2), p.198.
38. *Imag.*, p.245.
39. *Imag.*, p.245.

Notes to Chapter 1, continued

40. *Imag.*, p.233.
41. *Imag.*, p.235.
42. *Imag.*, p.234; p.238.
43. *Imag.*, p.237.
44. *Imag.*, p.236.
45. *Imag.*, p.238.
46. *Imag.*, pp.238-9.
47. See Catherine Rau, 'The Aesthetic Views of J. P. Sartre,' *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, IX (1950), p.144; and Van Meter Ames, 'Existentialism and the Arts', *ibid.*, p.253.
48. *Sit. II*, pp.60-1.
49. *Sit. II*, p.63.
50. *Sit. II*, p.62.
51. E. Fiser, *Le Symbole littéraire* (Corti, 1941), p.23.
52. *Sit. II*, p.61.
53. E. Delacroix, *Journal*, ed. A. Joubin (Plon, 1960) vol. I, p.17.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Sit. II*, p.60.
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Sit. II*, p.61.
58. *Sit. II*, pp.61-3.
59. *Sit. II*, p.59.
60. *Sit. II*, p.63.
61. Kaelin, p.105.
62. *Sit. II*, p.87.
63. *Sit. II*, p.66.
64. *Ibid.*
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Sit. II*, pp.67-8.
67. *Sit. II*, pp.69-70.
68. *Sit. II*, p.65.
69. *Ibid.*
70. *Sit. II*, p.86.
71. *Ibid.*
72. *Sit. II*, p.87.
73. *Sit. II*, p.88.
74. *Sit. II*, p.87.
75. C. Baudelaire, 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', *Œuvres complètes* (NRF, Pléiade, 1961), p.1154.
76. *Sit. II*, p.15.
77. *Ibid.*
78. 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', p.1154.
79. *Sit. II*, p.286.
80. *Sit. II*, p.110.
81. *Sit. II*, pp.141-2.
82. *Imag.*, p.236.
83. 'La Liberté cartésienne', *Sit. I*, p.289.
84. *Sit. II*, p.186.
85. *Sit. II*, p.99.
86. *Ibid.*
87. *Sit. II*, p.100.
88. *Sit. II*, p.102.
89. *Sit. II*, p.103.
90. *Sit. II*, p.104.
91. *Sit. II*, pp.104-5.
92. *Sit. II*, pp.94-6.
93. *Sit. II*, p.93.
    Sartre comments in a footnote that 'Il est de même à des degrés divers pour l'attitude du spectateur en face des autres œuvres d'art (tableaux, symphonies, statues, etc.)' (p.115). But the synthesis is perhaps clearest in the case of literature. The parallel with *savoir imageant*–if *savoir* is understood in its fullest sense–applies, of course, to literature alone.

Notes to Chapter 1, continued

94. *Sit. II*, p.299.
95. See *Sit. II*, p.261.
96. *Sit. II*, p.52.
97. *Sit. II*, p.281.
98. *Sit. II*, p.316.
99. *Sit. II*, p.110.
100. *Sit. II*, p.190.
101. *Sit. II*, p.286.
102. *Sit. II*, p.171.
103. *Sit. II*, pp.171-2.
104. *Genet*, p.415.
105. 'Explication de *L'Etranger*', *Sit. I*, p.99.
106. See *Idiot I*, pp.970-1.
107. Kant in fact considers the question of the *reality* or *objectivity* of the apparent finality of nature to be outside the domain of philosophical enquiry. He discusses it therefore throughout the *Critique of Judgement* as a subjective phenomenon.
108. E. Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, transl. J. C. Meredith (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1911), reprinted 1973, p.220. ('Eine subjektive Zweckmäßigkeit, welche auf dem Spiele der Einbildungskraft in ihrer Freiheit beruhte, wo es Gunst ist, womit wir die Natur aufnehmen, nicht Gunst, die sie uns erzeigt.' *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Berlin, 1913), p.350).
109. See above, note 107.
110. *Sit. II*, pp.97-8.
111. Kant, p.158. ('Dieser Vorzug der Naturschönheit vor der Kunstschönheit, . . . stimmt mit der geläuterten und gründlichen Denkungsart aller Menschen überein, die ihr sittliches Gefühl kultiviert haben.' *Urteilskraft*, p.299.)
112. Kant, pp.166-7. ('In einem Produkte der schönen Kunst muß man sich bewußt werden, daß es Kunst sei und nicht Natur; aber doch muß die Zweckmäßigkeit in der Form desselben von allem Zwange willkürlicher Regeln so frei scheinen, als ob es ein Produkt der bloßen Natur sei.' *Urteilskraft*, p.306.)
113. Kant, p.173. ('. . . weil Kunst immer einen Zweck in der Ursache . . . voraussetzt.' *Urteilskraft*, p.311.)
114 Idealism/realism are here used in the sense of subjective/objective (in Kant's terminology)—in other words an imagined finality/a 'real' finality.
115. See above.
116. Kant, pp.220-1. ('In der schönen Kunst ist das Prinzip des Idealismus der Zweckmäßigkeit noch deutlicher zu erkennen. Denn daß hier nicht ein ästhetischer Realismus derselben durch Empfindungen (wobei sie statt schöner bloß angenehme Kunst sein würde) angenommen werden könne: das hat sie mit der schönen Natur gemein. Allein daß das Wohlgefallen durch ästhetische Ideen nicht von der Erreichung bestimmter Zwecke (als mechanisch absichtliche Kunst) abhängen müsse . . . leuchtet auch schon dadurch ein, daß schöne Kunst als solche nicht als ein Produkt des Verstandes und der Wissenschaft, sondern des Genies betrachtet werden muß.' *Urteilskraft*, pp.350-1.)
117. See Kant, Section 59, p.221, 'Beauty as the symbol of morality' ('Von der Schönheit als Symbol der Sittlichkeit,' *Urteilskraft*, p.351.)
118. Kant, p.166. ('Schöne Kunst . . . ist eine Vorstellungsart, die für sich selbst zweckmäßig ist und, obgleich ohne Zweck, dennoch die Kultur der Gemütskräfte, zur geselligen Mitteilung befördert.' *Urteilskraft*, p.306.)
119. *Imag.*, p.245.
120. *Sit. II*, p.98.
121. *Sit. II*, p.261.
122. *Sit. II*, p.98; p.97.
123. *Sit. II*, p.98.
124. *Sit. II*, p.111.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. *Sit. I*, p.103.
2. *Sit. I*, p.104.

Notes to Chapter 2, continued

3. J. Paulhan, 'Jean-Paul Sartre n'est pas en bons termes avec les mots', *Table Ronde*, no.35 (1950), pp.9-20.
4. *Sit. I*, p.104.
5. 'La Temporalité chez Faulkner,' *Sit. I*, p.66.
6. 'Un Nouveau Mystique,' *Sit. I*, p.136.
7. 'L'Homme ligoté,' *Sit. I*, p.271.
8. *Sit. II*, p.192.
9. *Sit. II*, p.174.
10. *Sit. II*, p.321.
11. *Sit. II*, p.220.
12. *Sit. II*, p.323.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Sit. II*, p.216.
15. *Sit. II*, pp.191-2
16. *Sit. II*, p.217.
17. *Sit. II*, p.321.
18. *Sit. II*, p.324.
19. See *Sit. III*, pp.285-6.
20. *Genet*, p.567.
21. *Sit. II*, p.324.
22. 'L'Artiste et sa conscience,' *Sit. IV*, p.29.
23. *Sit. IV*, p.29.
24. 'Le Séquestré de Venise,' *Sit. IV*, p.331.
25. *Sit. IV*, p.332.
26. 'Masson', *Sit. IV*, p.404.
27. *Genet*, pp.486-7.
28. 'Aminadab', *Sit. I*, p.130.
29. *Sit. I*, pp.223-4.
30. 'M. Jean Giraudoux et Aristote', *Sit. I*, p.77.
31. *Sit. I*, p.77.
32. *Sit. II*, p.254.
33. *Sit. II*, p.254.
34. *Sit. I*, p.80.
35. J. Giraudoux, *Electre*, Act I, Scene 3.
36. *Sit. I*, p.90.
37. 'Masson', *Sit. IV*, pp.389-90.
38. See *Sit. IV*, p.390.
39. 'Giraudoux . . . est "normal" au sens le plus vulgaire comme au sens le plus élevé de ce terme'. (*Sit. I*, p.76).
40. *Sit. I*, pp.90-1.
41. 'Mallarmé', *Sit. IX*, p.191.
42. W. B. Yeats, *Collected Poems* (London, Macmillan, 1955), 'Byzantium', p.281.
43. *Sit. II*, p.252.
44. 'M. Francois Mauriac et la liberté', *Sit. I*, p.36.
45. 'A propos de John Dos Passos', *Sit. I*, p.24.
46. *Sit. I*, p.23.
47. *Sit. I*, p.15.
48. *Sit. I*, p.15.
49. *Sit. I*, pp.18-19.
50. *Sit. I*, pp.23-4.
51. *Sit. I*, p.23.
52. 'Portrait d'un inconnu', *Sit. IV*, p.10.
53. *Sit. IV*, p.10.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Sit. I*, p.44.
56. *Sit. IV*, p.10.
57. *Sit. IV*, p.10.
58. *Sit. IV*, p.16.
59. *Sit. II*, p.200.
60. *Sit. II*, p.328.
61. *Sit. II*, p.200.

Notes to Chapter 2, continued

62. *EN*, p.225.
63. *EN*, p.183.
64. *Sit. I*, p.77.
65. *EN*, pp.265-6.
66. *Sit. I*, pp.74-5.
67. *Sit. I*, p.71.
68. *Sit. I*, p.66.
69. *Sit. I*, p.69.
70. *Ibid.*
71. *Sit. I*, p.74.
72. *Ibid.*
73. *Sit. I*, pp.48-9.
74. *Sit. II*, p.327.
75. 'Des Rats et des Hommes', *Sit. IV*, p.46.
76. *Sit. IV*, p.61.
77. 'Je-Tu-Il', *Sit. IX*, pp.296-7.
78. *Sit. IX*, pp.314-5.
79. *Sit. I*, p.237.
80. *Sit. I*, p.108.
81. *Ibid.*
82. *Sit. I*, p.118.
83. *Sit. I*, p.119.
84. *Sit. I*, p.120.
85. T. Todorov, 'The Fantastic in Fiction', in *Structuralism*: special no. of *Twentieth Century Studies* (May 1970), p.77.
86. *Sit. I*, p.115.
87. *Sit. I*, p.172.
88. *Sit. I*, pp.172-3.
89. *Sit. I*, p.242.
90. *Sit. I*, p.258.
91. *Sit. I*, p.270.
92. *Sit. IX*, p.19.
93. *Sit. IX*, p.20.
94. *Sit. I*, p.259.
95. *EN*, pp.288-9.
96. *EN*, p.291.
97. *EN*, p.300.
98. *EN*, p.502.
99. Here Sartre is of course using the term to indicate a recognition of the importance of man's relations with others, and his philosophical reservations are not relevant in this context.
100. *Sit. IV*, p.272; *Sit. IX*, p.170.
101. *Sit. IV*, p.272.
102. *Ibid.*
103. In the linguistic sense, i.e. where there is no necessary connection between the grapheme and what it refers to.
104. 'Masson', *Sit. IV*, p.392.
105. 'Le Peintre sans privilèges', *Sit. IV*, p.380.
106. 'Doigts et non-doigts', *Sit. IV*, pp.414-5.
107. *Sit. I*, p.286.
108. *Sit. IV*, p.380.
109. *Sit. IX*, pp.36-7.
110. *Sit. IX*, p.15.
111. 'Coexistences', *Sit. IX*, p.325.
112. *Imag.*, p.236.
113. *Sit. II*, p.106.
114. G. W. Hegel, *Philosophy of Fine Art*, Vol. I, transl. Bosanquet, London, 1886, p.105. ('Hergegen steht zu behaupten, daß die Kunst die Wahrheit in Form der sinnlichen Kunstgestaltung zu enthüllen'. *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* (Berlin, 1842), p. 72).
115. See *Philosophy of Fine Art*, p.17.
116. M. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, transl. A. Hofstadten, London, 1971,

Notes to Chapter 2, continued

pp.6-7. ('Die Erde . . . ist das Hervorkommend–Bergende . . . Auf die Erde und in sie gründet der geschichtliche Mensch sein Wohnen in der Welt . . . Das Werk läßt die Erde eine Erde sein . . . Die Erde ist das wesenhaft sich Verschließende. Die Erde herstellen heißt: sie ins Offene bringen als das Sichverschließende.' 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main, 1950), pp.35-6.)

117. Heidegger, p.60. (Hofstadten has translated a later version of 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes.' The original text is as follows: 'Die Wahrheit ist Unwahrheit. In der Unverborgenheit als Wahrheit weist zugleich das andere "Un" eines zweifachen Verwehrens.' *Holzwege*, p.49.)
118. See below, Chapter 5, p.95.
119. *Sit. II*, p.110.
120. See above, pp.15-16.
121. *Sit. II*, p.73.
122. *Sit. III*, p.184.
123. I. W. Alexander, 'The Phenomenological Philosophy in France', in *Sartre: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. M. Warnock (New York, 1971), pp.96-7.
124. Alexander, p.96.
125. *EN*, p.270.
126. M. Dufrenne, *Phénoménologie de l'expérience esthétique*, Vol. II (P.U.F., 1967), p.656.
127. Dufrenne, p.647.
128. *Sit. II*, p.109.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. *Baud.*, p.123.
2. *Baud.*, p.124.
3. *Baud.*, p.241.
4. *Baud.*, p.240.
5. *Baud.*, p.241.
6. *Sit. II*, p.87.
7. *Sit. II*, p.86.
8. *Sit. II*, p.85.
9. *Sit. II*, p.86.
10. *Sit. II*, p.87.
11. *Idiot II*, p.1987.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Idiot II*, p.1621.
14. *Idiot III*, p.162.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Baud.*, pp.219-20.
17. *Baud.*, p.223.
18. *Baud.*, p.228.
19. See H. Wardman, 'Sartre as Critic', in *Sartre: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. M. Warnock (New York, 1971), pp.186-200.
20. C. Baudelaire, 'L'Art philosophique', *Œuvres complètes* (Gallimard, Pléiade, 1961), p.1099. (All future references to Baudelaire's works are to this edition unless otherwise stated.)
21. *Salon de 1846*, p.891.
22. 'Merleau-Ponty', *Sit. IV*, p.273.
23. *EN*, p.667.
24. *EN*, p.682.
25. *Fusées*, p.1247.
26. *Mon Cœur mis à nu*, p.1271.
27. *EN*, p.680.
28. *Salon de 1859*, pp.1037-8.
29. *Richard Wagner et 'Tannhäuser' à Paris*, pp.1210-11.
30. *Salon de 1859*, p.1087.
31. 'La Recherche de l'Absolu', *Sit. III*, p.299.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Baudelaire, *Théophile Gautier*, p.683.

Notes to Chapter 3, continued

34. *Théophile Gautier*, p.684.
35. *Prométhée délivré*, p.596.
36. *Œuvres complètes de Charles Baudelaire: Correspondance générale*, ed. J. Crépet, tome IV (Louis Conard, 1948), p.198. (Letter to C. A. Swinburne, 10 October 1863).
37. *Théophile Gautier*, p.685.
38. *Salon de 1846*, p.879.
39. *L'Ecole païenne*, pp.626-8.
40. *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, p.1154; (See *Baudelaire*, p.231.)
41. See 'De l'Idéal et du Modèle', *Salon de 1846*, pp.912-15.
42. See 'Des Ecoles et des Ouvriers', *Salon de 1846*, pp.246-9.
43. *Salon de 1846*, p.877.
44. *Sit. I*, p.66.
45. *Sit. II*, p.44.
46. *Salon de 1846*, p.878.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. *Genet*, p.645.
2. London, Tavistock Publications, 1964.
3. *EN*, p.656.
4. *EN*, p.537.
5. *Critique*, p.94.
6. 'Sartre par Sartre', *Sit. IX*, p.114.
7. *Critique*, p.44.
8. *Sit. II*, p.89.
9. *Critique*, p.95.
10. *Genet*, p.645.
11. Baudelaire, *Salon de 1846*, p.877.
12. See P. Thody, *Jean Genet* (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1968); or T. Driver, *Jean Genet*, (New York and London, Columbia University Press, 1966).
13. Thody, p.6, referring to *Playboy* interview, April 1964.
14. *Genet*, p.18; cf. *EN*, Quatrième Partie.
15. S. de Beauvoir, *Tout compte fait* (Gallimard, 1972), p.34.
16. Thody, p.84.
17. *Genet*, p.417; cf. *Baudelaire*, p.68.
18. Baudelaire, *Bribes*, p.177.
19. Baudelaire, 'Au Lecteur', *Les Fleurs du Mal*, p.5.
20. *Genet*, p.661.
21. Camus referred to Meursault in these terms in his preface to the Methuen edition of *L'Etranger*, (1958).
22. *Genet*, p.646.
23. *Genet*, p.277.
24. *Genet*, p.418.
25. *Genet*, p.647.
26. *Genet*, p.653.
27. *Genet*, p.652.
28. See *Genet*, p.622. We shall return to this question in our examination of the *Idiot de la famille*. See below, pp. 94-5.
29. *Genet*, p.652.
30. *EN*, p.363.
31. *EN*, p.496.
32. *EN*, pp.717-8.
33. *Critique*, e.g. p.533; p.704, etc.
34. *Genet*, p.656.
35. *Genet*, p.657.
36. *Genet*, p.660.
37. *Genet*, p.662.
38. *Sit. II*, p.129.
39. *Sit. II*, pp.39-40.
40. *Genet*, p.646.

Notes to Chapter 4, continued

41. *Critique*, p.67.
42. G. W. F. Hegel, *Reason in History*, transl. R. S. Hartman (Indianapolis and N. Y., 1953), p.82. (See *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (Stuttgart, 1928), p.105).
43. *Critique*, p.67.
44. *Ibid.*
45. See J. P. Sartre, *Un Théâtre de situations*, Gallimard, 1973, p.95.
46. The term *tourniquet* is used by Sartre to indicate an unending return from one pole of a binary opposition to the other. In his translation of *Saint Genet* (1964) Bernard Frechtman renders the term by 'whirligig', but I have preferred a transliteration of the French as more appropriate. Sartre's own definition of the term is as follows: 'Ces fausses unités où les deux termes d'une contradiction renvoient l'un à l'autre dans une ronde infernale: je les nomme des tourniquets' (p.286).
47. *Genet*, p.52.
48. *EN*, p.440.
49. *Genet*, p.54.
50. *Genet*, p.313.
51. *Genet*, p.314.
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Genet*, p.54.
54. *Genet*, pp.319-20.
55. *Genet*, p.330.
56. *Genet*, p.331.
57. *Genet*, p.334.
58. *Genet*, pp.340-1.
59. *Genet*, p.487.
60. *Genet*, p.515.
61. *EN*, p.692.
62. G. Bachelard, *Poétique de l'espace* (P.U.F., 1957), p.2.
63. M. Carrouges, *Eluard et Claudel* (Le Seuil, 1945).
64. See R. Champigny, 'Gaston Bachelard', in *Modern French Criticism*, ed. J. K. Simon (Chicago and London, 1972), p.188.
65. *Genet*, p.127.
66. *Genet*, p.302. See Bachelard, *La Terre et les rêveries de la volonté* (1948), pp.205-32, (esp. p.224).
67. *Genet*, p.303.
68. *Genet*, p.515.
69. *Sit. IV*, p.390.
70. *Genet*, p.515.
71. *Genet*, p.516.
72. *Ibid.*
73. *Genet*, p.520. cf. *Sit. IV*, pp.389-90.
74. *Genet*, p.516.
75. *Genet*, p.520.
76. *Genet*, p.520-1.
77. *Genet*, p.521.
78. A. Rimbaud, *Œuvres* (Garnier, 1960), p.131.
79. *Œuvres*, p.178.
80. Maison Marne, 1972.
81. *Les Fleurs du Mal*, pp.45-6.
82. *Sit. IV*, p.389.
83. *Sit. IV*, p.390.
84. *Sit. IV*, p.405.
85. *Genet*, p.516.
86. *Larousse Encyclopaedia of Renaissance and Baroque Art*, ed. R. Huyghe (London, 1967), p.140.
87. *Salon de 1846*, p.885.
88. *Sit. IV*, p.390.
89. *Salon de 1846*, p.213.
90. *Genet*, p.491.
91. *Genet*, p.560.
92. *Genet*, p.566.

Notes to Chapter 4, continued

93. *Genet*, p.560.
94. *Ibid.*, Maritain speaks of evil as 'la lèpre de l'absence', in *De Bergson à Thomas d'Aquin*, p.270; quoted by Sertillanges, *Le Problème du Mal*, 1948, part II, p.8.
95. *Genet*, p.561.
96. *Genet*, p.568.
97. *Genet*, p.491.
98. *Genet*, p.572.
99. *Genet*, p.568.
100. *Genet*, p.573.
101. *Genet*, p.574.
102. *Genet*, p.573.
103. *Genet*, p.567.
104. *Genet*, p.615.
105. *Ibid.*
106. *Genet*, p.529.
107. *Genet*, p.551.
108. Baudelaire, *Mon Cœur mis à nu*, p.1271.
109. *La Transcendance de l'Ego*, p.82.
110. *La Transcendance de l'Ego*, p.13.
111. *EN*, p.148.
112. *Genet*, p.392.
113. *Genet*, p.115.
114. *Ibid.*
115. Sartre's expression is careless: as we know, he considers the recognition of beauty to be in fact an act of imagination not perception. His meaning is however clear.
116. *Genet*, p.415.
117. *EN*, p.210.
118. *Genet*, pp.87-8.
119. *Genet*, pp.22-3.
120. *Genet*, p.115.
121. *Genet*, p.437.
122. *Genet*, p.470.
123. *Genet*, p.470.
124. See above, note 46.
125. *Genet*, p.87.
126. *Genet*, p.414.
127. *EN*, p.76.
128. *Genet*, p.414.
129. *Ibid.*
130. *Genet*, p.415.
131. *Genet*, p.416.
132. *Genet*, p.122.
133. *Genet*, p.420.
134. *Genet*, p.415.
135. *Genet*, p.424.
136. *Genet*, p.434.
137. *Ibid.*
138. *Genet*, p.429
139. *Genet*, p.430.
140. *Genet*, p.420.
141. *Genet*, p.422.
142. *Genet*, p.308.
143. *Fusées*, p.1261.
144. Baudelaire, *L'Art philosophique*, p.1099.
145. *Genet*, p.418.
146. *Genet*, p.419.
147. *Ibid.*
148. *Genet*, p.420. See note 115, above.
149. *Ibid.*
150. *Ibid.*
151. *Genet*, p.421.

Notes to Chapter 4, continued

152. *Ibid.*
153. *Genet*, p.470.
154. *Genet*, p.487.
155. *Genet*, pp.611-12.
156. *Genet*, p.611.
157. *Genet*, p.612.
158. *Ibid.*
159. 'L'Ecrivain et sa langue', *Sit. IX*, p.58.
160. *Genet*, pp.534-5.
161. *Genet*, p.469.
162. *Genet*, p.470.
163. *Genet*, p.552.
164. *Genet*, p.575.
165. *Genet*, pp.626-7.
166. *Genet*, p.630.
167. *Genet*, p.634.
168. *Genet*, p.636.
169. *Ibid.*
170. *Genet*, pp.636-7.
171. *Genet*, p.634.
172. S. de Beauvoir, *La Force des choses*, I (Gallimard, Livre de Poche, 1963), p.227.
173. *Genet*, p.637.
174. *Ibid.* See Mallarmé, 'Autre Eventail', *Poésies* (Gallimard, 1945), pp.84-5.
175. *Genet*, p.638.
176. *Ibid.*
177. *Ibid.*
178. *Genet*, p.604.
179. *Genet*, p.606.
180. *Genet*, p.623.
181. *Genet*, p.624.
182. *Genet*, p.638.
183. See R. Jolivet, *Sartre ou la théologie de l'absurde*, (Fayard, 1965).
184. T. Molnar, *Sartre: philosophe de la contestation* (1969).

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

1. M. Contat and M. Rybalka, 'Un Entretien avec J. P. Sartre', *Le Monde*, 14 May 1971, p.20.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Le Monde*, p.21.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Idiot I*, p.8.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. 'Sartre par Sartre', *Sit. IX*, pp.116-7.
10. *Sit. IX*, pp.117-8.
11. *Sit. IX*, p.118.
12. *Sit. IX*, p.115; p.118.
13. *Sit. IX*, pp.118-9.
14. *Le Monde*, 14 May 1971, p.21.
15. J. Piatier, 'J. P. Sartre s'explique sur *Les Mots*', *Le Monde*, 18 April 1964, p.13.
16. In connection with the events of May '68 in France.
17. See 'Les Ecrivains en personne', *Sit. IX*, p.36. and above, Chapter 2, p.42.
18. See: J. Lecarme, 'Sartre et son double', *Nouvelle Revue Française*, 232 (April 1972), pp.24-8.
    : Jean Mergeai, in *Synthèses* (Oct./Nov. 1971), pp.71-4.
    : *Times Literary Supplement* (29 Sept. 1972), p.1155.
19. C. Burgelin, 'Lire *L'Idiot de la famille?*', *Littérature* (6 May 1972), pp. 111-20.
20. Burgelin, p.117.

Notes to Chapter 5, continued

21. 'Merleau-Ponty', *Sit. IV*, p.273.
22. *Idiot II*, p.1569.
23. See Chapter 2, p.39 and Chapter 4, p.64.
24. *Sit. IX*, p.87.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5 (I)

1. *EN*, p.656.
2. *EN*, p.657.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *EN*, p.658.
5. By reflexion Sartre means, as always when the term is unqualified, 'la réflexion impure'. 'La réflexion pure' or 'non complice' is never defined or described by Sartre and its role in existential psychoanalysis remains therefore uncertain, though Sartre implies that it would constitute the instrument of an authentic self-analysis. We should note moreover that the distinction between the two forms of reflexion has been blurred by the later Sartre: 'Par la suite j'ai découvert que la réflexion non complice n'était pas un regard différent du regard complice et immédiat, mais était le travail critique que l'on peut faire pendant toute une vie sur soi, à travers une praxis' (*Le Monde*, 14 May 1971, p.21).
6. *EN*, p.658.
7. *Ibid.*
8. See below, p.99.
9. *EN*, p.659.
10. *Ibid.*
11. See E. Pinto, 'La "Névrose objective" chez Sartre', *Les Temps Modernes*, no.339 (Oct. 1974).
12. *EN*, p.660.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *EN*, p.661.
15. *EN*, pp.91-2.
16. *EN*, p.663.
17. 'L'Anthropologie', *Sit. IX*, p.95.
18. *Ibid.*
19. 'Sartre par Sartre', *Sit. IX*, p.105.
20. *Critique*, p.47.
21. *EN*, p.659.
22. *Sit. IX*, p.107.
23. *Sit. IX*, pp.108,111 (my italics).
24. cf. *EN*, p.658, '. . . si le projet fondamental est pleinement *vécu* par le sujet et, comme tel, totalement conscient, cela ne signifie nullement qu'il doive être du même coup *connu* par lui'.
25. *Sit. IX*, pp.110-11.
26. *Le Monde*, 14 May 1971, p.21 (my italics).
27. J. Lacan, *Ecrits I*, Ed. du Seuil, 'Points', 1966, p.136.
28. *Sit. IX*, p.97.
29. 'Jean-Paul Sartre répond', *L'Arc* (1966), pp.91-2.
30. *Ecrits I*, p.159.
31. *La Transcendance de l'Ego*, p.43.
32. *Le Monde*, 14 May 1971, p.20.
33. *Idiot I*, p.678.
34. The present reference represents Sartre's first discussion in his critical writings of the role of the mirror in the process of self-objectivation; though the notion of course occurs in various forms in many of his earlier literary works (e.g. *Huis clos*). It derives originally from a lecture given by Lacan in 1936, the ideas of which were consequently disseminated amongst French analysts, and were further developed by Lacan in 1949 in 'Le Stade du Miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je'. (*Ecrits I*, pp.89-97).
35. *Ecrits I*, p.162.
36. *Ecrits I*, p.284.
37. *EN*, p.663.
38. *Ecrits I*, pp.136-7.

Notes to Chapter 5(I), continued

39. *Le Monde*, 14 May 1971, p.21.
40. See for example R. Barthes, *Critique et Vérité*, (Seuil, 1966): 'Le langage n'est pas le prédicat d'un sujet, inexprimable ou qu'il servirait à exprimer, il est le sujet' (p.70). Barthes himself describes this notion as echoing Lacan.
41. *Sit. IX*, p.104.
42. 'Sartre contre Lacan', *Figaro Littéraire* (29 Dec. 1966), p.4.
43. 'Sartre contre Lacan', p.4.
44. *Ecrits II*, p.20.
45. *Ecrits II*, p.94.
46. *Le Monde*, 14 May 1971, p.21.
47. *Idiot I*, p.20.
48. *Idiot I*, p.21.
49. *Idiot I*, p.22.
50. *Idiot I*, p.25.
51. *Idiot I*, p.26.
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Idiot I*, p.27.
54. *Idiot I*, p.28.
55. *Idiot I*, p.36.
56. *Idiot I*, p.37.
57. *Idiot I*, p.40.
58. *Idiot I*, p.41.
59. *Ibid.*
60. *Ibid.*
61. *Idiot I*, p.42.
62. *Idiot I*, p.44.
63. *Idiot I*, p.46.
64. *Idiot I*, p.47.
65. *Idiot I*, p.49.
66. *Idiot I*, p.51.
67. *Idiot I*, p.52.
68. *Idiot I*, p.54.
69. *Ibid.*
70. *Idiot I*, pp.54-5.
71. e.g. Melanie Klein.
72. *Idiot I*, p.51.
73. *Idiot I*, p.55.
74. *Idiot I*, pp.57-8.
75. Probably to *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul), 1935.
76. *Idiot I*, pp.60-1.
77. *Idiot I*, p.61.
78. *Ibid.*
79. See 'Sartre par Sartre', *Sit. IX*, p.102.
80. *Idiot I*, p.134.
81. *Idiot I*, p.137.
82. *Idiot I*, p.178.
83. This sentence is often quoted in isolation by Sartre's adversaries who contrive to ignore that he is referring to a general condition of the knowledge we can acquire of the infantile stage of human development. Sartre is here not dismissing his account but trying to face honestly an epistemological problem.
84. *Idiot I*, p.139.
85. *Idiot I*, p.7.
86. e.g. D. W. Winnicott.
87. *Idiot I*, p.57.
88. *Idiot I*, p.953.
89. *Idiot I*, p.894.
90. *Critique*, pp.90-1.
91. *Critique*, p.91.
92. A. Green, 'Le Double et l'Absent, (l'analyse textuelle: du divan à l'écrit)', *Critique* (May 1973), pp.391-412.

Notes to Chapter 5(I), continued

93. See 'Pourquoi écrire?' *Sit. II.*
94. Green, *op. cit.*
95. *Idiot I*, p.954.
96. *Ibid.*
97. This is one of Sartre's interpretations of the *indisable*; see *Le Monde*, 14 May 1971, p.21: 'Ce que Flaubert appelle "l'indisable" c'est, en fait, ce qu'il ne veut pas dire mais qu'il *sait*, par exemple ses sentiments envers son père et son frère, et c'est aussi l'inexprimable aujourd'hui'.
98. *Idiot I*, p.954.
99. *Ibid.*
100. M. Robert, 'Le Tribunal ou l'analyse', *Le Monde*, 2 June 1971, p.16.
101. C. Burgelin, 'Lire *L'Idiot de la famille?*', *Littérature*, no.6 (May 1972), pp.111-20.
102. Burgelin, *op. cit.*
103. M. Robert, *op. cit.*
104. H. Levin, 'A Literary enormity: Sartre on Flaubert', *Journal of History of Ideas*, XXXIII, (1972), pp.643-9.
105. *Idiot I*, p.698.
106. *Idiot I*. p.703.
107. *Idiot II*, p.1901.
108. *Idiot II*, p.1545.
109. 'Assouvissement' here clearly applies to resentment rather than to sexual desire.
110. *Idiot I*, p.703.
111. *Idiot I*, p.702.
112. *Idiot I*, p.1001.
113. C. Rycroft, *A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (1968), (reprinted London, Penguin, 1972), p.106.
114. *Idiot I*, p.686.
115. In fact of course Sartre prefers to interpret it as hysterical in so far as this implies a greater element of choice on Flaubert's part.
116. *Idiot II*, p.1786.
117. *Sit. IX*, p.105.
118. M. Robert, *op. cit.*
119. *Ibid.*
120. See above pp.112, 115.
121. *Idiot II*, p.1546.
122. *Idiot I*, p.8.
123. Burgelin, *op. cit.*
124. C. Mouchard, 'Un Roman vrai,' *Critique*, 27 (II), (1971), pp.1029-49.
125. See below, p.124 (*Idiot II*, p.1899).
126. Speaking of Gustave's constant imitation of others Sartre says 'c'est un symptome connu de l'hystérie' and refers to *Cinq Psychanalyses*, 'Qui imitez-vous?' Freud à Dora. (*Idiot I*, p.1040).
127. Burgelin, *op.cit.*
128. Mouchard, *op. cit.*
129. Burgelin, *op. cit.*
130. We should moreover note in passing the bias of this term which assumes all psychoanalysis to be necessarily Freudian rather than existentialist or other.
131. *Idiot II*, p.1826.
132. *Idiot II*, p.1829.
133. *Idiot II*, p.1892.
124. *Ibid.*
135. *Idiot II*, p.1784.
136. *Ibid.*
137. *Le Monde*, 14 May 1971, p.20.
138. 'L'Anthropologie', *Sit. IX*, p.95.
139. The notion of *antipsychiatry* originated of course with R. D. Laing and David Cooper who were influenced by Sartre's existentialist approach to human problems, and is now practised also by others as diverse as Aaron Esterton and Gregory Bateson in England, Franco Basaglia in Italy and Roger Gentis in France. It depends basically on the belief that madness is not an illness but rather an intelligible response to an intolerable situation; and it attempts to break down the hierarchy implicit in the patient-doctor

Notes to Chapter 5(I), continued

relationship. In its extreme form, it sees schizophrenia for example as a higher form of sanity, but it is unlikely that Sartre would subscribe to the mystical interpretation of this view given it by R. D. Laing.

140. *Idiot II*, p.1826.
141. G. Bateson *et al*, 'Towards a Theory of Schizophrenia,' in *Behavioural Science*, I (1956), pp.251-63.
142. *Idiot II*, pp.1864-5.
143. See *Idiot II*, p.1872.
144. *Idiot II*, p.1877.
145. *Idiot II*, pp.1908-9.
146. *Idiot II*, p.1893.
147. *Idiot II*, p.1894.
148. *Idiot II*, p.1899.
149. *Ibid.*
150. *Idiot II*, p.1914.
151. *Idiot II*, p.1918.
152. *Idiot II*, p.1919.
153. *Idiot II*, p.1920.
154. *Idiot II*, p.2136.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5 (II)

1. W. Desan, *The Marxism of J-P. Sartre* (New York, 1965).
2. C. Audry, *Sartre et la réalité humaine* (Seghers, 1966).
3. *Idiot I*, p.64.
4. *Idiot I*, p.513.
5. *Idiot I*, p.523.
6. *Idiot I*, p.564.
7. Sartre uses the expression 'alienated *to*' as well as the more usual 'alienated *from*'. Inauthenticity involves alienating one's liberty to an external force or arbiter. Thus, for example, Flaubert is alienated *from* himself *to* his family.
8. *Idiot I*, p.611.
9. *Idiot I*, p.612.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Idiot I*, p.613.
13. *Idiot I*, p.648.
14. *Idiot II*, p.1411.
15. *Idiot III*, p.48.
16. *Idiot III*, p.50.
17. *Idiot III*, p.51.
18. *Idiot III*, pp.53-5.
19. *Idiot III*, p.56.
20. *Ibid.*
21. C. Lévi-Strauss, *Le Cru et le Cuit* (Plon, 1964), p.19.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Le Cru et le Cuit*, p.20.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Idiot III*, p.50
26. My italics.
27. *Idiot III*, p.50.
28. *Le Monde*, 14 May 1971, p.21.
29. *Idiot III*, p.66.
30. E. Pinto, 'La "Névrose objective" chez Sartre', *Les Temps Modernes*, no.339 (Oct. 1974), pp.35-76.
31. *Idiot III*, p.28.
32. *Idiot III*, p.29.
33. *Idiot III*, p.142.
34. *Idiot III*, p.28.
35. *Idiot III*, p.142.

Notes to Chapter 5(II), continued

36. Pinto, p.53.
37. *Idiot III*, p.196
38. Pinto, p.56.
39. *Idiot III*, p.414.
40. *Idiot III*, p.201.
41. *Idiot III*, p.424.
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Idiot III*, p.425.
45. *Idiot III*, p.426.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Idiot III*, p.427.
48. *Idiot III*, p.431.
49. *Idiot III*, p.434.
50. *Idiot III*, p.440.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Idiot III*, p.441.
53. *Idiot III*, p.442.
54. *Idiot III*, p.447.
55. *Ibid.*
56. *Idiot III*, p.495.
57. *Idiot III*, p.577.
58. *Idiot III*, p.597.
59. *Idiot III*, p.455.
60. *Idiot III*, p.463.
61. *Idiot III*, p.662.
62. *Idiot III*, p.663.
63. *Idiot III*, p.664.
64. *Idiot III*, p.665.
65. *Idiot III*, p.33.
66. *Idiot III*, p.150.
67. *Idiot III*, p.342.
68. *Idiot III*, p.665.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5 (III)

1. *Imag.*, p.23.
2. *Imag.*, p.26.
3. *Imag.*, p.175.
4. *Imag.*, p.176.
5. *Imag.*, p.188.
6. *Imag.*, p.236.
7. *Imag.*, p.237.
8. *Imag.*, p.236.
9. *Imag.*, p.234.
10. *Imag.*, p.189.
11. *Imag.*, p.26.
12. *Idiot II*, p.1957.
13. *Idiot II*, p.1958.
14. *Idiot II*, p.1302.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Idiot I*, p.969.
17. *Idiot I*, p.595.
18. *Idiot I*, p.968.
19. *Idiot II*, p.1592.
20. *Idiot I*, p.968.
21. *Idiot II*, p.1592.
22. *Idiot II*, p.1440.
23. *Imag.*, p.237.
24. *Idiot III*, p.22.

Notes to Chapter 5(III), continued

25. *Idiot I*, p.440.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Idiot I*, p.442.
28. *Idiot I*, p.452.
29. *Idiot II*, p.1198.
30. *Idiot I*, p.441.
31. *Idiot I*, p.1034.
32. *Idiot I*, p.967.
33. *Idiot III*, p.22.
34. *Genet*, p.420.
35. *Imag.*, p.245.
36. *Genet*, p.420.
37. *Idiot II*, p.2088.
38. *Œuvres Complètes, Correspondance*, vol.II (Louis Conard, 1926), p.339 (14 January 1852).
39. *Théophile Gautier*, p.686.
40. *La Fanfarlo*, p.509.
41. *Correspondance*, vol.III, Librairie de France, p.638 (3 April 1876).
42. *Idiot I*, p.836.
43. *Idiot III*, p.168.
44. *Idiot II*, p.1595.
45. *Genet*, p.229.
46. *Imag.*, p.234.
47. *Idiot I*, p.970.
48. See *Idiot I*, p.961.
49. *Idiot I*, p.961.
50. *Idiot I*, p.865.
51. *Idiot I*, p.971 (misprint in text).
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Idiot I*, p.959.
54. *Idiot I*, p.963.
55. *L'Art philosophique*, p.1099.
56. *Idiot II*, p.1963.
57. *Idiot II*, p.1964.
58. *Idiot II*, p.1968.
59. G. W. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, transl. W. H. Johnson and L. G. Struthers (London, 1951), Vol.I, p.94 ('Das Sein, das unbestimmte Unmittelbare ist in der Tat Nichts, und nicht mehr noch weniger als Nichts.' *Wissenschaft der Logik* (Berlin, 1841), p.73).
60. *Imag.*, p.234.
61. See: 'Ce qui me semble beau, ce que je voudrais faire, c'est un livre sur rien, un livre sans attache extérieure, qui se tiendrait de lui-même par la force interne de son style . . . un livre qui n'aurait presque pas de sujet, ou, du moins, où le sujet serait presque invisible, si cela se peut'. *Correspondance*, Vol.I, Librairie de France, p.412 (16 Jan. 1852).
62. *Imag.*, p.26.
63. *Idiot II*, p.1971.
64. *Idiot I*, p.664.
65. *Idiot I*, p.669.
66. *Idiot I*, p.670.
67. *Idiot I*, p.734.
68. *Idiot I*, p.735.
69. *Idiot I*, p.365.
70. *Idiot I*, p.773.
71. *Idiot I*, p.660.
72. *Idiot I*, p.661.
73. *Idiot I*, p.875.
74. *Idiot I*, p.882.
75. *Idiot I*, p.885.
76. *Idiot I*, pp.885-6.
77. *Idiot I*, p.887.
78. *Idiot I*, p.888.
79. *Ibid.*

Notes to Chapter 5(III), continued

80. *Idiot I*, p.34.
81. *Idiot I*, p.41.
82. *Idiot I*, p.44.
83. *Idiot I*, p.916.
84. *Idiot I*, p.928.
85. *Idiot I*, p.979.
86. *Idiot I*, p.973.
87. *Idiot II*, p.1485.
88. *Ibid.*
89. *Idiot II*, p.1597.
90. *Idiot II*, p.1918.
91. *Idiot I*, p.1086.
92. *Idiot I*, p.1092.
93. *Idiot I*, p.1090.
94. *Idiot II*, p.1470.
95. *Idiot II*, p.1486.
96. *Idiot II*, p.1980.
97. *Idiot II*, p.1981.
98. *Idiot II*, p.1616.
99. *Idiot II*, p.1982.
100. *Idiot II*, p.1987.
101. *Salon de 1846*, p.891.
102. *Correspondance*, Vol.III, Librairie de France, p.638 (3 April 1876).
103. *Idiot II*, p.1959.
104. *Idiot II*, p.1987.
105. *Idiot II*, p.1999.
106. *Imag.*, p.176.
107. *Idiot II*, p.2003.
108. *Idiot III*, p.665.
109. *Sit. II*, p.13.
110. *Le Monde*, 14 May 1971, p.21.
111. M. Robert, *Le Monde*, 2 July 1971.
112. *Times Literary Supplement*, 29 Sept. 1972.
113. *Le Monde*, 14 May 1971.
114. *Sit. II*, pp.26-7.
115. *Idiot I*, p.307.
116. See for example *Idiot I*, p.310; *Idiot II*, p.1314; *Idiot III*, p.498.
117. *Idiot III*, pp.308-9.
118. *Idiot III*, p.309.
119. *Sit. II*, p.261.
120. *Idiot III*, p.12.
121. *Ibid.*
122. *Idiot III*, pp.12-13.
123. *Idiot III*, p.13.
124. 'Sartre par Sartre', *Sit. IX*, p.116.
125. 'Les Ecrivains en personne', *Sit. IX*, p.14.
126. *Idiot III*, p.321.
127. *Les Mouches*, Gallimard, Livre de Poche, p.183 (Act III).
128. *Idiot III*, p.22.
129. My italics.
130. *Le Monde*, 14 May 1971, p.21.
131. See for example *Idiot I*, p.623; *Idiot II*, pp.1186, 1977.
132. *Sit. II*, pp.93-4.
133. See *Sit. II*, p.97: 'Ainsi l'écrivain en appelle à la liberté du lecteur pour qu'elle collabore à la production de son ouvrage', etc.
134. *Sit. II*, p.122.
135. 'Entretien sur *Les Mains sales* avec Paolo Caruso', 1964, in *Un Théâtre de situations*, 'Idées' (1973), p.251.
136. *Idiot III*, pp.102-3.
137. *Idiot III*, p.103 (my italics).
138. R. Barthes, *S/Z*, 'Tel Quel' (Seuil, 1970), p.12.

Notes to Chapter 5(III), continued

139. *Idiot III*, p.326.
140. *S/Z*, p.13.
141. *S/Z*, p.15.
142. *Idiot III*, p.51.
143. 'Sartre par Sartre', *Sit. IX*, p.102.
144. *S/Z*, pp.16-17.
145. *Idiot III*, p.424.
146. *Idiot III*, p.428.
147. *Ibid.*
148. *Idiot III*, p.103.
149. *Idiot III*, p.23.
150. *Le Monde*, 14 May 1971, p.21.
151. *Idiot III*, p.20.
152. *Ibid.*
153. *Idiot III*, p.21.
154. *Idiot III*, p.20.
155. *Idiot III*, p.23.
156. *Idiot III*, p.644.
156. *Idiot III*, p.23.
158. *Idiot III*, p.604.
159. *Idiot III*, p.605.
160. *Le Monde*, 14 May 1971, p.21.
161. *Ibid.*
162. *Ibid.*
163. *Ibid.*

NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

1. 'L'Ecrivain et sa langue', *Sit. IX*, p.42.
2. *Mots*, pp.53-4.
3. *Mots*, p.46.
4. *Mots*, p.121.
5. *Mots*, p.154.
6. G. Gusdorf, *La Parole* (P.U.F., 1953), pp.11-12.
7. *Mots*, pp.210-11.
8. *Sit. IX*, p.44.
9. *Mots*, p.152.
10. *Sit. IX*, p.44.
11. *Mots*, p.60.
12. *Imag.*, p.112.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *EN*, p.599.
15. *EN*, p.564.
16. L. S. Vygotsky, *Thought and Language* (Cambridge, Mass., M.I.T. Press, 1962), p.2.
17. B. Croce, *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic*, transl. D. Ainslie (1909, reprinted London, Macmillan, 1922), p.330. (See 'Se si può pensare senza parole, non si può pensare senza espressioni,' *Estetica come scienza dell'espressione e linguistica generale* (Bari, Gius. Laterza & Figli, 1912), p. 386.)
18. H. Bergson, 'L'Energie spirituelle', *Œuvres* (P.U.F. 1959), p. 848.
19. Croce, p.327. ('Il linguagio . . .à nato invece dal bisogno tutto interno di conoscere e procacciarsi un'intuizione della cosa.' *Estetica*, p.383.)
20. Bergson, p.831.
21. *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, transl. W. Wallace, 1894, together with the *Zusätze*, transl. A. V. Miller (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971), p.221. ('Wir wissen von unseren Gedanken nur dann,–haben nur dann bestimmte, wirkliche Gedanken, wenn wir ihnen die Form der Gegenständlichkeit, des Unterschiedenseins von unserer Innerlichkeit,–also die Gestalt der Äußerlichkeit geben,–und zwar einer solchen Äußerlichkeit, die zugleich das Gepräge der höchsten Innerlichkeit trägt. Ein so innerliches Äußerliches ist allein der artikulierte Ton, das Wort. Ohne Worte denken zu wollen,–wie Mesmer einmal versucht hat,–erscheint daher als eine Unvernunft, die jenen Mann, seiner Versicherung nach,

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beinahe zum Wahnsinn geführt hätte. Es ist aber auch lächerlich, das Gebundensein des Gedankens an das Wort für einen Mangel des Ersteren und für ein Unglück anzusehen; denn, obgleich man gewöhnlich meint, das Unaussprechliche sei gerade das Vortrefflichste, so hat diese von der Eitelkeit gehegte Meinung doch gar keinen Grund, da das Unaussprechliche in Wahrheit nur etwas Trübes, Gährendes ist, das erst, wenn es zu Worte zu kommen vermag, Klarheit gewinnt. Das Wort gibt demnach den Gedanken ihr würdigstes und Wahrhaftestes Dasein.' *Die Philosophie des Geistes* (Berlin, 1845), p.349.)

22. *Philosophy of Mind*, p.218. ('Die Intelligenz äußert sich unmittelbar und unbedingt durch Sprechen.' *Die Philosophie des Geistes*, p.345.)
23. Vygotsky, pp.125-6.
24. *EN*, p.598.
25. *EN*, p.601.
26. M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (N.R.F. Gallimard, 1945), pp.206-7. (hereafter *Phénoménologie*.)
27. *EN*, pp.440-1.
28. *Ibid*.
29. *EN*, p.441.
30. *EN*, p.462.
31. *EN*, pp.592-3.
32. *EN*, pp.602-6.
33. *EN*, p.442.
34. *Ibid*.
35. *Ibid*.
36. *EN*, p.599.
37. *Ibid*.
38. *Ibid*.
39. *Ibid*.
40. *EN*, p.600.
41. *Imag*., pp.113-4.
42. 'M. Jean Giraudoux et Aristote', *Sit. I*, p.77.
43. 'Explication de *L'Etranger*', *Sit. I*, p. 103.
44. E. Fiser, *Le Symbole littéraire* (1941), p.21, from H. Bergson, *Evolution créatrice* (Alcan, 1937), p.370.
45. Fiser from Bergson, *Données immédiates de la conscience* (Alcan, 1936), p.100.
46. *Sit. I*, p.103.
47. *Sit. I*, pp.103-4.
48. 'Un Nouveau Mystique', *Sit. I*, p.136.
49. cf. Bergson, 'La Pensée et le Mouvant,' *Œuvres*, p.1321 ff.
50. *Sit. I*, p.137.
51. *Ibid*.
52. *Sit. I*, p.111.
53. *Sit. I*, p.138.
54. 'L'Homme ligoté', *Sit. I*, p.271.
55. *Sit. I*, p.274.
56. *Sit. I*, p.275.
57. 'L'Homme et les choses', *Sit. I*, p.228.
58. *Sit. I*, p.228.
59. *Sit. I*, p.248.
60. *Sit. I*, p.232.
61. *Sit. I*, p.233.
62. *Sit. I*, p.234.
63. *Sit. I*, pp.244-5.
64. *Sit. I*, p.258.
65. *Sit. I*, p.261.
66. *Sit. I*, p.265.
67. *Sit. I*, p.267.
68. *Sit. I*, p.270.
69. 'Aller et retour', *Sit. I*, p.213.
70. *Sit. I*, p.178.
71. *Ibid*.

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72. *Sit. I*, p.183.
73. *Ibid.*
74. *Sit. I*, p.187.
75. *Sit. I*, p.186.
76. *Sit. I*, p.205.
77. *Sit. I*, p.212.
78. *Phénoménologie*, p.213.
79. *La Parole*, p.85.
80. *Sit. I*, p.214.
81. *Sit. I*, p.216 (my italics).
82. *Sit. I*, pp.217-8. (for meaning of *compréhension* see account of psychoanalytic element of the *Idiot*.)
83. *Sit. I*, p.219.
84. *Sit. I*, p.220.
85. *Sit. I*, pp.222-3.
86. *Sit. I*, p.223.
87. *Sit. II*, p.34.
88. *Ibid.*
89. Sartre's syntax is contorted, but the meaning in the context is clear.
90. *Sit. II*, p.305.
91. *Ibid.*
92. *Sit. II*, p.201.
93. *Sit. II*, p.200.
94. i.e. (probably) the object in the real world rather than the psychic object: the *référent* rather than the *signifié*.
95. *Sit. II*, p.64.
96. *Ibid.*
97. *Sit. II*, pp.65, 70-1.
98. *Sit. II*, pp.72-3.
99. *Sit. II*, pp.74-5.
100. *Sit. II*, p.65.
101. *Ibid.*
102. *Sit. II*, p.66.
103. *Ibid.*
104. We must bear in mind that, as Fiser points out, although Bergson's philosophy gives the fullest account of the intuitions of the Symbolists about language, nevertheless the actual term 'symbol' is used by Bergson not to designate what we would now call a symbol, but rather in the opposed sense of a category or concept.
105. Fiser, p.39.
106. *Ibid.*
107. Fiser, p.49.
108. *Phénoménologie*, p.228.
109. *Phénoménologie*, p.218.
110. *Sit. II*, p.62.
111. *Sit. II*, p.75.
112. *Ibid.*
113. *Sit. II*, p.86.
114. *Sit. II*, p.87.
115. *Sit. II*, p.88.
116. *Sit. II*, p.95.
117. *Critique*, p.75.
118. *Critique*, pp.76-7.
119. *Critique*, p.722.
120. *Critique*, p.267.
121. *Critique*, p.266.
122. *Critique*, pp.180-1.
123. *Critique*, p.76.
124. *Critique*, p.103.
125. *Critique*, p.18.
126. *Critique*, p.176.
127. *Critique*, p.181.

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128. *Critique*, p.344.
129. *Critique*, p.176.
130. *Critique*, p.181.
131. *Critique*, p.344.
132. *Ibid.*
133. *Ibid.*
134. *Critique*, p.348.
135. *Phénoménologie*, p.229.
136. *Ibid.*
137. *Phénoménologie*, p.207.
138. *Critique*, p.344.
139. *Sit. II*, p.86.
140. *Sit. III*, p.243.
141. *Ibid.*
142. *Sit. III*, p.244.
143. *Ibid.*
144. *Ibid.*
145. *Sit. III*, p.245.
146. *Sit. III*, p.246.
147. *Ibid.*
148. Mallarmé, *Magie*, (Edition de la Pléiade, page 400) (Sartre's footnote).
149. *Sit. III*, pp.246-7.
150. *Sit. III*, p.250.
151. *Genet*, p.15.
152. *Genet*, p.339.
153. *Genet*, p.56.
154. *Ibid.*
155. *Genet*, p.331.
156. *Genet*, p.332.
157. *Genet*, p.334.
158. *Genet*, p.346.
159. *Genet*, pp.558-60.
160. *Genet*, pp.653, 660.
161. *Genet*, p.336.
162. *Ibid.*
163. *Genet*, p.612.
164. 'Jean-Paul Sartre répond', *L'Arc*, 30 (1966), p.88. (hereafter *Arc*.)
165. 'L'Ecrivain et sa langue', *Sit. IX*, p.72.
166. *Arc*, pp.88-9.
167. 'L'Anthropologie,' *Sit. IX*, p.90.
168. *Plaidoyer*, p.107.
169. *Sit. IX*, p.97.
170. *Critique*, p.75.
171. *Sit. IX*, p.48.
172. *Plaidoyer*, p.90.
173. *Sit. IX*, pp.48-9.
174. *Plaidoyer*, pp.92-3.
175. *Plaidoyer*, p.90.
176. *Plaidoyer*, p.116.
177. *Plaidoyer*, p.92.
178. *Plaidoyer*, pp.105-6.
179. *Plaidoyer*, p.106.
180. *Sit. IX*, p.55.
181. *Sit. IX*, p.54.
182. *Plaidoyer*, p.93.
183. *Ibid.*
184. *Plaidoyer*, p.94.
185. *Les Temps Modernes*, vol. VIII (1951-2), p.84.
186. *Sit. II*, p.95.
187. *Plaidoyer*, p.94.
188. *Que peut la littérature?* ed. Y. Buin (l'Inédit, Paris, '10/18', 1965), p.94 (hereafter

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Q. p. la litt?).
189. My italics.
190. *Plaidoyer*, pp.102, 105.
191. *Sit. IX*, p.50.
192. *Sit. IX*, pp.50-1.
193. *Plaidoyer*, pp.108-9.
194. *Sit. IX*, p.56.
195. *Q. p. la litt?* p.117.
196. *Plaidoyer*, p.93.
197. *Q. p. la litt?* p.54.
198. *Plaidoyer*, p.87.
199. *Genet*, p.347.
200. *Q. p. la litt?* p.117.
201. *Ibid.*
202. *Plaidoyer*, p.110.
203. *Ibid.*
204. *Ibid.*
205. See below p.216.
206. *Q. p. la litt?* pp.117-8. (my italics.)
207. *Q. p. la litt?* pp.118-9.
208. *Sit. IX*, pp.45-6.
209. My italics.
210. *Sit. IX*, p.46.
211. *Sit. IX*, pp.49-50.
212. *Sit. IX*, p.47.
213. *Sit. IX*, p.48. (my italics.)
214. *Sit. IX*, pp.58-61.
215. *Sit. IX*, p.62.
216. *Sit. IX*, p.63.
217. *Sit. IX*, p.62.
218. *Sit. IX*, p.64.
219. *Ibid.*
220. *Sit. IX*, p.65.
221. *Sit. IX*, p.71.
222. *Le Monde*, 14 May 1971, p.21.
223. *Idiot I*, p.21.
224. Misplaced line in text.
225. *Idiot I*, p.22.
226. *Idiot I*, p.23.
227. *Idiot I*, p.25.
228. *Idiot I*, p.26.
229. *Idiot I*, p.38.
230. *Ibid.*
231. *Idiot I*, p.39.
232. *Ibid.*
233. *Idiot I*, p.38.
234. *Idiot II*, p.1984.
235. *Idiot II*, p.1986.
236. *Idiot III*, p.99.
237. *Idiot II*, pp.1986-7.
238. *Idiot I*, p.50.
239. *Idiot II*, p.1988.
240. *Idiot II*, pp.1195-6.
241. *Idiot I*, p.888.
242. *Idiot II*, p.1615.
243. *Idiot I*, p.623.
244. *Idiot II*, p.1977.
245. *Idiot I*, p.623.
246. *Idiot I*, p.879.
247. *Idiot I*, p.159.
248. *Idiot I*, p.929.

Notes to Chapter 6, continued

249. *Idiot I*, pp.929-30.
250. *Idiot I*, p.930.
251. *Idiot I*, p.931.
252. *Ibid.*
253. *Ibid.*
254. *Idiot I*, p.932.
255. *Idiot I*, p.934.
256. *Idiot I*, p.932.
257. *Ibid.*
258. See above pp.208-9.
259. *Idiot I*, p.934.
260. *Idiot I*, p.929.
261. *Idiot I*, p.928. It is clear, as the subsequent quotation indicates, that Sartre simply means that the writer uses both aspects of language together, though he too, like the reader, cannot focus simultaneously on both the *sens* and the *signification*.
262. *Idiot I*, p.934.
263. *Ibid.*
264. *Ibid.*
265. *Idiot I*, p.935.
266. *Idiot I*, p.934.
267. *Idiot I*, p.935.
268. *Idiot I*, p.938.
269. *Idiot I*, pp.926, 929.
270. *Idiot I*, p.961.
271. *Ibid.*
272. *Idiot I*, p.962.
273. *Idiot I*, p.974.
274. *Idiot II*, p.1982.
275. *Idiot II*, p.1620.
276. *Idiot II*, p.1617.
277. *Idiot II*, p.1718.
278. *Idiot II*, p.1616.
279. *Idiot II*, pp.1983-4
280. *Idiot II*, p.2000.
281. *Idiot II*, p.2003.

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