

10

*Drama and the notion of scheme-role meaning**

Michael Macnamara
Department of Philosophy
University of South Africa

Jeanette Ferreira-Ross
Department of English
University of South Africa

INTRODUCTION (Michael Macnamara)

This paper explores the topic of *existential meaning* in relation to *drama*. 'Existential' meaning here signifies the meaning of *life*, of human existence. Within this concept, the present focus will be on one *type* of existential meaning. This type may, for brevity's sake, be called 'scheme-role meaning', that is, meaning conceived of as the *orientation* provided by a *role* in a *scheme* or project. An everyday example would be the orientation given to a mother's life by her role in the family framework.

The way in which this inquiry *came about* may also be mentioned here, though merely *en passant*, as a further topic for possible pursuit elsewhere. The inquiry arose from the question: Can one, in the philosophy of drama, draw a distinction between 'theoretical' and 'experimental' dramatists, analogous to the contrast drawn in the philosophy of science between theoretical physicists (such as Einstein)

*Paper presented jointly at the sixteenth Annual Congress of the Philosophical Society of Southern Africa, Pretoria, 1989. This article also appears in *The English Academy Review*, vol. 7, 1990.

and experimental ones (like Faraday); and, if so, do the two kinds of dramatist have fundamentally different philosophical orientations toward the world, that is, different world views, or visions of the meaning of life? As such high-level questions, while interesting, can generate several different and lengthy lines of investigation, the present inquiry has been limited to considering the relation between only a *small sample* of plays and primarily the scheme-role *variety* of meaning.

Part I of this article introduces the topic of existential meaning as such, with special reference to scheme-role meaning (abbreviated SRM). Part II discusses a sample of plays in relation to SRM. Part III reviews the preceding parts and suggests a theme for later possible pursuit.

I EXISTENTIAL MEANING (Michael Macnamara)

It may be as well to pose certain root questions at the outset. *Why* consider drama in relation to existential meaning? Why think about existential meaning at all? This may be answered briefly and with a deliberate *double entendre*: What could be more significant in life than what makes the whole show meaningful? But, for that matter, what is 'meaning' in this context?

Two main philosophical usages of the term may be distinguished here. First, the notion of meaning as in '*the theory of meaning*', that is, *semiotics*, which is the theory of signs and is usually divided into syntactics, semantics and pragmatics. And of course one trend in contemporary dramatic theory is precisely the semiotic one (Bassnett-McGuire 1980; Elam 1980). Second, there is the concept of meaning as in '*the meaning of life*' or '*meaning in life*' (Wisdom 1965; Britton 1969; Macnamara 1976 & 1977), and this is the type which is, for brevity, called *existential* meaning in this article, the name implying the meaning of human *existence* as opposed to the meaning of a *sign*.

The term 'existential meaning', as used here, is not simply *equivalent* to meaning as it is interpreted by thinkers in the philosophical trend of *existentialism*, represented by say Sartre (1943): the general topic of existential meaning *subsumes* the existentialist's particular idea of meaning as one among many other past and present conceptions of the meaning of life. Certainly Sartre (1938) and Camus (1942) were deeply concerned with the question of the meaningfulness or

meaninglessness of life; but so, among many others, were logicians like J. S. Mill (1873, ch. 5), scientists like J. Huxley (1948), novelists like Tolstoy (1886), and playwrights like S. Beckett (1965). Indeed, this question of meaning in life crops up repeatedly, in various guises, throughout the long history of the world's prose and poetry classics.

Various *avenues* for approaching the subject of existential meaning exist, three of which are as follows:

First, the approach via the diverse *senses of the term* 'meaning' that have been implied by various thinkers when they use the expression 'meaning of life'. For example, when someone says John's or Jane's life is meaningful/meaningless, it may be meant that his/her life is senseful/absurd (cf. the idea of absurdity in writers like Dostoevsky (1866), Sartre or S. Beckett); or it may be meant that it is purposeful/aimless (involving such goals as material success, social power, aiding the needy, or artistic achievement); or it is authentic/false [think of writers like W. Pater (1885), Camus, E. O'Neill (1947)]; or identified/alienated (marxism, or the contemporary concern over estrangement); or good/bad [the matter of moral worth, going back via Dante (c. 1320) to Aristotle (4th century BC), or even the early Egyptians]; or caring/uncaring [Tolstoy (1886), or the ethical theists]; or spontaneous/mechanical [Sappho (c. 600 BC), or say Nietzsche (1883)]; or social/lonely (Lewis 1971, ch. 1, regards loneliness as the most recurrent theme in contemporary theatre). Or in another category, perhaps, his/her life is socio-politically avid/tepid.

Second, the meaning of life can be considered in terms of one or another set of *vectors* or determinants of meaning. One such set has the following seven vectors [see Macnamara & Postma-de Beer (1988) for one particular application of this set, or 'viewing apparatus']: (1) the *logic* of the *concept* of existential meaning itself (involving, inter alia, interpretations such as those in the first approach above, and in the third approach below); (2) the state of *arrest of life* ['To be or not to be', that famous question posed in various forms by Hamlet, J. S. Mill (1873), Tolstoy (1888), and Chesterton (1936) among others]; (3) *authenticity* [avoidance of alienation and deception — topics with which existentialists like Sartre (1943), and the marxists, were much concerned]; (4) *freedom* of the individual (fatalism, determinism, libertarianism); (5) *conceptions* or images of *man* (materialistic, idealistic, and so on); (6) *care for others* (egoism, altruism, commitment,

detachment); and (7) *death* as a determinant of meaning [mortalism, immortalism, states of life/death — see, for instance, the Chinese poet Chang Hêng (c. 130 BC)].

Third, and most relevant to the present inquiry, existential meaning can be considered in terms of a distinction between two *kinds* of question about life and meaning: (a) the *general* or cosmic question: What is the meaning of *life as such*? (b) The *particular* or individual question: Is there meaning in *Susan's* life, or *Peter's* life, that is, in the life of a specific person?

An example of a well-known world view, the adherents of which answer Yes to the *cosmic* question, is ethical theism: in this view, human life is part of a divinely ordained *scheme* for the cosmos; a person has a *role* in this cosmic plan, and the orientation given by this role is what people call the meaning of life. Among those who take an opposing position are existentialists of the atheistic variety, such as Sartre and Camus: they argue that there is no such divine scheme, so that life is meaningless — it is absurd — when viewed in relation to the traditional theistic sense of meaning; they do, however, maintain that one can *give* life meaning by accepting responsibility squarely and living on resolutely in the teeth of this absurdity. The support or rejection of either of these opposing views of meaning involves a cluster of problems, including the several much-debated arguments for and against the existence of deity; but these are not, as such, at issue here.

As regards the other question, the *particular* question, about meaning, the kind of distinction drawn by Sellars (1926:176) has come into use: he contrasted meaning in the sense of a cosmic plan with 'intrinsic meaning' in the sense of 'satisfactory objectives', and asked whether our lives may not have meaning in the intrinsic sense even if not in the cosmic one. Concerning the relation between the cosmic and particular senses of meaning, it may be said in overview that a person may deem life meaningful in both cosmic and particular senses, or in either sense though not the other one; or, pessimistically, in neither sense.

The focus of the present article is on *scheme-role* meaning (SRM) in relation to *drama*. But how are SRM and drama connected? That is the subject of the next section, but it can well be prefaced by a clearing away of some conceptual undergrowth at this point.

Taking the first patch of this undergrowth: when people talk about SRM, they seem only to think of a 'scheme' as a divine, supernal one. But, whether or not there exists a *supernatural* cosmic scheme, there are certainly schemes (and roles) in several other senses of these terms. To mention some of them: for materialistic determinists and non-theistic fatalists, there exists a quite natural *pattern* according to which all the events of the physical universe unfold necessarily. For Hobbes (1651), again, there was the socio-politically meaningful role of a rational citizen in a peaceful monarchal *state*; for Sartre — in his last phase — there was the role of a collectivistically committed citizen in a communist society. There are many such roles: people may be seen as having roles in a global *poetic vision*; soldiers have roles, august or modest, in military *operations*; a salesman plays his part in the business *project* of a firm; a father has a function within a family *framework*; a player has a role in the *structure* of a team; an oboist, a role in the *score* performed by an orchestra; and a director or an actress has a role within the total *parameters* of a particular play — apart from a role in any of the other senses mentioned above.

Second, as will be evident from the preceding paragraph, one has to consider the matter of similarities and differences between the concepts 'scheme' and 'role', on the one hand, and their various related concepts, on the other. Is a scheme similar to all of an arrangement, plan, schedule, programme, venture, enterprise, operation, project, formula, scenario, pattern, blueprint, structure, or set of parameters? And is a role similar to all of a part, impersonation, function, capacity, office, vocation, occupation, job, duty or performance?

Third, how are the notions 'role' and 'scheme' related to each other? Can each notion exist quite independently of the other, as do the concepts 'good' and 'round'; or are they *polar* concepts, that is, are they intelligible only in terms of contrast with each other, as are the two concepts 'good' and 'evil'?

Fourth, if meaning is said to be the *orientation* given by a role in a scheme, just what is this 'orientation': does it mean alignment toward the goal(s) of the scheme, and is it being implied that the degree of meaningfulness varies as the degree of alignment? Can one speak acceptably of an actress as orientated toward a dramatic goal? What goal? The imputed goal of a play-text, be it socio-political revolution, aesthetic instruction, conceptual exploration, or plain entertainment?

Or are we referring to the goal(s) of drama as such, considered at some deeper level? And what is 'the goal' of drama — is there any common, fundamental goal, or are there several different goals for diverse kinds of drama?

Let us move on directly to considering SRM specifically in relation to a selection of actual dramatic works. This pursuit will be of the reconnoitring, region-mapping kind, as opposed to the kind that could well follow it on a later occasion, namely the sinking of shafts, by those interested, at one or a few of the points brought to light on this regional map.

I should emphasize that, while this section defines a certain *conception* of existential meaning, the author of the next section was not asked to adhere exclusively to it, but rather to 'stand loose to it' wherever this was thought fruitful.

II SCHEME-ROLE MEANING AND DRAMA (Jeanette Ferreira-Ross)

In applying the idea of scheme-role meaning to drama, many possibilities present themselves. Similarly, the notion of existential meaning in drama can be approached from various angles. I have chosen to concern myself with drama as significant action intended for performance by actors in the presence of spectators. The significant action, or drama, on which I wish to focus involves the acting out of *roles* in which the relationship between man and his world is explored. Implicit in the definition given is the acknowledgement that drama necessarily involves the creation/realization of *roles*, that is, a character or characters 'on stage' who are perceived by a *body of onlookers* and to whose actions/spoken words the onlookers respond. The immediacy of this interaction between *die Rollenträger* and *die Rollen erlebende Gemeinschaft* (Eberle 1953–1954) is what links drama to ritual. There is a communal element operative in both so that drama, like ritual, tends to focus on the central preoccupations in the life of the culture, group or community for whom the performance is intended.

Methodologically, one can approach the subject synchronically or diachronically. I have opted for the latter because what interests me are the *shifts* in the *scheme* component, understood in terms of a particular world view (*Weltanschauung*), and the *consequent orientation*

given to the *role* component in order to communicate what is experienced as the sense or *meaning of life*. The process of communication involves the interaction between role projection and role reception within the parameters of an implied world view, or even of a set of schemes in juxtaposition. What I propose to examine are the ways in which *adjustments* within the *scheme* component entail adjustments of perspective concerning the *role* component which, as the experiencing consciousness interacting with the audience, is the purveyor of meaning.

The choice of samples must necessarily be selective and to some extent arbitrary. For example, I shall not deal with the drama of classical Greece with its emphasis on an inexorable fate bearing down on the life of an individual so that, in spite of the fact that in nearly all the great tragedies of the period the cause of the hero's downfall is a compound of his capacity for error or misjudgment (*hamartia*) and his overweening pride or arrogance (*hubris*), it remains true that in Greek tragedy there is less question of the protagonist's moral culpability than in Renaissance drama. The shift in the pattern of scheme-role meaning from Greek tragedy to the Renaissance drama is indeed an interesting one, but there is enough material here for a study on its own. Similarly, one might explore the shifts in scheme-role meaning that led to the creation of Romantic Drama in which the iconoclastic hero of what has aptly been termed the 'Theatre of Messianic Revolt' (Brustein 1969) rebels against the restrictions of an older order, hoping to replace it with a new heroic order.

I shall also not pause to consider the political theatre, notably the seminal plays of Bertolt Brecht. The revolutionary theatre of Brecht is a new departure, based as it is on the ideology or scheme of the historical (-materialistic) dialectic which runs as follows: the structure on which all human relationships are built is socially determined; social relations are relative and subject to historical change; therefore, the structure of human relationships can be changed. Here too the implications of the shift in perspective from what Brecht refers to as the fatalistic pessimism of the 'Aristotelian drama' (Brecht 1967), with its closed, autonomous action and empathic role-identification, to his own 'epic theatre', which necessitates a critical stance *vis-à-vis* the events and characters portrayed, are fascinating but too wide-ranging to be included in the present context.

As the framework of this study is limited to a conceptual exploration of the interrelationships between the concepts constituting scheme-role meaning in drama, I consider it justified to ignore the distinctions between ritual and drama as an artistic form, based on specifically literary and theatrical conventions.

The significance of role-playing as the *acting out of relationships perceived to be fundamentally meaningful* has been stressed by anthropologists. Frobenius has seen role-playing (*jouer son rôle*) as the source of all civilization: 'L'homme est acteur; le jeu est l'expression de la réalité qu'il vit'¹ (Frobenius 1933:146).

It is evident that, from earliest times, man has striven to understand the meaning of life; to understand the *world* and man's *place* in it. Accordingly, he builds models of reality using, as frames, such terms of reference as are at his disposal. He constructs a *scheme* and assigns to man a *role* or roles in relation to this scheme. As part of his adjustment to his universe, man *dramatizes* his world view; that is, by means of rituals he plays, or actualizes by representation (Huizinga 1949), a higher order of things, expressive of the *value system* which pertains to the group (Wilson 1954) but is outside the sphere of ordinary life.

A feature of ritual performances among non-literate peoples is active participation by all those who are involved. But the central position is that of the 'ritual expert'. In African tribal societies the ritual expert is the witchdoctor. He is the main actor or performer: his *role* is clearly defined. At crucial times, or when misfortune or illness strikes, he is called upon. It is he who stages the performance of a magical rite, and in doing so he acts out the 'rapport' with the unseen forces. For the time being and for the prescribed purpose of the rite, he believes himself, and is believed, to be the medium by which the inimical forces can be controlled. This affords release of tension in the sense that the performance of the rite restores the confidence of those involved or of those for whom the rite is performed, for the dramatization of the witchdoctor affirms the value system of the tribe and demonstrates the underlying ordering. In short, the rite is the *scheme in action*. The flow and equilibrium of vital forces necessary for the health and well-being of the group as a whole, and the individuals as members of the group, are believed to be under the *control of ancestral spirits*. In ritual performances these supernatural

presences are concretized in some way or another (role *projection*) and the community participates as an actively involved, experiencing consciousness (active role *reception*). In this way there is interaction, and so, drama.

We may understand this theorizing better if we consider in some detail an actual example of a rite I have been privileged to watch. It is one performed by the Xhosa witchdoctor [*gqira(m) — gqirakazi(f)*] to propitiate the spirits believed to live at the bottom of deep river pools.

Among the AmaXhosa there is apparently a definite tradition of the ancestral spirits (*amathonga*) being connected with rivers.² In this particular case of a rite, misfortune in the form of a strange illness had dogged a certain woman. A master-diviner of great repute was consulted. He decided that the cause of the trouble was the anger of the 'river people'. Matters could only be set right by a propitiatory offering to them. First, a hut was prepared by the master-diviner. It is clear that the preparation of this hut must be interpreted as a dramatic act of setting it apart in the religious sense: it is what we would call 'holy', dedicated to the ancestors. Into the hut the diviner carried a bundle of willow branches collected from the river pool, from whence he returned after having solemnly made his report concerning the offering of the morrow to the ancestral spirits. Some of the willow branches he brought from the river were deposited for a bed, and some at central points to keep out evil spirits. After her ritual purification, the afflicted woman was led into the hut where she was to remain until the diviner instructed her to come out. One can see what is at work here: the powerful suggestion of significant symbolism. Imaginations are stirred by the intensely felt presence of the force of the ancestors.

The symbolic line which identifies the 'river people' with the branches fetched from the pool can be drawn still further by analysing the subsequent dramatic action. The woman must sleep on the branches. This, together with the visual symbolism, inevitably suggests the working of a magic process: the sickness (evil) must be drawn out and vital force absorbed from the ancestors. For, to the participant and onlookers alike, in accordance with their mythical, analogical way of thinking, the branches represent the 'river people', that is, the ancestors; they *are* the ancestors.

Before daybreak on the day of the ceremony, a silent and solemn procession of five threaded its way towards the river. The diviner, cloaked in a blanket and carrying the patient's bedding of the previous night, led the way. The arrival of the procession at the river was so timed that it coincided with the rising of the sun, for the African has a strongly developed sense of *stage technique*. The setting was also ideal: it was a spot where lush green ferns fringe a deep pool which darkly mirrors the rugged walls of rock rising sheer and weirdly shaped in the background. This 'primitive' witchdoctor had not learned the tricks of the spotlight, the back-cloth or the drop curtain; but he knew how to stage his performance so that the background would be most effective, and he also knew how to exploit the emotional effect of the predawn and the first rays of the rising sun. Everybody knelt down, facing the pool. The diviner stepped forward and solemnly addressed the river people, offering all the items brought along. The procession then turned round and filed home in silence. There, a full report was given of the performance at the river in the presence of the clan to which the woman belonged and their neighbours.

Judging by its outer form, this is a simple enough rite. Yet, if one probes down into the meaning of the performance, it becomes an important *dramatic statement* in which the interest of the group as a whole is involved. In accordance with the operative scheme involved here, the drama that unfolds is clear. The witchdoctor acts as the mediator between the afflicted woman (and, by implication, her clan) and the ancestral spirits whose continued and powerful life force can work either for, or against, effecting either an increase (health), or decrease (sickness), in the vital force of the individual or group of their descendants. The action is carried out to restore the health of the protagonist, which means the effort to gain the co-operation of the supernatural so that the disrupted balance of vital forces, necessary for well-being, may be restored. By the effort to ward off evil from one clan member, the well-being of the whole is sustained, and something is contributed towards attaining a peaceful way of life. In this way, a rite performed for one individual becomes an act of public worship in the form of a ritual drama in which the whole community can participate. For the performance is a communal experience which links both participants and spectators, or listeners, to the report of the performance at the river, as members of a *Gesamtorganismus*.

From the point of view of dramatic technique and structure this rite is also fascinating. The antagonist (the supernatural, explained in Xhosa belief in humanized, personal terms) is invisible. But the mysterious presence is vividly evoked by means of associative suggestion which is made to work by purely theatrical means. An application of Greimas's 'actantial model' (1972) is illuminating here in showing the interrelationships of SRM in ritual drama. The ancestral spirits fulfil more than the role of *opposant* (opponent). They are, simultaneously, the *destinateur* (sender) as well as the *destinataire* (receiver) within the total context of the action. The role of the witchdoctor is that of *tritagonist* [Greimas: *adjuvant* (helper)]. He is the mediator who performs the significant action whereby the crisis is resolved. But as *intercessor* he also replaces the protagonist in actually confronting the supernatural. In fact, the *sujet* (subject) of the rite includes *the group as a whole* who therefore also becomes the *destinataire* (receiver).

In short, the *scheme* in the present example consists in the *conduct* which — according to the witchdoctor — is *prescribed by the transcendent ancestors*. Among the several roles identifiable in this context, the key ones are those of the witchdoctor, who *mediates* between ancestors and people, and the afflicted woman who, in somehow *deviating* from the prescriptive scheme, has angered the ancestors and now seeks their pardon. The spectators (who also have their roles in the general scheme) are *affected* (reassured) by viewing, or participating in, the rite. As we shall see, several of these notions are to be found — developed, modified or discarded — all along the historical course of drama.

When we turn to the ritual drama of Europe in the Middle Ages, we observe the same relationship between the components of scheme-role meaning. Here, the *scheme* is *ethical theism circumscribed by the dogma of medieval catholicism*. In a comparatively late morality play such as *Everyman* (c. 1500), the link with ritual is still evident. Although the protagonist is used as an exemplum in a simple drama whose aim is moral teaching, *Everyman's* progress to death closely follows the stages of the catholic ritual. The play's vision is based on the closed medieval system or scheme of good and evil, in which good entails obedience to the established Christian dogma and evil represents man's neglect of his responsibilities towards God. The

characters are allegorical figures representing basic human traits. Everyman himself, as the name indicates, is clearly a plural person, representing mankind as a whole. As Death says to God at the opening of the play:

Lord, I will in the world go run overall,
And cruelly outsearch both great and small;
Every man will I beset that liveth beastly
Out of God's laws, and dreadeth not folly.

(*Everyman* 1956, lines 72-75)

As a result, *Everyman* and the other allegorical figures in the play exist mainly in terms of the *theological truths they are meant to demonstrate*. The figure of Knowledge, for example, is inseparable from spiritual awareness and is therefore by definition a means to self-purification. This is enacted in the play when Knowledge leads Everyman to Confession who administers the sacrament of penance. Thereafter Everyman dons the garment of contrition upon which his Good Deeds, now restored to vigour, declares their reckoning to be clear. This is in accordance with medieval church doctrine. As is the case in the African ritual described, the mediating role of the ritual expert is central in *Everyman*. In the latter, the role of tritagonist is assigned to Priesthood, who administers the sacraments through which alone the protagonist may reach *salvation*, which is perceived as the ultimate meaning of life.

Towards the end of the 16th century, drama in Western Europe had evolved into an autonomous art form distinct from early ritual. But the shifts in the interrelationships within the pattern of scheme-role meaning are not only due to the secularization of drama, that is, to the break with the ritual pattern. From one perspective, a Renaissance play such as Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* may still be seen as an inverted morality play. It is based on the traditional scheme of ethical theism. Like *Everyman*, *Doctor Faustus* (c. 1589) affirms the immortality of the soul whose passage to either heaven or hell depends on God's judgement of the individual's religious state. *Doctor Faustus*, in a series of inverted rituals, then traces the progress of the protagonist not to salvation but to damnation, dramatically enacted in true medieval fashion when the devils appear at the end to drag him off to hell. *Doctor Faustus* relies, too, on allegorical figures such as the Good and Bad Angel. But, whereas the Good Angel represents Faustus's

religious conscience, the Bad Angel projects his proud instinct to rebel against human limitation. Here, then, more than one scheme is introduced. The role of the protagonist is therefore no longer simply that of an exemplum within the parameters of one scheme. Faustus, as a typical Renaissance figure, is a scholar steeped in classical learning; he is also an ambitious and wilful power-seeker, a man proud of his individuality which is constituted by his independent, enquiring mind. He has two roles: that of an inverted morality figure, and that of an aspiring humanist thinker and, in the *tension* between the two, another dimension of meaning is generated.

In Shakespeare, this notion of role in relation to various and conflicting schemes reaches a peak of sophistication. The classic example is, of course, *Hamlet* (c. 1601). On one level, the opposing claims of the *revenge ethos* and *Christian ethic* constitute the tragic conflict. Hamlet's inability to reconcile his roles as 'scourge' and 'minister' dislocates his sense of being. In the splitting of roles in this example, meaning becomes ambiguous and indeterminate. It has been pointed out that even the use of the term 'scourge and minister' by Hamlet himself 'is an example of [his] existential irresolution, for the roles of *Flagellum Dei* and *Christian medicus* are virtually irreconcilable: ... a scourge is a human agent so steeped in crime as to be past salvation, while a minister is a virtuous agent of divine retribution who eschews private vengeance in pursuit of public justice so that his hands will not be stained with crime' (Brown 1988:87).

Hamlet is called upon by his father's ghost to assume the role of revenger. But the Ghost's moral position is ambiguous. He bases his demand on the 'natural' bond of filial duty:

If thou didst ever thy dear father love —
... Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.
(I.v.23–25)

However, the revenge code, exacting as it does 'an automatic response of blood and honour' (Gurr 1978:72), is morally dubious. In its appeal to nature, to instinct, it provokes 'reckless foolhardiness and ... ruthless self-promotion' (Brown 1988:68). Moreover, as it is based on passion, not reason, it is spiritually corrosive in that it panders to man's lower nature which is propelled by the baser, predatory, animal instincts. Tamora in *Titus Andronicus* (c. 1590) sums up the revenge code:

I am Revenge, sent from th' infernal kingdom
To ease the gnawing vulture of thy mind
By working wreakful vengeance on thy foes.
(V.ii.30–32)

In *Hamlet*, the roles of Fortinbras and Laertes demonstrate the kind of behaviour dictated by the imperatives of honour and revenge. Fortinbras is prepared to sacrifice thousands of lives to regain

... a little patch of ground
That hath in it no profit but the name.
(IV.iv.18–19)

Hamlet assesses the situation with devastating clarity of insight, ironically undercutting his ostensible admiration for Fortinbras's spirit

... with divine ambition puff'd
.....
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death and danger dare,
Even for an egg-shell
..... I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men
That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain
(IV.iv.49–65)

The role of Laertes, whose situation closely parallels that of Hamlet — he too has had a father killed — functions as a direct foil to that of the Prince. His response is a single-minded dedication to revenge at all costs and an unbridled submission to passion:

To hell, allegiance! Vows, to the blackest devil!
Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!
I dare damnation
(IV.v.131–133)

Hamlet, on the other hand, is incapable of such univocity. Although his initial reaction to the appearance of the Ghost is to question its identity, its resemblance to his father seduces him into a state of over-

wrought passion. But Horatio, the man of reason ('... not passion's slave'), who acts in a sense as Hamlet's alter-ego, sounds the note of warning against the insubstantial and possibly changeable shape of a ghost

Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason,
And draw you into madness ... *Think* of it [my emphasis].
(I.v.73-74)

This is precisely what Hamlet does and, in spite of his avowed assumption of his role as 'scourge', it soon becomes evident that this role is at variance with the pull of his 'conscience', both in the sense of Christian conviction of right and wrong and knowledge within oneself which is related to a sense of one's own being. When Hamlet ponders the question 'To be or not to be', the implications go deeper than merely being alive or not. It involves the awareness of man as an active rational being. According to Sydney Bolt, 'This meaning of "to be" was common intellectual currency at the time the play was written. The being of a thing was its essence — which, in its derivation from the Latin word *esse*, "to be", literally means "being". To be therefore involved realizing one's essence, which called for moral effort' (Bolt 1985:52). Hamlet's insistent self-questioning therefore not only undermines his role of revenger; it also touches on the question of integrity or authentic being — not, in the existentialist sense of self-creation through individual freedom of choice, but in relation to the whole moral framework of that which constitutes the essence of *man*, which was part of the Elizabethan 'scheme' or world view.

As 'minister', Hamlet's role is equally ambiguous. What is emphasized at the outset is Hamlet's deep moral awareness. Suspecting his uncle of foul play, he invokes his belief in a providential universe:

... Foul deeds will rise,
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.
(I.iii.257-258)

But when he is made the agent of moral redress, the task appears an impossible one. Firstly, the world which he is called upon to 'set ... right' is hopelessly corrupt. The court of Denmark is rotten to the core. Hamlet is surrounded by deceivers and sycophants, by debauchery, lechery and betrayal. Thus he experiences a sense of universal deception, of the whole cosmos as fraudulent, and this makes him

unsure of everything. That is why he adopts the role of madman and malcontent in order to achieve an ironic distance and so, paradoxically, to preserve his sanity and integrity. Secondly, he is specifically asked by the enigmatic Ghost to act without violating his integrity:

But howsomever thou pursuest this act,
Taint not thy mind

(I.v.84-85)

Yet, in spite of his at times almost hysterical revulsion against his mother's sin, Hamlet, in identifying himself with the universal corruption of man's fallen state, sees his own mind as already tainted: he is acutely aware of his own dual nature. His self-questioning is ruthless. This, says Philip Edwards, is revealed in his language which 'is teasing, riddling, punning, looking two ways at once, never directly serious or directly jesting. In almost everything he says, he reveals his incapacity for or refusal of single vision and single evaluation' (Edwards 1983:50). No sooner has Hamlet adopted one stance or role than he devalues his performance by debunking its motivational impulse. It is only at the end that he seems to acquiesce, with quiet composure, in the providential nature of the universe. But this is less an acknowledgement of his role as 'minister' than an acceptance of human limitation and a final acceptance of the elusive mystery of being: '... the rest is silence'. Hamlet's conflict is not resolved; in a sense it *cannot* be resolved: he can only come to 'rest' in the silence of death.

In the classical tragedy of 17th-century France, the prevalent notions of *purity of form* led to a refocusing of scheme-role meaning. Or, conversely, as it has also been argued (Moore 1961; Goldmann 1964) the specific cultural climate which obtained in 17th-century France encouraged a preoccupation with form, pattern. If it was then a matter of form, this was a corollary of the underlying need of the whole culture at the time for the principles of *order and rationality*. It was the same climate, after all, that brought forth Descartes and Pascal. Whichever way it came about, in the two outstanding tragic dramatists of the age, Corneille and Racine, a dramatic form of extraordinary concentration, never equalled since, was evolved. Indeed, the rigours of form and the 'rules' they adopted proved a perfect vehicle for the world view communicated. In the case of Corneille, the *scheme* is narrowed down to the *heroic ideal of duty*. Accordingly, the whole orientation of the protagonist's *role* is towards a *measuring*

up to this sublime ideal. The attitude of the hero is typically summed up by Rodrigue in *Le Cid* (1637):

J'ai fait ce que j'ai dû, je fais ce que je dois.
(III.iv.910)³

The conflict is between the very human passions and the almost in-human, hence fanatic, pursuit of a calling [cf. in particular *Polyeucte* (1642)]. The action hinges on a single situation of choice in which the roles of the characters are defined in a series of patterned confrontations and reflections.

Racine, in turn, uses the same kind of situational 'plot' and patterning but he focuses on the *ravages of human passions*. He explores the obsessive, if necessarily catastrophic, pursuit of self-interested passion setting itself hopelessly against a 'higher' order. In *Phèdre* (1677), it is significant that both Phèdre and Hippolyte are outsiders whose impulses propel them beyond the ken of 'normal' society and relationships represented by Thésée and Aricie. Hippolyte, as the votary of Diana, and Phèdre, as the offspring of Minos and Pasiphaé — of her who was enamoured of the bull — are possessed figures. In her uncontrollable passion for her stepson, Hippolyte, Phèdre sees herself as a monster. As she dies, having taken poison, she utters a final self-condemnation which acknowledges the darkness of her soul. Her very eyes — the windows of the soul — have soiled the bright light of day, the realm of reason and order:

Et la mort, à mes yeux dérobant la clarté,
Rend au jour, qu'ils souillaient toute sa pureté.⁴

Bérénice (1670) is, in a way, the most interesting of Racine's plays because the tragedy does not end with the death of the protagonists. Again the situation hinges on a single moment of crisis: in order to assume his role as Emperor, Titus is required to renounce his union with the alien princess, Bérénice. Here the external conflict centres on the opposing claims of passion and reason, the irreconcilable split between private and public roles. Bérénice confronts Titus with the equal claims of both:

Rome a ses droits, Seigneur. N'avez-vous pas les vôtres?⁵

The Emperor, in turn, pleads:

... Forcez votre amour à se taire;
Et d'un oeil que la gloire et la raison éclaire
Contemplez mon devoir dans toute sa rigueur.⁶

The fluctuating movement in the series of confrontations between and reflections of the lovers is from the *irrational and private* 'amour' to the *rational and public* 'gloire'. But the real conflict hinges on the act of renunciation, on love as sacrifice. Within the rigours of Racine's Jahnsehnist vision of the world there can be no authentic being without a radical *rupture of whatever belongs to the world*. The admirable concentration of Racine's classical form renders the climax and the dénouement simultaneously. Bérénice rises majestically, as the incarnation of desire, articulating what she represents:

J'aimais, Seigneur, j'aimais: je voulais être aimée.⁷

But she is already speaking in the past tense. Then by a supremely dramatic *switch* of roles, she effects the act of renunciation:

Je vivrai, je suivrai vos ordres absolus
Adieu, Seigneur, régnez: je ne vous verrai plus.⁸

The paradox is not resolved:

Je l'aime, je le fuis; Titus m'aime, il me quitte.⁹

But the final emphasis is on *régnez*, carrying the full weight of the imperatives of absolute, transcendent values to which both Titus and Bérénice are bound.

The 18th-century fascination with society and social standards of conduct is clearly reflected in the drama of the age, making this the great age of comedy. In the notable plays of the early 18th-century the scheme could be said to be society, and the role-fulfilment or adjustment of the characters *vis-à-vis* the social context within which they function is what determines their sense of being. In Congreve's *The way of the world* (1700), for example, the struggle of the protagonists, Mirabel and Millament, is between acceptance of their socially determined roles (as prospective husband and wife respectively) and the demands of their own individuality. There is an amusing yet poignant interplay of social values and individual integrity, of public and private roles, and a play on the interrelationship between the two. An

even more complex and pessimistic view of role-identification versus personal identity emerges in Marivaux's *La double inconstance* (1723). The ingenuous lovers, Silvia and Arlequin, are subjected to the sophisticated machinations of the Prince and his confidante, Flaminia. The Prince, who has fallen in love with Silvia, is determined to win her consent to marry him. At first the young lovers, held captive but showered with luxuries, resist the seductive ploys to alienate their affections. But gradually they are *corrupted by the new roles* into which they have been cast. By the end of the play they have not only transferred their affections to the Prince and Flaminia respectively, but they have also lost their innocence and sense of true identity.

The serious drama of the late 19th and early 20th centuries focuses on man's role within the scheme of a universe perceived as *implacably hostile*, denying him the fulfilment of his being. In the plays of Ibsen, Chehov and O'Neill the roles of the characters are to a greater or lesser extent those of helpless *victims* rather than active *agents*. They are at the mercy of overwhelming *social realities* over which they have little or no control.

The orientation of the roles, and indeed the movement of the whole action, for example, in Ibsen's *Ghosts* (1881) and O'Neill's *Long day's journey into night* (1941), demonstrate that the characters become *what their past has made them*. They struggle in vain to free themselves from, or are unavoidably trapped within, ingrained attitudes or modes of behaviour conditioned by their environment which includes their social and familial circumstances. The weight or pressure of the past (the 'ghosts' in Ibsen's play to which Mrs Alving refers explicitly) impinges on the present, determining the inevitable journey into night, the hopeless fate of Oswald in *Ghosts* and Mary Tyrone in *Long day's journey*. Ibsen's overriding concern with inheritance or, more precisely, inherited guilt is developed by O'Neill in terms of the oppressive, life-denying puritanism of Ephraim Cabot in *Desire under the elms* (1924) and the Mannons in *Mourning becomes Electra* (1931). Freedom is a fantasy, like Hedda Gabler's desire to see Lovborg with 'vine-leaves in his hair', or the dream of the South Sea Islands in *Mourning becomes Electra*. At best it is a transitory, epiphanic moment as described by Edmund in *Long day's journey*.

Chehov's plays are also concerned with the death of freedom. His figures are surrounded by a weary atmosphere of frustration, futility, apathy. Invariably they find themselves in an impasse. The present is dominated by a sense of loss, a lack of fulfilment, a nostalgia for the past [*The cherry orchard* (1904)] or an elusive, ever-receding hope for a better future, like the dream of going to Moscow in *The three sisters* (1901). A fascinating aspect of Chehov's conception of role-playing, which anticipates the *ironic mode* of modern drama, is the manifest *self-dramatization* of many of his characters. Often a character's pose is deflated by himself, another character or the context. For example, in *The cherry orchard* Madame Ranyevskaia's sentimentality and romantic posturing is shown up as not only anachronistic but futile within the kind of world in which the rough pragmatism of Lopahin has taken over. In Chehov's plays, again, there is *no one central role* that dominates all the others. The various characters — and there are many — in each play all represent different shades of helplessness, uncertainty and bewilderment in the face of life. What they all share is a feeling of dislocation, a sense of life petering out, a loss of existential meaning.

This scheme, in which the *possibility of any transcendent self-realization is denied*, is inevitably anti-heroic. The focus is on ordinary mortals, broken by life. The only hope of survival, in a restricting world in which freedom to change one's life is virtually absent, is to withdraw from the world, to avoid any kind of confrontation, including self-confrontation, and to cling to 'pipe dreams'; that is, the adoption of an acquiescent role based on *comforting delusions* which shield one from the unbearable nature of reality. Ibsen's *The wild duck* (1884) and O'Neill's *The Iceman cometh* (1947) explore what happens when sustaining illusions are destroyed. The role of Gregors (*The wild duck*) and Hickey (*The Iceman cometh*) is that of the inverted messiah. They are the missionaries of 'truth'. But Larry Slade, who is in a sense the central consciousness in the microscopic 'society' of misfits gathered in Harry Hope's hotel — this 'Bottom of the Sea Rathskeller' (p. 27) — anticipates the outcome:

To hell with truth ... the lie of the pipe dream is what gives life to the whole misbegotten mad lot of us.

(pp. 15–16)

Larry himself has adopted the facile posturing of the cynical intellectual who watches life from the grandstand of philosophical detachment. But his real problem is that 'of projecting value in a world devoid of absolutes — the "existential dilemma": man's chief struggle is not with something, not with Evil but with the valueless which is neither good nor evil' (Falk 1958:163). His anguished realization of the nothingness that lies beneath appearances leads him to an impasse of moral paralysis. His compassion exposes him to the pain of being, that of others and his own. Significantly, Larry, who sits alone staring into space (that is, nothingness), is separated at the end from the pipe dreamers who return to the oblivion of their inauthentic but comforting mode of existence. In this way, O'Neill's vision anticipates not only the existentialist differentiation between authentic and inauthentic being; also, in Larry's perception of meaninglessness, he approaches the absurdist vision of the world.¹⁰ However, in O'Neill as in Ibsen and Chehov, the emphasis is still on the impossibility of authentic being owing to the tension between man's deepest aspirations and the *hostile* nature of the world within which he finds himself. Because of the predominantly naturalistic mode in which their plays are cast, this world is socially contextualized and sympathetic identification with the plight of the characters is encouraged.

By the time we come to the existentialist drama of Sartre and Camus, the universe is no longer perceived as hostile, but *meaningless, absurd*. There is no metaphysical scheme against which to measure human conduct. It is here that the notion of role *becomes central*. One can *give* meaning by creating, assuming or becoming one's freely chosen role and then squarely accepting the responsibilities it entails. This is the only path to human freedom. Thus, in creating one's role, *a new scheme and kind of meaning are created*. A brief look at Sartre's *Les mouches* (1943) will serve to illustrate the point. The plot derives from the *Oresteia* (458 BC). But whereas, in Aeschylus, Orestes's crime falls within the fatalistic pattern or scheme of Greek tragedy, in Sartre it is prompted by freedom of choice. What Oreste discovers is that man is free and that *chaque homme doit inventer son chemin*¹¹ (Sartre 1947:113). The sense of fatality which oppresses the people of Argos is therefore false: it is an invention of the representatives of power. The role of Électre after the murder of Égisthe epitomizes the human tendency to allow oneself to be

obsessed and finally annihilated by an egocentric sense of guilt and remorse, instead of choosing the path of freedom. She is therefore an example of *mauvaise foi* (bad faith). Oreste, on the other hand, disclaims remorse and this enables him to triumph over Jupiter. He alone, the authentic being, has the courage to assume responsibility for his act:

Vous me regardez, gens d'Argos, vous avez compris que mon crime est bien à moi; je le revendique à la face du soleil; il est raison de vivre et mon orgueil, vous ne pouvez ni me châtier, ni me plaindre, et c'est pourquoi je vous fais peur.¹²

(Sartre 1947:120)

Freedom is frightening because the liberated being accepts his isolation and the fact that '*la vie humaine commence de l'autre côté du désespoir*'¹³ (p. 114). However, if man accepts, like Oreste, that he creates himself through his actions, that is, that he is the sum of his actions, then he announces the twilight of the gods, that is, of false projections of external powers. At the same time, creating one's role and assuming responsibility for one's actions is far from easy. This is dramatically enacted at the end of the play when Oreste leaves Argos, pursued by the flies (the Érinnyes) representing the responsibility and anguish of the liberated being.

In the subsequent so-called theatre of the absurd (Esslin 1966) the *very notion* of meaningful action is undermined. The emphasis is on human limitation and man is seen as the victim of an absurd world which eludes full comprehension. Characters have no 'identities'; in other words, the roles become *depersonalized*. We are back at the emblematic figures of the morality plays, but the frame of reference, the *scheme* within which the characters function, has undergone a fundamental change. In Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952) the protagonists are, in fact, reduced to '*clochard-clowns*'. Here, the role of protagonist is, significantly, the antithesis of the hero, a royal or prominent figure, pitting his forces against an intrinsically meaningful universe. An added irony is that, as the inversion of the king, the buffoon or clown constantly struggles with the material world over which the king has absolute control (De Vries 1974).

Beckett's use of the role of clown is interesting and significant. The clown is traditionally the licenced fool, speaking truth under the guise

of folly. Furthermore, the clown has *no social identity*. By stripping his clownlike tramps of social identity, Beckett succeeds in enlarging their significance so that they come to represent an *elemental facet of the human condition*. In Beckett's own production of *Waiting for Godot* for the Schiller Theater in Berlin in 1975, he underlined this emblematic aspect of the characters by adding a significant symbolic touch with regard to the costumes. Rolf Michaelis (1975:18) reports in *Theater Heute*:

Im ersten Akt trägt Didi zur passenden, gestreiften Hose eine schwarze Jacke, die ihm viel zu klein ist und offensichtlich Gogo gehört; der wiederum trägt zur gut sitzenden schwarzen Hose eine viel zu grosse Streifenjacke aus Didis Garderobe. Im zweiten Akt sind die Kleidungsstücke dann vertauscht. Ein gleicher kreuzweiser Bezug besteht in der Gewandung des anderen Paares: Pozzos Hose mit dem Rautenmuster des Zirkus-Clowns passt zu Luckys Weste. 'Wir sind die Menschheit' — dieser Satz wird durch die Kostümierung augenfällig.¹⁴

Michèle Foucre (1970:18–19), in an interesting theatrically orientated study called *Le geste et la parole dans le théâtre de Samuel Beckett*, has drawn attention to the dramatic effectiveness of the 'silhouette' by which Beckett's *clochard*-clowns are concretized:

Le costume n'est pas harmonieusement proportionné. Les détails exagérés, saugrenus, esquissent une silhouette mal équilibrée, mal adaptée au monde, ou plutôt, correspondant à l'univers en marge du monde qui est créé sur la scène. Le corps, le vêtement sont eux-mêmes geste et signification. Le personnage est, mieux que défini, concrétisé par la silhouette qui le dessine.¹⁵

On one level the absurd, animated silhouettes of the two tramps in the 'landscape' of nothingness evoke a sense of inappropriateness. Their presence does not 'fit' into the world as it is depicted. Or, to see it in another way, it corresponds to the whole universe lacking in proportion and definition which is created on the stage. Secondly, the 'silhouettes' we are watching constantly evoke a sense of precarious balance, as when Vladimir and Estragon try to do the 'tree', a balancing exercise from yoga, or when all four characters end up prostrate in a heap and they are unable to get up. Furthermore, the awkwardness which characterizes the clown and, in particular, the clumsiness

of gesture which forms part of the role are used by Beckett to *create significance*. Especially effective is the sense of physical discomfort which centres on Estragon's struggles with his shoes and Vladimir's difficulty with his hat. The ill-fitting boots and dilapidated derby hats which Beckett's tramps clearly inherited from Charlie Chaplin become a means of concretizing half-mockingly, half-seriously, the struggles of essential man with the material world which he cannot control, his sense of discomfort with his physical presence in the world, his 'thereness' or being in the world.

Finally, the role of clown in which Beckett casts his characters has yet another interesting implication which J-J. Mayoux (1967:20) explains as follows:

Le clown, c'est justement, l'acteur pur, non point l'interprète d'un rôle, mais celui qui fait son 'numero', entendons sa parodie personnelle de l'homme, de la vie, des comportements.¹⁶

As clown, the actor is separated from an 'impersonization' of a particular individual. His parody of life, man and human behaviour in general is non-illusionistically 'enacted' in the presence of *spectators who are included in the 'act'*. The kind of *Verfremdungseffekt* we have here is, however, very different from that aimed at by Brecht. In case the spectator should be tempted to sit back and merely laugh at the antics of two clown-like tramps on the stage, the scenic illusion is deliberately broken on several occasions by the sarcastic humour of the actor. For example:

Estragon: Endroit délicieux. (*Il se retourne, avance jusqu' à la rampe, regarde vers le public.*) Aspects riants. (*Il se tourne vers Vladimir.*) Allons-nous-en.¹⁷

(Beckett 1952:16)

or:

Vladimir (regard circulaire): L'endroit te semble familier?
... *Tout de même* ... cet arbre ... (*se tournant vers le public*) ...
cette tourbière.¹⁸

(p. 18)

And once again, once more referring to the 'place' where they find themselves:

Estragon (soudain furieux): Reconnais! Qu'est ce qu'il y a à reconnaître? J'ai tiré ma roulure de vie au milieu des sables! Et tu veux que je vois des nuances! (*Regard circulaire.*) Regarde-moi cette saloperie! Je n'en ai jamais bougé!¹⁹

(pp. 85–86)

The laugh is clearly on the spectator as well, who is uncomfortably made aware that he is *part of* the bleak landscape evoked. In other words, the *regard circulaire* of the actor encompasses the inner landscape which is the basic condition of 'unaccommodated' man, shared by stage characters and spectators alike. A feature of absurdist drama is, then, its conception of role as parody. The character/actor, ironically aware that he is playing a role, is an essentially modern phenomenon. What is achieved is an *undercutting of any role-identification* and, by implication, *any value system underpinning the role*.

In Fugard's *Boesman and Lena* (1969) the elaborate self-parody of the characters has a dual function. They mock the whites and the 'system' by affecting an exaggerated servility, but they also mock themselves in their degradation. The sarcasm or irony implicit in their 'role playing' undercuts the underlying scheme and hence its intrinsic meaning.

Pinter, in *The homecoming* (1965), debunks civilization itself. The play seems to start on a solid naturalistic base. Initially both the set and the behaviour of the characters lead one to expect a mundane drama with a conventional familial role distribution. However, the tensions created through the dialogue and telling gestures soon shatter this illusion as the hidden motivations of the characters are allowed to surface. Pinter's use of the *ironic mode* becomes evident: underneath the seemingly ordinary, civilized behaviour of the characters primitive passions are revealed, and each situation develops into a dramatically powerful struggle for dominance. The contradictions in the references to Jessie (the dead mother) and Ruth (the 'visiting' daughter/sister-in-law) are operative on two levels. On the surface there are the conventional clichés, the ready-made 'romanticism' of the idealized mother figure. But beneath the conventionalized roles and relationships lie the primitive impulses, desires and confrontations of the male and female principles. Ruth, who functions on an instinctual level, recognizes the need of the males for the female who functions both as whore and mother and this increases her

manipulative power. From another angle, but on an equally basic or primitive level, the males are locked in a power struggle. Max, the aging male, is dimly aware of his diminishing powers. His position is threatened by the younger males. So what Pinter is actually showing are areas of *interaction* that lie beneath the veneer of civilized behaviour with its set roles underpinned by societal conventions, norms, so-called moral values. He exposes the *subliminal desires and conflicts* that operate beneath the *clichéd responses* mouthed by the characters.

Finally, a playwright such as Genet *questions the reality of any role and consequently any underlying meaning*. His is a theatre of total illusion. Whereas Pirandello, throughout his oeuvre [cf. in particular *Così è se vi pare* (1918)], and Max Frisch [cf. *Andorra* (1961)] also explore illusion in relation to the problem of identity, showing the interchangeability of appearance and reality by means of dramatic parables, Genet assumes that identity can only exist as a role one chooses to play. The role is, however, determined by *the image formed by 'les Autres'* (the Others). In Genet's scheme man does not create meaning by fully assuming his chosen role, and so creating himself. He merely *plays* at being what he is, acting out a role assigned to him by himself and others. But he does not become the role; he acts out the image of the role. Coe (1968:19) sums up Genet's vision as follows:

Appearance is reality, argues Sartre. Appearance is *more* than reality, counters Genet: the mask is more real than the face; to pretend to act, or to act a pretence, is more essential than sincerity — in a word, all reality is theatre, and the subtleties of showmanship are the *ne plus ultra* of integrity.

The act or gesture seems to exist for Genet as an autonomous power (Magnan 1966:136–137). Its essential symbolic significance lies in its potentiality to transform whoever performs it into the *archetypal image* portended by the act or gesture in question. But, as Genet insists equally on the blankness behind every action, his 'personae' can never *be* the Image. They can only reflect the image of the Image. Hence his obsessive interest in *travesty*. 'My characters,' says Genet, 'are all Masks. How do you expect me to tell you whether they are true or false?' (Quoted by Hassan 1971:280.) He cannot, because the mask and the face present a dichotomy. The mask is the image and behind the image is the void.

The *theatre* is the *perfect symbol* for Genet's vision. That is why his plays are concerned with the theatrical event as a theatrical event. The actors playing their roles project an image which we, the audience, attribute to them. They are only projections of what we condemn them to be. As Archibald, who compères *Les nègres* (1958), subtitled a 'clownerie' by Genet, states:

Nous sommes sur cette scène semblables à des coupables qui, en prison, joueraient à être des coupables.²⁰

(Genet 1963)

The roles of the Blacks projecting the image of Blackness can only be played out as the mirror-opposite of the Whites (the audience) whose presence is required to confirm and ratify the image of Blackness. The audience is deliberately identified as 'white' and attention is drawn to the role-playing of the actors:

Vous êtes Blancs. Et spectateurs. Ce soir nous jouerons pour vous La distance qui nous sépare, originelle, nous l'augmenterons par nos fastes, nos manières, notre insolence — car nous sommes aussi des comédiens.²¹

The roles of the Blacks project the image of Blackness by a white audience. Conversely the Blacks on stage also have their image of Whiteness. As Martin Esslin (1966:170) points out:

The white audience in the theatre is confronted by a grotesque mirror image of itself on the stage. The Negro actors stand between two audiences of whites. The stage audience consists, however, of the Negroes' fantasy image of the white man, embodied in the hierarchy of power in a colonial society — the queen, haughty and remote; her governor; her judge; her missionary; and her valet, who plays the part of the artist or intellectual who lends his services to the hierarchy of power while not strictly belonging to it. It is significant that queen, judge, bishop and general (the governor is a military man) are identical with the figures of the hierarchy of power in *The Balcony*.

The 'spectacle' which is to be performed will be a symbolic rejection of 'whiteness'. The play will be a rite of death in which the nostalgia and sadness which is all that remains of 'white' values will be 'embellished', that is to say ritually done to death. However, the outrage

upon the sensibilities of the Whites is seen as necessary for the self-realization of the Blacks:

Archibald: ... Puisqu'on nous renvoie à l'image et qu'on nous y noie, que cette image les fasse grincer des dents.²²

(p. 57)

What is more, the opposition of Black and White must be seen as polarities: 'white' is positive, 'black' is negative; love is 'white', hatred is 'black'. Hence for the Black, love is a temptation which has to be repulsed. The force of *rapprochement* must be resisted through deliberate effort in the opposite direction. Against the 'white' world of necessity, harmony and law, Genet posits the opposing principle of gratuity, chaos and irrationality, symbolized by hatred and the dream of the ultimate gesture of revolt and rejection, murder. But in spite of the intricately worked out symbolism involved in the black/white dichotomy, the 'ceremony' derisively draws attention to itself as a mockery in order to make the audience feel that what they are watching is merely a distorted mirror-image, a grotesque clownerie. Even the form of the play moves against itself: form becomes anti-form and ritual anti-ritual as Genet pursues his dialectic of rejection with ruthless consistency.

The whole series of masquerades which make up the play is, in fact, a *parody of role-identification*. That is why the drama is constantly transformed into a play within a play, within a play. Archibald reminds the audience:

Un comédien ... Un Nègre ... s'ils veulent tuer, irréaliment même leurs couteaux.²³

(p. 164)

The 'distantiation' which Genet labours to achieve is part of his *reduction* of all *reality* to the *illusory nature of the theatrical event*. Genet's whole play is, in fact, a brilliant exploitation of the topos in which the world is compared to a theatrical performance. The theatre is based on illusion, and so, Genet implies, is the world. Behind the illusion is the Void. This is visually enacted when the central symbol of the play, the catafalque, is at a given moment suddenly revealed as two chairs over which a white cloth has been draped. This revelation, of course, deflates the last vestige of dramatic tension built up round

the idea of the 'murder' of a white woman by the Blacks, thus helping to reduce the whole spectacle to empty clowning. At the same time the very element of clowning, which is operative throughout the play, becomes an aesthetic medium through which Genet can stylize his vision of the world. In other words, the clownery 'corporealizes' the *reductio ad absurdum* of reality itself. Not only the actors, however, but also the audience are cleverly drawn into the circle of factitious 'role playing'. The simultaneous interaction of three separate groups — the Blacks, the Court, and the Audience — is almost Pirandellian. At one point the audience is directly drawn into the action when a member of the public has to step on to the stage to hold the knitting of Diouf as the *petite bourgeoise* while 'she' gives her imaginary performance of a Gounod melody on an invisible piano. At the end of the elaborately worked out dramatic game of masques which is the play, we have watched Diouf as well as the other *dramatis personae*, that is, the different members of the cast, pass through a bewildering array of travesties, each one of which has merely served to lead us deeper into Genet's Hall of Mirrors.

In *Le balcon* (1955) Genet focuses even more specifically on the notion of role-playing. The setting is Madame Irma's brothel, the Grand Balcony, which is really a 'house of illusions' — a hall of mirrors to which the customers come to act out their fantasies of power and sex. The brothel is 'also a kind' of theatre, with Madame Irma as its producer and impresario' (Esslin 1966:164). The element of theatricality is evident in the emphasis on the props to be provided and the supporting cast which is necessary for the role transformations. In accordance with Genet's vision, the role can only be realized as a mirror-reflection of the image determined by 'the Others'; so there has to be *reciprocal role-playing between spectator and actor*, between paying customer and pandering performer. What is implied by the play as a whole is that all the world is a brothel. The role-playing of the characters in Madame Irma's brothel-theatre is no more real — or unreal — than that of their counterparts in the 'real' world. The actress who plays Madame Irma makes the point explicitly in her parting shot at the audience near the end of the play:

... il faut rentrer chez vous, où tout, n'en doutez pas, sera encore plus faux qu'ici ...²⁴

(Genet 1968:135)

III REVIEW (Jeanette Ferreira-Ross and Michael Macnamara)

What considerations has this reconnaissance of SRM, done in relation to drama, brought to light? Many different veins could be traced, but to offer just a few examples:

- 1 In *general* terms, it is suggested that SRM may be used as an explorative 'viewing apparatus' through which various aspects of drama may be considered from a new perspective and be more sharply perceived. Two such aspects are the shifts in focus on, and depth of attention to, the various components of SRM.

To exemplify this:

- (a) Drama, by its very nature, is public and — in a sense — a communal art form. It therefore necessarily reflects, or comments on, the central preoccupations, or the very conception of existential meaning, of the group or society whose presence is implicit. (Cf. the satirical elements in the comedies of Shakespeare, Jonson or Molière — not dealt with in the present context.)
- (b) The SRM viewing apparatus reveals a clear shift, in attitude, from a simple acceptance of an existing motivating scheme — say an early ancestral type — to the scrutiny and even rejection of an extant well-developed scheme. An instance is the criticism and dismissal of the traditional ethical-theistic scheme by the non-theistic existentialists.
- (c) Also revealed is a wide ontological shift in underpinning schemes, from the paternalistic medieval one, through the late 19th-century vision of a hostile world, to the 20th-century conception of an absurd universe.
- (d) Quite noticeable is the increasing complexity, concomitant with the increasing complexity and/or fragmentation of the underpinning scheme, of the role component. This component ranges from the simple and complete role-identification of earlier types, through the splitting of the representative univocal role into a multivocality of roles, to the conception of role as parody.
- (e) Then there is the variation, during the history of drama, of another kind of factor: the nature and degree of involvement of specta-

tors/audience, say from the group-bonding involvement in early ritual, via the subsequent conception occurring in the 'two worlds' (fourth-wall) approach to drama, to various techniques of distanciation. The effect of audience distanciation is to stimulate critical awareness and objectivity, to jolt the audience into a recognition of role manipulation within the parameters of the presented scheme, so that the scheme itself is undermined and the spectators'/audience's own role is reassessed.

- (f) Moving to a different dramatic-theoretic level: individuals have roles in a project or play; but, as anticipated in Section I and illustrated in Section II, drama itself has a role in the framework of society, and perceptions of this role have varied widely according to times and dramatic trends. The earlier manifestations of drama almost invariably confirm the spectators'/audience's world view, whereas later drama tends to encourage a questioning of any underpinning scheme.
- 2 From a *philosophical* viewpoint, the following further sample of considerations may be offered:
- (a) Reference to examples from drama has thrown light on the scheme-role *model* of existential meaning itself. To instantiate:
- (i) As shown in both Sections I and II, each of the key terms 'scheme' and 'role' is substantially multivocal. Neglect of this fact would (as analysts have long been generally aware) easily lead to conceptual confusion and the manufacture of pseudo-problems in talk about existential meaning.
- (ii) A single-role/single-scheme model of meaning is inadequate: multiple roles and schemes — existing in harmony, isolation or conflict — occur both in drama and real life (apologies to the absurdists). Where there is a tension between roles, this strain can result in either a loss (cf. Hamlet) or a generation (cf. Everyman) of existential meaning. Nor need one role dominate the others (cf. Chehov). Moreover, there are roles within roles within ... (cf. Genet).
- (b) Though one can focus attention on either of the concepts 'scheme' or 'role' to the seeming exclusion of the other, the two concepts are, in at least one interpretation, really polar: one could not have the notion of an operative human scheme without the notion of

people having roles in it; nor could one have the parameters of a going, non-closet drama without actresses/actors performing roles in it. Looking at the other side of the coin: if an actress is said to have some role, then *in what* scheme or drama is her role defined? In similar vein, one may question whether certain dramatists can justifiably imply, without further ado, that a mask can be false or 'true' (Genet), or that appearance and reality are interchangeable (Pirandello). *What* is it that a mask conceals or disguises? And what is it that something is an appearance *of*? Have there, or have there not, been inadvertent terminological shifts in the dramatists' theorizing?

(c) There are, besides the 'epistemological' considerations above, also moral ones. To indicate two:

(i) The imposition of roles — engineered in whatsoever fashion — can have a decidedly corrupting effect by bringing about a loss of identity or a lapse into bad faith (cf. Marivaux's *Silvia* and *Arlequin*).

(ii) As the big schemes that power the conduct of individuals, or even societies, change — for instance, from the medieval Christian world view to the existentialist or absurdist ones of the 20th century — so the very conception of the moral role, 'the moral life' itself, alters accordingly. And sometimes a change in schemes itself results from an individual's electing to act outside the received roles.

Several questions that are implicit or explicit in Sections I and II have, of course, been left dangling for want of elbow-room. To end with one such dangler, though one of the more elevated and comprehensive kind: What would a depth study of the revealed facets of the SRM concept, made with specific reference to two major world views — say the ethical-theistic world view as well as the scientific-deterministic one — bring to light, both as regards the two world views and the scheme-role model itself?

Notes

- 1 Man is an actor; play is the expression of the reality which he lives.
- 2 I am indebted to Prof E. J. de Jager and Mr V. Z. Gitywa of the University of Fort Hare for background information, detailed observation, as well as for the exact words and their translation as used in the ceremony.

- 3 I have done what I had to do, I do what I must. (My translation)
- 4 ... and Death, that rots
My eyes of clearness, to the day they soil
Restores its purity. (Racine 1960c:225)
- 5 ... Rome has her rights
My lord; have you not yours? (Racine 1960c:161)
- 6 Compel your love to silence: with an eye
Enlightened both by honour and by reason
Look on my duty in its sternest guise. (Racine 1960c:158)
- 7 ... I loved, my lord.
I loved, I wanted to be loved ... (Racine 1960c:171)
- 8 ... I shall go on living now.
I shall obey your absolute commands.
Farewell, my Lord. Reign. I shall not see you more.
(Racine 1960c:171)
- 9 I love him, and I flee him. Titus loves me,
And he forsakes me ... (Racine 1960c:172)
- 10 For the crystallization of these insights I am indebted to D. W. Lloyd, *The tragic sense of Eugene O'Neill*, MA dissertation, Unisa, 1982.
- 11 Each man must invent his path.
- 12 You see me, men of Argos, you understand that my crime is wholly mine; I claim it as my own, for all to know, it is my glory, my life's work, and you can neither punish me nor pity me. That is why I fill you with fear. (Sartre 1962:315)
- 13 Human life begins on the far side of despair.
- 14 In the first Act Didi wears a black jacket, which is much too small for him and which obviously belongs to Gogo, with his well-fitting, striped trousers; Gogo, in turn, wears a much-too-big striped jacket from Didi's wardrobe with his well-fitting black trousers. In the second Act the articles of clothing are switched around. A similar inverted relation applies to the costumes of the other pair: Pozzo's trousers with the lozenger pattern typical of the circus clown go with Lucky's jacket. 'We are mankind' — this sentence is made evident through the costumery.
- 15 The costume has no harmonious proportions. The exaggerated, ridiculous details sketch an unbalanced silhouette, misadapted to the world, or rather, corresponding to the marginal universe created on stage. The body and the clothing in themselves convey the elements of the gestural and the meaning. The character, more than being defined, is concretized by the silhouette which designates him.
- 16 The clown, precisely, is the actor pure and simple, not the interpreter of the role, but someone who performs his 'act', that is, his personal parody of man, life, behaviour.
- 17 *Est*: Charming spot. (*He turns, advances to front, halts facing auditorium.*) Inspiring prospects. (*He turns to Vlad.*) Let's go. (Beckett 1955:13)
- 18 *Vlad*: (*looking round*). You recognize this place?
... All the same ... that tree ... (*turning towards the auditorium*) ... that fog. (Beckett 1955:14–15)

- 19 *Est: (suddenly furious)*. Recognize! What is there to recognize? All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud! And you talk to me about scenery! (*Looking wildly about him*) Look at this muckheap! I've never stirred from it! (Beckett 1955:61)
- 20 On this stage we're like guilty prisoners who play at being guilty. (Genet 1960:32)
- 21 You are White. And spectators. This evening we shall perform for you We shall increase the distance that separates us — a distance that is basic — by our pomp, our manners, our insolence — for we are also actors. (Genet 1960:12)
- 22 *Arch*: ... Since they merge us with an image and drown us in it, let the image set their teeth on edge! (Genet 1960:32)
- 23 An Actor ... a Negro ... who wants to kill turns even his knife into something make-believe. (Genet 1960:86)
- 24 ... You must now go home, where everything — you can be quite sure — will be falsier than here ... (Genet 1962:96)

Bibliography

For Section I

- Aristotle. 4th century BC. *Ethics*. English translation from the Greek by J. Warrinton, 1963, London: Dent.
- Basnett-McGuire, S. 1980. An introduction to theatre semiotics. *Theatre quarterly*, vol. 38, pp. 47–53.
- Beckett, S. 1965. *Waiting for Godot*. 2nd edition. London: Faber & Faber.
- Britton, K. 1969. *John Stuart Mill*. 2nd ed. Dover Books.
- Camus, A. 1942. *Le mythe de Sisyphe*. English translation from the French by J. O'Brien, 1955, *The myth of Sisyphus*. London: Hamish Hamilton.
- Chang Hêng. c. 130. *The bones of Chuang Tzu*. English translation from the Chinese by A. Waley, 1982, *Chinese poems*. London: Unwin (pp. 59–61).
- Chesterton, G. K. 1936. *Autobiography*. New York: Sheed & Ward.
- Dante Alighieri. c. 1320. *Divina commedia*. English translation from the Italian by E. Gardner, 1908, *The divine comedy*. London: Dent.
- Dostoevsky, F. M. 1866. *Crime and punishment*. English translation from the Russian, 1911. London: Dent.
- Elam, K. 1980. *The semiotics of theatre and drama*. London: Methuen.
- Hobbes, T. 1651. *Leviathan*. Various editions, including that of W. Molesworth, 1839, *The English works of Thomas Hobbes* (11 vols).
- Huxley, J. 1948. 'Life can be worth living', in his *Man in the modern world*. New York: Mentor.
- Lewis, A. 1971. *Contemporary theatre*. New York: Crown.
- Macnamara, M. 1976. *Philosophy, life and meaning*. Pretoria, University of South Africa, Miscellanea Series No. 7.
- Macnamara, M. (Ed.) 1977. *Meaning in life*. Johannesburg: Ad Donker.
- Macnamara, M. & Postma-de Beer, Z. 1988. Hobbes and existential meaning. *SA Journal of Philosophy*, 7(1):9–17.

- Mill, J. S. 1873. *Autobiography*. London: Longmans, Green (ch. 5, A crisis in my mental history ...).
- Nietzsche, F. 1883–1893. Also *sprach Zarathustra*. English translation from the German by A. Tille & M. Bozman, 1933, *Thus spake Zarathustra*. London: Dent.
- O'Neill, E. 1947. *The Iceman cometh*. London: Jonathan Cape (1966).
- Pater, W. 1885. *Marius the Epicurean*. London: Dent (1934).
- Sappho. c. 600 BC. *Poems*. English translation from the Greek by M. Barnard, 1966. University of California Press.
- Sartre, J.-P. 1938. *La nausée*. English translation from the French by R. Baldick, 1965, *Nausea*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin.
- Sartre, J.-P. 1943. *L'Être et le néant*. English translation from the French by H. E. Barnes, 1956, *Being and nothingness*. New York: Philosophical Library.
- Sellars, R. W. 1926. *Principles and problems of philosophy*. London: Collier-Macmillan.
- Tolstoy, L. 1886. *The death of Ivan Ilych*. English translation from the Russian by L. & A. Maude, 1935. London: Oxford University Press.
- Tolstoy, L. 1888. *A confession*. English translation from the Russian by A. Maude, 1921. London: Oxford University Press.
- Wisdom, J. 1965. *Paradox and discovery*. Oxford: Blackwell (ch. 4, The meaning of the questions of life).

For Section II

Note: The date in square brackets refers to the original date of publication/production in the original language.

- Aeschylus. 1962 [458 BC]. *The Oresteia*. In *Greek tragedies*. 3 vols. Edited by Grene, David and Lattimore. Richmond. University of Chicago Press.
- Beckett, Samuel. 1952. *En attendant Godot*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit.
- Beckett, Samuel. 1955 [1952]. *Waiting for Godot*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Bolt, Sydney. 1985. *Hamlet*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin.
- Brecht, Bertolt. 1967. *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 15. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Brown, Verna. 1988. 'Lilies that fester': a study of thwarted idealism in 'Julius Caesar', 'Hamlet' and 'Measure for measure'. MA dissertation, Unisa.
- Brustein, Robert. 1969. *The theatre of revolt*. London: Methuen.
- Chehov, A. 1962a [1901]. *The three sisters*. In Chehov, 1962c, pp. 249–330.
- Chehov, A. 1962b [1904]. *The cherry orchard*. In Chehov, 1962c, pp. 333–398.
- Chehov, Anton. 1962c. *Plays*. Translated from the Russian by Elisaveta Fen. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin.
- Coe, Richard, N. 1968. *The vision of Jean Genet*. London: Owen.
- Congreve, William. 1971 (1700). *The way of the world* (New Mermaids). London: Benn.

- Corneille, Pierre. 1984 (1637). *Le Cid*. In *Théâtre complet*. Tome I, vol. 2. Publications de l'Université de Rouen, pp. 650-703.
- De Vries, Ad. 1974. *Dictionary of symbols and imagery*. Amsterdam: North-Holland.
- Eberle, Oskar. 1953-1954. *Cenalora, Leben, Glaube, Tanz und Theater der Urvölker*. In *Schweizer Theater-Jahrbuch*. Bd. 22-23. Olten und Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter.
- Edwards, Philip. 1983. *Tragic balance in Hamlet*. *Shakespeare Survey*, vol. 36, pp. 43-53.
- Esslin, Martin. 1966. *The theatre of the absurd*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode.
- 'Everyman' and *medieval miracle plays*. 1956 (c. 1500). Edited by A. C. Crawley. London: Dent.
- Falk, Doris. 1958. *Eugene O'Neill and the tragic tension*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Foucre, Michèle. 1970. *Le geste et la parole dans le théâtre de Samuel Beckett*. Paris: Nizet.
- Frisch, Max. 1964 (1961). *Andorra*. Translated from the German by Michael Bullock. London: Methuen.
- Frobenius, Léo. 1933. *Histoire de la civilisation africaine*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Fugard, Athol. 1981 (1969). *Boesman and Lena*. In 'Boesman and Lena' and other plays. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Genet, Jean. 1968 (1955). *Le balcon*. In *Oeuvres complètes*. Tome IV. Paris: Gallimard, pp. 39-135.
- Genet, Jean. 1962 (1955). *The balcony*. Translated from the French by Bernard Fechtman. London: Faber & Faber.
- Genet, Jean. 1963 (1958). *Les nègres*. Décines (Isère): L'Arbalète.
- Genet, Jean. 1960 (1958). *The blacks*. Translated from the French by Bernard Fechtman. London: Faber & Faber.
- Goldmann, Lucien. 1964. *The hidden God: a study of tragic vision in the Pensées of Pascal and the tragedies of Racine*. Translated from the French by Philip Thody. London: Routledge & Kegan.
- Greimas, A. J. 1972. *Sémantique structurale*. Paris: Larousse.
- Gurr, Andrew. 1978. *Hamlet and the distracted globe*. Edinburgh: Sussex University Press.
- Hassan, Ihab. 1971. *The dismemberment of Orpheus: toward a postmodern literature*. Oxford: University Press.
- Huizinga, Johan. 1949. *Homo ludens: a study of the play-element in culture*. Translated from the Dutch by R. F. C. Hull. London: Routledge & Kegan.
- Ibsen, Henrik. 1962 (1881). *Ghosts*. Translated from the Norwegian by Michael Meyer. London: Hart-Davis.
- Ibsen, Henrik. 1962 (1884). *The wild duck*. Translated from the Norwegian by Michael Meyer. London: Hart Davis.
- Ibsen, Henrik. 1962 (1890). *Hedda Gabler*. Translated from the Norwegian by Michael Meyer. London: Hart-Davis.
- Magnan, Jean-Marie. 1966. *Essai sur Jean Genet*. Paris: Seghers.

- Marivaux, Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de. 1968 (1723). *La double inconstance*. In *Théâtre complet*. Tome I. Paris: Garnier, pp. 255–315.
- Marlowe, Christopher. 1978 (c. 1589). *Doctor Faustus*. London: Benn.
- Mayoux, J.-J. 1967. Samuel Beckett: Homme de théâtre. In *Livres de France*, 1 (Jan. 1967), 20; quoted by Foucre, 1970:31.
- Michaelis, Rolf. 1975. Gewalt wird immer: Becketts Warten auf Godot, vom Autor in Berlin inzeniert. *Theater Heute*, 16(4):16–20, April.
- Moore, Will G. 1961. *French classical literature*. Oxford: University Press.
- O'Neill, Eugene. 1976 (1947). *The Iceman cometh*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- O'Neill, Eugene. 1953 (1924). *Desire under the elms*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- O'Neill, Eugene. 1975 (1931). *Mourning becomes Electra*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- O'Neill, Eugene. 1979 (1941). *Long day's journey into night*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Pinter, Harold. 1983 (1965). *The homecoming*. London: Methuen.
- Pirandello, Luigi. *Right you are! (if you think so)*. 1962 (1918). Translated from the Italian by Frederick May. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin.
- Racine, Jean. 1964 (1670). *Bérénice*. In *Théâtre complet de Racine*. Tome I. Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, pp. 383–432.
- Racine, Jean. 1965 (1677). *Phèdre*. In *Théâtre complet de Racine*. Tome II. Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, pp. 202–252.
- Racine, J. 1960a. Berenice. In *Racine*, 1960c, pp. 127–172.
- Racine, J. 1960b. Phaedra. In *Racine*, 1960c, pp. 179–225.
- Racine, Jean. 1960c. *Racine: five plays*. Translated from the French into English verse by Kenneth Muir. Macgibbon & Kee.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1962. *The flies*. Translated from the French by Stuart Gilbert. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1947. *Les mouches*. In *Théâtre*. Tome I. Paris: Gallimard, pp. 13–121.
- Shakespeare, William. 1953 (c. 1590). *Titus Andronicus*. Edited by J. C. Maxwell (The Arden edition). London: Methuen.
- Shakespeare, William. 1982 (c. 1601). *Hamlet*. Edited by Harold Jenkins (The Arden edition). London: Methuen.
- Wilson, Monica. 1954. Nyakusa ritual and symbolism, *American Anthropologist*, 56(2):228–240.

Curriculum vitae

Michael Raymond Harley Macnamara

PERSONAL

Born in Bloemfontein, 1925.

Schools: Waterkloof House Preparatory School and Pretoria Boys' High School.

Married to Amy. Two sons, Robert and James.

DEGREES

Studied for all his degrees through Unisa. BA (1961) cum laude; BA Hons (1962) cum laude; MA (1963) cum laude; DLitt et Phil (1969).

THESES

M: *Ryle's concept of philosophical analysis*. xiii + 157 pp.

D: *Trying: a conceptual analysis*. vii + 161 pp.

LECTURING, RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

(1) Joined the Philosophy Department, University of South Africa in 1964. Lecturer 1964-67; Senior Lecturer 1967-74; Professor 1974-89; Head of Department, 1981-89; Emeritus Professor, from 1990. Co-ordinator, master's and doctoral studies in philosophy, 1981-89.

(2) Doctoral research at University of Oxford, Director Gilbert Ryle, 1966.

Origination and co-ordination of joint small-group research in philosophy, University of South Africa, 1983-89. The latter research involved co-operation with members of several other Unisa departments and members of external bodies, including the CSIR (physics and fundamental standards), University of the Witwatersrand (Zoology Department), and Transvaal Museum (palaeontology and evolution).

(3) Community service included contributing the opening lecture, 'What is a "great philosopher?"', to the first of an explorative series, *Six great Western philosophers*, presented publicly by the Institute for Continuing Education, Pretoria, 1989.

(4) Started interdisciplinary discussion group (T-group) at Unisa, 1976. Responsible for selecting themes, organizing programmes and meetings and leading discussions. This informal inter-departmental group ran annually for 13 years (1976–88) and had a floating membership drawn from primarily the following Unisa departments: African Languages, Chemistry, Classics, Communication, English, Geography, German, History, History of Art and Fine Art, Library and Information Science, Linguistics, Mathematics, Musicology, Philosophy, Physics, Political Science, Psychology, Romance Languages, Semitics and Sociology. There were various spin-offs, for example into books, articles and study guides.

PUBLICATIONS

Books, contributions & communications

Philosophy

1976. *Philosophy, life and meaning*. Pretoria: Unisa (Miscellanea No. 7). vi + 28 pp. Inaugural lecture.
1977. *Life and meaning* (editor and contributor). Johannesburg: Ad Donker. 188 pp. Paperback edition. 1987.
1980. *World views* (editor and contributor). Pretoria: Van Schaik. viii + 333 pp.
1989. 'Holism', p. 137 in J. Urmson & J. Rée (eds), *Concise encyclopedia of Western philosophy and philosophers*. London: Unwin Hyman. Revised edition. xiii + 331 pp.

Creative writing and arts

1976. *The falls run back* (poetry volume). Johannesburg: Ophir/Ravan. 48 pp.
1981. *Joggo & Jezz*, including *The butterflies* and *Twelve J/J fragments* (poetry volume: 4-decker, in *Bateleur Poets* series). Johannesburg: Bateleur. 53 pp.

1985. *Walter Battiss*. Co-editor (with K. Skawran). Johannesburg: Ad Donker. 222 pp., 57 colour plates, 100 black-and-white figures. Including co-authorship (with J. Wilkinson & I. Powell) of chapter 2, 'Battiss and understanding: the philosophy of art', pp. 30-39.

Articles and academic letters

These include the following:

1955. Variable high-pass filters. *Electronics & Wireless World*, 61(2):71.
1965. The psycho-physical problem. *SA Journal of Philosophy* (old series), (2):1-8.
1965. On the pattern a:b::c:d in analogical reasoning. *SA Journal of Philosophy* (old series), (3):91-96.
1967. Can machines produce art? *De Arte*, 1(2):28-35.
1967. A look at truth. *Unisa English Studies*, (4):41-58.
1968. The egocentric assumption and theories of imaging. *SA Journal of Philosophy* (old series), (7):1-6.
1969. Imaging and imagining. *Unisa English Studies*, (2):46-50.
1970. The concept of representation. *De Arte*, (7):34-38.
1970. Ineffability reconsidered. *Unisa English Studies*, (1):27-32.
1971. The Pasquino Society. *SA Libraries*, 38(4):256-259.
1973. The meaning of L: return of another exile? *Unisa English Studies*, 11(3):33-43.
1977. The inception of the research project. In A. Louw (ed.), *Perspectives on post-graduate tuition*. Pretoria: Unisa, pp. 20-25.
1980. Paper No. 7. In *University education*. Pretoria: Unisa, pp. 76-78.
1981. Discussion note. *Philosophical Papers*, 10(1):35-36.
1982. Basic postulates and time-standard stability. *SA Journal of Philosophy*, 1(3):83-97.
1984. A conceptual map of evolutionism (co-author E. S. Vrba). *SA Journal of Philosophy*, 3(1):13-21.
1984. Homer's wine (puzzle of the wine-dark sea). *Nature*, 307 (5952):590.
1984. Enough of Homer. *Nature*, 311(5988):700.
1984. The recognition concept of species (co-author H. E. H. Pateron). *SA Journal of Science*, 80(7):312-318.

1985. 'Elegance' in science and mathematics (co-authors W. Kistner & J. Wilkinson). *SA Journal of Philosophy*, 4(3):93-99.
1986. World views and mathematics (co-authors W. Kistner & J. Boers). *SA Journal of Philosophy*, 5(3):75-82.
1987. Logic and poetry (co-author W. Kistner). *Journal of Literary Studies*, 3(2):78-93.
1988. Hobbes and existential meaning (co-author Z. Postma-de Beer). *SA Journal of Philosophy*, 7(1):9-17.

Unisa study guides

Dates of first editions only are quoted:

Philosophy II & III:

1968. *Metaphysics: a conceptual-analytical approach*. vii + 156 pp.
1970. *Logical atomism*. iv + 23 pp.
1971. *Materialism and atomism*. vi + 271 pp.
1972. *Life and meaning. Guide 1*. v + 156 pp.
1973. *Meaning in life. Guide 2. A survey of views*. viii + 154 pp.
1976. *World-pictures*. vii + 123 pp.

Philosophy honours:

1973. *Existentialism*. 11 pp.
1974. *The empiricists*. 43 pp.
1974. *Imagination*. 21 pp.

Papers read at various institutions, congresses and symposia

These include the following:

1967. 'Machines and art'. Symposium, University of South Africa.
1968. 'Imagination'. Annual Congress of Philosophical Society of Southern Africa, University of Lesotho.
- c. 1969. 'Effability and ineffability'. Seminar, University of South Africa, English Department.
- c. 1970. 'Representation (in art)'. Seminar, University of South Africa.
- c. 1971. 'Atomism'. Address to students, University of the North.
- c. 1971. 'Censorship'. Association of Arts, Pretoria.
- c. 1971. 'Censorship'. PEN, Cape Town. Trip funded by anonymous donor.

1972. 'Tolstoy and meaning in life'. Rotary, Pretoria.
1975. 'Life and meaning'. University of Natal, Philosophy Department, Durban campus.
1981. 'Time standards'. Annual Congress of Philosophical Society of Southern Africa, Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg.
- c. 1981. 'Tolstoy's Ivan Ilych'. University of the Witwatersrand, French Department.
1982. 'Logical positivism and existentialism'. Philosophical Society, University of the Witwatersrand.
1982. 'Determinism, fatalism and freedom'. RAU, English Department.
1983. 'Evolutionism'. Annual Congress of Philosophical Society of Southern Africa, University of the Witwatersrand.
1987. 'Legitimacy (in political philosophy)' (co-reader Z. Postma-de Beer). Annual Congress of the Philosophical Society of Southern Africa, Rhodes University.
1989. 'Drama and scheme-role meaning' (co-reader J. Ferreira-Ross). Annual Congress of the Philosophical Society of Southern Africa, Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria.

Talks at departmental philosophy seminars (Unisa)

1981. 'Creation and representation, with reference to high-fidelity sound reproduction'.
1982. 'Concept of trying'.
1983. 'Theory assessment'.
1985. 'The "substratum" in physics, with reference to Dirac'.
1986. 'Logic and poetry'.
1987. 'Concepts of mystery and wonder'.
1988. 'Logic, art and transformation'.
1989. 'Energy in physics' (based on an earlier discussion with the physicist E. Halliday).

Talks to interdisciplinary discussion group (Unisa)

Discussions led included the following first-of-series talks:

1976. 'An LP lyric' (analysis).
1979. 'Imagination'.
1980. 'Evaluation'.
1982. 'Concept of revolution'.

1983. 'What is "What is 'What is X?'"?'
1986. 'Is "relevance" relevant?'
1987. 'Towers and market-places'.
1988. 'Form and content: a notional reconnaissance'.

Poetry (creative writing)

(1) About 180 poems published in local and overseas journals and magazines, including: *Bloody Horse*, *Contrast*, *De Arte*, *Edge* (Canada), *English Academy Review*, *Expression* (England), *Labris* (Belgium), *New Coin*, *Ophir*, *Purple Renoster*, *Unisa English Studies*, *UpStream*, and *Workshop* (England).

(2) Poems reprinted in local and overseas anthologies, including:

1968. *Poet* (India), eds K. Srinivas & D. Botes.
1968. *Unisa English studies*, ed. R. Beeton.
1974. *Central almanac* (New Zealand), ed. P. Davies.
1979. *New book of SA verse in English*, eds G. Butler & C. Mann.
1981. *Century of SA poetry*, ed. M. Chapman.
1981. *Twenty-three SA poems*, eds R. Beeton & W Saunders.
1983. *Quarry*, ed. W. Saunders.
1986. *Celebrating friendship* (England), eds B. Frost & P. Webb.
1986. *Paperbook of SA English poetry*, ed. M. Chapman.
1988. *Give me words*, ed. A. Stones.

(3) Poems reprinted, or translated by others, in journals, magazines, newsletters, study guides and tutorial letters (English), and the press.

GENERAL

Unisa exhibitions for honours and master's studies. Grants for post-graduate research at Oxford University from British Council, Ernest Oppenheimer Memorial Trust, and Unisa.

Member inter alia of Philosophical Society of Southern Africa, English Academy of Southern Africa, Unisa Art Gallery Management Committee; one-time member of the Philosophical Society, Oxford, and Aristotelian Society, London; one-time member of Poets' Workshop, London, and Workshop Two, London.

External examiner, levels bachelor to doctor, at various times and for various universities, including Natal (Durban and Pietermaritzburg campuses), Witwatersrand, and RAU.

Initiator, visiting professor (overseas) programme in Unisa Philosophy Department, 1983–88. Visitors: Brian Farrell (Oxford), Richard Hare (Oxford/Florida), Richard Rorty (Princeton/Virginia) and Joseph Bocheński (Fribourg).

Chairman, Pasquino Society (formed to promote access to the arts in South Africa), 1969 & 1970.

Co-origination (with W. Saunders & P. Horn) of the poetry 'little magazine' *Ophir*.

Poetry read by invitation at various venues, including English Academy Conference (Rhodes, 1969), SA Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg, and University of the Witwatersrand. Poems broadcast in various SABC series.

Chief pre-academic experience, 1942–63: technical posts (electronics, physics) in coastal and airborne radar (Special Signals Service, SACS, SA and Egypt, World War 2), SABS, and CSIR (Research Institute for Mathematical Science).

Private cultural trips: Egypt and Palestine, 1945; Britain, Eire and France, 1949; Britain and Europe, 1966; Greece, 1983.

Interests: many, including literature, drama, art, music; physics, electrical and mechanical engineering, scientific cosmology.



ISBN 0 86981 664 0