AN ANALYSIS OF LA MORT DANS L'AME
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by

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: The aim of this study has been to review earlier criticism of La Mort dans l'Ame, which is mainly adverse, and to suggest that Sartre, with some success, used both the characters and the structure of the novel to explore imaginatively the philosophical ideas of L'Être et le Néant.
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INTRODUCTION

Critics of La Mort dans l'Ame, and of the novel sequence, have been less than generous in their appreciations. Almost all have attacked the characters, finding them empty and abstract, and some have included in their attacks the style and content, deploring the monotony of the former and regretting the violence of the latter. Thus André Rousseaux writes of the characters:

(•••) ces personnages ont une valeur très mince, parce qu'il leur manque ce que leur créateur aurait dû leur donner avant tout, c'est-à-dire la vie

and of the style:

Le souci de vérité naturaliste produit des dialogues inlassablement argotiques et orduriers, dont le vocabulaire est à base de nomenclature excrémentielle

while Philip Thody attacks Sartre on the content:

He has no conception of family life, no understanding of religion, (•••) and no awareness that members of the middle-class are not inevitably self-satisfied swine or tormented intellectuals.

And other critics have been equally sweeping in their denunciation.

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1"La Mort dans l'Ame", Le Figaro Littéraire, (October 22, 1949), p. 2
3E.g. "The ferocity with which he lambasts bourgeois 'stinkers' in Les Chemins de la Liberté and continues to attack them elsewhere must be partly due to the fact that he is working off on them his exasperation at being unable to achieve, in his own thought, a genuine transition from negative to positive," J. Weightman, "Jean-Paul Sartre", in The Novelist as Philosopher, ed. J. Cruickshank, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1
Yet none of these critics has made a detailed examination of Sartre’s technique, his ordering of incidents, or his structuring of characters. None has looked at the characters of the sequence from the inside. Thody and Cranston, for example, have assigned Mathieu and Daniel to certain categories, without looking beyond their representative function to find what is individual about the predicament of each. It is as if most critics had first decided that the sequence as we have it must be unsatisfactory because Sartre did not complete it, and had therefore denied it any close attention.

La Mort dans l’Ame, however, deserves study, if only because of its place in Sartre’s work. On the one hand, it is important in the development of his political thought. In 1946 Sartre had stated in "Matérialisme et Révolution" his reasons for not joining the Communist Party; briefly his objections were its claim to absolute authority, and

1962), "Ethics and Politics seem indeed to have invaded twentieth century fiction to the point of crowding out all other interests, including that of creating a work of art. It is as though some of the more gifted novelists of our time felt a pang of guilt every time they surrendered to the sheer joy of creativity." V. Brombert, The Intellectual Hero, (New York: Lippincott, 1960). Iris Murdoch has attempted a more detailed analysis (Sartre: Romantic Nationalist, London: Bowes & Bowes, 1965). But because she disagrees with Sartre on the fundamental aims of the novelist, her appreciation is not a totally sympathetic one.


In Les Temps Modernes, I (1946), 1537-63, I-II (1946), 1-52, later published in Situations III, (Paris: Gallimard, 1949). Further references to this article will be taken from the second source.
its refusal to accept criticism. Les Mains Sales, which first appeared in 1948, presented these difficulties dramatically through Hoederer’s single-minded opposition to the Party, and Hugo’s volte-face from obedience to rebellion; the conclusion was that each Party member is responsible, that the Party cannot be an excuse. In La Mort dans l’Ame and Drôle d’Amitié Sartre was able to express his doubts about the Party more subtly and more fully, though with less impact. Thus the novel throws light on Sartre’s ultimate decision in 1950 to cooperate with the Party without joining it.

On the other hand, La Mort dans l’Ame is important artistically. It is the last complete novel of the sequence and the last of Sartre. And since it was also the only novel Sartre published after his examination of the novel form in "Qu’est-ce que la Littérature?", it helps to clarify why he abandoned the form.

Finally the novel has an intrinsic interest, unrelated to the author’s development, which the critics have largely failed to bring out.

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6. The play was first presented at the Théâtre Antoine, Paris, April 2, 1948.
7. Paris: Gallimard, 1949. The edition used for this study was published by Gallimard in the Livre de Poche series in 1964.
10. In Les Temps Modernes, II (1947), 796-805, 961-88, 1164-1218, 1410-1429, 1609-41, Litter (1947), 77-114. It was later reprinted in Situations II, (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), and finally published separately, again by Gallimard in the Idées series in 1965. It is this last edition which will be used in this study.
The method used in this study needs a brief explanation here. Existential psychoanalysis proved illuminating in Sartre's studies of Baudelaire and Genet, where the projet original was uncovered and shown to permeate all levels of personality and thought. The use of a similar approach for the protagonists of the novel aims, therefore, at a basic interpretation of each character's attitude towards existence, which Sartre calls "un choix d'être". This method is not only suggested by Sartre's analyses of the personalities of writers, but grows naturally out of the novel itself. Firstly, each character is presented largely through his own consciousness, so that the viewpoint itself has to be analysed: it cannot be taken as the author's. Secondly, we are given a pointer to the method by the memories and dreams of childhood which direct our attention to the original upsurge of freedom. Thirdly, existential psychology alone provides an analysis beyond the complexes of the characters and examines each person as an individual rather than a type.

While the analyses presented in the first three chapters are far less subtle than Sartre's, it is hoped they will be none the less valid. Nor does the section dealing with the novel's structure (Chapter 4) pretend to be exhaustive. Its aim is to supplement and confirm the individual analyses by examining the way in which events and viewpoints are ordered. As Sartre has said: "Essayons de comprendre, c'est-à-dire de sympathiser".

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CHAPTER I

DANIEL

"Etre pédéraste, comme le chêne est chêne":¹ this is the basic significance of Daniel's fundamental project; to exist like an inanimate object and yet retain consciousness of being that object. In this Daniel is not alone, for every human project aims at being what is at the outset an ideal, aims at realising a perfect state of repose. But in Daniel's case the process has been short-circuited. As the result of an unspecified event in childhood,² Daniel has been alienated from himself; he has been told what he is already, presented with an essence which he cannot recognise as himself. That this essence is not that of the homosexual will be made clear later on; for the present, the specific essence is not the issue. What is important is that Daniel has broken some law of society, has been caught and condemned; he has been made to think that his essence is evil (in Le Sursis he says that he is "infiniment coupable"³), but he cannot feel that he is evil. This then is the basic

¹Le Sursis, (Paris: Gallimard Livre de Poche, 1963), p. 155
²Daniel's sole allusion to his childhood occurs when the Germans enter Paris (cf. infra p. 15): "(...) ces anges exterminateurs dont les regards lui rendaient une enfance," (La Mort dans l'Ame, p. 115). The evil restore his innocence, because the good took it away. This must mean that an act of Daniel provoked condemnation, made him guilty.
³P. 470
dilemma for Daniel: the adults, those people who are always right, have said that Daniel is wicked (not, that he has done wrong, or made a mistake); Daniel cannot recognise himself as wicked, but he must be so, he thinks, since it is the adults who have told him so. His existence then will focus on the attempt to realise this being, to feel in every act he performs that he is this _worthy_. The search for a method will lead him to hate society as a whole, to provoke its condemning look; then to divulge his essence to an individual, Mathieu; later, to constitute God as his witness; and finally to collaborate with the German forces occupying France in the Second World War.

Daniel's most striking feature is his preoccupation with the _regard d'autrui_. His attitude, however, is ambivalent; sometimes he provokes the Other's look, sometimes he resents it, and tries to avoid it. Let us examine first why he provokes _le regard_.

Two small incidents in _L'Ago de Raison_ reveal the pattern of his behaviour. Although it is hot, Daniel decides to wear a heavy sports jacket, knowing that he will appear ridiculous, and that he does not want to wear it at all. Later in the same scene he frightens a child, knowing that her mother will detest him; he is able to meet her stare, "paisiblement". In both cases, though the reaction provoked is

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4. The origins of this preoccupation lie in the childhood incident alluded to above. As Sartre shows in his study of Genet, the revelation of the wicked essence is linked indissolubly with the look which apprehends the criminal in the act of breaking the law. Cf. _Saint Genet_, pp. 23 ff.


6. p. 122

7. p. 129
different, Daniel is pretending to be someone else: the stars he
attracts do not attack Daniel himself, but a character he has assumed.
Sartre, writing about a similar attitude in Genet, says:

Puisque le mépris des hommes est inévitable, il s'agit
de le provoquer: ce nouveau venu ignore qui je suis et
me traite avec amitié; il n'y a pas de temps à perdre;
bientôt les gens vont le pousser du coude et le mettre
en garde contre moi.

The same attitude is evident in his relationship with Marcelle, but
here his rôle of "archange" is more developed. There is an important
difference, however; with Marcelle he will not try to provoke a
condemning look, but a sympathetic one. The reason is not hard to find.
Mathieu has told her about Daniel's mythomania so that she is wary of
him. Daniel's approach then is to destroy Mathieu's image of him and
substitute his own, that of the "archange". If Daniel has succeeded in
this, it is because Marcelle needs their secret relationship to supplement
the lifeless affair with Mathieu. 9

Daniel adopts a more subtle approach to Mathieu: he tells lies, knowing
that Mathieu will not be deceived. And, indeed, Mathieu is so sure that
he has seen through the deception that he fails to see that Daniel's
mythomania is a pretence. In this Daniel is again presenting a mask to
the world in order to absorb the Other's look, to divert the regard away
from his "true self", which is neither Jekyll nor Hyde. 10

8 Saint Genet, p. 62
9 It is significant that when Daniel suggests to Marcelle they
drop the pretence of the "archange" it is only to substitute that of
her "best friend" (L'Age de Raison, p. 229).
10 L'Age de Raison, p. 124
When he is caught unawares, however, the Other's look is terrifying for him. He has invested his cats with human personalities, so that when they look at him he feels that they can see through his play-acting. It is because he cannot bear their look that he tries to drown them. Besides, they are the only personal thing he has in his apartment: he feels that other people can by-pass the mask he holds up by touching his cats.\(^1\) A clearer example is furnished by Daniel's reaction to the waiter who anticipates his order:

Qu'ils aillent se foutre avec leur manie de cataloguer les gens comme si c'étaient des parapluies ou des machines à coudre. Je ne suis pas... on n'est jamais rien. Mais ils vous définissent en un touremain.\(^2\)

Daniel is annoyed, but his anger is only a mask for the terror he feels at being penetrated by a look. The passage is important also because, in a moment of lucidity, he realises that he is not a thing, that people cannot be classified as if they were objects, that man has no hidden essence or ego. And when he hesitates to say, even to himself, what he is not, he is afraid that this negative definition will have the same effect as the barman's classifying him.

Thus Daniel tries to set up a barrier between himself and the outside world to protect himself from the regard d'autrui. The reason for this appears obvious: Daniel is a homosexual and he is ashamed; he wants to hide this fact from other people. There is indeed some truth in this, but it fails to explain later incidents.

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\(^1\) L'Age de Baison, p. 124. There is yet another reason for Daniel's attempted drowning of his cats. Cf. infra pp.11-12.

\(^2\) L'Age de Baison, p. 125
Although Daniel is a homosexual he cannot believe that he is one; he cannot feel it completely. In the same way he knows that he is a coward, yet, when he calls himself one, he does not feel that the word refers to him, to his secret "self":

( . . . ) de toutes ses forces il voulait se dégouter, il ne trouverait jamais une si belle occasion. "Salaud! lâche et comédien: salaud!" Un instant il crut qu'il allait y parvenir, mais non, c'étaient des mots.

Separated from others by the barrier he has erected, Daniel is alone in the contemplation of his secret "self". When he looks into the mirror while shaving he tries to grasp his essence, and decides that he is handsome. The illusion he tries to create is that of another person looking at Daniel and saying that he is handsome; since Daniel can never coincide with his essence by himself, he needs the mediation of the Other. But the regard d'autrui is too painful, so he has recourse to the false mediation of the mirror.

When he tries to progress from contemplation to action Daniel finds that it is still impossible to coincide with his essence. The attempt to castrate himself appears to be a reaction of disgust at his sexual intercourse with Ralph, but we should see that it is also a trap in which Daniel hopes to catch his essence. By placing himself in a

\[\text{L'Age de Raison, p. 433}\]
\[\text{Ibid., p. 396}\]
\[\text{Ibid., p. 120. Roquentin, on the other hand, cannot see any significance in his reflection; he has difficulty even in recognising it as a face. Cf. \text{La Nausée,} (Paris: Gallimard Évène de Poche, 1966), p. 30}\]
\[\text{In the scene with Ralph (L'Age de Raison, pp. 533-4) there is a similar attempt; Daniel experiences Ralph's hateful look via the mirror. Daniel could not have supported it directly, and Ralph is not strong-}\]
situation where an irremediable action is possible, Daniel hopes that his essence will manifest itself by committing that action without Daniel's will intervening. If he manages to castrate himself it will be a natural expression of his Self, a necessary effect, of which his essence is the cause. But if he fails to carry out the castration, Daniel has the excuse that he knew all the while that he would not do it. He is so enmeshed in the myth of the Self that he cannot abandon it without a total change in his original project.

Since Daniel cannot coincide directly with himself, he is obliged to find a substitute method. Reflecting on the failure of his attempted castration, Daniel remarks:

Il aurait fallu... Ah! n'importe qui, n'importe quel juge, il eût accepté n'importe quel juge mais pas lui-même, pas cet atroce mépris de soi qui n'avait jamais assez de force, ce faible, faible mépris moribond, qui semblait à chaque instant sur le point de s'anéantir et qui ne passait pas. Si quelqu'un savait, s'il pouvait sentir poser sur lui le lourd mépris d'un autre...

As was noted in the analysis of Daniel's recourse to mirrors, the Other's gaze mediates his essence. But the regard d'autrui, when experienced directly, without a mirror or a mask, is terrifying. Faced with this dilemma Daniel finds a solution which is designed to minimise the force

willed enough to show his hate if he thinks Daniel is watching.

17"Gesture" would be a more appropriate word, since his attempted castration lacks the truly intentional structure required of action. Cf. Saint Genet, p. 75. "Un acte qu'on accompli pour être, ce n'est pas un acte, c'est un geste."

18"Toutes les sociétés châtent les inadaptés. Simplement cette castration peut être effective et physique ou s'opérer par persuasion: le résultat est le même." (Saint Genet, p. 83)

19L'Age de Raison, p. 396
of the Other's gaze and bring about the self-coincidence which he seeks.

His closest acquaintance is Mathieu, and in selecting him to be his judge Daniel knows that he will not suffer as much as he might have done with a stranger. In fact he prejudices Mathieu's reaction to his confession by informing him first of his decision to marry Marcelle. Thus, when Daniel reveals that he is a homosexual, Mathieu's thoughts are turned inward against himself, so that the condemning look which Daniel so feared does not materialize. Indeed Daniel has so well prepared the trap that Mathieu does not fall into it; no expression of disgust is manifested, and Daniel is forced to supply it for him:

"Tu as la réaction qu'il faut, je n'en doute pas, celle que tout homme sain doit avoir, mais tu fais aussi bien de la garder pour toi." 20

Now that Mathieu knows about Daniel's secret "self", Daniel will have a good reason for hating him. And through this hatred of an individual, Daniel will be able to attack society as a whole. Before this incident Daniel's feelings were vague and abstract, but he hopes that when they are concentrated against one person they will become extreme.

Daniel's marriage to Marcelle, besides being the obvious sacrifice of his "natural" sexual inclinations, will, he hopes, be a safeguard against any waning of his intense hatred for Mathieu, or of the disgust he thought he would generate in Mathieu. Marriage will be, as Mathieu says, a martyrdom for Daniel who will be placed in a continuing situation

20 L'Age de Raison, p. 432
21 Ibid., p. 436
of tension between his homosexual inclinations and his decision to fulfill the "duties" of a husband. This at least is Daniel's intention, his hopes are not realised, however. Instead of being tortured by his life with Marcelle, Daniel finds it rather pleasant. And since Mathieu is absent Daniel is again thrown back on himself.

In Le Sursis Daniel has a strange experience while he is on holiday with Marcelle. Left alone in the garden, he reverts to his first method of self-coincidence through hatred of Self. He finds, however, that his consciousness is not an opaque centre of reference but "une suite de petites courses excentriques". He tries to coincide with himself, to gather himself into a ball, but words and images break the unity, scattering his consciousness. This time instead of watching himself ("ne plus me regarder, surtout, si je me regarde je suis deux"), he tries to exorcise every thought by counting, just as the mystic prepares himself for the presence of God by driving out all worldly thoughts. Then suddenly:

Ca le fendit comme unefaux, c'était extraordinaire, désespérant, délicieux. Ouvert, ouvert, la cosse éclate, ouvert, ouvert, combîé, moi-même pour l'éternité, pederaste, méchant, lâche. On me voit; non, Même pas: ça me voit. Il était l'objet d'un regard.

Daniel seems finally to have found a method to trap that Self which had always eluded him.

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22 His marriage will be a further blow against society since it will parody one of society's cornerstones.
23 Le Sursis, p. 154
24 Ibid., p. 155
25 Ibid., p. 157
The experience does not last, however. The following day, a Sunday, he watches people going to church and envies the certainty of their existence. With God as their witness their essence is fixed by His scrutiny for eternity. While they have "des techniques éprouvées", Daniel lacks a method for maintaining the intensity of his experience of being watched. But when he says he is tired of being "celle évaporations sans répit vers le ciel vide", and concludes: "Je veux un toit" he does not mean that he is going to enter the Church. The roof he desires is not for security or shelter, but simply one which will stop this evaporation. God will be for Daniel a Judge, and not only an impersonal regard but the opposite pole of his essence.

Mais je suis sous ton oeil que je ne peux plus me fuir, j'entrerai, je me dresserai debout, au milieu de ces femmes à genoux, comme un monument d'iniquité. Je dirai: "Je suis Cain. En bien? c'est toi qui m'as fait, porte-moi".

In constituting God as his witness Daniel reaps a double benefit. Firstly he will find himself, feel completely that he is what he knew he was. Secondly he will be absolved of the responsibility for his existence; if he is evil then he is so because his existence was anticipated by the omniscience of God.

The "regard de Méduse" which Daniel experiences should, however, not be interpreted as something external to him. Daniel does

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28. *Ibid.*, p. 229. The implication of the sexual undertones of this passage is discussed below,
29. *Le Sursis*, p. 229
not find God, he recreates the regard d'autrui within himself, giving it the figure of God. Since Daniel cannot invest a human being with the powers of Absolute Subject he has to create that subject within himself, interiorise the regard to intensify its force while maintaining a pretence of its being other.

Another advantage of this situation is that Daniel will free himself from the feeling of shame. "Tous les invertis sont honteux, c'est dans leur nature," he tells Mathieu.

"Les pédérastes qui se vantent ou qui s'affichent ou simplement qui consentent... ce sont des morts; ils se sont tués à force d'avoir honte. Je ne veux pas de cette mort-là."

By transferring the responsibility for his essence to God, Daniel removes the cause of his shame. In fact he is now proud of his Self; justified by God, his existence has become a mission of evil. And his evil-doing is directed against society. This then is Daniel's situation before the advent of the Second World War and the French defeat of 1940.

Though Daniel does not have a prominent position in La Mort dans l'Ame his appearances there are none the less important. The first shows Daniel walking the streets of Paris which has been abandoned by the majority of civilians. He feels free to do what he pleases, to smash the window of a café or take off his trousers in the street. But he does neither: his feeling of freedom is "immense et vaine". The restrictions of bourgeois morality and respect for property no longer

30 L'Age de Raison, p. 436
31 Ibid., p. 437
32 La Mort dans l'Ame, p. 112
held for Daniel, yet he does nothing to mark the breakdown of the old society. One reason is that there is no one to witness his action, no representative of the bourgeoisie through whom Daniel can measure the effect of his act. The main reason is that such an action would be anarchic, would aim at the destruction of bourgeois society. And this would remove Daniel's raison d'être.\footnote{Mathieu, as we shall see, invokes a similar reason for not joining the Communist Party; removal of the capitalist system would take away the object of his indignation. \textit{Infra} p. 34} If the same acts of destruction are committed by the Germans their significance will be different; they will be part of the behaviour which is characteristic of an occupying force. Daniel is prepared to encourage that destruction because its origin is external to society and is a manifestation of subjugation, not of internal disorder.\footnote{It is in this light that Daniel's compulsive walking around Paris is to be interpreted. Since the civilians have deserted the city, the streets and buildings have lost their meaning. And insofar as Paris is the image of French society Daniel has to give meaning to the city to maintain the old order of society until the Parisians return or the Germans arrive. If he did not do so the German invasion would be for him the exploration of an unknown land, not a conquest. And it is the latter that Daniel wants to experience.}

The German invasion, however, represents more than the subjugation of French society for Daniel. His reaction to the first German soldiers is worth quoting in full.

\begin{quote}
Comme ils sont beaux! Il ne touchait plus terre: ils l'avaient enlevé dans leurs bras, ils le serraient contre leurs poitrines et leurs ventres plats. Quelque chose dégringola du ciel: c'était l'antique loi. Effondres la société des juges; effacée la sentence; en déroute les petits affreux soldats kaki, champions des droits de l'homme et du citoyen. "Quelle liberté!" pensa-t-il, et ses yeux mouillaient. Il était seul vivant du désastre. \textit{Seul homme} en face de ces anges de haine et
\end{quote}
This passage is important for its unification of the secondary structures of Daniel's *projet original*. The first two sentences hardly mask the homosexual basis of his feelings for these men. The next two reiterate his contempt for bourgeois society and his joy that it will no longer dominate his life. The fact that he considers himself the only man to witness the arrival of these angels is a vindication of his mission of evil. Most important, however, is the fact that they restore his childhood. Because the sentence imposed by society has now been wiped out, the gap which separated innocent childhood from the rest of his life has now been bridged.

Daniel's projected collaboration with the Germans does not indicate that he was a secret fascist, although it does imply acceptance of fascist ideology. Rather one should see here Daniel's desire for a stricter social hierarchy.

Daniel does not want to be integrated into the new society nor the old, but rather desires that the society which has excluded him be more rigidly determined.

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35 *La Mort dans l'Armée*, p. 115
To understand this attitude more fully, we must examine Daniel's homosexuality a little more closely. We have already noticed his attitude towards the *regard d'autrui*, but two important examples of the regard were omitted. The first is related in his letter to Mathieu in *Le Sursis*, the second concludes Daniel's appearances in *La Mort dans l'Ame*. In both cases the look comes from behind, and inspires Daniel with *angoisse*, a stronger emotion than that generated by other instances of the regard. One reason for the force of this emotion is that Daniel has no defence against this type of stare. In the métro the Other conceals his look as soon as Daniel turns round; in his bedroom there is no one. For the present, it is Daniel's defencelessness which is important. In his letter to Mathieu he states that this regard is "un viol perpétuel", and we can see that, since the look surprises him from the rear, it is symbolic for Daniel of rape by a man.

If we connect this analysis of the stare with the occasion of Daniel's childhood crime, then the look which revealed his essence and terminated the innocence of his childhood also revealed his sexuality. This does not mean that he became a homosexual overnight, but that each successive look, which penetrated through to his essence, was a repeated rape, so that by puberty his sensibilities had been channelled. Each look he received, particularly from behind, caused a physical reaction.

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38 *Sursis*
39 *Le Sursis*, p. 468
40 *La Mort dans l'Ame*, p. 207
41 *Le Sursis*, p. 469
42 *Cf. Salat Genat*, pp. 81-2
in the muscles of his back:

Tu retournes à ta position première, mais tu sais que l'inconnu vient de relever les yeux, tu le sens à un léger fourmillement de tout ton dos, comparable à un resserrement violent et rapide de tous les tissus. 43

But if this leads to homosexuality, Daniel must decide what kind of homosexual he will be. L'Age de Raison 44 and La Mort dans l'Âge 45 show him to be a tante-mâle, and for this category of homosexual:

(... ) les femmes n'ont pas assez de prestige pour symboliser à ses yeux la société qui l'a exclu; puisque ce sont les hommes qui font la loi et qui s'arrogent le droit de le juger, la soumission d'un mâle peut seule le racheter en humiliant devant lui son sexe tout entier.

Thus while his homosexuality may be attributed to his society, Daniel is not passive, but gives his homosexuality a personal style, making of it a manifestation of his hatred of society. 47

Collaboration with the Germans, then, will be a more effective and direct method of humiliating French society. And since fascist ideology will organise society rigidly Daniel will feel that his existence is justified. The "new judges", that the German troops are for Daniel, have the "techniques éprouvées" which he envied in the church-goers.

Collaboration is for Daniel the triumph of his original project of being en-soi-pour-soi since it affords an intense feeling of self-

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43 Le Sursis, p. 468
44 L'Age de Raison, p. 384
45 La Mort dans l'Âge, p. 168
46 Saint Genet, p. 78
47 "L'important n'est pas ce qu'on a fait de l'homme, mais ce qu'il fait de ce qu'on a fait de lui." Quoted by B. Pingeaud, LEVRA, XXX (1958), 4
coincidence. Judged coupable by French society he now feels that he is le Coupable; he will do evil because he is evil, and his pleasure will be increased by his "conscience dans le Mal".

This process, of course, is not consciously willed. But Daniel's collaboration can be seen to provide the fullest satisfaction for his fundamental project at all levels of thought and feeling, his attitude to society, his homosexuality, and his guilt. This picture is completed by his meeting Philippe, the young pacifist who appeared in Le Surcin.

Daniel takes Philippe to his apartment, the first time he has dared bring one of his lovers to his home. After an evening of "le dérèglement de tous les sens", the first stage in Philippe's "education", Daniel says to himself:

Si je peux le garder longtemps, c'est une bonne affaire: j'ai besoin de dételer, il me faut quelqu'un à domicile. Les kermesses, Graff et Toto, ma Tante d'Honfleur, Marius, le Sens interdit: finis ( . . . ) je ne range. (Finie la Terreur!)

Daniel intends to stabilise this affair, making of it a marriage. With the terror of the regard d'autrui removed, as he thinks, he can better attack the old society. And since the pères de famille condemned him, it is their existence Daniel strikes at through this parody of marriage.

With Daniel apparently at ease already in the new society it may seem surprising that, at the end of his final appearance in La Mort dans l'Ame, he should again be gripped by the very terror he had thought destroyed:

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48 La Mort dans l'Ame, p. 114
49 Ibid., p. 207
50 The parody is made even more forceful because Philippe, suffering from an Oedipus complex, hates his step-father.
Yet we should not be surprised. We noted that Daniel saw himself as Cain, the one God has chosen to reject. He is unique, an exception to the rule, "le Coupable". Yet he baptises Philippe "le Miracle", another exception to the rule. Daniel thought that meeting Philippe marked the end of his suffering, that this was a reward for his patience. But the look he senses reminds him that he is the only miracle, and that his mission is to suffer and to do evil. As Sartre writes of Genet:

("... il ne veut pas d'exception en sa faveur pour la bonne raison qu'il est l'exception lui-même; par un nouveau paradoxe le miracle ne ferait que le renvoyer au sort commun: les plus malheureux ont connu, fut-ce un instant, les sourires de la fortune.

In spite of the mauvaise foi of Daniel's attitude to life, one cannot but find him sympathetic, for at least some of the time. Even before a detailed study reveals that his project is undertaken only as the defence against a society which tried to eliminate him, one feels that he is struggling against some force which threatens to engulf him. The terror which he experiences at the Other's look, the abortive attempt to castrate himself, the aching for intercourse even with such people as

51 Le Mort dans l'Âme, p. 207
52 Sartre p. 13
53 Le Mort dans l'Âme, p. 168
54 Saint Genet, p. 137
Ralph, the compulsive walking around Paris after the French defeat, all indicate a deep-seated trouble which is not the result of an abnormality, but is rather the mal de siècle, the loss of identity.

Daniel suffers from the myth of identity, a myth fostered by advertising and psychology, public relations officers and politicians. And it is a myth to which most of us succumb. We create an Ego for ourselves, not necessarily to project it, but as a central core of reference, something which which unifies our every action. And having created this self we accept it as a given which then becomes an excuse for our actions.

Daniel, however, refuses to use this self as an excuse. And for this reason we should not condemn him, in spite of his joyful decision to collaborate. Rather we should see in Daniel a person whose existence has been dominated, perhaps warped, by the society in which he found himself. In the struggle for existence society prejudiced the outcome by persuading the young Daniel that the battle was over, that his essence was already fixed. By reducing him to en-soi, society had in fact killed Daniel; his body might continue to function, but Daniel is dead, he has no future. The passing of time will not change him at all. And because he lives in an eternal present he can predict exactly what will happen until the physical death, which will be his final self-coincidence.
CHAPTER II
MATHIEU

For a discussion of Mathieu a full consideration of the first volume is essential; for it contains certain indications without which we cannot understand completely his actions in *La Mort dans l'Âme*.

Sitting in the Luxembourg after his meeting with Sarah and Brunet, Mathieu recalls three experiences from his earlier life which are obviously significant for him. At the age of seven he had been shown an ancient Chinese vase which stood on a table in the waiting-room of his uncle's surgery.

Mathieu s'était approché du vase, les mains derrière le dos, et il l'avait regardé en se dandinant avec inquiétude: c'était effrayant d'être une petite boulette de mie de pain, dans ce vieux monde rissolé, en face d'un impasible vase de trois mille ans.

Without knowing why, he broke the vase:

(...) ça lui était venu comme ça, et, tout de suite après, il s'était senti lâcher comme un fil de Vierge. Il avait regardé les débris de porcelaine, émerveillé: quelque chose venait d'arriver à ce vase de trois mille ans entre ces murs quinquagénaires, sous l'antique lumière de l'été, quelque chose de très irrévérencieux qui ressemblait à un matin. Il avait pensé: "C'est moi qui ai fait ça!" et il s'était senti tout fier, libéré du monde et sans attaches, sans famille, sans origines, un petit surgissement têtu qui avait crevé la croute terrestre.

This incident is juxtaposed to the next, but no further critical comment upon it is offered by Mathieu. This childhood memory is an important

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1 *L'âge de raison*, p. 72
2 Ibid.
indication of his original choice, since it is undistorted by self-conscious deliberation. The vase, and in particular its age, frightens the young Mathieu; in a sense it is a challenge to his small body because of its passivity, but, more significantly, its age emphasises his youth, his apparent insignificance in "un vieux monde rissolé". The breaking of the vase is an attempt to transcend this insignificance by committing an irreparable act, something which will be undeniably his. By refusing to be intimidated Mathieu asserts his autonomy, and this act symbolises his mastery over the world of objects.

Another act of violence, when he was sixteen, had marked a further indication of the original choice we are trying to uncover.

He had fought with and beaten another boy:

Assis à l'ombre des pins, hors d'haleine, les marines emplies par l'odeur de résine, il avait l'impression d'être une petite explosion en suspens dans les airs, ronde, abrupte, inexplicable. Il s'était dit: "Je serai libre," ou plutôt il ne s'était rien dit du tout, mais c'était ce qu'il voulait dire et c'était son pari; il avait parié que sa vie entière ressemblerait à ce moment exceptionnel.

This act too is a means of transcendence, but more is involved than his defeat of the boy. By forcing him to eat sand Mathieu has humiliated him; transcendence here has the ethical overtones of domination. This moment of victory, however, cannot be extended for the rest of his life; physical violence is rejected.

The third reminiscence recalls Mathieu at the age of twenty-one. 4 Now a student of philosophy, he has decided on thought as the means of carrying out his fundamental project. Again the implications contained

3Ibid., p. 72

4Ibid., p. 73
in the description of this incident are important. There is a sharp contrast between his quiet contemplation of Spinoza and the noisy Mardi Gras parade outside in the street; the life of serious study and that of carefree enjoyment. And the reiteration of the wager\(^5\) while he is reading philosophy would indicate a connexion between his desire for freedom and the excercise of the mind.

In the analysis of these three incidents we have not clearly stated what his original choice is. The explicit meaning is clear: Mathieu wants to be free, and the means he chooses for the realisation of this project develop from the physical to the mental. The implicit level, however, which we have emphasised, seems to conflict with this. The first two events clearly involve, on the implicit level, some form of domination which is less evident, though still present, in the third. The conflict is between levels. A desire for freedom would preclude the domination of others on the same level. If Mathieu wants to be free he must wish the same for others.\(^6\) At this stage Sartre gives no indication, which of the two, freedom or domination, is Mathieu's basic project. An examination of later events will provide the necessary evidence.

We have a brief glimpse of the answer when Mathieu goes to ask Daniel for money. Daniel remarks to himself:

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\text{La supériorité de Mathieu était odieuse: 'Il croit me connaître, il parle de mes mensonges, de mes yeux de velours. Il ne me connaît pas du tout mais ça l'amuse de m'étiqueter comme si j'étais une chose.'}^{11}
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\(^{11}\text{Ibid., p. 73. 'Dix fois, cent fois, il avait refait son pari.'}^{11}\)

\(^{12}\text{Cf. L'Être et le Néant, p. 639}^{12}\)

\(^{13}\text{L'Age de Raisin, p. 135}^{13}\)
This reflects the attitude of Mathieu as suggested in the Mardi Gras incident. Although Daniel is haunted by the regard d'autrui, and thinks everyone is condemning him, his immediate reaction to Mathieu's superior attitude is valid. The subsequent inner monologue exaggerates the effect of Mathieu's regard but Daniel's interpretation is none the less true. Mathieu's ability to classify Daniel as a mythismaniac indicates that he has uncovered the essence, the secret which motivates Daniel. This knowledge enables Mathieu to grasp intellectually the hidden meaning of Daniel's actions, to make allowances for his mythismania, and thus avoid being duped. Mathieu is able to use Daniel.

Naturally enough, Mathieu tries to mask this basic attitude of superiority, using his knowledge to be understanding. This results, however, in pity and an avuncular indulgence. At the end of L'Age de Raison, Mathieu tries to persuade Daniel to accept his homosexuality.

Daniel replies:

"Tu m'en reparleras, le jour où tu auras accepté d'être un salaud, répondit-il avec dureté. Non. Les pédérastes qui se vantent ou qui s'affichent ou simplement qui consentent... ce sont des morts; ils se sont tués à force d'avoir honte. Je ne veux pas de cette mort-là."

In his discussion of bad faith, Sartre examines a parallel case. One of the examples he adduces is the person who persuades another to accept himself and his faults: and this situation is discussed as a suzerain-vassal relationship.

"Voilà pourtant ce que le censeur exige de sa victime: qu'elle se constitue elle-même comme chose, qu'elle lui

8. L'Age de Raison, p. 437
The terms "suzerain" and "fils" provide some indication that Mathieu's original choice was one of domination and not of freedom. One example hardly constitutes proof, however; we must now examine Mathieu's liaison with Marcelle.

The relationship was based originally on a recognition by each party of the other's freedom: neither felt any obligation. For this reason they decided not to marry, and not to have children. Each discloses everything to avoid the compromise of the other's freedom which would result from acting without consulting the other. This at least was the theory. In practice Mathieu has the advantage over Marcelle in that his ideas are already formulated, hers are vague impressions or opinions. Jacques, Mathieu's brother, points out that this relationship is based not on freedom, but on the humiliation of Marcelle.

( . . . ) toi, si prompte à t'indigner quand tu entends parler d'une injustice, tu maintiens cette femme dans une position humiliée, depuis des années, pour le simple plaisir de te dire que tu es d'accord avec tes principes. Et encore si c'était vrai, si vraiment tu conformais ta vie à tes idées. 10

What Jacques says is valid. The decision to have an abortion was Mathieu's; he imposed this on Marcelle on the basis of a "decision" taken two years

9. L'Être et le Néant, p. 105
10. L'Age de Raison, p. 155
previously when the eventuality was only an hypothesis.

His attitude of domination towards Marcelle, however, has
turned back on himself; he is in turn dominated by the situation.

Tu as pris tes habitudes chez cette jeune femme: quatre fois
par semaine tu t'en vas tranquillement la rejoindre et tu
passes la nuit avec elle. Voilà sept ans que ça dure, ça n'a
plus rien d'une aventure; tu l'estimes, tu te sens des
obligations envers elle, tu ne veux pas la quitter.  

Mathieu maintains "une apparence de liberté" in this situation, but this
frank appraisal reveals the extent to which his independence is limited.
This limitation, however, is a direct result of his basic choice; in order
to dominate Marcelle Mathieu has to see her frequently. He makes use of
Marcelle's unexpressed desire for marriage (all women want to be wives and
mothers), for, although their arrangement precluded such a formal act,
Mathieu must have known that marriage was at the back of her mind. Again,
the proportion of mauvaise foi in his attitude is difficult to determine;
he has tried to maintain his disponibilité without impinging on the freedom
of others. But it is difficult to see why Marcelle would continue their
relationship if she did not cling to the hope of marriage.

Mathieu, on the other hand, visits her regularly and enjoys the
security afforded by this stable situation; so his original intention was
not to have a brief affair, but to establish a long-term relationship which
would be a marriage except in name. His independence is limited, but the
restriction is a necessary one if he is to savour his domination of another
person. His exploitation of Daniel, made possible by the domination
through knowledge, is intermittent, since they meet infrequently. But

\cite{ibid., p. 154}
as Marcelle's main link with the outside world, he exercises over her a continuous domination. This need for comfort and security finds an expression not only in his relationship with Marcelle but in his mode of existence. Jacques again analyses Mathieu's condition accurately:

(...) tu es pour autant dire marié, tu as un appartement coquet, tu touches à dates fixées un traitement assez rondelet, tu n'as aucune inquiétude pour l'avenir puisque l'État te garantit une retraite... et tu aimes cette vie-là, calme, régulée, une vraie vie de fonctionnaire.\(^\text{12}\)

Mathieu replies that he is not concerned whether he is a bourgeois or not. He had earlier indicated that his present way of life was only "une morale par provision".\(^\text{13}\)

But Jacques' comment is in fact another clue to Mathieu's original choice. His deliberate choice of freedom is a mask to hide his original choice of superiority and domination. His bourgeois existence is not the failure of a man who could not realise his fundamental project. It is rather a further expression of his choice of domination; as a member of the bourgeoisie he belongs to the dominant social class.

He may profess contempt for this class, but it is only lip-service to his deliberate choice of being free from all obligations. Had his contempt been genuine his actions would have supported it. For example, he need not have taken an apartment, he could have voted for the

\(^{12}\) L'Age de Raison, p. 155

\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 74. "Mais à travers tout ça, son unique soin avait été de se garder disponible. Pour un acte. Un acte libre et réfléchi qui engagerait toute sa vie et qui sortait au commencement d'une existence nouvelle." One can see the Gidean overtones in this quotation. Indeed Mathieu reflects the influence that that author had over the French intelligentsia of this century, an influence whose roots reach back to Descartes.
Communists against the bourgeoisie, or have contributed to a left-wing review. Jacques sums up Mathieu's position:

Ce que tu te caches (. . .) c'est que tu es un bourgeois honteux (. . .) tu condamnes la société capitaliste, et pourtant tu es fonctionnaire dans cette société, tu affiches une sympathie de principe pour les communistes, mais tu te gares bien de t'engager, tu n'as jamais voté. Tu méprises la classe bourgeoise, et pourtant tu es bourgeois, fils et frère de bourgeois et tu vis comme un bourgeois.

The choice of the bourgeoisie as an expression of his desire to dominate is, however, only a partial structure. He is not a capitalist and does not use his social status as a means to maintain a position of superiority.

His desire for domination manifests itself rather in the pursuit of knowledge and an intellectualising approach to situations. This involves a double process; firstly the compilation of facts, and secondly the contemplation of that knowledge from an objective point of view.

An examination of his affair with Ivich reveals the first. Their relationship seems rather inconsequential at first sight; Mathieu does not know what he expects of Ivich, while she seems indifferent to Mathieu. She tries to hide her "true self" from him, partly by remaining silent and refusing to involve herself in anything, partly by displaying no fixed features which could be classified. This appears to be caprice, but it is rather a calculated attempt to forestall judgment by other people.

"En bien, ça vous plairait à vous qu'on sache qui vous êtes?" She perseveres in this attempt to hide herself from others, even though it leads to irrational behaviour.

Ecoutez, Ivich, la dernière fois c'était votre cœur, vous aviez peur d'une crise cardiaque. Quelle drôle de petite

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14 L'Age de Raison, pp. 154, 156
15 Ibid., p. 79
Mathieu is pointing out not only her inconsistency, which he believes to be unethical, but also that he cannot classify her. His main object in taking her to exhibitions, museums, plays is not to entertain her, but to elucidate for himself her opinions on these subjects.

As long as Ivich refuses to disclose herself Mathieu feels ill at ease. He wonders continually what she is thinking about him, and questions her in an attempt to draw out a definite statement, which he will then be able to combat. By situating the struggle between them on his own ground, that of logical discussion, he is sure of winning.

What Mathieu expects to gain by this is not clear, except that he will have imposed his version of himself and will thereby feel secure. With Boris Mathieu has already succeeded, but with Ivich the outcome of the struggle is still in question.

When Mathieu draws Ivich to him in the taxi, it is an attempt to impose his vision of himself on Ivich. If their relationship has been ambiguous up to that point it is because Mathieu has not been able to persuade Ivich to accept him as he is for himself. There can be no question of using Ivich until their relationship has been clarified; Mathieu must establish himself as the dominant figure. And for this he needs to enlist the help of Ivich. She must constitute Mathieu as Subject, and herself as Object, by refusing to judge him. Because Ivich

\[16\text{Ibid., p. 81}\]
refuses her help on an intellectual plane Mathieu resorts to desire, not because he wants to make love to her (the gesture is made in a taxi) but because he wants to make Ivich conscious of her body, to drag her consciousness into her body.

If Mathieu seems surprised it is not because his action is inexplicable, although he does say it happened "by itself". Rather, his surprise is a defence because Ivich did not respond. He is forestalling judgment on himself by this escape through surprise, preparing himself for judgment by Ivich. If she had responded the gesture would have seemed natural, would have been motivated by his love for her. But because of Ivich's stiffness, Mathieu is reminded of the man stealing a piece of cold meat. 18

Instead of "un sentiment rare et précieux, qui n'avait pas de nom, qui ne pouvait pas s'exprimer par des gestes", 19 there now exists for Mathieu a love "tout rond, tout facile, avec ses désirs simples et ses conduites banales". 20 And when Mathieu says he does not desire her he is right: he does not want to sleep with her. But he realises already that his only defence against Ivich's condemning look will be physical domination through sexual intercourse. The irony here is that when Ivich offers herself at the end of L'Age de Raison, Mathieu no longer desires her because she no longer condemns him. Indeed Mathieu has at that point assumed a controlling rôle in the relationship.

17 Ibid., p. 54
18 Ibid., p. 93
19 Ibid., p. 94
20 Ibid., pp. 94-5
The important feature for us, however, in Mathieu's attempt to dominate through knowledge. The gesture in the taxi was premature because Mathieu did not have the quota of knowledge he needed to be able to predict the effect the act would have. The most important fact missing was that Ivich was a lesbian, so that Mathieu's project of love, and domination through desire was bound to fail. And it is because his original project was domination through knowledge that at the end of the novel Mathieu has to admit: "Je ne sais pas ce que je veux de vous."

His interest in Ivich must be at least partly explained by the air of mystery which surrounds her. Mathieu hopes that after he has gathered facts about Ivich her true self will emerge; hence the repeated questions about what Ivich is thinking, and the telling remark to himself: "La vraie Ivich avait disparu. 'Et pourquoi la vraie?' pensa-t-il avec irritation." There can only be a true or false Ivich for someone speaking from a privileged point of view, more precisely from that of the Absolute. And it is the objective standpoint that we must now examine.

The notion of objectivity is an important one, not only for Mathieu but for the novel sequence as a whole, and indeed for much of Sartre's theatre. Briefly one could define objectivity as the belief in the existence of an Object, exterior to the person, which prescribes a scale of ready-made values; for the Christian it is God, for the patriot it is the Nation, for the academic it is Reason, for the humanist the Individual. A belief in transcendental values is a denial of individual

\[\text{ibid., p. 414}\]
\[\text{ibid., p. 242}\]
subjectivity; it is an attempt to justify existence, and so avoid responsibility, by reducing subjectivity to a function of the Absolute.

One can adopt one of two attitudes to the Object. W.W. Knight has aptly named them those of the monk and the messiah. For the case of Mathieu the monastic attitude is important; the messianic will be treated in the next chapter.

One can readily see the importance of Reason for Mathieu. As a member of the bourgeoisie and a professor of philosophy he has constant recourse to it. Reason as an infallible instrument is an important aspect of Mathieu's being-in-the-world, since belief in it results in certain approaches to the problems of the world, and excludes others.

Basically the approach of the monk is to put himself beyond the reach of worldly events. He refuses to act, in the belief that we are not yet in possession of enough facts to be able to decide on the appropriate course of action. Thus he refuses to support any political party and takes refuge in the compilation of facts which will eventually reveal the Truth. Mathieu refused to join the Communist Party and now is envious of Brunet, whose existence seems so attractively meaningful.

C'est à vingt ans qu'il aurait fallu m'engager. Comme Brunet. Oui, mais alors, on ne s'engage pas en pleine connaissance de cause. On est couillon. Je ne voudrais pas non plus être couillon. 25

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25 *L'Age de Raison*, p. 74
Mathieu adduces reasons for and against taxing sides, but the decision is formed in a vacuum. His main concern is personal salvation, not what should be done to achieve an effective change in the world.

This non-partisanship, besides requiring aloofness, involves inevitably a conservative attitude to the *status quo* (another aspect of his adherence to the bourgeoisie). His decision to get an abortion for Marcelle is a symbolic manifestation of this; once they are rid of the child their relationship will be as it was. On a different level, his refusal to join the Communist Party is also conservative. After his meeting with Brunet when Mathieu refuses to join the Party, he tries to see the situation clearly.

J'ai refusé parce que je veux rester libre: voilà ce que je peux dire. Et je peux dire aussi: j'ai eu les foies; j'aime mes rideaux verts, j'aime prendre l'air le soir à mon balcon et je ne voudrais pas que ça change. Ça me plaisait de m'indigner contre le capitalisme et je ne voudrais pas qu'on le supprime, parce que je n'aurais plus de motifs de m'indigner; ça me plaisait de me sentir dédaigneux et solitaire, ça me plaisait de dire non, toujours non et j'aurais peut qu'on essayât de construire pour de bon un monde vivable, parce que je n'aurais plus qu'à dire oui et à faire comme les autres.

But his conservatism is maintained only by specious reasoning. He tries to mask it by claiming that where people are concerned, and the dimension of ethics is added, no one can decide for certain. His Object has only one commandment: Thou shalt not. Reason can only analyse, it cannot set a value on anything. In the struggle between Communism and Capitalism Mathieu wants to remain objective. He can find reasons for the abolition of capital and for the suppression of Communism, as îde...
but these reasons are found in a vacuum, with no reference to effective action in the world. His reasoning is useless when action is at stake. And he is not prepared to dismiss reason, since this would require a total change of his original project.

One can see that Mathieu's self-conscious desire to be free takes the form of objectivity. To maintain his disponibilité he must refuse partisanship of any form, political, social, or mental. Mathieu is free to say no, to reject commitment; as yet, at the end of L'Âge de Raison, he has not conceived of a "freedom for...". 27

It is appropriate at this point to review our discussion so far, before dealing in detail with Mathieu's actions in La Mort dans l'Ame. The apparent contradiction in his original choice is now resolved. A deliberated choice of freedom is secondary to an actual choice of domination and exploitation. The secondary structures are the choice of freedom and objectivity. The first of these implies a preservation of the status quo in every respect in order that Mathieu can retain his disponibilité. It results in a refusal to marry Marcelle or to join the Communist Party. This conservatism can be traced both to his choice of freedom and to that of objectivity. The latter is also pursued through aloofness. He remains above the situation to maintain his peace of mind and avoid partisanship. Both freedom and objectivity, however, are expressions of a primary desire for domination.

27 In the light of this analysis of Mathieu one can see the irony of Sartre's title for the first volume.
The events of *Le Surfais*, however, reveal to Mathieu the futility of his desire for an empty freedom and sterile objectivity. When he reads the poster announcing his mobilisation, Mathieu feels that his life up to that point is now meaningless.

*C'est la guerre. Quelque chose qui ne tenait plus à lui que par un fil se détacha, se tassa et retomba en arrière. C'était sa vie; elle était morte. Mort.*

But it is not his fault alone; the responsibility for the war is that of the bourgeois intelligentsia as a whole.

Nous étions appliqués et sérieux, nous essayions de comprendre et voilà; ces belles journées avaient un avenir secret et noir, elles nous trompaient, la guerre d'aujourd'hui, la nouvelle *Grande Guerre* nous les volait par en dessous. Nous étions cocc sans le savoir. 29

Mathieu talks of "*un avenir secret et noir*", as if the necessary knowledge could have been uncovered by him, as if his erudition, correctly channelled, could have predicted, and thereby prevented this war. 30 His attitude is still that of the scientifically objective spectator.

The realisation of the futility of his life up to the present is, despite this misconception, the first step towards a clearer understanding of his position in the world. He is now aware of the danger inherent in his attitude, even if he cannot as yet change his manner of perception.

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28 *Le Surfais*, pp. 96-9
29 Ibid., p. 100
30 It is remarkable that in 1938 the expression "entre-deux-guerres" was current in intellectual circles in Paris.
A change in orientation gradually comes about during La Fausse; in particular his conceptions of liberty and objectivity disintegrate as he begins to question them. During his last evening in Paris before going to the barracks in Nancy, Mathieu comes to a full realisation of his freedom.

Au milieu du Pont-Neuf, il s'arrêta, il se mit à rire: cette liberté, je l'ai cherchée bien loin; elle était si proche que je pouvais la voir, que je ne peux pas la toucher, elle n'était que moi. Je suis ma liberté.\textsuperscript{31}

This liberty is still empty, however; he has not committed himself to anything. He contemplates suicide and becomes aware of the full weight of his responsibility.

Il se pencha, mais ses mains ne lâchaient pas la pierre, elles supportaient tout le poids de son corps. Pourquoi pas? Il n'avait pas de raison particulière pour se laisser couler, mais il n'avait pas non plus de raison pour s'en empêcher. Et l'acte était là, devant lui, sur l'eau noire, il lui dessinait son avenir. Toutes les amarres étaient tranchées, rien au monde ne pouvait le retenir: c'était ça l'horrible, horrible liberté.\textsuperscript{32}

This awareness, however, will not maintain itself; its first impact is great, but Mathieu needs constantly to renew it. In the barracks at Nancy, when the Munich agreement has been announced, he sees that his old way of life is about to resume. The temptation of such a ready-made existence, however, is resisted.

Je ne veux pas, pense-t-il en serrant les barreaux de toutes ses forces. Je ne veux pas! Ça ne sera pas! ( . . . ) Il se sentait fort; il y avait au fond de lui une petite angoisse qu'il commençait à connaître, une petite angoisse qui lui donnait confiance. N'importe qui; n'importe où. Il ne possédait plus rien, il n'était plus rien. La nuit sombre

\textsuperscript{31}Le Sursis, pp. 418-9 
\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., p. 421
Le Suris shows how Mathieu approaches a greater self-awareness, but his actions in the novel do not reflect this mental process. His last vigorous outburst leads us to expect that Mathieu's approach to the world will be more positive than before.

Mathieu's first appearance in the third volume, however, is as disappointing as the first of volume two; he seems to have regressed and fallen into his former passivity. There are some indications that something has changed. If we compare a passage from Le Suris with one from La Mort dans l'âme, the difference becomes clear.

Mathieu vit un lit défaits, à baldaquin, un pouf, un gramophone et des disques sur une table Henri II. Sur un fauteuil à bascule, on avait jeté pieds-nêles des bas usages, une culotte de femme, des combinaisons.

Mathieu respira soudain un parfum timide d'absinthe et de menthe; après les oiseaux, les herbes et les fleurs s'éveillaient; elles jetaient leurs odeurs comme ils avaient jeté leurs cris: "C'est vrai, pensa Mathieu, il y a aussi les odeurs."

Although this change involves only his relationship to objects, it suggests the beginning of a total metamorphosis. The first passage is a mere enumeration of the objects he can see; the room he is describing is devoid of personality (emphasised by the "on avait jeté") and is held at a distance. In the second passage by contrast objects have become more intimate. This is partly the result of a change from sight to smell as the mode of perception; but it also indicates that he

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33 Le Suris, pp. 510-11  
34 Ibid., p. 433  
35 La Mort dans l'âme, p. 60
is relinquishing the supra-human viewpoint for that of the man in the world. It is important, too, that Mathieu himself notices that his sense impressions are becoming more acute; it is the beginning of a tragic self-awareness which will culminate in his defiant act on the church-tower.

From this awareness of the world of objects, Mathieu moved on to realise his situation in general.

Il regarde dans le vide, il pense: "Je suis Français", et il trouve ça marrant, pour la première fois de sa vie. C'est marrant. La France, nous ne l'avions jamais vue; nous étions déboussolés, c'était la pression de l'air, l'attraction de la terre, l'espace, la visibilité, la certitude tranquille que le monde a été fait pour l'homme; c'était tellement naturel d'être Français, c'était le moyen le plus économique de se sentir universel.  

Such was Mathieu's situation before the war; this state he had accepted as natural if not inevitable. The advent of war has now made him realise that his nationality, and all that it implies is:

(...) un accident de terrain, un accident de l'histoire. Nous sommes encore Français, mais ça n'est plus naturel. Il a suffi d'un accident, pour nous faire comprendre que nous étions accidentels.  

For the first time Mathieu realises his contingency; there is no justification for his situation, he can accept or reject it.

This does not mean that Mathieu has ceased to be objective. His increased self-awareness manifests itself only on the level of reflexion. When he is asked to arbitrate the dispute between Pinette and Longin, he refuses.

36 La Mort dans l'Anc. p. 65
37 Ibid., p. 62
Si c'était maïqu qui battais, je pouvais avoir un avis. Mais c'est les autres qui se font descendre, c'est sur la Loire qu'on se battra: je ne peux pas décider pour eux.

This refusal to choose between resistance and passivity is misinterpreted by Longis who thinks Mathieu is refusing to decide the fate of other men. Mathieu corrects this view by pointing out that if the slightest chance remained, he would resist the Germans. His reason for not stating a choice is that he has not enough facts at his disposal. This assertion too is apparently misinterpreted:

- Ça veut dire, expliqua Charlot, qu'il n'y a plus qu'à attendre, en tâchant de ne pas trop se faire de bile.
- Non! cria Mathieu. Non!
Il se leva brusquement les poings serrés.
"J'attends depuis l'enfance".

But although Mathieu construed Charlot's answer as a misunderstanding, Charlot is right. He has pointed out the danger in the monk's attitude. Mathieu tries to maintain his objectivity and to avoid committing himself. This is in fact a decision to wait for further information; for, with other facts in his possession, he could predict more accurately the results of action. This waiting, however, is in itself action, since a refusal to act remains an action by its implicit support of one cause; Mathieu, in this case, is condoning the German invasion. His outburst here contains the realisation that his decision to wait has rendered him passive. His refusal to act has left him at the mercy of events; he has been caught in a trap.

Mais, bon Dieu! je n'en voulais pas, moi, de cette guerre, ni de cette défaite; par quel traquage m'oblige-t-on à les assumer? Il sentit monter en lui une colère de bête prise au piège et, levant la tête, il vit briller cette

\[38\] Ibid., p. 66
\[39\] Ibid., p. 67
mêmes colères dans leurs yeux. Crier vers le ciel tous ensemble. "Nous n'avons rien à faire avec ces histoires! Nous sommes innocents!"

Mathieu realises, however, that this assertion of their innocence is unjustified; they are responsible, for it is impossible for them to revoke the nationality which has involved them. Nor can they plead that they were not consulted on the prosecution of the war, since abstention from politics and failure to agitate amount to acquiescence. Mathieu is aware that he is at fault.

Mon Dieu, j'ai lu, j'ai bâillé, j'agitais le grelot de mes problèmes, je ne me décidais pas à choisir et pour de vrai j'avais déjà choisi, j'avais choisi cette guerre, j'avais choisi cette défait et j'étais attendu au cœur de cette journée.

This is only an intellectual acceptance of his guilt: like the others he tries to exculpate himself. But he realises that his anger is only an escape and that he therefore has no right to judge them.

(., .) il avait honte: qui m'a donné le droit d'être si sévère? Ils viennent d'apprendre qu'ils sont fortuna, ils se débrouillent comme ils peuvent parce qu'ils n'ont pas l'habitude. Moi, j'ai l'habitude et je n'en veux pas mieux pour ça. Et après tout, moi aussi, j'ai choisi la fuite. Et la colère.

Thus Mathieu gradually breaks down his objective viewpoint; after an intellectual appraisal of it he symbolically destroys it. He is sitting by a stream with Pinette.

Mathieu lui trouva l'air bête et une marée de colère lui déferla dans la bouche et dans les yeux: "Assez! assez!"

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40 Ibid., p. 68
41 Ibid., p. 95
42 Ibid., p. 101
J'en ai marre d'être le type qui voit clair!" Le moustique vibrait autour de son front, dérisoire couronne de gloire. "Si je m'étais battu, si j'avais appuyé sur la gâchette, un type serait tombé quelque part..."
Il leva brusquement la main et s'envoya une bonne claque contre la tempe; il balaya les doigts et vit sur son index une minuscule dentelle sanglante, un type qui saignerait sa vie sur les cailloux, une claque sur la tempe, une pression de l'index sur la détente, les verres multicolores du kaleidoscope s'arrêteraient net, le sang dentellerait les herbes du sentier, j'en ai marre! j'en ai marre."

The mosquito draws a halo around Mathieu's head. Usually the mark of the person whose soul is in heaven, the halo is for Mathieu one of objectivity; his spirit rests in the lap of the Absolute. His killing of the mosquito thus symbolises the disintegration of the objective viewpoint.

With this sequence is interwoven the idea of committing a positive action: killing an enemy soldier. Such an action would situate him totally, mind and body, in the world; at the same time he would assume his responsibility for the war by positively committing himself to his nation's opposition to the enemy. The opportunity, however, has not yet presented itself; it is one of Mathieu's possibles à réaliser.

Although Mathieu resolves to abandon his former way of thinking he is at this stage of his development unable to do so. When he decides to engage in an act "qu'on ne comprend jamais tout à fait" he is evidently deceiving himself since he refuses to act when the opportunity is presented. A company of soldiers who are trying to obstruct the German advance has just entered the village. Pinette says he will join them. Mathieu adduces reasons for refusing to do so. It would, he claims, be a meaningless act, probably ending in death, and besides the armistice is imminent. To such arguments Pinette has already closed his mind.

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And Mathieu realises that through this choice of certain death, Pinette has reached a point of self-coincidence which is attractive. A similar decision by Mathieu would unite him with Pinette, but on this side of despair.

Mathieu rejects Pinette's offer, neither from cowardice, nor from a respect for the village and its inhabitants, who will suffer long after the soldiers are dead; but because he is unwilling to accept an easy exit from his situation. Pinette may want to die rather than face the humiliation which would be inflicted by his wife and father-in-law. But such a course is not open to Mathieu: he has to invent his own solution. He can no longer accept "un acte gratuit" as the answer to a problem; he needs a long-term project which will totally commit him to his situation.

Se fendre la main d'un coup de couteau, jeter son anneau de mariage, tirailier sur les Fridolins; et puis après? Casser, détériorer, ça n'est pas une solution; un coup de tête ce n'est pas la liberté.

45 Cf. L'Être et le Néant, p. 133. "Ainsi cet être perpétuellement absent qui hante le pour-soi, c'est lui-même figé en en-soi. C'est l'impossible synthèse du pour-soi et de l'en-soi". The en-soi in the case of Pinette is his past life. By choosing to die in this manner he hopes to constitute himself as a hero. And Mathieu feels that Pinette has already died: "Pinette était hors d'atteinte; il marchait en aveugle dans sa dernière nuit; il marchait, mais il n'avancait pas: il était déjà arrivé; sa mort et sa naissance s'étaient rejointes..." (p. 220)

46 La Mort dans l'Ame, pp. 108-9
47 Cf. Situations III, p. 313
48 La Mort dans l'Ame, p. 222
This passage is of prime importance for the final scene. It indicates that a mere gesture without a future holds no attraction for Mathieu.

In selecting a rifle with Pinette shortly afterwards he reverses his earlier decision. This act is not explained, but in the light of the previous quotation we can conclude that Mathieu's reasons for choosing resistance are not the same as Pinette's. Mathieu's arguments against Pinette's decision do not apply to his own case. The lack of premeditation in Mathieu's action suggests that he has invented an exit; he has taken a possible course of action from the world and made it unique by creating around it a structure of motives, means and ends peculiar to him.

The exact nature of this structure is not clear. On the church-tower he thinks over his spontaneous choice.

Je décide que la mort était le sens secret de ma vie, que j'ai vécu pour mourir; je meurs pour témoigner qu'il est impossible de vivre; mes yeux éteindront le monde et le fermeront pour toujours.

But as we have already seen, this form of deliberation is suspect. To elucidate the real reasons for Mathieu's choice we must examine the whole complex scene.

Firstly this is not a gratuitous act in the manner of his self-mutilation in the first volume. That such exhibitionism has since been relinquished is underlined by Mathieu's indifference to a cut inflicted with a can-opener. Kenneth Douglas in his article "The Self-Inflicted

\[49\] Ibid., p. 253

\[50\] Supra p. 34

\[51\] Ibid., p. 251
Wound52 points out: "The incident, which no exhibitionism has defiled, helped to make of this last meal a communion meal". Communion there is among these men during their last night before almost certain death. And this fraternity of human dignity is sharply contrasted with the "franc-maçonnerie des pissebasses" which Mathieu had previously encountered among the soldiers of his regiment. He wonders whether he should be with his fellow soldiers in the cellar of the town-hall. But he rejects the idea. "Il y en a marre. Tant pis pour ceux d'en dessus, tant pis pour tout le monde. Finis les remords, les réserves, les restrictions".53 The violence of the expression is in part a manifestation of Mathieu's choice of exploitation. It also denotes a selfishness which belies any feeling of fraternity.54 The sense of brotherhood inspired by a joint heroic action is present, but this is not the motive for Mathieu's action; his is an attempt to achieve personal salvation. A group effort will enhance the significance and effect of the individual action, but it will not efface the personal goal. Mathieu's choice of resistance is subsumed to that of the other men; his personal intention remains separate and intact. Thus it is Mathieu's individual behaviour and not his part in the group action which is the key to an understanding of this episode.

After killing his first German soldier, Mathieu is surprised that the whole manoeuvre has lasted but three minutes.

53 La Mort dans l'Ame, p. 253
54 It also shatters the importance of an earlier incident when the soldiers experience a more dignified brotherhood when their officers desert. (pp. 136-8)
Pendant des années, il avait tenté d'agir en vain: on lui volait ses actes à mesure, il comptait pour du beurre. Mais ce coup-ci, ce ne lui avait rien volé du tout. Il avait appuyé sur la gâchette, et, pour une fois, quelque chose était arrivé. "Quelque chose de définitif, pensa-t-il en riant de plus belle."

His desire for a definitive act has been fulfilled. For the first time a decision to act has involved the possibility of death, and it is this risk which has given meaning to his action. Nothing can take away the significance of this act for him not even death.

One by one his comrades are killed, or rendered unconscious, until Mathieu is alone. In a last blaze of fury he stands up and fires at everything in sight. Each shot symbolises the breaking of a scrumle which had previously fettered him.

Un coup sur Lola que je n'ai pas osé voler, un coup sur Marcelle que j'aurais dû plaquer, un coup sur Odette que je n'ai pas voulu baiser. Celui-ci pour les livres que je n'ai pas osé écrire, celui-là pour les voyages que je me suis refusés, cet autre sur tous les types, en bloc, que j'avais envie de détester et que j'ai essayé de comprendre. Il tirait, les lois volaient en l'air, tu aimeras ton prochain comme toi-même, pan dans cette gueule de con, tu ne tueras point, pan sur le faux jeton d'en face. Il tirait sur l'homme, sur la Vertu, sur le Monde: la Liberté c'est la Terreur; le feu brûlait dans la mairie, brûlait dans sa tête: les balles sifflaient, libres comme l'air, le monde sauterait, moi avec, il tira, il regarda sa montre: quatorze minutes trente secondes; il n'avait plus rien à demander sauf un délai d'une demi-minute, juste le temps de tirer sur le bel officier si fier qui courait vers l'Église; il tira sur le bel officier, sur toute la Beauté de la Terre, sur la rue, sur les fleurs, sur les jardins, sur tout ce qu'il avait aimé. La Beauté fit un plongeon

55. Ibid., p. 271
56. See below.
obscène et Mathieu tira encore. Il tirait, il était pur, il était tout-puissant, il était libre.

Mathieu's objective position is completely destroyed. Fifteen minutes of irreparable action have purged him of all the taboos which had previously smothered him.

This passage raises several problems and requires close analysis. Critics have asserted that Mathieu dies or commits suicide although this is not precisely stated. In fact Mathieu was intended to live, but even without extraneous knowledge of this nature it is possible to see that Mathieu had no intention of killing himself, although his action exposed him to the possibility of death.

Firstly, at least one other character present on the tower survived the battle. Clapot, who was in charge of that small company, reappears as a prisoner-of-war in the second part of La Mort dans l'Ame. Indeed he is evidently uninjured. And this fact alone would lead one to question the allegation that Mathieu is dead.

Secondly, during the scene which concludes the first part of the novel there is an unusual insistence on the passing of time, and particularly on the fragmentation of time.

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57 Ibid., pp. 280-1
58 J. Weightman, op. cit., p. 125 and M. Cranston, op. cit., p. 73
60 La Mort dans l'Ame, p. 380
Mathieu regarda son bracelet-montre et vit qu'il était six heures. 
Ils seront là dans une minute, dit-il malgré lui. 
 Ils roulai en avec des saccades mécaniques, avec la raide noblesse de personnages articulés qui s'avancent sous le cadran de vieilles horloges quand l'heure sonne. L'heure allait sonner. 
Si ça pouvait s'arrêter une minute pour que je me reprenne. 
(. . . ) dans sa tête, une roue dentelée tournait de plus en plus vite. 
(. . . ) la roue de feu tournoyait comme la roulette des marchands d'oubliées. 

As tension mounts the action is split by the three-, seven-, and ten-minute marks. "(. . . ) il regarda sa montre: quatorze minutes trente secondes; il n'avait plus rien à demander sauf un délai d'une demi-minute." And "quinze minutes" at the close emphasises finally this division of the brief time span. As a simple dramatic effect this fragmentation heightens the suspense. But it is also part of the philosophical design.

Throughout L'Etre et le Néant Sartre insists on the unity of time: past, present and future are continuous and cannot be separated. The instant, however, is not an empty invention of philosophy. "Nous sommes tels, par le choix même de notre liberté, que nous pouvons toujours faire apparaître l'instant comme rupture de notre unité ek-statique." But the instant is not the scientific unit of time (although Sartre is obliged to use accepted divisions of time in this scene of La Mort dans

61 Ibid., p. 264. Before this incident we are unaware that Mathieu even possesses a watch. 
62 Ibid., p. 265 
63 Ibid., p. 267 
64 Ibid., p. 268 
65 Ibid., pp. 268-9 
66 Ibid., p. 269 
67 Ibid., p. 281 
68 L'Etre et le Néant, p. 544
It is rather the end of one project and the beginning of another.

En un mot, si la fin d'un projet coïncide avec le commencement d'un autre projet, une réalité temporelle ambiguë surgira qui sera limitée par un néant antérieur en ce qu'elle est commencement et par un néant postérieur en ce qu'elle est fin.

The phenomenon is not common however.

[L'instant] n'existera donc que si nous sommes à nous-même commencement et fin dans l'unité d'un même acte. Or, c'est précisément ce qui se produit dans le cas d'une modification radicale de notre projet fondamental.

This passage is critical for our understanding of Mathieu. The emphasis on the fragmentation of time is the artistic transposition of this idea from L'Être et le Néant. The actual instant is marked by "Quinze minutes"; standing alone it has a néant before and after. His defiance of the Germans is the end of his initial project of domination (underlined by the destruction of the church-tower) and the beginning of a new fundamental project. The latter would have been the subject of the subsequent volume, but conjecture about what it would have been does not concern us. The important point is that Mathieu has abandoned his original project and has already begun another.

Another aspect of Sartre's technique in his creation of Mathieu provides further evidence to support our interpretation. The time of La Nausée is the present, and in Qu'est-ce que la Littérature? Sartre implies that the novel should be written in the present tense:

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69 Ibid.

70 Sartre's task was made easier by conceiving that novel in the form of a diary, where the present tense is more normal.
Les romans de nos aînés racontaient l'événement au passé, la succession chronologique laissait entrevoir les relations logiques et universelles; les vérités éternelles; le plus petit changement était déjà compris, on nous livrait du vécu déjà repensé (...). Mais nous, si nous venions à méditer sur nos écrits futurs, nous nous persuadions qu'aucun art ne saurait être vraiment nôtre s'il ne rendait à l'événement sa brutale fraîcheur, son ambiguïté, son imprévisibilité, au temps son cours, au monde son opacité menaçante et somptueuse, à l'homme sa longue patience; nous ne voulions pas décevoir notre public de sa supériorité sur un monde mort et nous souhaitions le prendre à la gorge.71

The story of Mathieu, however, has been written in the past tense. And Sartre is too conscientious an artist to let such details pass without questioning them.72 If the above interpretation of the emphasis on time is accepted then the consciousness of Mathieu recounts the story in the past because that way of life for him is past. Mathieu is recalling this part of his life from the point of view of the unwritten fourth volume. And it is separated from this hypothetical present because of the instant; he no longer has to be his past (except "sur la mode de l'avoir été") because it has been rejected in favour of the new fundamental choice.

(....) ainsi le présent pur appartient à la temporalisation nouvelle comme commencement, et il reçoit du futur qui vient de surgir sa nature propre de commencement (....) Ainsi le présent du choix appartient déjà comme structure intégrée à la nouvelle totalité amorcée (....) Il est même par principe décision de saisir comme passé le choix auquel il se substitue. Un athée converti n'est pas simplement un croyant: c'est un croyant qui a nié de lui l'athéisme, qui a passéifié en lui son projet d'être athée.73

71 Qu'est-ce que la Littérature, p. 273.
72 Moreover, the second part of La Mort dans l'Ame is written in the present tense. The juxtaposition of tenses is surely deliberate.
73 L'Être et le Néant, pp. 544-5
If the question of Mathieu's "death" is thus solved, there still remains the problem of why he should choose such a violent method of terminating his first fundamental choice. The key lies partly in the vocabulary, and particularly in the phrase: "La Liberté, c'est la Terreur". This has been interpreted rather superficially by one critic to apply to the whole of Mathieu's action in Les Chemins de la Liberté; Mathieu was used by Sartre to illustrate "the idea of terrorist liberty". At first sight it appears that Mathieu's search for freedom has come to fruition. He has found a meaning for his long years of waiting in this widespread destruction. The situation of the phrase in the text, however, does not carry the ring of triumph one would have expected from such a momentous discovery. The lack of exclamation mark, or of any comment, leads one to imagine the tone to be subdued if not grim.

As it stands the phrase is rather enigmatic. But the addition of "absolue" helps us in our considerations. For absolute freedom to be possible everything must be negated, everything destroyed.

74 P. Thody, op.cit., p. 66

75 This phrase is the first expression of an equation with freedom.

76 Mathieu's earlier reflexions on freedom imply that his concept of freedom is not concerned with existence, but rather with an absolute, which is by definition unrelated. Cf. Le Sursis, p. 405. "L'église peut crouler, je peux choir dans un trou d'obus, retomber dans ma vie; rien ne peut m'ôter ce moment éternel. Rien; il y aurait eu, pour toujours, cet éclair sec, enflammant des pierres sous le ciel noir; l'absolu, pour toujours; l'absolu, sans cause, sans raison, sans but, sans autre passe, sans autre avenir que la permanence, gratuit, fortuit, magnifique. 'Je suis libre', se dit-il soudain."
La liberté universelle ne peut donc produire ni une œuvre positive ni une opération positive; il ne lui reste que l'opération négative; elle est seulement la furie de la destruction.

Mathieu's blaze of fury, then, is the logical outcome of his original choice of domination and of the secondary structure of absolute freedom. And as the logical outcome it is also the end term of the series. The violence of this scene is the resolution of the tension between the original choice of domination and the secondary choice of freedom.

Destruction, however, takes place on three distinct levels. On the first the objects of destruction are the German soldiers. And as the situation is that of war no comment is required. The second level comprises, as we have seen, the destruction of self-imposed limitations. It implies the rejection of the superstructure of his original choice, the attitude of objectivity and the desire for untrammelled freedom. The third level is a destruction of the choice of domination itself.

This may seem contradictory, since Mathieu's killing of the soldiers could be interpreted as a further expression of his choice of domination. But the use of abstract concepts "l'homme", "la Vertu", "le Monde", "la Beauté", as the targets for his bullets suggests a deeper significance. All these concepts, marked particularly with a capital letter, are


78 This apparently contradicts what we have just stated, but the contradiction stems from the ambiguous nature of this action. Mathieu's violence is an expression of absolute freedom, and at the same time it is a responsible, positive action which situates him in opposition to the Germans.
objective; they are dictated by Mathieu's Object. The destruction of these suprahuman categories is in fact destruction of the Object for Mathieu.

This is of obvious importance. When Mathieu abandons the objective standpoint, he is passing from the inauthentic to the authentic, from the sphere of mediated values to that of the immediate. Up to this point Mathieu has been in a state of alienation. The meaning of his actions was denied him, because they were not the result of a spontaneous desire. Mathieu had set up a mediator as his god and then proceeded to imitate this model as far as possible. But his decision to fight is unsullied by reflexion or by recourse to the mediatory god: it is a spontaneous action, and one which marks that he is departing from the objective point of view.

It has been necessary to make a close analysis of this scene because critics of the novel sequence have been unaware of its ambiguous nature. In alleging Mathieu's death, they have concluded that his road to freedom has ended in failure, that his concept of freedom was empty, and that Sartre was presenting a basically pessimistic view of Mathieu's attempt. If, as we have shown, Mathieu does not die, but is rather embarking on a phase of authenticity, then the charge of pessimism is unfounded.

One major problem still remains: that of the value of Mathieu as

It is remarkable that Mathieu more than any other person in the novel sequence uses the word "Dieu".
a central figure in *Les Chemins de la Liberté*. Is Sartre's preoccupation with him only a means of personal exorcism à la Gide, or is it the interest of the psychoanalyst in an eccentric? Or again does Mathieu have a more general application? All these views have been forwarded by critics. Iris Murdoch equates Mathieu with Sartre, while Thody contends that Sartre decided "to use Mathieu to illustrate the idea of 'terrorist liberty'" while others decline to mention the situation of the novel sequence in history, restricting their analysis of Mathieu to the novel in a vacuum. Sartre, however, has an acute awareness of being in the twentieth century, and to deny a wider significance to his novels, literary purists notwithstanding, is to ignore an important feature of his writing.

Sartre has created in Mathieu a figure readily recognisable by the majority of readers, not as a member of the bourgeoisie, nor as an intellectual, and still less as a psychological case history; but as anyone between the wars who was not politically committed. And this broad category comprised a large proportion of the adult population in 1949, including Sartre himself. His awakening to politics had come with the Munich agreement which was welcomed with relief by all but a few. Mathieu's predicament is not confined to academics, though probably it is more poignant where clear-thinking is commonly allied with aloofness;

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it is that of anyone who sees that action is required but desists because it is not his concern, only to find that events have outstripped him.

And it is here that Mathieu's choice of freedom has its relevance. Ontologically man is free, he is condemned to choose and cannot avoid the responsibility of his choice. But at the same time freedom can be masked by mauvaise foi, or be submerged by the mystifying agents of society. Thus Mathieu, through his choice of objectivity, had masked his freedom to choose; from the objective standpoint the choice between two possible courses of action is impossible because action requires a human scale of values for it to be meaningful. The objective standpoint rests on super-human values, and any action viewed from outside a human framework must seem pointless or absurd. Mathieu then had to liberate himself from the myth of Rationalism, and his action on the church-tower shows that he has done so.
CHAPTER III

BRUNET

If Mathieu exemplifies the attitude of the monk, Brunet's approach to the world is that of the messiah. Of Brunet, F. Jeanson says: "Il pense sa vie comme un destin, comme une mission inscrite dans les choses" and later:

(....) il a voulu être engagé, c'est-à-dire, être quelque chose. Il a voulu "récupérer" son projet, coïncider avec lui, être ce qu'il n'était pas.

Certainly this capsule analysis of Brunet affords important indications for the general meaning of his projet original; it explains that his decision to join the Communist Party was an attempt to justify his existence and that he took refuge in the "esprit de sérieux" which engagement offered him. But Jeanson's opinion is based only on the first two volumes while it is La Mort dans l'Ame which affords the clearest view of the texture of Brunet's existence.

Before his appearance in the third volume our knowledge of Brunet is very limited. A brief conversation with Mathieu shows him as a

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2 Jeanson's book was first published in 1947. It was reprinted in 1966 with a postface, "Un Quidam Nommé Sartre", but the text was not revised.

3 L'Age de Raison, pp. 167-80.
militant communist, totally dedicated to the Party, and at ease with the world. His short meeting with Maurice in _Le Sursis_, however, belies this surface self-sufficiency.⁴ There is tension between his being a communist and his social background, between thought and feeling. And it is the resolution of this tension which will decide Brunet's style of life. There are three possible courses: he can allow himself to be hypnotised by his social situation; he can assume it in order to change it; or he can ignore it.⁵ The incident in _Le Sursis_ indicates that Brunet has chosen the third possibility, has rejected his bourgeois background to espouse the Communist Party. But the severance is not yet complete. The full significance of Brunet's joining the Communist Party will become clear only after an examination of _La Mort dans l'Ame_.

At the outset Brunet recognises that further fighting is futile and finds a house to spend the night, realising that with the French defeat his work as a militant communist can begin again. Seeing his reflection in a mirror, he remarks: "J'ai drôlement besoin de me raser."⁶

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⁴ His reflections on Zézette, Maurice's girl-friend, show that all is not cut and dried:


⁶ _La Mort dans l'Ame_, p. 285.
a surprising reaction at a time when we should expect his personal
appearance to be the least of his concerns. But it is clarified during
his quarrel with the French civilian in whose cellar he has spent the
night:

( . . . ) il regarde avec dégoût ce gros mollason qui
s'obstine à vivre ( . . . ) Le type ( . . . ) roule ses
yeux d'alcoolique, il dégage une puissante odeur de
mort et de purin.

His attitude combines an obsession about personal cleanliness with a
disgust for the dirtiness of others. This duality is, however, only
a symptom of a basic element in Brunet's *choix original*. His obsession
with cleanliness cannot be explained by Brunet's need to feel clean or
comfortable, and only in part by habits instilled in childhood.

It is evident that, in taking the trouble to shave, Brunet hopes
to separate himself from the mob of defeated Frenchmen, to be superior
to his defeated countrymen:

On est entre Français. Une cohue de petits Français,
en kaki, mal lavés, pas rasés, le visage noir de fumée,
qui rient, plaisentent, chuchotent, un moutonnement de
têtes nues, de bonnets de police, pas un casque.

Brunet dominates the herd from his clean intellectual position. More
than that, "Brunet trottine avec les autres, mais il est aussi grand que
le Fritz, aussi bien rasé"—he is on a par with the victorious Germans.

One practical reason for being conspicuous is that he wants to
be recognised as he was before the war, as the noted Communist whose

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7 *Ibid.*, p. 287. This is a stronger expression of his reaction to
photograph was often featured on the front page of L'Humanité. He will thus be the rallying point for other communists who would otherwise be wary of revealing themselves for fear of torture by the Germans.

The main reason must be sought elsewhere, however, since Brunet continues to make himself conspicuous after he has been recognised. In the prisoner-of-war camp at Baccarat he forces himself to wash and shave, even when it is obvious that his body is too weak for such an effort. This obsession reaches the point of fury when Brunet is told that there are fleas in the neighbouring compartments of the loft:

Il se sent nerveux, il s'énerve encore davantage, il dit avec violence: "Je ne veux pas de poux ici." Il s'arrête brusquement, se mord la lèvre inférieure, et regarde les types avec incertitude. (...) Il sent que ses joues se congestionnent, sa voix s'élève, il crie: "Il n'y aura pas de poux ici! Il n'y en aura pas!"

When his anger has cooled a little he thinks: "En tout cas, moi, je n'en aurai pas". Not only does Brunet contrast his cleanliness with the dirtiness of the others, to his own satisfaction. For him, the rest are reduced to one function, that of being unclean. By concentrating on this feature exclusively, he begins to think of them as animals and ignores that they are men. This tendency to reduce people to one function is characteristic of the objective viewpoint.

So is his attitude to individuals. When forced to take notice

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10 Ibid., pp. 374-5

11 Cf. "leurs yeux de chiens battus" (p. 295), "le troupeau tout entier gémit" (p. 296), "on dirait des phoques" (p. 305), "ces bêtes nocturnes et affamés qui se pressent contre les barreaux" (p. 328), "c'est un banc de poissons crevés qui flottent, le ventre en l'air" (p. 340), and "Vous êtes tous des porcs!" (p. 367)
of people separately he again selects a single feature of each person which not only labels him, but also negates any other possibilities. For Brunet the person becomes that feature. The first night in the Baccarat prison Brunet reflects on those he has met:


While apparently analysing these men Brunet is in fact denoting functions for them, rather like the employer selecting workers for an assembly line: one to put bolts in holes, another to put nuts on those bolts. And by reducing them to functions Brunet treats them as objects.

We have already alluded to the notion of objectivity, and can now expand our definition of it. For Mathieu it was "la valeur absolue d'un regard dépouillé des faiblesses subjectives"; and he adopted this viewpoint to contemplate the world. Brunet too adopts it, but not for the purpose of contemplation. His aim is to work in the world using men as objects or tools. Schneider, adopting Brunet's standpoint and terminology to criticise him, through irony, says:

(....) moi, je me fous de ses intentions: il veut peut-être sauver la France. Mais objectivement c'est un prisonnier français qui passe ses journées avec l'ennemi. Voilà ce que les copains doivent savoir.

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12 Ibid., pp. 313-4
13 Supra pp. 32-3
14 Situations III, p. 141
15 La Mort dans l'Ame, pp. 352-3
The implication is clear: by adopting the objective point of view Brunet removes the intentional structure from the act. The priest may go to the Germans' quarters to visit sick prisoners (the infirmary is in that section) but, as far as Brunet and Schneider are concerned, the other prisoners are to consider his actions as if he were a machine first and a person second. Thus the priest-machine enters the Germans' quarters and spends his day there. Afterwards his intentions are imputed to him as a priest-man: he is a collaborator.

By removing the intentional nature of the priest's actions Brunet is denying the man's freedom in order to establish his own subjectivity, his absolute freedom in the world. If Brunet reduces the men around him to machines it is to remove the possibility of being seen by the Other. This does not contradict what was said earlier about Brunet's shaving in order to be recognised, since that recognition would come from communists who would be prepared to assume the rôle of cogs in a Party machine. If, however, the look which fixes him is a critical one, it is Brunet who becomes an object, en-soi; and this situation makes him aware of the Other's freedom which in turn inspires him with the anguish of his own freedom. Let us examine this a little more closely.

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16 On this tactical point Brunet and Schneider hold the same opinion. The subsequent analysis is valid only for Brunet.
Hegel wrote that "chaque conscience tend à la mort de l'autre", consciousness when faced with another consciousness risks its own life in a struggle to the death, in order to be certain of its own existence. In Sartrian terms, freedom meets its limits only in the freedom of the Other. And it is this confrontation which reveals the frightening abyss of freedom in man. In a solipsistic system where consciousness faces a non-conscious world freedom knows no limits and is thereby not called into question.

Solipsism is not a fact, but it can become a conscious comportment assumed in order to avoid an aspect of human reality; the person who is so involved in practical matters that people no longer exist as persons but only as factors or bodies is but one example. A semi-solipsistic world must exist for the factory manager who is not concerned with the personalities of his workers but only in production figures, bodies to fill vacancies. This attitude is called "l'indifférence envers autrui" by Sartre and is a type of willed blindness.

Je pratique alors une sorte de solipsisme de fait; les autres, ce sont ces formes qui passent dans la rue, ces objets magiques qui sont susceptibles d'agir à distance et sur lesquels je peux agir par des conduites déterminées. J'y prends à peine garde, j'agis comme si j'étais seul au monde; je frôle "les gens" comme je frôle les murs, je les évite comme j'évite des obstacles, leur liberté-objet n'est pour moi que leur "coefficient d'adversité"; je n'imagine même pas qu'ils puissent me regarder.¹⁷

If people look at Brunet, then his objectifying attitude disarms the power of their look; even a persistent look can be rendered invalid if the stârè is

¹⁷ L'Etre et le Néant, p. 449.
And normally Brunet is not at all troubled by the looks he receives:

Les types le regardent avec curiosité; ce sont des gars comme il les aime: solides et propres avec des yeux durs. De bons outils. Ils le regardent, il pense: "Ici, ils n'ont plus que moi" et il se sent mieux.

The communists who look at him are already for Brunet "de bons outils", are posited as libertés-objets whose stare has no effect on him.

At this stage we must ask why Brunet adopts this objective attitude. L'Etre et le Néant gives the general principles which lie at the basis of any relation with other people, but does not explain why an individual adopts one possible attitude rather than another.19 In the case of Mathieu we were afforded three clear memories of childhood and adolescence which clarified for us his projet original. But with Brunet, who tries to discard such memories, the pointers are fleeting and fragmented. Instead we must turn to the symbolism of his dreams.

During a period of exhaustion Brunet recalls in dream his youth:

J'ai aimé l'ananas, oh! il y a longtemps, c'était du temps que j'aimais le ski, les montagnes, la boxe, les petits yachts à voile, les femmes. (...) le fourmillement du soleil dans les feuilles des châtaigniers, la pluie de soleil sur mon front, je lisais dans le hamac, la maison blanche derrière moi, derrière moi la Tourraine, j'aimais les arbres, le soleil et la maison, j'aimais le monde et le bonheur, oh! autrefois.

This and other fragments21 are of prime importance. The above passage

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18. La Mort dans l'Ame, p. 338
20. La Mort dans l'Ame, p. 342
in particular shows that Brunet comes from the middle if not upper-middle class. And if Brunet tries to hide these memories from himself it is because he is ashamed of his background, particularly of the luxury and leisure that he knew as an adolescent.

The dream's symbolism, however, affords important insights into Brunet's choix original. The three important elements are trees (and vegetable growth), the sun and the chimpanzees or monkeys. The monkey symbol is most easily deciphered: they are men reduced to their animal functions. But they display three important emotions: sadness -- "le singe est la bête qui a les yeux les plus tristes après l'homme" -- happiness -- "les singes s'esclaffent en se frappant les cuisses"-- and, most important, love -- "(ils) tendent leurs longs bras entre les barreaux". Brunet sees himself as a monkey ("la bête est en cage"), but he remains passive in his cage; he has repressed these "animal" feelings. The cages are made of wood (the word "caisse" specifies the material) and represent subjectivity. The monkey's natural habitat is the trees that are growing; in the forest the monkey's emotions can be spontaneously expressed in his effortless movement among the branches. But for Brunet subjectivity is a dead letter; the trees have been cut down and fashioned into cages. Yet the other monkeys try to ignore the bars that Brunet has set around them and stretch out their arms in love to touch him. He was once "une jeune pousse tendre

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22 The fact that "FRAGILE"(p.341) and "SUBJECTIVITE"(p. 342) are in capital letters further emphasises the symbol.
et gluante de sève" but "ils m'ont eu, ils m'ont écorcé", and now he is "une écorce", "la sève est morte". The dream so far corresponds with what has been already noted about Brunet; the animal vocabulary, the repression of any feeling for the men around him, the rigid discipline imposed on his own body. But it goes further; "Ecartez les herbes et vous trouverez un soleil", in other words set aside your subjectivity and you will find the Communist Party, the centre of Brunet's universe, the giver of life and light. Thus the greatest catastrophe for him is "un refroidissement du soleil". The sun, however, is also a symbol from his childhood. The pineapple becomes "un sirop de soleil" in his mouth. At that time in his life the sun was his mother, the pineapple her body. This does not necessarily mean that Brunet has an Oedipus complex, but it is significant that when he comes out of his dream for a while he is afraid of:

(. . .) cet énorme désir qui le submerge tout à coup, désir de vivre, désir d'aimer, désir de caresser des seins blancs.  

And when he briefly falls back into dream, the image is more noticeably sexual:

Le corps, le corps mortel, forêt de désirs, sur chaque branche un oiseau, ils servent le jambon de Westphalie sur des assiettes de bois, le couteau tranche la viande, on sent, quand on le tire, l'adhérence légère au bois humide, ils m'ont eu, je ne suis qu'un désir.  

There is a very strong link between sexual desire and childhood in

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23 La Mort dans l'Ame, p. 343
24 Ibid.
Brunet. And if the pineapple is indeed the symbol of his mother's body, then Brunet's eating the pineapple is the equivalent of making love to his mother. But this in its turn must be deciphered. Sartre points out that:

( . . . ) avant d'être aimés, nous étions inquiets de cette protubérance injustifiée, injustifiable qu'était notre existence; au lieu de nous sentir "de trop", nous sentons à présent que cette existence est reprise et voulue dans ses moindres détails par une liberté absolue qu'elle conditionne en même temps.  

Thus Brunet recovers his existence and his facticity by wanting to make love to his mother, since she is his physical origin. The concomitant attitude is hatred of his father, on one level as a rival for his mother's love, but more significantly as the accomplice of his mother in Brunet's birth. Of this hatred we know nothing.

At some stage Brunet's love for his mother was revealed to him as culpable; "ils m'ont écorcé". And we may suppose that he tried to find a mother-figure elsewhere: "Qu'est ce que j'ai fait de mes amours; ils m'ont dit: Tu ne nous aimes pas assez." Finally Brunet joined the Communist Party where he again found justification for his existence. The symbol of the sun has been transferred. The Party has become the touchstone for Brunet's actions: he no longer wonders what he should do, but what the Party would do.

*25* L'Être et le Néant, p. 439

*26* While it could be argued that joining the Communist Party, rather than the Socialist Party or even a right-wing movement, was an expression of his hatred for his father, since Communism aims at the eradication of privileges, yet it seems more appropriate in Brunet's case to conclude that Party doctrine, in particular the belief in materialist philosophy and the historical process, was the deciding factor.
With the dream sequence, then, we are given conclusive information about Brunet's *choix originel*. Let us summarise briefly the results of our investigation so far. Brunet's basic project is to find a justification for his existence; this was achieved originally through his relationship with his mother. But this relationship initiated feelings of guilt. By joining the Communist Party, he was able to find the desired justification, transferring the faith he had had in his mother to Communist doctrine, but ridding himself of the attendant guilt by discarding subjectivity, denying feeling. Thus he makes of himself and the other Party-members, objects: he reduces his body to a machine, the men around him to functions. We shall now turn to the direct confrontation of Brunet and Schneider, during which Brunet defends his belief in the Communist Party.

Brunet feels the Party is worthy of the trust he places in it because its ideology is based on rational scientific laws. The materialist foundation of Communism lends a certain validity to its pronouncements, and its belief in an historical process means that the future is certain. Thus Brunet, in answer to Schneider's question about what he hopes for, replies: "Je n'espère rien; je n'ai jamais rien espéré, je me fous de l'espoir: je sais."

27 And a little later, he draws an analogy between his trust in the Politbureau and Schneider's trust in natural laws.

(....) tu sais très bien qu'il y a des lois naturelles et que les immeubles ont l'habitude de tenir debout quand on les a construits en accord avec ces lois.

27 *La Mort dans l'Ame*, p. 387.
Alors? Pourquoi voudrais-tu que je passe mon temps à m'interroger sur la politique de l'U. R. S. S. et qu'est-ce que tu viens me parler de ma confiance en Staline? J'ai confiance en lui, oui, et en Molotov et en Jdanov: dans l'exacte mesure où tu as confiance en la solidité de ces murs. Autrement dit, je sais qu'il y a des lois historiques et que, en vertu de ces lois, le pays des travailleurs et les prolétariats européens ont des intérêts identiques.  

The fallacy in Brunet's reasoning is obvious. Whereas the success of science demonstrates the working validity of natural laws, no such certainty can be claimed for the laws of history. While some patterns are discernible in past events, they cannot be used as the basis for prediction. Brunet's confidence, then, in historical laws is founded not on the certain knowledge he claims but on faith. And the analogy he draws with natural laws is an attempt to convince Schneider; it is rhetorical, not rational.

From the belief in historical laws Brunet's argument moves quickly, and for him necessarily, to determinism:

Quand tu tends la main pour prendre ta gamelle, ton geste, à lui seul, postule le déterminisme universel; moi, c'est pareil: le moindre de mes actes affirme implicitement que l'U. R. S. S. est à l'avant-garde de la Révolution mondiale.  

for only if man is determined can historical laws have any meaning. For the man who believes that human beings are governed by the laws of matter

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28 Ibid., p. 388.


30 La Mort dans l'Ame, p. 389.
there is, however, the problem of the world of the mind; how can matter generate the idea of matter? He circumvents the problem by making himself regard objectif, claiming that the subjective part of man, particularly his psychological make-up, is either non-existent, or meaningless. Thus on the one hand, a materialist philosophy liberates Brunet, as we have seen, from subjectivity and the guilt of his desires. On the other, it assures him of the future. Supported both by the success of science and by the success of the Russian Revolution, Brunet is able to work at specific concrete projects without concerning himself with the ultimate aim of his actions or with his responsibility.

In the prisoner-of-war camp, however, Brunet and the other soldiers are cut off from a meaningful social environment. As Schneider says: "la situation est abstraite et nous sommes irresponsables". Brunet, however, is not accustomed to thinking in these terms, and acts as if the situation had political significance. His programme of action is:

(. . .) repérer les éléments sains, les organiser, amorcer une contre-propagande clandestine, voilà les objectifs immédiats. Deux thèmes à développer: nous refusons de reconnaître l'armistice: la démocratie est la seule forme de gouvernement que nous puissions accepter aujourd'hui.

Of these suggestions the first might conceivably have some relevance.

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31 As Sartre points out in the priest's sermon (pp. 347-51) the Church has also taken issue with this point of Communist doctrine, while behaviourism, the materialist psychology, is still searching for the answer to this problem.

32 La Mort dans l'Ame, p. 358.

33 Ibid., p. 354.
to their situation, since it could be used to raise morale. The second, however, is meaningless, since it requires political action and a political context, both of which are denied to the prisoners. At best the prisoners pose a problem for Hitler's government, but not a political threat. Brunet is so out of touch with life that he cannot see an alternative to direct political action. Gradually, however, Brunet changes this point of view under the influence of Schneider.

There are few positive figures in Sartre's work; Hoederer in *Les Mains Sales* is one outstanding example; another is Schneider. In *La Mort dans l'Ame* and *Drôle d'Amitié*, Schneider counters Brunet's objective attitude by presenting a more human approach to their situation and the prisoners who are caught up in it. Where Brunet despises the men he has to work with, Schneider is sympathetic, if not compassionate; Brunet tries to organise men into a political machine, Schneider joins the group because he does not want to be alone; but Brunet sees in his work the continuing historical process, the march towards Social Revolution, Schneider is content with a smaller objective:

(....) si nous pouvons rendre un peu de courage aux copains, si nous les empêchons de désespérer, si nous leur donnons une raison de vivre ici, fût-elle illusoire, alors ça vaut la peine d'essayer.

Briefly, Brunet emphasises the general and abstract, Schneider the particular and concrete. While Brunet relies totally on Communism as

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a system of values, Schneider reacts to each situation as it arises. And if Schneider defies Brunet's attempts to classify him, it is not because he is inconsistent, but because he refuses to force his ideas into a system.

Political discussion is the mainstay of the action in the second part of the novel, and in Drôle d'Amitié. Through the confrontation of Brunet with Schneider, we witness an upheaval in Brunet's thinking, a shift from the objective viewpoint to a sympathetic one. This process is not a gradual linear development however. Brunet veers from one to the other, unwilling to free himself from Party doctrine until a crucial event, the death of Schneider, makes him see that he and not the Party must take the decisions which govern his actions.

When the prisoners are allowed visits, Brunet is at first annoyed, since if the prisoners' morale is raised in this fashion his work will be more difficult: "Rien à faire; ils ne sont pas assez malheureux." This is the attitude of the "médecin des morts", the rigid, militant Communist. When the visitors arrive, however, Brunet joins the rest of the men and, watching this small group of civilians, "Brunet retrouve tout à coup ce qu'il avait perdu: le sens de la vie." Although he preserves this more sympathetic attitude for a short time, Brunet reverts to his former one when the men around him show that they do not deserve such sympathy:

Rien à faire. Rien! Rien! Rien! Rien sûr que ça ne suffit pas, la confiance! Confiance en qui? Confiance

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36 Ibid., p. 373.
37 Ibid., p. 395.
en quoi? Il faut la souffrance, la peur et la haine, il faut la révolte et le massacre, il faut une discipline de fer. 38

But he no longer maintains the rigid attitude he had before he met Schneider.

We see his fluctuation most clearly in the last section of the novel. When the "typo" says he will jump from the train, Brunet, thinking of him as a man, advises against it. As if to explain this to himself, and to convince the "typo", he then makes this an order, appealing to his authority within the Party structure. 39 It is significant that this should come after his initial appeal to the "typo" as a man.

Again, when Schneider has consulted the German guards as to the destination of the train, and informed the men in the wagon that they are going to Germany, he says: "Dommage que tu ne saches pas l'allemand (...). Parce que toi, tu aurais été content de les renseigner." 40 This remark reflects a prior conversation, when Brunet and Schneider had agreed that it would be good for the men to undergo the experience of a German prisoner-of-war camp. 41 But now Brunet, thinking of the others as men, not members of the Communist Party, replies that he does not in fact want to break the bad news.

Finally, when the "typo" again wants to jump from the train,

38 Ibid., p. 408.
39 Ibid., p. 411.
40 Ibid., p. 429.
41 Ibid., p. 409.
Brunet stops him because he would certainly be killed. And when he justifies this action to himself by setting it in the framework of the Party, he lacks any real conviction:

Il serre, de quel droit? Il serre plus fort, le typo dit: "Tu me fais mal!" Brunet serre: c'est une vie de communiste, il nous appartient tant qu'il vit. (...) Brunet se sent drôle; il tient dans ses mains cette dépouille: un membre du Parti qui ne peut plus servir. Il voudrait lui parler, l'exhorter, l'aider, il ne peut pas: ses mots sont au Parti, c'est le Parti qui leur a donné leur sens; à l'intérieur du Parti, Brunet peut aimer, peut persuader et consoler. Le typo est tombé hors de cet immense fuseau de lumière, Brunet n'a plus rien à lui dire.

The action is totally a sympathetic one; in stopping the "typo", he acts as a man and not a Party member.

The prisoners' discovery that they are not to stay in France, and the death of the "typo" coincide to bring about the effect that Brunet had wanted. The prisoners are prepared at last to fight the Germans:

Les types poussent; Brunet voit toute cette haine, sa haine, son outil et il a peur. (...) Les Français et les Allemands se regardent, c'est la guerre; pour la première fois c'est la guerre depuis septembre 39.

The situation is now ripe for Brunet to work effectively. But he now works with a more sympathetic attitude, as Drôle d'Amitié shows.

In the published fragments, he is pleased with the organisation he and Schneider have set up, and the men have ceased being abject:

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42 Ibid., p. 431.
43 Ibid., pp. 433-4.
Chez Thibaut, il a fait installer un poste récepteur dans une boîte à savon.
- Envoyez quelqu'un chez Thibaut, dit-il. Y a du bon.
Leurs yeux brillent, la haine et la joie pavoisent leurs joues. Brunet sent son cœur battre, voilà ce que j'ai fait d'eux.
- En Albanie, les gars: les Grecs leur ont mis ça, ils sont en pleine déroute.
Il referme la porte, il est ému: ils commenceront leur journée dans la gloire.

But the arrival of Chalais, a Party intellectual, changes the situation. Schneider is in fact Vicarios, a Communist who had been excluded from the Party for his disagreement with the German-Russian pact. Brunet also learns that his work in the camp goes against the Party line, since it is "pro-imperialist" as well as anti-fascist. Faced with these facts, Brunet decides once more that the Party is in the right; he stops seeing Schneider, and allows Chalais to take over as leader of the Communist group, though he retains some authority. But Brunet is troubled by this situation. Being a Communist no longer reassures him: he needs closer contact with the others than the Party allows.

Thus, when Vicarios is attacked by two Communists, Brunet responds, although he defies the Party in doing so. Like Mathieu, Brunet has done something which he does not altogether understand. But after the fight he explains to Vicarios:

(...ça se peut que j'aie rencontré ces jours-ci

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44 Drôle d'Amitié, op. cit., pp. 772-3.
46 Ibid., p. 1011.
quelques petites difficultés, mais je ne quitterai jamais le Parti. S'il faut me soumettre, je me soumettrai, s'il faut me désavouer, je me désavouerai. Je ne suis rien, ce que j'ai pu croire ou dire n'a aucune importance.

While still ostensibly putting the Party first and human feeling second, Brunet discovers, in helping Vicarios escape, that his order of priorities is no longer certain. With the death of Vicarios, Brunet finally rejects the Party's authority over his life: "Le Parti, je m'en fous: tu es mon seul ami."

Brunet has come to realise that a rigid adherence to a doctrine or system involves too great a sacrifice in the sphere of human relations. To believe in the infallibility of a doctrine is to reject the unpredictable, human dimension of any situation: "même si l'U. R. S. S. gagne, les hommes sont seuls."

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47 Ibid., p. 1031.
48 Ibid., p. 1039.
49 Ibid.
CHAPTER IV
STRUCTURE

The aim of the analysis so far has been a basic interpretation of the novel's content, focusing on the projet originel of the three central persons. The form of the novel, however, is as important as the content, and an examination of the structure will reveal not only the interrelation of the characters but also a further dimension of their fundamental projects.

Before the question of structure is broached, one point of Sartre's style should be clarified, since it has led to some confusion. He has been criticised both for setting up "arbitrary" rules in his study of Mauriac, and for not keeping them. The chief objection offered is that Sartre demands that the author should not manipulate his characters as if he were God, that indeed the author should be totally absent from the work. Since it is obvious that this critical principle grows directly out of Sartre's philosophy, no explanation of it need be given here. In La Mort dans l'Ame, as in all his novels, there is no direct comment by the author. The second objection, that of not observing this rule himself, is based on Sartre's use of il and elle.

1P. Thody, op.cit., p. 65.
Picard writes: "'Il yeta' c'est le pur récit du romancier, étranger à ses personnages et qui raconte du dehors." But for Sartre, the *il* is surely the "conscience non-thétique de soi", and not the expression of an omniscient author. Thus in the opening of the second part of *La Mort dans l'Ame*, the reader is in the consciousness of Brunet:

> Ils sont partout, ils m'auront demain. Il entre dans le village endormi; il traverse une place, il s'approche d'une maison au hasard, frappe, pas de réponse, pêse sur le loquet, la porte s'ouvre. Il entre, il referme la porte; le noir. Une allumette. Il est dans le vestibule, une glace sort vaguement de l'ombre, il se voit dedans: j'ai drôlement besoin de me raser.

The first sentence is a reflexion which Brunet might almost speak aloud. But the *il* of the second sentence indicates that Brunet is now totally absorbed in what he is doing; reflexion has no place here. That the *il* is not the "point de vue de Dieu" is emphasised by the half-sentences, "frappe, pas de réponse, pêse sur le loquet"; there is no grammatical subject because Brunet himself has no reflexive consciousness of what he is doing. It is only in the last sentence, when he looks in the mirror, that the reflexive consciousness comes into play again, and the change of mode of consciousness is marked by the use of *je*. Thus Sartre is not untrue to his principle: rather his critics have not adjusted to his use of the pronoun.

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5 *La Mort dans l'Ame*, p. 285.

6 A further refinement on Sartre's use of the pronoun is to be found in Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalouse*, where the third person is used exclusively, but the narrator is not omniscient. B. Morrisette has called that style of narration the "je-néant". "The Evolution of Narrative
We come now to the architecture of *La Mort dans l'Ame*. Not only is there a definite break in the novel, there is also a change in technique. In the first part the reader is placed in the consciousness of a succession of people; the second part (with *Drole d'Amitié*) has but one point of view, that of Brunet. The two sections are closely linked, however, as an examination of each will show.

The structure of the first part is similar to that of *L'Age de Raison* in that the reader is placed in the consciousness of different people. In the first novel of the sequence, however, the chapter divisions give the novel a more conventional appearance. Each division represents a new consciousness or a time-lapse in the same consciousness. Thus at the end of Chapter III, Mathieu is sitting in the Luxembourg gardens, while in Chapter IV, he is at the Dôme café. (In Chapters IX, XIV, and XVI, there are also changes of consciousness within the body of the chapter, each marked by a break in the text.) Each chapter division, however, dissipates the illusion, which has been created by placing the reader in a single consciousness.

In *Le Sursis*, the formal divisions are reduced to eight, and within these divisions the reader is tossed from one consciousness to another without encountering any mark of transition. But the divisions are marked by dates instead of chapter headings; these serve as landmarks rather than dividers, ironically documenting the historical period and the passage of time in a novel where time and action are not at all

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stressed.

In *La Mort dans l'Ame*, the formal divisions are made informal. The headings are italicised and phrased so as to suggest the datelines of newspaper articles. In this way the reader is reminded that the novel has a specific historical setting, without being made aware of the author. At the beginning of *La Mort dans l'Ame*, a time, date and place are assigned to the action. And as the reader moves from the consciousness of Gomez in New York to that of Sarah, his wife, in France, and back to New York, he encounters only one small break in the text. The next formal mark shows only the date, "Dimanche 16 juin"; and is inconspicuous, although the break it represents is clear. The subsequent headings are often less definite (e.g. "4 heures" and "6 heures du matin"). In the second part of the novel, there is no documentation of time or place.

From this it is evident that, while the structure of the first part of *La Mort dans l'Ame* bears some resemblance to that of *L'Age de Raison*, it allows much greater flexibility. The severe breaks that occur at chapter divisions in the first volume are awkward and frequently unnecessary; often the impact of a subtle juxtaposition is lost, or a purely temporal division in the flow of a single consciousness exaggerated. *La Mort dans l'Ame* avoids this awkwardness; the divisions are few and

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7 *La Mort dans l'Ame*, p. 48. The action of the novel's first part is spread over four consecutive days. This in itself would not be significant were it not that the division of one day from another is decisive for the structure. Cf. *infra* pp. 83, 84.

represent deliberate juxtapositions of viewpoint.

The opening sequence of three scenes contributes economically to the general themes of *La Mort dans l'Ame*. Firstly, it situates the novel at the time of the French defeat in 1940. But since this is done through the consciousness of Gomez, the first reaction to the defeat offered by the novel is an unsympathetic one; for Gomez, the French deserve to be defeated. Secondly, because Gomez is in New York, we are given some insight into the American attitude to the war; the relief that it had ended before America was involved. Thirdly, since Gomez is already familiar, a link is established with the first two volumes.

The tripartite nature of the opening sequence is particularly significant, both for the structure of the first part of *La Mort dans l'Ame*, and for the central theme of individual existence, to which the French defeat is the background. The consciousness of Gomez provides a frame for that of Sarah; this alternation allows the reader to draw conclusions about the two characters which are not explicit in the text.

"L'homme est un sorcier pour l'homme," writes Sartre; "les Hommes seront des Dieux, les uns pour les Autres," writes Girard: two expressions of the idea that man, in order to avoid his responsibility for creating values, chooses a model through whom the world is mediated. While Sartre is referring to human comportment in the world, Girard is concerned with mediation in the novel. He finds that the basic structure of the novel is the "désir triangulaire"; man is not in an authentic relationship with

the world, but selects an exemplary figure who points out what should be desired. Girard distinguishes two fundamental categories of "désir triangulaire" in fiction:

Nous parlerons de médiation externe lorsque la distance est suffisante pour que les deux sphères de possibles dont le médiateur et le sujet occupent chacun le centre ne soient pas en contact. Nous parlerons de médiation interne lorsque cette même distance est assez réduite pour que les deux sphères pénètrent plus ou moins profondément l'une dans l'autre.

La Mort dans l'Ame offers three clear examples of médiation interne. The first is contained in the opening sequence. In the central scene, Sarah, though she has left Paris ostensibly to avoid the Germans, wonders: "Pourquoi marcher quand l'espoir est mort? Pourquoi vivre?" Besides, she has chosen to go to New York to rejoin Gomez, an undertaking which is not only difficult, but unnecessary if she wants simply to avoid the Germans. Her attempts to justify herself disclose that she is in fact dependent on Gomez:

"Va! Va! pensa-t-elle, si j'étais seule, tu n'entendrais plus jamais parler de moi; mais il faut bien que je vive pour élever le gosse que tu m'as fait." But the reasons are not financial. Although she may have found it difficult to bring up Pablo alone, she had done just that while Gomez

10Thus, for instance, Don Quichotte chooses objects which are held in high estimation by Amadis who is his mentor. Ibid.

11Ibid., p. 18.

12La Mort dans l'Ame, p. 30.

13Ibid., pp. 25-6.
was in Spain. She had even managed to help other people. This she did in order to feel useful. Pablo alone had not enough prestige for Sarah to make of him the justification of her existence. Besides, he reminded her of Gomez, and of how inessential she was. Because of the German invasion, she has been forced, as a Jew, to leave a situation where she felt essential to other people, and has become inessential. And in this predicament, she turns again to Gomez, since it is through him that her existence will again have meaning. This is the significance of the framing of Sarah's consciousness by that of Gomez: she is cut off from any spontaneous contact with the world. Gomez is the mediator of the world for Sarah.

A similar example is to be found in the relationship of Mathieu and Boris. In the hospital at Marseille, Boris reflects:

( . . . ) on le destinait à vivre et il était bien obligé de reconnaître qu'il n'avait ni vocation, ni talent, ni argent.  

He feels that the success of the peritonitis operation condemns him to live when he has no reason for doing so. This negative attitude can be attributed directly to Mathieu whose disciple Boris is. He found that, studying philosophy, he could hold life at a distance, which was comforting as long as Mathieu was present to interpret and filter experience of life. Now, Boris has to make a decision by himself; but he has been so influenced by Mathieu that his reactions are those of Mathieu. Given an opportunity

\[14\text{ Ibid., p. 69.}\]
to fly to England to join the Free French, Boris refuses, citing Lola as an excuse. When Ivich comes to visit him, and proves as annoying as ever, Boris nonetheless seizes on her problems to formulate an excuse for himself. His feeling for Ivich and his marriage to Lola will successfully provide an alibi for not taking effective action. The scene in which Boris decides not to go to England is framed by two of Mathieu's scenes, so that the structure again reinforces our impression of one character's dependence on another.

This magical triangle is broken, however, by Boris' decision to go to England. In this he is helped by Lola's attitude, but the important point is that his choice of continuing the fighting is spontaneous: Lola simply helped break Mathieu's influence by refusing to be part of Boris' alibi. And the fact that Mathieu is no longer Boris' mediator is supported by the structure. The final scene between Lola and Boris is framed to be sure by Mathieu's consciousness. Yet there is a break in time between Mathieu's first scene and theirs; and, more significant, that scene is presented through the consciousness of Lola.

The third example of médiation interne again concerns Mathieu, this time in his relationship with Odette. This is perhaps the most closely-knit triangle of desire since Jacques constantly presents to Odette an image of Mathieu. And according to her, Jacques too is influenced by Mathieu's existence:

Pour "vieille sorcière" non; [Mathieu] aurait trouvé autre chose, il aurait dit "vieille peau, vieux débris, vieux machin", mais pas "vieille sorcière", tu lui envies son argot.\footnote{Ibid., p. 224}
Odette is so influenced by Mathieu that her life with Jacques is totally a pretence: all her words and feelings are fabricated especially for Jacques’ benefit, so that he will not suspect her love for Mathieu. It is only when Jacques falls asleep that she can give herself freely to her thoughts of Mathieu. Again, the framing device reflects the fact that Odette’s existence is not authentic; she has taken refuge in second-hand values. Now that we have established the significance of the tripartite sequences, let us look at the central section of the first part, which is structured differently.

It is clear that Daniel’s appearances alternate with those of Mathieu. But the pattern of alternation is not regular; it runs thus: Daniel, Mathieu; Mathieu, Daniel, Mathieu, Daniel. And the sequence is broken by a division which marks the beginning of a new day. As the two characters are so obviously linked even the irregularity of the pattern seems significant. An explanation for this is suggested by one section of Daniel’s letter to Mathieu in Le Sursis:

Mais un beau jour je me suis avisé de la réciprocité de nos relations. Que serais-tu sans moi, sinon cette même espèce d’inconsistance que je suis pour moi-même? C’est par mon intercession que tu peux te deviner parfois -- non sans quelque exaspération -- tel que tu es.

Daniel goes on to give quite an accurate picture of Mathieu as he is, and although we must again be wary of Daniel’s pronouncements, his analysis of the relationship is true, at least for himself. Mathieu was the

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16 "Lundi, 17 juin", p. 138.
17 Le Sursis, p. 467
mediator of Daniel's "essence" to Daniel. But in the section of La Mort dans l'Ame which we are discussing, Mathieu is not superior to Daniel. When the officers desert, the soldiers discover that they are unwanted:

Il fallait dire: nous sommes les boucs émissaires, les vaincus, les lâches, la vermine, la lie de la terre, nous avons perdu la guerre, nous sommes laids, nous sommes coupables et personne, personne, et personne au monde ne nous aime. Mathieu n'osa pas, mais Latex dit derrière lui, sur un ton objectif: "On est des parias."19

Now Mathieu and Daniel are equals: and this situation is borne out by the structure of the novel. Sartre has for the moment discarded the framing device for the irregular alternation which suggests this equality.

Let us review Mathieu's progress throughout the novel. In the three-part sequence with Boris, Mathieu has not progressed much further than in Le Sursis: he is no nearer using his freedom. When the officers desert, not only does he lose hope of ever performing the ideal action, he also regresses to a passive state. It is at this stage that the sequence with Daniel begins during which he appears as a pariah and at his lowest ebb. When he chooses a rifle we know that he has left this low level of existence. And the next three scenes, with Odette at the centre, which recall his influence over Boris, show that he has returned at least to a state where action seems again possible. This

18 Cf. supra pp. 10-11.
19 La Mort dans l'Ame, p. 137.
resurgence prepares us for the climax which concludes the first part. And the preparation is complete when Boris breaks out of the triangle of mediation in the penultimate scene, for we feel that Mathieu is capable of a similar spontaneous action. Thus throughout the first part, the structure is part of the argument; each juxtaposition of consciousness to consciousness enlarges our understanding of the participants. And for Mathieu the structure is of particular importance. His progress from non-intervention, his regression to passivity, and his final progress to freedom determine the pattern of incidents in the first part.

With the break in *La Mort dans l'Ame* come a new subject and a new technique. Brunet replaces Mathieu as the central protagonist: indeed he is accorded undivided attention, since the second part is presented entirely through his consciousness. It is chiefly this uniformity which divides the second part from the first, in which Mathieu was not the sole observer of events. And this shift to the medium of a single consciousness is reflected by changes in style: the second part is written in the present tense instead of the past-historic, and there are no paragraph divisions. (The two short breaks in the narrative have no headings.)

As has already been shown, Brunet's life is completely subordinated to the Communist Party: his life is in fact mediated by the Party. This fact separates him from Mathieu (whose existence was mediated, at least in part, by another person) and accounts for the change in structure.

Girard has explained that in certain cases the sphères de possibles of subject and mediator overlap, that the spiritual distance between them is minimal. Thus it is with Mathieu and Daniel, who are of comparable
backgrounds, social positions, and intelligence. In such a case rivalry between subject and mediator can occur. Thus Daniel and Mathieu are at one point rivals for Marcelle. And the mediation is, by Girard's definition, internal. Brunet on the other hand does not constitute a rival to the Communist Party since they are separated geographically and spiritually. And it is the impossibility of rivalry which marks Brunet's mediation as external. This is the essential difference between the two parts of the novel, and upon this the structure depends.20

The use of the present tense in the second part has already been mentioned in our discussion of Mathieu.21 The past tense is used for Mathieu because he is recalling events of the past. By the end of the first part he has altered his projet originel. Brunet, however, retains his projet originel throughout La Mort dans l'Ame and Drôle d'Amitié; only his methods of executing it change. This may explain the switch to a present tense. But there is another possible significance. As Sartre points out in Qu'est-ce que la Littérature?, previous novels told the story in the past because the chronological succession allowed the reader to see logical and eternal relations, eternal truths.22 Now since it is precisely these eternal truths which govern Brunet's existence, the use of the present tense is not only ironical, it is also a constant

20. The viewpoint and style are uniform throughout because the presentation of any incident through the consciousness of, say, Schneider instead of Brunet, would suggest internal mediation.  
21. Supra p. 50.  
22. Qu'est-ce que la Littérature?, p. 273
confrontation between the ambiguity of reality and Brunet's attempt to force one interpretation on that reality, between the unfolding of human time and Brunet's belief in the course of history. This effect of the present tense is reinforced by the almost uninterrupted flow of the narrative. The structuring of a story into paragraphs is a sign that the events are already thought out and ordered. Since for Brunet the world is indeed structured and controlled, Sartre is perhaps suggesting that this attitude is erroneous.

In spite of the internal break, the difference in structure and the disparity between the lengths of the two sections, Sartre has preserved the unity of the volume by establishing links between the two parts. The most obvious link occurs at the break. Brunet emerges from the cellar to witness the destruction of the church-tower on which Mathieu was fighting at the end of the first part. The impression created is one of continuity. The reappearance of certain characters in the second part has already been noted; further, the officers' departure is related in the second part. Other smaller incidents are also repeated in different situations. Pinette clasps Mathieu's hand as the officers are leaving; Brunet clasps Schneider's hand when the Alsatians are being freed. Mathieu has a brief dream before being violently awakened.

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23 Supra p. 47.
24 La Mort dans l'Ame, pp. 133-5
25 Ibid., p. 304.
26 Ibid., p. 135.
27 Ibid., p. 383.
28 Ibid., p. 131.
and this is paralleled by Brunet's dream of Abd-el-Krim. When Latex displays his penis, Mathieu is disgusted, and Brunet experiences the same reaction in similar circumstances. The repetition of striking phrases is another linking device. Mathieu says: "S'il y avait quelque chose à faire," and Brunet: "si seulement ils avaient quelque chose à faire"; Guiccioli says: "Pas plus d'armistice que de beurre aux fesses", and Brunet: "Il n'y a pas plus de défaite que de beurre aux fesses". Thus the unity is maintained, in spite of the division, using all levels of the novel.

It remains only to determine the part played by this novel in the sequence as a whole. For, although Les Chemins de la Liberté is technically incomplete, certain conclusions can be drawn. Let us look first at Sartre's original plans for the tetralogy.

In the two sections of Drôle d'Amitié which we have, Brunet is brought to a realisation as dramatic as that of Mathieu in his final appearance in La Mort dans l'Ame. He too recognises the error of his approach to the world, and now knows the limitations of Communist doctrine and the objective viewpoint. And, like Mathieu, he has not decided how to use his freedom.

Further evidence of what Les Chemins de la Liberté was to have been is derived from interviews with Sartre. The earlier pronouncement, reported by Champigny, contains solutions for each of the principal

29 Ibid., p. 318.
30 Ibid., p. 160.
31 Ibid., pp. 366-7.
32 Ibid., p. 107.
33 Ibid., p. 371.
34 Ibid., p. 110.
35 Ibid., p. 316.
characters:

On his return to France, Brunet was to discover that his line of action in the prisoners' camp was again congruous with the Party doctrine. Mathieu was to find at last an opportunity for committing his treasured freedom thanks to the Resistance. Still intent on cultivating abjection and perversity, Daniel was to become a collaborator, then kill himself.\(^{36}\)

But that these ideas were not in any way final, is borne out by Sartre's later rejection of his plan for Mathieu. In an interview reported by Cranston Sartre said:

\textit{The situation was too simple. I don't mean that it is simple to be courageous and risk one's life; what I mean is that the choice was too simple. One's allegiances were obvious. Since then things have become much more complicated, and more romantic in the literary sense of the term. There are many more intrigues and cross-currents. To write a novel whose hero dies in the Resistance, committed to the idea of liberty, would be much too easy.}\(^{37}\)

It is indeed clear that the solution which Sartre had planned for Mathieu, while adequate for the war years, was yet too simple for the complex post-war situation. Each member of the Resistance had a personal reason for fighting, but as a body they suppressed their differences to achieve a common goal, the German defeat. After the war, these differences re-emerged in a proliferation of political parties and years of unstable government. In 1949, when politics in France were in ferment and the Cold War at its height, an heroic novel about the Second World War would have been irrelevant.

\(^{36}\)R. Champigny, \textit{art.cit.}, p. 381, note.  
Sartre's own solution to the 1949 situation was not to commit himself to a single party, since there was none of which he fully approved. 38 But Sartre, being exceptional, did not need to commit himself to be politically effective. Mathieu is not exceptional, however; the novel's persuasive value would be diminished if he were. 39 So Sartre's course of action was not suitable for Mathieu. Similarly, the solution originally proposed for Brunet, who was to criticise the Communist Party's authoritarian attitude and doctrine while remaining within the Party, was eccentric rather than representative.

In any case such solutions would have been unsatisfactory. Qu'est-ce que la Littérature? stresses that the novel is "un appel à la liberté", 40 that it reveals an aspect of the world which has been masked. The author's aim is to give his readers a bad conscience. 41 But an heroic resolution of the novel would have had the opposite effect; the reader would have felt complacent, satisfied that the hero's conversion was a fitting end for the novel, but that such matters never turn out that way in "real" life. And from the point of view of Sartre's philosophy,

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39 Hoederer in Les Mains Sales is one such man, but the action in that play centres on Hugo: the audience's sympathy with Hoederer is maintained, their awe of him reduced, by masking the force of his political insight (which is reported) and by emphasising his less exceptional human qualities.

40 "Ainsi l'auteur écrit pour s'adresser à la liberté des lecteurs et il la requiert pour faire exister son œuvre." (p. 65)

41 "[La société] perd l'équilibre que lui donnait l'ignorance, elle oscille entre la honte et le cynisme, elle pratique la mauvaise foi; ainsi l'écrivain donne à la société une conscience malheureuse." (p. 104)
such resolutions for the main characters would deny the ambiguity of their existence, and impose a sense of order which would reduce their development simply to a phase of suffering. Mathieu's tortuous struggle to liberate himself from the objective standpoint would become, after we had seen his freedom authentically engaged, a necessary process which he had to undergo.

In the final analysis, we must consider what we have and not what might have been. For in any case, Les Chemins de la Liberté as we have it does not leave the impression of being incomplete. The three central characters have reached the climax of their development; Mathieu and Brunet have realised the extent to which they have tried to escape the responsibility which freedom condemns them to accept, and Daniel is fully aware that his death alone will solve his dilemma. No further demonstration of their projets originels is required, and each has reached a high point of lucidity.

An examination of the ending of La Mort dans l'Ame shows too that this novel does not have the completeness of the first two:

Au-dessus du mort et du wagon inerte, la nuit passe, seule vivante. Demain l'aube les couvrira de la même rosée, la chair morte et l'acier rouillé ruisselleront de la même sueur. Demain viendront les oiseaux noirs.

The close is not without effect. The more stately rhythm of these sentences changes the pace of the narrative to round out the ending. Their sadness recalls the few moments of emotion in Brunet's dealings

42 La Mort dans l'Ame, p. 435.
with the men around him. The feeling of these last lines balances the inhuman image of the militant Communist-machine. But the last incidents of La Mort dans l'Ame fail to complete the novel satisfactorily. We are left with several unfinished themes: Brunet's friendship with Schneider remains unresolved, as does the outcome of their confrontation; the prisoners' anger has yet to be channelled; and even the "typo"'s death is not final, for it is made clear in the symbol of the black birds that it is the first of a series.

Drôle d'Amitié, on the other hand, makes a fitting ending to La Mort dans l'Ame. Firstly, we continue to see events through the consciousness of Brunet until his final insight, so that the break after La Mort dans l'Ame is less definite than those after L'Age de Raison or Le Sursis. The most obvious reason for the break is in fact a temporal one; the interval of six months is necessary for the Communist organisation to be set up in the prisoner-of-war camp. But Sartre could not incorporate such a waiting-period into the novel without breaking his principle of non-omniscience, although he allows a time-lapse between volumes.

Secondly, Drôle d'Amitié is the resolution of La Mort dans l'Ame's unfinished themes. Brunet's failure to save Schneider is an ironic reversal of Schneider's saving the life of Brunet. Because their escape

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43 "Brunet reste seul et raide, inconfortable, dans une chaleur de four. Il se tient sur un pied, l'autre est coincé au-dessus du plancher, dans un enchevêtrement de jambes et de souliers. Il n'essaie pas de le dégager, il a besoin de rester dans le provisoire: il est de passage, sa pensée est de passage dans sa tête, le train est de passage en France." (p. 434)


45 La Mort dans l'Ame, p. 320
is betrayed by Communists, it is a reversal of Brunet's (and Chalais') fears that Schneider would betray them. The arrival of Chalais, besides reducing Brunet's prestige, reveals his fallibility, a necessary preparation for the final confession to Schneider.

The impasse which Sartre reached with the end of Drôle d'Amitié is thus an artistic one. Both Cranston and Weightman have suggested that the novel sequence peters out because Sartre has arrived at a moral impasse, that in fact he has not solved the ethical problems of his characters. We have seen, however, that the message of the sequence as it stands is unambiguous, but that Sartre has failed to organise it. Every element in La Mort dans l'Ame and Drôle d'Amitié is essential, but the novel, as Sartre thought it should be written, could not include both.

46 Ibid., p. 331, and Drôle d'Amitié, p. 789.
CONCLUSION

The main work of evaluation is now finished, but one question of a general nature still needs to be answered. Does the novel have any universal validity, since it is after all about the war years and since we have used existential psychoanalysis to uncover its meaning? The Second World War is of course merely the background to the novel; the subject, as the title of the sequence shows, is freedom, and more particularly the commitment of freedom in a political context. Through Mathieu we see that man is condemned to be free, free to choose and responsible for his choice. But if no positive choice is made, then freedom is submerged by events and the myths of society. Through Brunet, on the other hand, we see that commitment itself can become a myth, if the individual is not constantly on his guard, carefully questioning every action he performs. The fact that Sartre refused to use solutions which were valid only for the war years emphasises that he wanted to write a novel the relevance of which would not be limited by its historical setting. And through Daniel we see an extreme form of alienated freedom, totally submerged by personal and social myths.

Sartre shows quite clearly, however, that although man is mystified by himself and by society, he can still liberate himself from the forces which try to mask his freedom. Mathieu has the strength of purpose to achieve this liberation almost unaided; the conjunction of events places him in an extreme situation where basic issues can be clearly recognised. Brunet is helped by Schneider, but his final decision to
reject the absolute authority of the Party is his alone. Daniel has not liberated himself, but is still capable of doing so if he wants to.

Yet, *La Mort dans l'Ame* is not a bald illustration of the philosophical ideas set out in *L'Être et le Néant*. Nor is existential psychoanalysis absolutely necessary in explaining the novel; we have used its terms as a convenient shorthand, but we have not imposed it on the novel, for the actions of the protagonists can be evaluated without it, and the basic issues remain the same. For instance, in using Sartre's analysis of the instant to show that Mathieu has started on a new project, we merely reinforced the immediate intuition that Mathieu has reached a high point in his life. Such is his feeling of exhilaration that we sense his action on the church-tower will change the course of his life. It is in the character as a human being, and not as a philosophical concept, that the struggle is explored. While it is true that Sartre has so organised his investigation of freedom that a different type of problem is exemplified in each of the three main characters, yet Mathieu, Brunet and Daniel are not merely these problems, but complete people in their own right, each with a past and range of possibilities. And through Sartre's technique of presenting events through a single consciousness, we are invited to identify with each of the main characters, while maintaining a critical attitude to his view of life.
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