

CHAPTER 4

SAINT GENET: COMEDIEN ET MARTYR

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

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

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

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

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

un acte humain qui ne soit *révélateur*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

In fact Sartre does not really perfect his own use of this method until his work on Flaubert; *Saint Genet* still concentrates on Genet himself rather than on his historical situation, and this is why Sartre later criticized his study as insufficient despite its length: 'Il est évident que l'étude du conditionnement de Genet par les événements de son histoire objective est insuffisante, très très insuffisante.'⁶

Although Sartre lays more stress on the formative influence of Genet's childhood than in the case of Baudelaire, it is nonetheless clear that he is still concerned with the free choice Genet made within his situation at the expense of an equally detailed account of that situation itself, which alone could enable us to judge the extent of Genet's area of choice or the extent to which his liberty successfully dominated his objective situation. Sartre is anxious to show the limitations of a rigid Marxism which imagines it has explained a man once it has situated him in a broad historical framework; 'Valéry est un intellectuel petit-bourgeois, cela ne fait

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

aimions *Notre Dame des Fleurs* a abordé Sartre au Flore'.¹⁵ How then did an aesthete such as Genet earn the literary respect of the chief exponent of committed literature, even though Sartre's idea of commitment had, by this stage, broadened out to include writers previously considered uncommitted? Genet's values are indeed not those of a bourgeois society, but on the other hand they are merely a logical inversion of bourgeois values and moreover depend necessarily on these for their very existence. As Thody points out¹⁶ Genet, like Baudelaire, is a rebel not a revolutionary: he does not wish to bring about a new moral order based on his own inverted values, their very appeal lies in the fact that they are inverted and unacceptable to society. Once generally admitted and rationalized they would cease to approximate to pure evil. Like Baudelaire also, Genet '*réclame d'être condamné*',¹⁷ but whereas Baudelaire is guilt-ridden and writes frequently in a spirit of repentance more or less clearly acknowledged, we find none of this in Genet, whose desire for condemnation is simply the desire to confirm his status as evil; it is never envisaged as a punishment assisting his eventual redemption. Of course both writers use 'evil' as the subject matter of their writings, and make of this beauty and poetry. '*J'ai pétri de la boue et j'en ai fait de l'or*'¹⁸ is as true of Genet as it is of Baudelaire. But their attitudes to the evil they transform are less similar: Genet accepts evil as evil and glories in it, proclaiming his desire both to do and to be evil incarnate; Baudelaire, on the other hand, is haunted by moral anguish at the thought of evil, and attempts to come to terms with it in various ways. Sometimes he envisages it as a necessary punishment, a purification; at other times he attempts to disclaim all responsibility, and declares evil to be beyond his control: '*c'est le Diable qui tient les fils qui nous remuent!*'¹⁹ and his third way of trying to resolve the problem is through his attitude as a dandy, detached even from his own life. These three solutions all involve an evident *mauvaise foi* which Genet avoids at this level at least, though his own desire to *be* evil must prevent him from ever attaining complete authenticity in Sartre's eyes. Basically, the difference between the two writers involves the question of guilt: Baudelaire has a genuine if idiosyncratic religious sensibility; however inauthentic his attitudes towards his own wrong-doing might be, and despite insights into the way the criminal is made the scapegoat of bourgeois society, evil for Baudelaire is real, a positive force to be contended with, sometimes given in to. Satan is the symbol of both the perversity and the weakness of his own will. Genet on the other hand, is a twentieth-century atheist who has chosen evil as his particular way of being unconventional. Evil for Genet is simply what other people have decided it to be; the systematic inversion of all bourgeois values. In this sense Genet's universe is monolithic: the feeling of guilt is conspicuously absent, so too is Satan or the notion of a real force for evil counterbalancing good. In short Genet is the only kind of 'sinner' Sartre finds morally and philosophically acceptable, and, moreover, the only kind of saint.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ou dans une maison déserte quelque armoire
Pleine de l'âcre odeur des temps, poudreuse et noire,
Parfois on trouve un vieux flacon qui se souvient
D'où jaillit toute vive une âme qui revient.

Mille pensées dormaient, chrysalides funèbres,
Frémissant doucement dans les lourdes ténèbres,
Qui dégagent leur aile et prennent leur essor
Teintés d'azur, glacés de rose, lamés d'or.⁸¹

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

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

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

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

Les coloristes dessinent comme la nature; leurs figures sont naturellement délimitées par la lutte harmonieuse des masses colorées.

Les purs dessinateurs sont des philosophes et des abstrauteurs de quintessence.⁸⁷

Sartre expresses the same distinction:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As we have seen elsewhere in *Saint Genet* Sartre tends to use Mallarmé in order to explain Genet, he is thus in a sense writing not only about the latter but also about the former. Between the lines of his discussion of Genet we can find an implicit (and sometimes explicit) discussion of Mallarmé which probably incorporates material from the lost study of the poet referred to by Simone de Beauvoir¹⁷²: in particular his description of Genet as caught in the impossible *tournoquets* of *L'Être* and *le Néant*, with all the ambiguities attendant upon these two terms.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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