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Theatrical Sign: The Relational and Differential Pattern of Meaning in *No Exit*

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Original Article

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Abstract

This study analyzes Jaun-Paul Sartre's play No Exit structurally in terms of theatrical sign. It draws on Sartre's philosophy of existentialism and the structural relations among various elements i.e., dramatic performance, language, theatrical objects, consciousness, and the audience. It aims to show that No Exit is a fertile literary work for an existentialist analysis because Sartre's plays embody his philosophy. Sartre's philosophy is rooted in phenomenology that emphasizes the relation between the world and the mind. The mutual relation between the mind and the world constructs meaning; consciousness, therefore, is not a substance but a relation. In the context of Sartre's drama, the relations between the world and the mind are conceptualized in totality, making the whole dramatic work a complex theatrical sign. Using close textual analysis as methodology, the study contests Martin Esslin's views that Sartre's plays are not the expression of his philosophy and that his characters seem like they possess an 'immortal soul' because they do not change. The study critically discusses the signifier first and then the signified. The signifier focuses on existential concepts in terms of the relationship between the mind and the world with reference to Sartre's philosophy. The signified sums up the meaning and philosophy in No Exit with reference to the collective mind of the audience.

Introduction

Like language, drama constructs meaning through signs; but the sign system in drama is different from the sign system in ordinary language in that it is theatrical. Influenced by Saussurean structural linguistics, Jan Mukařovsky extended the definition of sign to theatrical studies. He theorized that the work of art or theatrical performance is one semiotic unit, "whose *signifier* or *sign vehicle* is the work itself as a 'thing', or ensemble of material elements, and whose *signified* is the 'aesthetic object' residing in the collective consciousness of the public" (Elam 6). The 'performance text' is a 'macro-sign' but its meaning derives from the execution of total elements. This 'macro-sign' is divided into different sub-signifiers, whose signified resides in the 'collective consciousness of the public.' The patterns of the sub-signifiers in the theatrical performance could be studied in

their relationship to each other before any meaning is concluded from the dramatic work. Since this relationship between different units in the dramatic performance occurs within the pattern of sign in a theatrical context, it is not only structural but theatrical as well. The meaning conveyed by theatrical sign, therefore, is not the product of any material object or element but of structural relationships in totality. The present study answers the following questions: (1) How is meaning communicated through theatrical sign in *No Exit*? (2) How is the pattern of meaning differential? And (3) What are the Sartrean existentialist ideas that align with the themes of the play?

Literature Review

According to the Swiss linguist and anthropologist, Ferdinand de Saussure, a linguistic sign is made of a sound-image and a concept. The sound-image is not a material thing; it, rather, is the "psychological imprint of the sound" (Saussure 963). The sound-image becomes material only when it is manifested in speech. The sound-image is a signifier and the concept or thought associated with it is a signified. Thus, sign consists of two parts, a signifier and a signified. Saussure argues that the "bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary" (964). He actually means to say that there is no natural or logical connection between the signifier and the signified: this connection is merely a conventional one. Thought, according to Saussure, is an indistinct shapeless mass that is organized only through language. Therefore, no idea or concept exists prior to language (974). Language, in this regard, creates a reality of its own. Just like there is no thought prior to language, there is no word prior to its construction. The relation between a sound-image and thought is reciprocal. Saussure gives his famous analogy of a sheet of paper to substantiate this view. Thought is the front side of the paper and sound-image is the other side of the paper. One cannot cut one side without cutting the other side. That is why the relation between the signifier and the signified is reciprocal (967). Now, since language is not a naming system and a sign does not refer to any object or objective reality, language is not a substance but a form. A particular word can be a particular sign but any particular word or sign in itself does not have any meaning. Saussure states that "[l]anguage is a system of interdependent terms in which the value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of the others" (969). What he means is simply that a word stands in a relation to all other words, and that relation gives it a value or meaning. The relation can be based either on similarities, or opposition and differences. A signifier, in this sense, is not something that can stand alone. It is defined by what it is not in its relation with other signifiers in a language. "Arbitrary and differential" become the two qualities of language (971).

Semiotics originated and developed by Saussure did not remain confined to language and linguistics alone. It was applied to culture and myths by the structuralists such as Barthes and Lévi-Strauss. It suggests that semiotics is a wider and rich field that can cover anything as its subject. Saussure's concepts that he formed in his structural linguistics gave birth to the theory of structuralism. The significance of structuralism is that it studies the work in its totality. The structure of the work is divided into individual components and then the relations and differences are analyzed. Form becomes of much importance when it comes to structuralism. In Derrida's words "within the structure there is not only form, relation and configuration. There is also interdependency and a totality which is always concrete." (Derrida 3) The work as a whole is a structure, and the significance of it lies in the interdependent relationships among different elements. The totality and interdependency give the work a meaning and a definition.

Theoretical Framework

Under the influence of Saussurean structural linguistics, Mukařovsky (11 November 1891 – 8 February 1975) extended Saussurean definition of sign to theatrical studies. He theorized that the work of art or theatrical performance as a whole is one semiotic unit, “whose *signifier* or *sign vehicle* is the work itself as ‘thing’, or ensemble of material elements, and whose *signified* is the ‘aesthetic object’ residing in the collective consciousness of the public” (Elam 6) The ‘performance text’ is a ‘macro-sign’ but its meaning derives from the execution of total elements. This ‘macro-sign’ needs to be divided into different sub-signifiers though it works as one single macro-signifier, whose signified resides in the “collective consciousness of the public” (6). The pattern of the sub-signifiers or sub-units in the dramatic work or theatrical performance as a whole could to be studied in their relationship to each other before any meaning is concluded from a dramatic work. Since this relationship between different units in the dramatic performance as a whole, working as one single signifier, occurs within the pattern of sign and in theatrical context, it is not only structural but theatrical as well. The meaning conveyed by theatrical sign, therefore, is the product of different relationships, not of any material object or element.

This division of the theatrical performance as whole into one single signifier with subunits and the collective consciousness of the audiences into the signified form a structure. This structure works as a theatrical sign which can be structurally explained by studying the relationships between different dramatic, linguistic and theatrical elements. Using this framework, the study analysis Sartre’s play from a structural perspective.

Analysis

The Signifier

The play *No Exit* begins in a drawing room, which is depicted as hell, and the three characters, Garcine, Inez and Estelle, are perpetually trapped in it after their death. A “massive bronze ornament stands on the mantelpiece” in the drawing room (Sartre 3). Garcine and the Room-Valet enter the room as the play begins. Their entrance counts as dramatic performance or action. The mention of the ‘massive bronze ornament’ explains how the very existence of the characters’ consciousness comes into being. The color bronze has similarity with yellow color in terms of its appearance; and yellow color is believed to be highly perceptible. The bronze ornament, in this regard, is a theatrical object that causes the consciousness of the audience and characters to be directed towards it. Since it is an ornament and a bronze ornament, Garcine and the Valet, just as they enter the room, must be attracted by it. In Sartrean phenomenological terms, this directedness of the consciousness towards the object is called ‘intentionality’. The action on the part of the characters brings their being-for-itself into contact with the bronze ornament. Thus, they come into being in the form of being-in-itself. The mere consciousness (being-for-itself) in Sartrean existentialism is nothingness. Sartre remarks that “Consciousness is born supported by a being which is not itself” (qtd. in Lalor 249). The mere consciousness of Garcine and the Valet is directed towards the bronze ornament to come into existence through this relation. This relation is structural because it originates neither in the consciousness of characters nor in the outer object; it is something in-between the two.

In the 1964 BBC Adaptation of *No Exit*, directed by Philip Saville, as Garcine and the Valet enter the room, the camera moves from the face of Garcine, covers the entire room and the objects in it, and gets fixed again on the faces of the two characters. This circular movement of camera suggests

how being-for-itself relates to the objects it encounters and how in this relation being-in-itself comes into existence. Soon after this relation is formed, the linguistic element intervenes to complete this process of 'intentionality'. Garcine, after looking at the objects around him and at the Valet, says: "Hm! So here we are" (3). The expression "Hm" puts us in the old Cartesian dilemma. Since it means thinking, one may construe it from the perspective of Cartesian philosophy, that is, "I think, therefore I am" (Descartes 48). But for Sartre, thinking is not prior to existence and mere consciousness simply does not exist. Garcine is *there* not because he thinks he is there but because he thinks he is there after he has come into being in his relation to the world around him. Studying the linguistic element or an abstract unitary linguistic pattern in itself outside its relation to other elements goes against Sartrean philosophy. Therefore, Garcine's endorsement in language that he is there (he exists) is the result of his awareness, first of the world around him and then of himself.

The Valet is also an object for Garcine as Garcine is an object for the Valet. The authentic experience of existence belongs only to him. Sartrean phenomenological existentialism maintains that the Other is encountered in the form of an object; but the Other does not remain an object like other objects. In the immediate encounter of the self with the Other, the Other is "still an object among other objects; but he is distinguished from all other objects by the fact that he is the object which perceives what I perceive and, at least as a possibility, perceives me as being an object" (Schuetz 187). Garcine starts talking about the objects and furniture in the room to the Valet. During this conversation, Garcine realizes that the Valet 'perceives what he perceives', and thus the Valet no longer remains an object like other objects. But it does not signify that the Valet becomes a pure subject for him, because the Other in Sartrean philosophy is negated by the self so that the self may exist. The Valet is still an object but an object different from other objects. Nonetheless, the relation that Garcine has to material objects differs from his relation to the Valet. Yet, this relation draws on the relation that Garcine has to the objects; for this relation is constituted only when Garcine has become conscious of his own being by the relation between him and the world (objects). The image of the Valet that Garcine acquires is tied to the relation of the Valet to the world in terms of action and language.

Saussure, in his lectures in general linguistics, states that "the concepts are purely differential and defined not by their positive content but negatively by their relations with the other terms of the system. Their most precise characteristics is in being what the others are not" (qtd. in Habib 636). Garcine's mere consciousness is directed towards the objects, and in this directedness the world is negated; the negation is the result of the difference between him and the world.

In Sartre's philosophy, the ego does not reside in the mind but in the world. It is in this sense that Sartre's phenomenology is existential. Garcine's ego is formed only when he finds himself in a relation to the world. Being-for-itself is the same as the past and the present is the same as being-in-itself. The present relates to the past as being-in-itself relates to being-for-itself. In other words, it is the present embodying in it the possibility of future that really exists. Therefore, the past is as nothing as being-for-itself is. So, in the present experience of being, the "self is constantly seeking to be the self that-it-would-be. This is not an infinite regress, but an activity of negating that myself is ever present in the world as a table is present" (Catalalo 677). This relation between past and present, and the concept of the past being nothing manifests itself when Garcine asks the Valet, "Do you know who I was?" and then says, "oh, well, it's no great matter" (3). The fact that the Valet does not know who Garcine is, does not matter because it is the presence of his being that matters, negating itself to project itself into the future as Catalalo argues. Garcine is not present in the world as 'the bronze ornament' is present. His existence is temporal in that it rejects the

substance of the past and extends to future. This extension of the self towards the future is called 'transcendence' in Sartrean terms.

Garcine is constantly under the impression that he is going to be tortured. That is why he asks, "Where are the instruments of torture?" (4). It is owing to the fact that his present consciousness transcends beyond the present towards future. Here is embedded the idea of free choice that has been discussed widely in the philosophy of existentialism and is discussed later in this study. Nonetheless, the relations discovered in between the sub-units in the macro-signifier explain not only the immateriality of these relations but makes the temporal metaphors explicit as well. Past, present and the future are temporal metaphors that operate parallelly with the dramatic development in *No Exit*. The past does not matter because it can differ from the present, and future matters because its possibility is embedded in the present which is a temporal reality, meaning that the future can also differ from the present, depending on the choice an individual makes. It is the relation that holds significance even among the temporal metaphors used in drama.

A spatial metaphor is encountered when Garcine suddenly begins talking of mirrors: "No mirrors, I notice. No windows. Only to be expected" (4). Garcine needs a mirror because the Other (Valet and the objects) has grown familiar. The Other no longer interests him. Yet, he needs the Other because the Other defines him. In this regard, the mirror is a metaphor that stands for the Other in which Garcine may see himself to renew his existence.

How he becomes disinterested in the Valet is clear from these lines: "I quite realize the position I am in, but I won't tolerate ..." (4). He won't tolerate the Valet's behavior anymore because he has become weary of it. For this reason, he expects a mirror, another that can make him feel his existence. It is not only the Valet but the bronze ornament also no longer appeals to him when he says: "But that bronze contraption on the mantelpiece, that's another story. I suppose there will be times when I stare my eyes out at it" (4). It appears to him to be an unnecessarily decorated object. Yet, it is so complicated that by gazing at it he would stare his eyes out. It reflects the helplessness on the part of Garcine to comprehend the world, to know the thing in itself in Kantian sense. But he asks for a "toothbrush", for something new (4). He wants to renew his relation to the world. This renewal can be possible only through the negation of what is and the expectation of what future may offer. Garcine, therefore, tries to displace the bronze ornament, but in vain. The Valet feels that he is unwanted, so he prepares to leave. It is here that the conflict between the will and the world begins. This conflict is the root-cause of all meaninglessness. But it is the situation that is meaningless not the dramatic work as a whole.

Garcine, before the Valet goes out, asks him: "And if I ring, you're bound to come?" and the Valet says "yes" (7). "Garcine goes to the bell-push and presses the button. A bell purrs outside (7). It purrs when Garcine does not need it. He merely tests it, and it works. But when he needs the Valet again, the button does not work. He goes to press "the button. The bell remains silent" (7). The bell works when it is not needed, and when it is needed it does not work. The bronze ornament cannot be moved; the door cannot be opened; and Garcine sits down in disappointment.

The objects around Garcine are in opposition to his will, and his expectation contradicts the consequences of his action. Most importantly, the linguistic element is also in an oppositional and differential relation to performance; when the Valet enters again with Inez and asks Garcine if he called him, Garcine tells him 'No' despite the fact that he called him by trying to ring the bell.

Two of Martin Esslin's views about Sartre are contested. The first view is that "the theater of Sartre ... is less adequate as an expression of the philosophy of Sartre" (Esslin 24). The second view is that Sartre's characters "remain wholly consistent and thus reflect the old convention that each human being has a core of immutable, unchanging essence—in fact, an immortal soul" (24). The

structural relations between the dramatic and theatrical elements in *No Exit* are in complete conformity with Sartre's phenomenological existentialism. Garcine has no 'immortal soul' as his disposition changes rapidly and is not permanent.

After the entrance of Inez, we notice Garcine trying to renew his existence through his relation to Inez. Contrary to his expectation, Inez turns out to be in an oppositional relation to him. Mistaking him for the torturer, Inez says things to which she herself is in a differential relation. Yet, her entrance differs from Garcine also when she tells him: "I've often watched my face in glass" (9). In his astonishment, Garcine tells her: "In the glass? [He looks around him.] How beastly of them! They've removed everything in the least resembling a glass" (9). It is a contrast that Garcine, after he entered the room and talked for a while to the Valet, asked for a mirror; and Inez says that she has watched herself often in the glass. Since the mirror or glass is a symbol for the Other, Inez denies that she needs it because the presence of Garcine offends her. She tells him: "Can't you keep your mouth still? You keep twisting it about all the time. It's grotesque" (9). Can she really avoid him? It is the question that will be answered later to see how Inez is in a differential relation to herself too.

The third, and the last, character, Estelle, appears on the stage accompanied by the Valet. Her relation to Garcine differs from Garcine's relation to Inez in that Garcine thinks that she would also mistake him for the torturer like Inez, but she does not do so:

GARCINE: I'm not the torturer, madam.

ESTELLE. I never thought you were. (10)

So, all of them have misconceptions about one another. The three characters stand in contrast to each other. These differences are a dramatic necessity because they give unity to the sub-units in macro-signifier. From a structural point of view, contrary to what Esslin says, Sartre's dramatic theory is not traditional. The differential and oppositional relations found among theatrical and dramatic elements suggest that Sartre's handling of characters, dialogue and action is experimental.

The three characters, in their confrontation with each other, share the fundamental problem of being ashamed and regretful of their past. Estelle is more pre-occupied with her past than the other two characters. During their narration of what happened to them in the past, we encounter another differential relation between performance and the underlying truth. The underlying truth is presented through the contrasting and oppositional relation that exists between what is said earlier and what is revealed later. As an example, Estelle's account of telling her story is marked by a difference between what Garcine or Inez thinks the truth is and what really the truth is. From the perspective of Sartrean phenomenological existentialism, this relation is critical because it explains how the three characters are distinct from each other. No character can comprehend what actually happens in the mind of another character. But the mere consciousness in itself is nothing. Therefore, the three characters always need a mirror to experience their being-for-itself. Earlier, it was mentioned that Estelle is in a differential relation not only to other characters but to herself as well; it is here that this fact is revealed. Earlier she told Garcine that she had watched herself in the glass, therefore, it can be implied that she did not need the glass. But now she desperately asks for a glass:

ESTELLE: Excuse me, have you a glass? Any sort of glass, a pocket-mirror will do.
Even if you won't speak to me, you might lend me a glass. (18)

This difference makes it clear that Sartre's characters are by no means constant. The metaphor of glass or mirror is clearer. The words in the brackets suggest that Estelle is looking for an Other,

Garcine in this case. Since there is no mirror in the room there is no ideal Other through which the characters can see their authentic self reflected, the characters are left with only one alternative: they accept each other as mirrors. It is after they have taken this decision that they start telling each other their stories of the past. But they fail to gain the authenticity of their existence because they seem to be worried about their past, and past, from the perspective of Sartrean existentialism, is nothing. They do not accept responsibility for what they have done. Taking responsibility would free them from the bondage of the past. This preoccupation with the past brings another special metaphor into our attention: the real world in which the character lived before their death. This real world stands in contrast to the hellish room in a differential relation. To see how this relation between the description of the past and the underlying truth, between theatrical world and the outer real world, and between what has been spoken earlier and what is spoken now by the characters is differential, it is necessary to analyze the character's description of their past stories.

Sartre digs out Estelle's mind and reveals through her words what she experiences in her mind (the other two characters do the same before telling their stories):

ESTELLE: Yesterday...the ceremony's not q

uite over...She's trying her best to cry. Come, dear! Make another effort...Two tears, two little tears are twinkling under the black veil. Oh dear! What a sight Olga looks this morning! She's 'holding my sister's arm, helping her along. She's not crying, and I don't blame her, tears always mess one's face up, don't they? Olga was my bosom friend, you know.(11)

These are the images that do not belong to her past but are related to her past, still active in her mind. She narrates them as if she "is seeing what she describes" (11). She can easily take a decision by negating what her past was and by beginning to live in the moment. Whether Estelle herself comes out of it or not is not important. The important thing is a reality Sartre is pointing at on behalf of the audience which is explained in the second section of analysis. Estelle says that she had a brother, and was married to an older person. Before she narrates the actual story of her past, Garcine describes in the same surreal manner the images flowing in his mind:

GARCIN: Yes, my wife...She doesn't yet know I'm—absent, but she suspects it...So much the better, she won't need to change. She isn't crying, but she never did cry, anyhow....Oh, how she got on my nerves! (12)

Garcine was a journalist and was shot dead for his pacifist views. The images, haunting his mind, are related to his past. From the point of view of Sartre's philosophy, he should be free from the bondage of the past. But the past has 'got on his nerves'. It does not allow him to make a choice and live in the moment. This makes him differ from his 'authentic self'. The authenticity of his being lies in his decision to negate his past and differ from it, accepting what the moment offers. Same is the case with Estelle and Inez. Each of these three characters does not realize the significance of the moment, mourning their decisions they made in the past. They negate each other instead of negating the past. The insignificance of the past, the reality of the present moment and the significance of taking responsibility for what the characters have done are the underlying truths that differ from what the characters say and think. This negligence or lack of freedom is called 'bad faith' in Sartrean philosophy. Instead of accepting themselves and negating the past in relation to each other, the characters mourn their past and negate each others. This is the possibility of consciousness that Sartre explains in *Being and Nothingness*:

It is best to choose and to examine one determined attitude which is essential to human reality and which is such that consciousness instead of directing its negation outward turns it toward itself. This attitude, it seems to me, is bad faith (*mauvaise foi*). (47-48)

The 'outward' in this case is their past or the real world in which they are dead. The 'inward' is their own selves that are in relation to each other. Garcine still cares for his wife, with whom he has no relation now, saying that she misses him. This preoccupation with his wife's mourning is rooted in his guilt that he had betrayed her by sleeping with another woman. This gives him 'anxiety'. On the other hand, Estelle is much worried about her little sister. The guilt or 'anxiety' of these two characters sets the two worlds in contrast to one another. The outer world or the real world in which the characters lived is marked by activity and sociability. The inner world or the theatrical world is marked by passivity, lack of action, guilt and inability on the part of characters to make a choice. Above all, it is freedom that the characters think they have lost because the door is closed and nothing happens according to their will. The closed door is in contrast to the open window of Inez's room in the real world through which she peeps in her mind. Therefore, both these worlds not only differ from and defer. In this deference, Sartre wants to communicate the idea that the past can be deferred. As Garcine entered the room, we noticed that the past really did not matter for him. But now he is haunted by his past and is unable to shake off the images of the past.

The oppositions, contradictions and differences become more obvious in the structure of the play when Estelle begins to talk again of her past. She had fallen in love with another man six years after her marriage to an old person. The man told her to run away with him but she had refused. She hesitates to explain the main reason behind her guilt. Garcine and Inez suspect that she is guilty because the man she fell in love with killed himself when she refused to run away with him and laughed at him. But she tells them that he wanted to have a baby. Garcine thinks that she refused to have a baby. Yet again, she tells them that the baby came. Contrary to their expectation, Estelle informs them that she killed the baby, and in response to this brutal act, the man blew his brains.

Garcine also tells us the story behind his 'anxiety' or guilt. His narration is in differential relation to what image he created earlier. He said earlier that his wife had 'got on his nerves.' His pacifist ideas and sympathetic description of how he was shot dead gave the two other characters the impression that he was a hero. But now when the truth about his past gets disclosed, the perspective of the characters suddenly changes and he becomes a 'brute', as Inez tells him, from a hero:

GARCIN. I brought a half-caste girl to stay in our house. My wife slept upstairs; she must have heard—everything. She was an early riser and, as I and the girl stayed in bed late, she served us our morning coffee (24).

That he has betrayed his wife is what makes him guilty and shamed. Like Estelle, he also reveals something that the other characters did not expect: cheating on his wife.

By virtue of the characters' confrontation with each other, Sartre contrasts two ideas regarding the relation of the self to the Other. The first idea is that of the romanticists who believed that the self is a unified whole that exists in the form of essence and has the power to determine and change things. The other idea derives from Sartre's own existential philosophy, that is, the self is not an essence. The relation between these two ideas is similar to the relation between being-for-itself and being-in-itself. The first idea is explicit in the following words spoken by Garcine:

GARCIN: You here, you here, and I there. Like soldiers at our posts. Also, we mustn't speak. Not one word. That won't be difficult; each of us has plenty of material for self-

communings. I think I could stay ten thousand years with only my thoughts for company.
(17)

Garcine believes that his individual self and his thoughts are enough to live with. It would mean that every individual has got an essence and existence of his own which is not dependent on the Other. The individual can communicate to himself whatever he wants, and can live alone with what his thoughts or imagination offers. Garcine is of the view that the Other is an interruption in the individual's self-indulgent meditation. This idea is opposed by Sartrean existential idea which is explicit in the words spoken by Inez though she first agrees to be silent: "To forget about the others? How utterly absurd! I feel you there, in every pore." (22) This is completely absurd to ignore the Other as being-for-itself is completely absurd without being-in-itself. The Other makes me conscious of my consciousness, only then I exist. The Other is the mirror in which I see myself. Therefore, the Other is inevitable. Since it is not a novel but a play, Sartre does not comment on these two ideas, he merely presents them.

The Signified

According to Reiss, Sartre destroys the dramatic illusion in theatrical performance to make the audiences see the reality. He proposes that the author "must set up a situation, but in such away that the illusion can be destroyed, not in order to break a spell but to turn the experience into reality." (9) The image of the actor is destroyed so that the audience may see the real in its light. Reiss is right in his view. Sartre does it because he wants the audiences to be involved in the play. Unlike Brecht who alienates the audiences from the stage, Sartre reduces the distance between audience and stage performance by destroying the illusion of dramatic performance.

These structural relations constituted by differences, contrasts and oppositions, along with other such relations that are analyzed in this section, appeal to the 'collective consciousness' of audiences and become meaningful. The concept that the audiences produce in their mind by encountering the differential and oppositional relations among the sub-units in the macro-signifier is the signified of the theatrical sign. This section explains how the sign is meaningful.

To make life 'authentic' was the very purpose of the philosophy of existentialism. Sartre does it more systematically in his drama than in his philosophy. In this regard, the dramatic development carries in it an underlying message that makes sense only when the audiences become involved in it. Therefore, Sartre does not comment on the authenticity or inauthenticity of the existence of the characters on the stage. Through the development of differential dramatic performance (differential in a sense that it differs from what is expected) the audiences learn Garcine's view of being able to live alone is a fallacy. He has to take responsibility for whatever decision he has taken and realize his role in the present moment. This judgment can be possible only on the part of the audience, and this judgment is Sartre's philosophy. Steven in his article "Existentialism" quite accurately explains how and when an action is authentic and inauthentic:

My moral act is inauthentic if, in keeping my promise for the sake of duty, I do
sobecause that is what "one" does (what "moral people" do). But I can do the something
authentically if, in keeping my promise for the sake of duty, acting this way issomething I
choose as my own, something to which, apart from its social sanction, I commit myself.
(para30)

The audiences realize that Garcine should differ from his past by ignoring it. He has to recognize his being in the present moment. Whether Inez herself realizes or not, she does make a suggestion

for the audience that the Other cannot be avoided. It is the responsibility of Garcine to recognize his being-for-itself only in the being-in-itself because acting the other way would be 'bad faith', and 'bad faith' makes existence inauthentic. To make his existence meaningful, Garcine has to choose for himself things as his own in his relation to them. The inner romantic world is simply non-existent, and to believe in it would also be 'bad faith'. Sartre makes this idea of 'bad faith' explicit to the audience when he makes performance differ from what Garcine said earlier about his loneliness.

The same is true of the two other characters, Estelle and Inez. The audiences become conscious of the meaning of their existence when they encounter meaninglessness on the part of the characters. That Estelle is in 'bad faith' is evident from the fact that she is still stuck in her past. Such an ambivalent state of mind puts her in 'anxiety' about her existence and makes her life disordered and meaningless. She sees Peter in the depth of her mind busy with another girl, Olga. When Inez asks her whether she loves him, she replies in the negative. Yet, her preoccupation with her past does not let her accept her present. She tells Inez that Peter belonged to her. In response to this, Inez's reply becomes suggestive for the audiences. She points towards this reality: "Nothing on earth belongs to you anymore." (32) Encountering this difference between the past and the present and the character's ambivalence due to her inauthentic relation to her past, the audiences become aware of the significance of the present and future, realizing the nothingness of the past.

The characters need each other's help, they ask for it; yet, they do not realize it. Garcine is still concerned about his newspaper job, and Estelle still sees Peter in the depth of her mind. That they cannot avoid each other is obvious in the fact that they approach each other with possible intimacy. Estelle wants Garcine to love her, and the same is desired by Inez. It is here that the audiences learn the significance of being in-itself, understanding the nothingness of being-for-itself. Yet, the freedom to choose is what is stressed in these differences. The audiences realize that by virtue of their freedom of choice the characters need to choose things as their own only in their relations to each other. There is nothing outside, and the past no more belongs to them. Estelle judges Garcine in terms of his past though the desire to love him is strong on her mind. She tells him: "Oh, you dear silly man, do you think I could love a coward?" (40). She thinks that he is a coward because he faced his death cowardly. She judges him in terms of the dominant world-view that one should face one's death bravely. She fails to look at him from her own genuine perspective. This is inauthentic approach towards life. The audiences become aware of it.

Why is the situation meaningful for the audiences? The fact is obvious in the contradiction between language and the underlying reality. For example, when Inez tells Garcine that fear and guilt make people dark, Garcine replies: "Do I need you to tell me that?" (38). But soon afterwards he says: "I want to feel someone looking at me while they are talking about me on earth" (38). So, the linguistic truth is quite different from the underlying coherent truth. They contradict one another. This contradiction or difference directs the audiences towards a possibility of their not being what the characters are. The identity of a person always lies in what that person is not, rather than in what that person is. The audiences also become aware of authentic existence when they see before their eyes what they should not be. Therefore, the awareness that the audiences acquire is also differential.

Conclusion

Audiences see the lives of the three characters disordered and inauthentic. In this disorder and inauthenticity, they comprehend the possibility of authenticity in their own lives. The audiences see Garcine and other characters go through a crisis of being, becoming and meaninglessness.

The total structural relations that are constructed in the characters' relationship with each other and the world around them, form a pattern that acts as the macro-signifier. The audiences become part of it when the dramatic illusion is destroyed; their 'collective consciousness' acts as the signified. Both the macro-signifier and the signified form a theatrical sign whose meaning is the awareness of authenticity instilled in the consciousness of audiences. This theatrical sign is the sum of all structural, differential, oppositional relations and the awareness on the part of the audiences.

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