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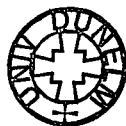
THE EXPRESSED AND THE INEXPRESSIBLE
IN THE THEATRE OF
JEAN-JACQUES BERNARD AND HENRY-RENE LENORMAND
BETWEEN 1919 AND 1945

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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December 1996



29 MAY 1997

PRUDENCE J. WINNETT

THE EXPRESSED AND THE INEXPRESSIBLE IN THE THEATRE OF
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BETWEEN 1919 AND 1945

Abstract

Ph.D. 1996

This study is concerned with the ways the Inter-War theatre of Jean-Jacques Bernard and Henry-René Lenormand illustrates the paradox of the relative impotence of words as instruments of communication on the one hand as compared with their potency in other respects. The first two chapters are devoted to Bernard's exploitation and demonstration of the inadequacy of words as vehicles of meaning, the complex and correspondingly confusing nature of dialogue and miscellaneous factors which generally aggravate the communication process. Chapter 4 is given over to an examination of the most important failing of verbal symbols as illustrated in Lenormand's metaphysically oriented drama, and Chapter 5 treats of the other ways in which Lenormand's theatre complements Bernard's by highlighting the fundamental inefficiency of words as communication tools and certain factors which further undermine dialogue and personal relations. Chapters 3 and 6 review how the plays of Bernard and Lenormand also bring into relief the extraordinary and sometimes dangerous effectiveness words can have, notably as provocative triggers and psychological catalysts. A substantial Introduction puts Chapters 1-6 into a historical perspective, explains the choice of playwrights, discusses the way their work has been critically evaluated, classified and analysed in the past and accounts for this study's particular approach to their drama between 1919 and 1945.

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REFERENCES

In order to restrict the material investigated in depth to a manageable quantity, only the stage plays which were written, published or performed between 1919 and 1945 and which are contained in the Théâtre of Jean-Jacques Bernard and the Théâtre complet of Henry-René Lenormand are analysed in this thesis.

PART I

All the passages from Bernard's plays quoted in this thesis have been taken from his Théâtre, Paris, Albin Michel, 1925-1952, 8 volumes - abbreviated henceforth to 'T I', 'T II', etc.

Quotations from other works of Bernard have been cited from the following editions:

Témoignages in Masques. Cahiers d'Art Dramatique,
25^e cahier, Paris, 1933.

Mon Père Tristan Bernard, Paris, Albin Michel, 1955.

Mon Ami le Théâtre, Paris, Albin Michel, 1958.

'Le silence au Théâtre', La Chimère. Bulletin d'Art Dramatique, no. 5, mai 1922, pp. 66-68.

'Réflexions sur le théâtre. De la suggestion et de l'artifice', Le Théâtre Contemporain (Recherches et Débats du Centre Catholique des Intellectuels Français), nouvelle série no. 2, octobre 1952, pp. 43-54.

(Title abbreviated, after the initial reference, to 'Réflexions sur le théâtre'.)

'Georges et Ludmilla Pitoëff', La Revue Théâtrale, no. 27, 1954, pp. 7-16.

PART II

All the passages from Lenormand's plays quoted in this thesis have been taken from his Théâtre complet, 10 volumes - abbreviated henceforth to 'T I', 'T II', etc. Volumes I to VII published Paris, G. Crès et Cie, 1921-1931, Volumes VIII to X published Paris, Albin Michel, 1935-1942.

Quotations from other works of Lenormand have been cited from the following editions:

Les Pitoëff, Paris, O. Lieutier, 1943.

Les Confessions d'un auteur dramatique, 2 vols., Paris, Albin Michel, 1949, 1953.

(Title abbreviated, after the initial reference, to Les Confessions.)

'Comment j'écris une pièce', Choses de théâtre, no. 8, mai 1922, pp. 449-453.

'L'Inconscient dans la littérature dramatique', La Chimère. Bulletin d'Art Dramatique, no. 5, mai 1922, pp. 74-80.

'Sur le seuil', La Chimère. Bulletin d'Art Dramatique, no. 9, avril 1923, pp. 138-139.

'Aidez-moi à détruire une légende', interview de Raymond Cogniat, Comoedia, 16 octobre 1924, p. 1.

'Chronique dramatique', Chantecler, 12 juin 1926, p. 1.

'Mon Théâtre', Revue Bleue, no. 8, 21 avril 1928, pp. 234-235.

'Souvenirs sur Giraudoux, suivis de propos notés par Georges de Wissant', La Revue Théâtrale, no. 16, avril-juin 1951, pp. 15-23.

'Shakespeare et le Mystère', La Revue Théâtrale, no. 30, 1955, pp. 5-10.

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For
my father,
my mother
and
Geoffrey

INTRODUCTION



1. The choice of playwrights

'Le Théâtre moderne est né le 30 mars 1887, dans une petite salle en bois, passage de l'Elysée-des-Beaux-Arts', declares Simone Balazard.¹ Certainly Antoine's efforts at the Théâtre Libre, followed by those of Paul Fort and Lugné-Poe at the Théâtre d'Art and the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre in the 1890s, were as significant as the theatrical reformation inaugurated by Jacques Copeau's famous manifesto² in paving the way for the revitalizing work of Gaston Baty, Charles Dullin, Louis Jouvet and Georges Pitoëff in the first quarter of the twentieth century. As a result of all this activity, by 1927 John Palmer could refer to Paris's recovery of 'an ascendancy in the arts of the theatre for which a parallel would have to be sought as far back as the seventeenth century'.³ Twenty years later similar claims are being made:

The Second World War brought to an untimely and tragic close this brilliant era in the French theatre. There are no names in it comparable to Corneille, Molière, or Racine. On the other hand, the general level of its excellence . . . places it historically only second to its forebear,⁴ the seventeenth-century French classical era.

-
1. Simone Balazard, Le Guide du Théâtre français contemporain (Paris, Syros, 1989) p. 8.
 2. Jacques Copeau, 'Un essai de rénovation dramatique: le Théâtre du Vieux Colombier', La Nouvelle Revue Française, 1^{er} septembre 1913, pp. 337-353.
 3. John Palmer, Studies in the Contemporary Theatre (London, Martin Secker, 1927) p. 37.
 4. Barrett H. Clark and George Freedley (eds.), A History of Modern Drama (New York-London, D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1947) p. 309.

The quasi-impossibility of categorizing the playwrights who contributed to this golden age of theatre⁵ is explained by Paul-Louis Mignon when he points out that 'l'auteur de ce temps n'aura pas eu seulement à apporter la personnalité de sa pensée, de sa sensibilité, de son tempérament; il aura dû inventer la forme qui en donnera la meilleure expression scénique, soit par un retour aux sources, soit en tentant d'innover':

Cette recherche constamment renouvelée d'une individualité marquante à l'autre, rend difficiles ou contestables les classements par école ou les vues synthétiques. Sans doute, on relève des affinités; la diversité est pourtant le trait frappant.⁶

The engines of this 'recherche d'originalité à tout prix'⁷ were undoubtedly fuelled by the First World War, in the aftermath of which all that civilization had hitherto taken for granted was challenged. A cry for change reverberated through every sector of French society, including the theatre. The resultant 'flight from naturalism'⁸ was ubiquitous, although it varied in degree and form.

Some dramatists did not reject outright the framework they inherited which, although fundamentally naturalistic, had been

5. See pp. 28-46, especially pp. 40-46.

6. Paul-Louis Mignon, Panorama du théâtre au XX^e siècle (Paris, Gallimard, 1978) p. 127.

7. Paul Werrie, Théâtre de la Fuite (Bruxelles-Paris, Les Ecrivains, 1943) p. 228.

8. Joseph Chiari, The Contemporary French Theatre, The Flight from Naturalism (New York, Macmillan, 1959).

modified by the Symbolist and ideological reactions against the excesses of the Théâtre Libre. To this framework, however, they brought their own changes. Distinct though these were, they do not appear to the reader/spectator of the 1990s to have been revolutionary, partly because they were made in favour of greater simplicity and were correspondingly subtle. Not only did the representatives of 'the new naturalism'⁹ refuse to have recourse in their dialogue to stylized speeches, artificial asides and 'inhumanly coherent' soliloquies,¹⁰ they also tended to strive for originality by successfully making drama of the apparently undramatic, using a minimum of action and artifice. Typical of them were the Intimists Denys Amiel, Jean-Jacques Bernard, Paul Géraudy and Charles Vildrac.¹¹ Interestingly, Benjamin Crémieux describes French Intimism as 'la "tranche de vie" du Théâtre Libre prolongée et renouvelée par des dramaturges ennemis du naturalisme'.¹²

At the other extreme from the work of such dramatists we find a very different kind of enemy of naturalism in what Dorothy Knowles spells as 'le sur-réalisme' when she touches on its origin in La Réaction idéaliste au théâtre depuis 1890.¹³

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9. Palmer, Studies, p. 30.
 10. Una Ellis-Fermor, The Frontiers of Drama (London, Methuen, 1946) p. 108 (Footnote 2).
 11. See p. 35.
 12. Benjamin Crémieux, 'Le Théâtre', La Nouvelle Revue Française, 1^{er} décembre 1925, p. 746
 13. Dorothy Knowles, La Réaction idéaliste au théâtre depuis 1890 (Paris, Librairie E. Droz, 1934) p. 489.

Implausibility in their action and dialogue, a propensity for esoteric symbolism and the desire to shock are characteristic features of the strongly surrealist playwrights exemplified by Artaud, some Cocteau, Yvan Goll, Georges Neveux, the early Salacrou and Vitrac, not to mention the Dadaist Tristan Tzara.

Across the span extending from the most bizarre and radical surrealist drama to the simplest, most classical form of 'new naturalism', including work by certain representatives of the outer 'poles', one finds a very wide mix of genres, types and styles of theatre, although there is usually either a lyrical or an ideological bias to some degree: tragedy (Demasy, Raynal), light comedy (Deval, Guitry), comic with tragic (Anouilh, Crommelynck), farce (Benjamin, Ghelderode), the 'ubuesque'¹⁴ (Vitrac, Zimmer), theatre of cruelty (Artaud, Ghelderode), literary plays (Giraudoux, Obey), the metaphysical (Henry-René Lenormand,¹⁵ Salacrou), social drama (Bourdet, Pagnol), unanimism (Romain), the fantastic with the everyday (Cocteau, Salacrou), fantasy or fairy tale (Achard, Supervielle), dreams/ideals and disillusionment (Jean-Jacques Bernard, Sarment), spiritual aspiration and decadence (Anouilh, Crommelynck), Romanticism (Achard, Sarment), cynicism (Passeur, Savoir), existentialism (Marcel, Sartre), the historical personage (Camus, Gide), Christian theatre (Claudel, Ghéon),

14. See p. 42.

15. Although the first name is often spelt with an 'i', Lenormand having signed his works using the abbreviated 'H.-R. Lenormand', it is now generally considered that 'Henry-René' is the more accurate.

people's theatre (Bloch, Rolland). This list is far from comprehensive, even if one takes into account that certain classifications dealt with elsewhere in this study have been purposely omitted from it.¹⁶ Moreover, although a maximum of two examples have been given for each aspect of work mentioned, several others from within or outside the list could frequently have been cited. It should also be noted that in many cases several mixtures are to be found not only across the work of one playwright but within a single play.

From the phalanx of dramatists writing in French between the Wars, Jean-Jacques Bernard and Henry-René Lenormand were selected for joint investigation in this thesis for a number of reasons. Firstly, they shared a guiding precept which is of particular importance given the fact that this study's conclusions are based on evidence that was a natural outcome of its implications: their stage characters say nothing they might not say in everyday life. That this should be considered worthy of comment is surprising to contemplate in the 1990s, but in the early years of the century theatre of this kind was a new phenomenon in France.

'French drama had been above all the art of the spoken word, of the explained emotion', observes Edward Marsh, then 'M. Bernard and his friends came along after the Great War with the confessed aim of conveying in a dramatic way emotions that in normal life never come to the point of being expressed,

16. See, notably, pp. 28-46.

often indeed are hardly realized'.¹⁷ The motivation behind this aim is pinpointed as follows by Robert de Beauplan:

M. Jean-Jacques Bernard s'est justement avisé que le théâtre était, le plus souvent, gâté par l'abondance verbale. Les personnages n'y sont point des êtres qui vivent, mais des psychologues qui s'analysent, des bavards qui se répandent en confidences improbables. Ils ne parlent pas pour eux-mêmes, mais pour les spectateurs.¹⁸

Products of a reaction against this, Bernard's characters only voice their feelings in so far as it is 'natural' for them to do so given their circumstances and personality, and they only voice them in the terms in which they understand them and in ways which are in keeping with their temperament.

It was not long before, to use S.A. Rhodes' words, 'what was a natural trait of Jean-Jacques Bernard's genius . . . came to be looked upon by many of his contemporaries as a literary principle'.¹⁹ With reference to Martine, L'Invitation au Voyage and Le Printemps des Autres Gérard de Catalogne writes:

Sur ces trois pièces est basée la théorie du silence. Le principe est de ne faire dire aux acteurs que ce qu'ils diraient en réalité, ou si l'on veut, de réduire la parole au rôle qu'elle a dans la vie.²⁰

17. Edward Owen Marsh, Introduction to 'Le Drame et le Théâtre Radiophonique', Jean-Jacques Bernard, The Listener, no. 985, 11 Decémbre 1947, p. 1013.

18. Robert de Beauplan, 'L'Invitation au Voyage', Le Théâtre et Comoedia Illustré, nouvelle série no. 30, 15 mars 1924, page not numbered.

19. S.A. Rhodes, The Contemporary French Theater (New York, F.S. Crofts & Co., 1942) p. 245.

20. Emphasis here and in the following quotation is my own.

Ceci est à soi seul une révolution. Le théâtre du dix-neuvième siècle a été tout entier fondé sur ce postulat que les personnages avaient des âmes de verre; non seulement le public voyait distinctement ce que pensaient les acteurs en scène, mais ceux-ci ne pensaient qu'autant qu'ils parlaient.²¹

Although Lenormand's rejection of theatrical rhetoric was not radical, the fundamental premises of the two playwrights were similar. Accordingly, we find Ashley Dukes referring to Lenormand's exploration of 'the dramatic field that lies on or beyond the borderland of verbal expression - the field of pregnant silences rather than eloquent tirades' and adding:

He feels with Gaston Baty that 'the part played by the text in a play corresponds to the part played by words in life'²² - a part always less than the whole.²³

'You create characters', Harold Pinter once said, 'then you give them words to speak'.²⁴ In giving their characters dialogue, Bernard and Lenormand made plausibility and authenticity prime considerations, and the grammatical

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21. Gérard de Catalogne, 'Jean-Jacques Bernard ou la psychanalyse au théâtre', La Pensée latine, no. 53, janvier 1925, p. 8.
 22. 'Le rôle du texte au théâtre, c'est le rôle du mot dans la vie'. Gaston Baty, 'La Place du Texte', Choses de théâtre, no. 11, novembre 1922, p. 7.
 23. Ashley Dukes, Foreword to D.L. Orna's English translation of Three Plays by H.R. Lenormand (The Dream Doctor, Man and His Phantoms, The Coward) (London, Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1928) pp. 5-6.
 24. 'In an Empty Bandstand - Harold Pinter in conversation with Joan Bakewell', The Listener, no. 2119, 6 November 1969, p. 631.

accuracy, lexical register and intonation and rhythm of their characters' speech fluctuate appropriately according to their personal, geographical and cultural background. At the same time Bernard and Lenormand worked painstakingly to meet the requirements of their specific dramatic ends and the general ones of the stage. Their characters do not, therefore, say anything which would adversely affect the pace and dramatic tension of the play by being irritatingly complicated, repetitive, irrelevant or elliptical.²⁵ The final adjustments made, however, their characters say nothing which it would be unnatural for them to say. Again Harold Pinter's explanation of his relationship with his characters is pertinent:

Given characters who possess a momentum of their own, my job is not to impose on them, not to subject them to a false articulation, by which I mean forcing a character to speak where he could not speak, making him speak in a way he could not speak, making him speak of what he could never speak.²⁶

Related to the similar policies of Bernard and Lenormand on the dramatic dialogue they wrote is their common appreciation that, in the words of Peter Brook, 'although the dramatist brings his own life nurtured by the life around him into his work - the empty stage is no ivory tower - the choices

25. Here 'elliptical' does not refer to the ellipses calculated to perplex for the specific purpose of making the reader/spectator more actively receptive to the drama.

26. 'Between the Lines', an account of a speech made by Harold Pinter to the Seventh National Student Drama Festival in Bristol, published in The Sunday Times, no. 7242, 4 March 1962, p. 25.

he makes and the values he observes are only powerful in proportion to what they create in the language of theatre'.²⁷

Whilst considering each text they wrote as 'la partie essentielle du drame'²⁸ and expecting it to be respected as such, Bernard and Lenormand knew that drama per se is not intrinsically dependent on a playwright's product and that in the final instance only actors/actresses or puppets and their animators are essential to theatre. Accordingly, although they believed 'une pièce vivante' should provide all that is necessary to trigger an armchair reader's imagination, 'le lecteur . . . étant ici son propre metteur en scène' (Mon Ami le Théâtre, pp. 71-72), they wrote their plays for players to play. They did not have the advantage of being players themselves,²⁹ but each knew that a good actor could take his 'oeuvre là où il ne savait pas lui-même qu'elle pût aller' (Les Pitoëff, p. 125). They were no less conscious of the value of all the others involved in creating a performance of which their text was only the kernel³⁰ - a view allied to Cocteau's, as given in his 1922 preface to Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel:

27. Peter Brook, The Empty Space (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books Ltd., 1976, First published 1968) pp. 42-43.

28. Gaston Baty, Théâtre Nouveau. Notes et Documents in Masques. Cahiers d'Art Dramatique, 4^e cahier, Paris, 1928, p. 15.

29. Unlike such dramatic geniuses as Aeschylus, Sophocles, Shakespeare and Molière.

30. The metaphor is Gaston Baty's: 'Le texte . . . est au drame ce que le noyau est au fruit, le centre solide autour duquel viennent s'ordonner les autres éléments'. Théâtre Nouveau. Notes et Documents, p. 15.

Une pièce de théâtre devrait être écrite, décorée, costumée, accompagnée de musique, jouée, dansée par un seul homme. Cet athlète complet n'existe pas. Il importe donc de remplacer l'individu par ce qui ressemble le plus à un individu: un groupe amical.³¹

Typical of such a group was Gaston Baty's 'Compagnons de la Chimère', to which Bernard and Lenormand belonged as members of its reading committee.³² In this capacity they were very aware that each script they wrote had to suggest appropriately through the 'répliques', through their interrelationship and built-up effect, through the silences between the lines and through any accompanying stage directions areas of creative activity for completion not only by actors, but also by set designers, architects and painters, musicians, costumiers, sound and lighting experts and various other technicians - all orchestrated by the director. The importance of the latter in the full realization of the work of Bernard and Lenormand is suggested tellingly by François Mauriac in a review of Le Simoun: 'M. Gaston Baty, qui a mis en scène le cruel drame de M. Lenormand, aurait pu le signer avec lui'.³³

31. Jean Cocteau, Théâtre I (Antigone - Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel - Les Chevaliers de la Table Ronde - Les Parents Terribles) (Paris, Gallimard, 1948) p. 48.

32. Alongside Denys Amiel, Lucien Besnard, Saint-Georges de Bouhélier, Edmond Fleg, Gabriel Marcel, Emile Mazaud, Adolphe Orna, Jean-Victor Pellerin, Jean Sarment and Auguste Villeroy - not forgetting Henri Crémieux, the 'Secrétaire du Comité de lecture', and Simon Gantillon, the 'Secrétaire Général'.

33. François Mauriac, 'Le Simoun', La Revue Hebdomadaire, 8 janvier 1921, p. 225.

Other similarities between Bernard and Lenormand will be touched on in the course of this study, but the disparities between the playwrights are no less significant. Indeed, the third reason for considering Bernard and Lenormand interesting subjects for joint examination in this thesis relates to their complementary 'différences de tempérament qui sont presque des oppositions'.³⁴

'Avec une beauté de conviction admirable', writes Denys Amiel with reference to Bernard and the subject matter of Martine, 'il l'a voulu le plus simple, le plus quotidien, j'allais dire le plus conventionnel qui se puisse trouver'.³⁵ Whilst Bernard was happy to exploit the drama with which he proves 'the aspirations and disillusionments of ordinary people' to be pregnant,³⁶ Lenormand appears to have been in his element exposing the mental processes of 'abnormal or pathological types'.³⁷ No criticism of Lenormand is implicit in this comparison.³⁸ As Daniel Mornet points out, some writers 'ont choisi surtout les êtres ou les choses qui représentent

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34. Gabriel Marcel, 'Le Théâtre français entre les deux guerres', Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 3 octobre 1946, p. 12.
35. Denys Amiel, 'Le Théâtre qui vient', Gazette des Sept Arts, no. 1, 15 décembre 1922, p. 6.
36. Thomas Bishop, Pirandello and the French Theater (New York University Press, 1960) p. 72.
37. Robert McHenry (ed.), The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, vol. 7 of Micropaedia, Fifteenth Edition (London, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1993) p. 267.
38. For details of critics who have attacked Lenormand on these and related grounds, see pp. 21-22 and 302.

les aspects violents, féroces, corrompus et bas. Libre à nous de croire qu'il y en a d'autres et que la réalité n'est pas, tout entière, ainsi faite'.³⁹ In Bernard's work the mortality toll is low. In Lenormand's there is at least one death, often a deliberately inflicted one, in every play except L'Innocente, where a murder is planned, and Crépuscule du Théâtre. On the other hand, the relatively subdued tones of Bernard's dramas contrast with the picturesque and frequently exotic local colour of Lenormand's.

Last but not least, Bernard and Lenormand were jointly chosen for scrutiny in this study because, although currently forgotten by critics and public, they have been acclaimed as two of the best and most innovative of the French playwrights of the 1920s and 1930s. Discussion of the critical reaction to the playwrights from the 1920s to the present day continues in the following section.

2. Critical reaction to the playwrights' theatre

Every effort has been made not to limit this section to views expressed during the Inter-War period but to place some emphasis on the contemporary critical landscape. The evaluations of the past fifty years, however, are comparatively few in number, a point which is elaborated below.⁴⁰

39. Daniel Mornet, Introduction à l'étude des écrivains français d'aujourd'hui (Paris, Boivin et Cie, 1939) p. 136.

40. See pp. 23-27.

In Gabriel Marcel's opinion Lenormand was unquestionably the man who contributed most to the French theatre between the Wars.⁴¹ 'The most important playwright of the years 1919-1930', writes Jacques Guicharnaud,⁴² and in his doctoral thesis Kenneth White points out that Lenormand's plays 'were more widely performed in theaters throughout Europe and America than those of any other French author during the decade after the first World War'.⁴³ Although, from the point of view of dramatic stature alone, Lenormand was the greater playwright, Bernard also enjoyed an international reputation due notably to Martine, 'qui connut un succès mondial'.⁴⁴

One of the most frequently made positive observations on Bernard and Lenormand concerns their importance as innovators. Bernard's particular claim to fame in this respect has already been highlighted.⁴⁵ As for Lenormand, Serge Radine maintains he was 'incontestablement un des dramaturges les plus originaux et

41. Gabriel Marcel, 'Le théâtre de H.-R. Lenormand', Opéra, 21 février 1951, p. 1.

42. Jacques Guicharnaud (in collaboration with June Beckelman), Modern French Theatre from Giraudoux to Beckett (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1961) p. 13.

43. Kenneth S. White, 'The Development of Lenormand's Principles and Purposes as a Dramatist' (doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 1958. Ann Arbor, Michigan, University Microfilms, 1993) pp. ix-x.

44. André Lagarde et Laurent Michard, XX^e Siècle (Paris, Bordas, 1988, First published 1962) p. 417.

45. See pp. 6-8.

les plus caractéristiques de l'entre-deux-guerres'.⁴⁶ A quarter of a century later Maurice Bruézière states that 'parmi les écrivains de théâtre de l'immédiat après-guerre', Lenormand 'est sans doute le plus original'.⁴⁷ Although a few commentators consider that he should share some of the honour with Saint-Georges de Bouhélier,⁴⁸ many commend Lenormand for his novelty in dividing his plays into 'des séries de petits tableaux, brèves scènes qui traduisent la multiplicité et la labilité des états d'âme de personnages dont les passions et les pensées sont toujours en mouvement'.⁴⁹ A number of critics point out that 'la psychanalyse monte sur scène pour la première fois' with Le Mangeur de Rêves.⁵⁰ 'Another new element', writes Dorothy Knowles, 'is to be found in Lenormand's attempt, in the great majority of his plays, to

46. Serge Radine, Anouilh, Lenormand, Salacrou (Genève, Edition des Trois Collines, 1951) p. 55.

47. Maurice Bruézière, Histoire Descriptive de la Littérature Contemporaine, vol. II (Paris, Berger-Levrault, 1976) p. 107.

48. Henri Clouard, Histoire de la littérature française du symbolisme à nos jours, vol. 2 (Paris, Albin Michel, 1949) p. 430;
Thomas H. Dickinson (and others), The Theatre in a Changing Europe (London, Putnam, 1938) p. 202.

49. Jacques Demougin (ed.), Dictionnaire de la littérature française et francophone, vols. 1-3 (Paris, Larousse, 1987) p. 815.

50. Jacqueline de Jomaron (ed.), Le Théâtre en France, vol. 2, de la Révolution à nos jours (Paris, Armand Colin, 1989) p. 292.

integrate human beings into the material world, the natural order'.⁵¹

'Marquées d'abord par la découverte de la psychanalyse et des forces inconscientes', remarks Michel Vaïs,⁵² 'les pièces d'Henri-René Lenormand, Jean-Jacques Bernard, Denys Amiel prévoient pour la première fois explicitement un rôle aux pouvoirs scéniques'.⁵³ Certain critics have stressed that it was no lack of literary talent on their part which led Bernard and Lenormand to leave the directors of their plays this scope for creativity,⁵⁴ and the next two paragraphs illustrate the high praise both won for their dramatic art and craftsmanship.

With reference to Martine, S.A. Rhodes claims, 'The characters in it are transparent; the passion is both intense and diaphanous' and goes on to add that 'the same qualities characterize the rest of Bernard's delicately intimate dramas'.⁵⁵ Bernard's 'singular delicacy of sentiment and

51. Dorothy Knowles, French Drama of the Inter-War Years 1918-39 (London, Harrap, 1967) p. 90.

52. Michel Vaïs, L'Ecrivain Scénique (Montréal, Les Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1978) p. 31.

53. See pp. 9-11.

54. Anon., 'M. Lenormand's Plays', The Times Literary Supplement, no. 1390, 20 September 1928, p. 662; Anon., 'A World of Elusive Things' (Review of The Sulky Fire, John Leslie Frith's translation of Le Feu qui reprend mal, Martine, Le Printemps des Autres, L'Invitation au Voyage and L'Âme en peine), The Times Literary Supplement, no. 1982, 27 January 1940, p. 41.

55. S.A. Rhodes in Columbia Dictionary of Modern European Literature, Jean-Albert Bédé and William B. Edgerton (eds.), Second Edition (New York, Columbia University Press, 1980) p. 82.

style'⁵⁶ is highlighted by a number of critics. 'L'art de Jean-Jacques Bernard est, dans sa discrétion, délicat et subtil', comments Paul Surer,⁵⁷ and Ronald Peacock states that Bernard 'is particularly good at the exquisite suggestion, at subtle and delicate indirectness'.⁵⁸ In Una Ellis-Fermor's view Bernard's solution to 'the task of conveying the minds of conventionally inarticulate beings strictly in terms of what they articulated . . . is at once technically brilliant and exquisitely faithful to its material'.⁵⁹ Reviewing Nationale 6, Pierre Scize writes, 'Nous écoutons une pièce, nous en entendons une autre, pas écrite, suggérée. C'est sobre, c'est fort, c'est très difficile à faire, et la difficulté n'est nulle part sensible'.⁶⁰

Whilst May Daniels maintains that Bernard, 'like Chekhov, but with a totally different technique, . . . excels in rendering the pathos of humble everyday existence and bewildered souls',⁶¹ Serge Radine claims comparison between Dostoievsky and Lenormand is not outlandish:

56. Anon., 'Obituary. M. J.-J. Bernard. Intimate theatre', The Times, 19 September 1972, p. 15.

57. Paul Surer, Cinquante ans de théâtre (Paris, Société d'Édition d'Enseignement Supérieur, 1969) p. 121.

58. Ronald Peacock, The Poet in the Theatre (London, Routledge, 1946) p. 8.

59. Frontiers of Drama, p. 118.

60. Pierre Scize, 'Nationale 6', Comoedia, 18 octobre 1935, p. 2.

61. May Daniels, The French Drama of the Unspoken (Edinburgh at the University Press, 1953) p. 237.

Lenormand possède un don exceptionnel de psychologue, qui lui permet de pressentir et d'explorer les recoins secrets de notre être, tous les dessous troubles de l'âme humaine. Nul n'a senti, avec plus de force et de lucidité, l'irréremédiable complexité de l'homme,⁶² et plus particulièrement de l'homme moderne.

Criticus refers to Lenormand as 'un homme . . . qui ne méprise nullement le métier, qui pose les jalons de son drame avec la sûreté d'un tragique grec'.⁶³ Discussing L'Amour magique, Robert Emmet Jones comments on Lenormand's 'ability, nay his genius, to create a convincing atmosphere which is both a character in and the setting of the play . . . The scenic effects are masterful'.⁶⁴

Kenneth White points out how during his lifetime Lenormand's 'works were incessantly attacked and deplored by indignant writers proceeding on false assumptions about his dramatic ethos and aims'.⁶⁵ Some of the negative comments directed at Bernard as well as Lenormand betray a jaundiced or distorted understanding of their dramatic principles. The following cynical observation by Pierre Brisson illustrates

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62. Serge Radine, Essais sur le théâtre (1919-1939) (Genève-Annemasse, Editions du Mont-Blanc S.A., 1944) p. 89.
63. Criticus (Marcel Berger), Le style au microscope, III, Dramaturges (Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1952) p. 259.
64. Robert Emmet Jones, H.-R. Lenormand, Twayne's World Authors Series no. 730 (Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1984) p. 95.
65. Kenneth S. White, 'Toward a new interpretation of Lenormand's theatrical ethos', Modern Drama, 2, February 1960, p. 334.

this, although he is in fact as fair to the Lenormand/
Vildrac/Bernard camp as he is to Giraudoux:

L'école du nudisme verbal ou, plus exactement, l'école du mutisme espérait des triomphes. Les Lenormand, les Vildrac, les Jean-Jacques Bernard multipliaient les joutes oratoires en faveur du silence. L'essentiel d'un dialogue devait être constitué par des points de suspension. Après ces excès naïfs, mais en définitive salutaires, Giraudoux, un beau soir, allait pouvoir rétablir en toute aisance et parfois même avec trop d'art, les prérogatives et la prééminence de la littérature sur la scène.⁶⁶

According to Bamber Gascoigne, Bernard's 'theatre was based on the dramatic possibilities inherent in the gaps between bits of dialogue'.⁶⁷ Harold Hobson also misleads when he writes, 'Bernard was the direct antithesis of Giraudoux. With Giraudoux the words told everything: with Bernard they told practically nothing. Everything was in his silences, his pauses, and his gestures'.⁶⁸ There was nothing unnatural to his characters in Bernard's silences, pauses and gestures, and Bernard's words also 'told everything', since 'le silence même se définit par rapport aux mots, comme la pause, en musique, reçoit son sens des groupes de notes qui l'entourent'.⁶⁹

66. Pierre Brisson, Le Théâtre des Années folles (Genève, Editions du Milieu du Monde, 1943) p. 41.

67. Bamber Gascoigne, Twentieth-Century Drama (London, Hutchinson University Library, 1963) p. 13.

68. Harold Hobson, French Theatre Since 1830 (London, John Calder, 1978) p. 144.

69. Jean-Paul Sartre, Situations II (Paris, Gallimard, 1948) pp. 74-75.

Words such as 'gris' and 'grisaille' used negatively recur in criticism of Bernard.⁷⁰ 'It is all very pretty, all very sentimental, and all very thin', claims Allardyce Nicoll.⁷¹ Paul Surer maintains that certain plays 'versent dans le conte bleu ou la berquinade naïve et douceâtre', and that Bernard's muted dramatic universe lacks breadth and vitality.⁷² Although May Daniels also considers Bernard's theatre 'subdued and very restricted', she argues that it 'has much beauty' and that 'in the rich field of the drama, beside the strong plants that shoot up proudly, there is room for the small flowers of quiet intimate pieces'.⁷³ Pierre Scize would certainly agree that there should be such room.⁷⁴

Whilst lack of impartiality may account for some of Paul Blanchart's very high praise of Lenormand in view of their friendship,⁷⁵ the subjectivity betrayed by André Rouveyre leaves one with little choice but to ignore his vitriolic attacks - attacks which Lenormand did more to exacerbate than

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70. Pierre de Boisdeffre, Une Histoire Vivante de la Littérature d'Aujourd'hui (1939-1961) (Paris, Librairie Académique Perrin, 1961) p. 630; Sylviane Bonnerot, Le théâtre de 1920 à 1950 (Paris, Masson et Cie, 1972) p. 10.
71. Allardyce Nicoll, World Drama. From Aeschylus to Anouilh (London, Harrap, 1949) p. 780.
72. Cinquante ans, pp. 121 and 122.
73. Drama of the Unspoken, pp. 236 and 237.
74. 'Nationale 6', pp. 1-2.
75. Paul Blanchart, 'H.-R. Lenormand: dramaturge d'apocalypse', La Revue Théâtrale, no. 4, janvier-février 1947, p. 14.

abate.⁷⁶ Allardyce Nicoll's disparaging comments deserve more attention: 'There is not, perhaps, very much of real worth in Lenormand's work, and occasionally we may suspect there is a good deal of nonsense'.⁷⁷ Others avoid such blanket statements of disapproval, targeting their criticism more precisely.

A number of critics claim pessimism among Lenormand's specific weaknesses, although, as John Styan points out, "'pessimistic", any more than "optimistic", should not be a critical pejorative'.⁷⁸ In Henry Bordeaux's opinion Lenormand is 'un pessimiste amer et cruel',⁷⁹ and Maurice Martin du Gard writes, 'On ne peut prendre de la vie une idée plus noire que lui'.⁸⁰ Twenty-two years later Serge Radine complains that his work 'ne reflète que l'ombre'.⁸¹ 'Its basic pessimism is close to being revolting', asserts Robert Emmet Jones.⁸² Clearly

76. 'Les auteurs dramatiques et les revues: un article de M. H.-R. Lenormand', Mercure de France, 15 mars 1927, pp. 762-764; 'Une lettre de M. H.-R. Lenormand', Mercure de France, 15 mai 1927, p. 253; André Rouveyre, 'M. Lenormand Défenseur du Théâtre', Mercure de France, 15 avril 1927, p. 510.

77. World Drama, p. 778.

78. John L. Styan, The Elements of Drama (Cambridge at the University Press, 1960) p. 227.

79. Henry Bordeaux, 'Le Temps est un Songe', La Revue Hebdomadaire, 3 janvier 1920, p. 71.

80. Maurice Martin du Gard, 'Une Vie secrète', Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 9 mars 1929, p. 12.

81. Anouilh, Lenormand, Salacrou, p. 94.

82. Robert Emmet Jones, The Alienated Hero in Modern French Drama, University of Georgia Monographs no. 9 (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1962) p. 57.

Lenormand's plays are concerned with the darker aspects of humanity, but claims of unremitting pessimism can be challenged. Indeed, the 'quelques atténuations à ce pessimisme' referred to by Paul Surer are significant.⁸³ As Kenneth White points out, 'in stressing the somber and apparently pessimistic aspects of Lenormand's plays, most commentators have neglected to examine fully the other side of his thought as a dramatist'.⁸⁴

Others have criticized some of Lenormand's dramas for having 'more than a suspicion of the old pièce à thèse'.⁸⁵ Georges Jamati disagrees: 'M. Lenormand, au contraire, vise moins à démontrer qu'à nous émouvoir et nous intéresser en nous associant à des recherches'.⁸⁶ That he does so successfully in the vast majority of cases is reflected in one of Robert de Beauplan's comments: 'Nul n'excelle, comme lui, à transposer en action scénique les abstractions les plus rébarbatives'.⁸⁷ Reminiscing, Georges Pitoëff tells how 'au moment de la création du Temps est un Songe, on a beaucoup parlé de Kantisme et d'Hindouisme, d'Aristote et de Shakespeare, de la

83. Cinquante ans, p. 137 (Footnote).

84. Thesis, pp. 320-321.

85. Geoffrey Brereton, A Short History of French Literature (London, Cassell & Company Ltd., 1962, First published 1954) p. 335.

86. Georges Jamati, La Conquête de Soi (Paris, Flammarion, 1961) p. 261.

87. Robert de Beauplan, 'L'Homme et ses Fantômes', Le Théâtre et Comoedia Illustré, nouvelle série no. 36, 15 juin-15 septembre 1924, page not numbered.

"relativité", de tous les éléments philosophiques que reflétait la pièce', but the director is expressing praise rather than criticism here, as is demonstrated by the remarks which immediately follow. Moreover, Pitoëff goes on to explain that 'la philosophie n'a servi à Lenormand que comme lignes du cadre dans lequel il a placé ses personnages', whose 'vérité' and 'humanité . . . sont la force de l'ouvrage'.⁸⁸

'C'est un Dostoïevski, gâté par les procédés du "Grand Guignol"' might be an oversimplification, as Serge Radine admits,⁸⁹ but one criticism of Lenormand difficult to contest relates to his penchant for the melodramatic.⁹⁰ Another is pinpointed in Kenneth White's statement that 'Lenormand was a penetrating analyst of moral weakness, but he did not fully understand virtue',⁹¹ and a probable third comes from Jacqueline de Jomaron who claims that, unlike Strindberg, Lenormand failed 'à sublimer ses propres aventures pour atteindre l'universel'.⁹²

Adverse criticism would seem to be less of a threat to the work of Bernard and Lenormand than indifference. The extent to which they have been eclipsed in the second half of the century

88. Georges Pitoëff, Notre Théâtre (Paris, Messages, 1949) pp. 63, 64 and 65.

89. Essais, p. 89.

90. Robert Posen, 'Aspects of the Work of Henri-René Lenormand, Part II', Nottingham French Studies, vol. VII, no. 1, May 1968, pp. 37-38.

91. Thesis, p. 332.

92. Le Théâtre en France, vol. 2, p. 292.

can be gauged by a survey of the principal encyclopedias/histories of twentieth-century theatre/literature published over the last three to four decades, especially the Franco-British as opposed to the American ones. Occasionally no mention is made of either of them.⁹³ Sometimes one of the two is omitted - usually Bernard.⁹⁴ In her opening chapter, 'Quelques vivants piliers', Geneviève Serreau mistakenly lists Lenormand with Salacrou and Zimmer as one of the playwrights Dullin helped to fame,⁹⁵ when in fact it was Pitoëff who, as Dorothy Knowles points out, played Lenormand's work more frequently than that of any other French writer.⁹⁶

That the justifiable or understandable criticisms made of Bernard and Lenormand should outweigh the qualities of the playwrights to the point of condemning them to outright oblivion is hard to accept. Indeed, if one leaves on one side Jean-Louis Benoit's production of Les Ratés at the Théâtre de l' Aquarium in the Autumn of 1995, that a dramatist of Lenormand's calibre, hailed in the 1920s as 'one of France's

93. This is the case, for instance, with: Françoise et Paul Gerbod, Introduction à la vie littéraire du XX^e siècle (Paris, Bordas, 1986).

94. See, for example: Martin Banham (ed.), The Cambridge Guide to Theatre (Cambridge University Press, 1995); J.-P. de Beaumarchais, Daniel Couty et Alain Rey (eds.), Dictionnaire des Littératures de Langue Française, 3 vols. (Paris, Bordas, 1984).

95. Geneviève Serreau, Histoire du "nouveau théâtre" (Paris, Gallimard, Collection idées, 1966) p. 15.

96. Inter-War Years, p. 32.

most celebrated dramatists',⁹⁷ should have been bypassed in his own country, as he has been in France over the last fifty years, is intriguing. 'Overall, one is struck by what seems to be a conspiracy of silence', is not an exaggerated claim on Philip Hewitt's part.⁹⁸ A number of reasons have been mooted. Robert Posen believes that the close identification of Lenormand's work 'with the contemporary interest in the discoveries of Freud'⁹⁹ must be one factor.¹⁰⁰ 'The current disrepute of Lenormand's plays may stem, in some degree, from the apparently outmoded moral perspectives they imply', is another suggestion from Kenneth White.¹⁰¹ Lenormand's attitude and activities during the Second World War¹⁰² may also have jeopardized his prospects of survival.¹⁰³ Lamenting the fact that 'la jeune génération théâtrale . . . ignore qu'il fut l'un des dramaturges les plus considérables d'entre les deux

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97. D.L. Orna, 'Henri-René Lenormand. One of France's Most Celebrated Dramatists. An Interview', The Jewish Guardian, 25 June 1926, p. 4 of Supplement.
98. Philip Hewitt, 'L'Homme et ses Fantômes: A Study of the Theatre of Henry-René Lenormand' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Wolfson College, University of Oxford, 1990) p. 8.
99. See pp. 38-40.
100. Robert Posen, 'A Freudian in the French Theatre, H.-R. Lenormand', Literature and Psychology, vol. XXV, no. 4, 1975, p. 137.
101. 'Toward a new interpretation', p. 346.
102. See Appendix C, pp. 458-461.
103. Ingrid Galster, Le théâtre de Jean-Paul Sartre devant ses premiers critiques (Paris, Editions Jean-Michel Place, 1986) pp. 230-231 and 283.

guerres, monté par les plus grands: Pitoëff, Gémier, Baty, Reinhardt...', Jean-Louis Benoit posits another reason for Lenormand's having been written off 'mort et oublié':

Demande-t-on, par ailleurs, aux jeunes acteurs, qui furent Antoine, Gémier, Lugné-Poe, Baty, s'ils ont lu leurs écrits ou connaissent l'originalité de leur démarche, et la réponse est toujours empreinte de la même gêne: non. Morts et oubliés.

Comment, encore une fois, leur en vouloir?

Les ouvrages sont introuvables.

Comment est-il possible que les écrits de ces hommes immenses ne soient pas réédités - mis à part Copeau? - Comment est-il possible que le théâtre français situé entre 1919 et 1939, si riche en découvertes, en recherches et en réalisations, nommé dès les années 20-21 'Théâtre Nouveau', soit à ce point oublié? Le théâtre français du XX^{ème} siècle commencerait-il avec Claudel, un peu de Vitrac... et Copeau? L'Histoire - aidée parfois par le cynisme de quelques maisons d'édition - fait preuve ici d'une injustice cruelle et intolérable.¹⁰⁴

Whether or not the time is right for a revival of Bernard or Lenormand is debatable, but much more questionable is the total and definitive dismissal of their work as old-fashioned. Bernard 'souffre dans ces années 80 qui révèrent Pinter, d'une indifférence largement imméritée', writes Jean-Marie Besset in 1985, 'La reprise de Martine à Londres fait donc figure de réhabilitation pour cet homme dont le seul défaut fut sans doute d'avoir eu raison trop tôt'.¹⁰⁵ Eleven years later,

104. Jean-Louis Benoit, 'Un Théâtre de l'Inquiétude', Programme: Les Ratés au Théâtre de l' Aquarium Cartoucherie, mise en scène de Jean-Louis Benoit, du 26 septembre au 19 novembre 1995, page not numbered.

105. Jean-Marie Besset, 'National Theatre de Londres. Martine de Jean-Jacques Bernard. La redécouverte du théâtre de l'inexprimé', Acteurs, numéros 26-27, juin-juillet 1985, p. 86.

scanning the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale's successful exhibition, 'Les Pitoëff. Destins de théâtre', one reads, 'Et les plus beaux poèmes sont à mes yeux les plus concis, ceux où le mot juste tient lieu de phrase, et qui donnent à imaginer plutôt qu'à voir' - Bernard's words, one might immediately presume, but, no, the simply stated preference of the artistic director of the Théâtre de l'Aquarium in 1996.¹⁰⁶

Christophe Deshoulières claims that Lenormand's theatre 'pourrait encore séduire sur les scènes contemporaines',¹⁰⁷ and in maintaining that 'la postérité est mauvaise mère lorsqu'elle passe à la trappe des enfants tels que Les Ratés', Odile Quirot was undoubtedly expressing the majority view of the public who saw the play in 1995.¹⁰⁸ Although he cannot be considered an objective critic, the comments of the director of the 1995 production of Les Ratés, Benoit again, are also illuminating: 'Lenormand est véritablement un cas bouleversant. J'ai rarement rencontré dans une oeuvre de cette époque autant de poignantes résonances avec mon temps, autant d'intelligence d'écriture, de profondeur et d'audace formelle'.¹⁰⁹

106. Jean-Louis Benoit, 'A propos du metteur en scène Georges Pitoëff' in Les Pitoëff. Destins de théâtre, Cahiers d'une exposition, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1996, p. 3.

107. Christophe Deshoulières, Le Théâtre au XX^e Siècle (Paris, Bordas, 1989) p. 73.

108. Odile Quirot, 'Un rêve de comédiens. Les Ratés', Le Nouvel Observateur, 26 octobre-1^{er} novembre 1995, p. 132.

109. 'Un Théâtre de l'Inquiétude', pages not numbered.

3. Categorization of the playwrights' work¹¹⁰

One way in which Bernard and Lenormand have been broadly categorized is as 'avant-garde' or occasionally 'Boulevard' playwrights. The volatility of these epithets is demonstrated in the three volumes of Georges Pillement's Anthologie du Théâtre Français Contemporain.¹¹¹ Lenormand is included in the first volume concerned with Le Théâtre d'Avant-Garde, whilst Bernard is dealt with in the second subtitled Le Théâtre du Boulevard.¹¹² Although Pillement does not use this classification pejoratively, his statement that when Bernard 'remplaça ses silences par des paroles, il se rapprocha tout naturellement du boulevard' remains unconvincing.¹¹³ Alfred Simon, one of the few writers of, or contributors to, Dictionaries of French theatre/literature who touch on the later plays of Bernard as well as the earlier ones, maintains that his 'théâtre est tout à fait indépendant du Boulevard'.¹¹⁴ Indeed, the majority of critics classify Bernard and Lenormand as avant-garde dramatists of their day. Bettina Knapp's

110. It should be noted that this survey does not claim to be exhaustive, and that frequently, where critics have grouped the playwrights in more than one category, only the principal classification is given.

111. Georges Pillement, Anthologie du théâtre français contemporain, 3 vols. (Paris, Editions du Béliet, 1945, 1946 and 1948).

112. The third volume covers Le Théâtre des Romanciers et des Poètes.

113. Vol. 2, p. 13.

114. Alfred Simon, Dictionnaire du théâtre français contemporain (Paris, Larousse, 1970) p. 95.

insinuation that they were both suppliers of Boulevard drama is exceptional,¹¹⁵ although Eliane Tonnet-Lacroix also appears to keep the term 'avant-garde' for the most radical wing of the experimental theatre movement between the Wars. Whilst making the point that 'le domaine du Boulevard est assez difficile à délimiter', she still chooses to discuss Achard, Anouilh, Jean-Jacques Bernard, some Cocteau, Lenormand, Mauriac and Salacrou, for example, under the heading 'Le Boulevard et ses avatars', and another section entitled 'Du côté de l'avant-garde' is reserved for such dramatists as the early Cocteau, Roussel, Tzara and Vitrac.¹¹⁶

The occasional classification of Bernard as a Boulevard playwright could be partly due to the fact that literary historians rarely fail to note that Jean-Jacques Bernard was the 'son of Tristan'.¹¹⁷ Seldom, however, do they point out that in spite of their blood relationship the literary rapport between the two dramatists is minimal, 'tant les styles des deux hommes sont différents'.¹¹⁸ If by the word 'Boulevard', however, one means 'une entreprise de pur divertissement teinté d'érotisme où le mécanisme élémentaire de la chasse au plaisir

115. Bettina L. Knapp, French Theatre 1918-1939 (New York, Grove Press, Inc., 1985) pp. 1-3.

116. Eliane Tonnet-Lacroix, La littérature française de l'entre-deux-guerres 1919-1939 (Paris, Editions Nathan, 1993) pp. 175-177 and 179-180.

117. David Steel in The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French, Peter France (ed.) (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1995) p. 85.

118. Besset, 'National Theatre de Londres. Martine', p. 86.

est pimenté de surprises (coups de théâtre) et de jeux de langage (mots d'auteur)',¹¹⁹ then Bernard and Lenormand can scarcely be labelled 'Boulevard' playwrights. Although Bernard stopped short of making a religion of art, he viewed it as 'une façon de traduire nos aspirations vers le divin' (Témoignages, p. 32), and in 'Georges et Ludmilla Pitoëff' he suggests that the couple taught us, among other lessons, 'qu'un art élevé ne peut se passer de spiritualité' (p. 15). Referring to Gaston Baty, Maurice Martin du Gard writes 'On devine ce qui l'attire chez Lenormand, . . . c'est une conception religieuse de l'art dramatique qu'il approuve de tout son être'.¹²⁰ Alexina Macpherson claims that the theatre was a religion to Lenormand, 'and one of the few things (perhaps really the only thing) that could raise complete sincerity and depth of feeling in him'.¹²¹ Bernard and Lenormand paid a price for refusing to betray such attitudes towards their art. Henry Bidou explains how Le Lâche, for example, could have had 'le plus grand succès au Théâtre de Paris': 'M. Lenormand pouvait, de l'histoire de ces agents surveillés et trahis, composer une pièce d'aventures. Par un choix honorable, il a préféré peindre un homme au vrai'.¹²² The

119. Michel Corvin in Dictionnaire Encyclopédique du Théâtre, Michel Corvin (ed.), vol. A-K (Paris, Bordas, 1995) p. 125.

120. Maurice Martin du Gard, Carte rouge, Le Théâtre et la Vie 1929-1930 (Paris, Flammarion, 1930) p. 223.

121. Alexina L. Macpherson, 'H.-R. Lenormand' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 1955) p. 133.

122. Henry Bidou, 'L'Armée secrète', La Revue de Paris, 1^{er} février 1926, p. 689.

'mépris absolu du succès facile', which Marcel Doisy also highlights as one of Lenormand's qualities,¹²³ was shared by Bernard, whose professional - and personal - integrity is frequently touched on by critics.¹²⁴

'Les pièces de Lenormand sont de véritables tragédies', claims Georges Pillement.¹²⁵ The majority opinion, however, would seem to be that Lenormand is a writer of 'dramas' dealing with tragic subject matter, rather than a tragedian.

Edmond Sée refers to Lenormand as a master of the theatre of ideas.¹²⁶ A series of Lenormand's plays have also been viewed as exotic theatre or examples of 'le drame colonial',¹²⁷ and the work of both Bernard and Lenormand has been classified, though for different reasons, as 'théâtre d'évasion'.¹²⁸

A number of critics have categorized Lenormand's drama as 'théâtre de l'inquiétude'.¹²⁹ Gérard Lieber maintains that

123. Marcel Doisy, Le Théâtre Français Contemporain (Bruxelles, Editions "La Boétie", 1947) p. 200.

124. Anon., 'Obituary', p. 15;
Lucien Dubech, 'Le Théâtre: l'Ecole du silence',
La Revue Universelle, 1^{er} mai 1924, pp. 381-382.

125. Anthologie, vol. 1, p. 138.

126. Edmond Sée, Le Théâtre Français Contemporain (Paris, Armand Colin, 1928) p. 96.

127. Criticus, Le style, pp. 258-259.

128. Werrie, Théâtre de la Fuite, pp. 226-230.

129. Benoit, 'Un Théâtre de l'Inquiétude', pages not numbered;
Jean-Jacques Préau, 'Un Théâtre de "l'Intranquillité"',
Programme: Les Ratés au Théâtre de l'Aquarium
Cartoucherie, mise en scène de Jean-Louis Benoit,
du 26 septembre au 19 novembre 1995, pages not numbered.

'plus que par son souci de la forme ou l'audace de ses sujets c'est par sa capacité à traduire les inquiétudes d'une époque que ce théâtre peut encore intéresser'.¹³⁰

Georges Versini groups Lenormand with Bernstein, Passeur and Raynal under the heading 'Le théâtre de la violence'.¹³¹ Somewhat similarly, Paul Surer discusses Lenormand's work with Passeur's and Raynal's in a section headed 'Le théâtre violent'.¹³² André Lagarde and Laurent Michard cover Lenormand, Passeur and Raynal in a short section entitled 'A la limite de l'humain'.¹³³

According to John Gassner, Lenormand is 'the French apostle of expressionism',¹³⁴ in which context he tends to be associated with Simon Gantillon and Jean-Victor Pellerin. Whilst arguing a case for viewing Lenormand as an 'expressionniste', Maurice Gravier points out that the term was not used between the Wars in France's theatrical 'milieux'.¹³⁵

130. Gérard Lieber in Dictionnaire Encyclopédique du Théâtre, Michel Corvin (ed.), vol. L-Z (Paris, Bordas, 1995) p. 533.

131. Georges Versini, Le Théâtre français depuis 1900 (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, Que sais-je?, 1970) pp. 18-20.

132. Cinquante ans, pp. 127-147, especially pp. 129-137.

133. XX^e Siècle, pp. 409-410.

134. John Gassner, Masters of the Drama (New York, Dover Publications, Inc., 1954) p. 418.

135. Maurice Gravier, 'L'Expressionnisme dramatique en France entre les deux guerres' in L'Expressionnisme dans le Théâtre Européen (Paris, C.N.R.S., 1971) pp. 285-298, especially pp. 288 and 293.

Lenormand's work is frequently discussed under the heading 'Le Théâtre de l'Inconscient'¹³⁶ - Bernard's, too, although this is rarely the first category into which Bernard is placed. 'Il est le dramaturge de l'inconscient', claims Gaston Rageot of Lenormand.¹³⁷ Depending on their definition of terms, some critics use 'le subconscient' instead of 'l'inconscient'.¹³⁸ Thus Dorothy Knowles groups Lenormand with Simon Gantillon, François Mauriac, Roger Martin du Gard and René Bruyez as a dramatist of subconscious motivation.¹³⁹

136. Marie-José Hourantier, 'Les "théâtres à côté" de l'entre-deux-guerres et leurs tentatives d'"Avant-Garde"' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Paris, 1974) pp. 298-320.

137. Gaston Rageot, Prise de Vues (Paris, Editions de la Nouvelle Revue Critique, 1928) p. 144.

138. Throughout this thesis the terms 'subconscious' and 'unconscious' will be used in accordance with the following definitions given in the Longman Dictionary of Psychology and Psychiatry: 'Subconscious' will be used 'as an adjective more than a noun, referring to memories or other events of which we are not now aware, or only dimly aware, but which can be brought to consciousness'. 'Unconscious', used primarily as a noun, will refer to 'the division or region of the psyche that contains memories, emotional conflicts, wishes, and repressed impulses that are not directly accessible to awareness, but which have dynamic effects on thought and behavior'. Robert M. Goldenson (ed.) (New York and London, Longman, 1984) pp. 719 and 771. It will be noted that the distinguishing factors are the possibility of dim awareness and accessibility in the case of the subconscious, as opposed to an absence of awareness and no direct accessibility in the case of the unconscious. For a generic term covering a combination of the two, 'unconscious' is used in this study, hence the global expression 'drama of the unconscious'.

139. Inter-War Years, pp. 90-111.

Although, in the words of May Daniels, 'Lenormand was not regarded as a member of the "silent" school',¹⁴⁰ his name is frequently mentioned in the context of the 'théâtre de l'inexprimé'. Paul-Louis Mignon, for example, discusses a) Lenormand and b) Bernard/Vildrac in a section entitled 'Le Jeu des Paroles et de l'Inexprimé'. In the introduction to this section Mignon also points out how the use of Tableaux, for which Lenormand was particularly famous,¹⁴¹ in itself helped the spectator 'atteindre la part d'inexprimé ou même d'incommunicable que chaque personnalité recèle dessous ses paroles ou au-delà d'elles'.¹⁴² For Louis Cazamian Lenormand was certainly no less a dramatist of the unspoken than Bernard:

Le Feu qui reprend mal . . . and Martine . . . by Jean-Jacques Bernard . . . are minute, pitiless studies of feelings too secret and painful not to fear the light of glib utterances. Henri-René Lenormand . . . devoted himself more fully to the exploration of unexpressed and largely inexpressible moods.¹⁴³

140. Drama of the Unspoken, p. 108.

141. See p. 15.

142. Panorama, pp. 116-119, especially p. 117.

143. Louis Cazamian, A History of French Literature (Oxford University Press, 1960) p. 447.

André Lagarde and Laurent Michard,¹⁴⁴ and Paul Surer,¹⁴⁵ group Bernard - with Amiel, Géraldy and Vildrac - as an Intimist.¹⁴⁶ Georges Versini does likewise but mentions the early Sarment as well.¹⁴⁷

Notwithstanding the fact that the designation 'théâtre de l'inexprimé' fits comfortably on no more than half of his plays, Bernard is categorized primarily as a dramatist of the unspoken. Kester Branford's full-length study¹⁴⁸ and the two chapters May Daniels devotes to Bernard speak for themselves.¹⁴⁹ Dorothy Knowles also classifies Bernard primarily as a dramatist of the unspoken alongside Amiel, Vildrac and Jean-Victor Pellerin.¹⁵⁰

The kind of label most frequently attributed to Bernard in Histories and Dictionaries of Theatre/Literature is that of 'chef de file' - and other variations - of the school or theatre of silence, or champion of the 'théâtre de l'inexprimé'.¹⁵¹ Some of those using the less satisfactory

144. XX^e Siècle, pp. 414-418.

145. Cinquante ans, pp. 103-125, especially pp. 119-122.

146. See p. 4.

147. Le Théâtre français depuis 1900, pp. 20-22.

148. Kester A. Branford, A Study of Jean-Jacques Bernard's Théâtre de l'Inexprimé, Romance Monographs Number 24 (University, Mississippi, Romance Monographs, Inc., 1977).

149. Drama of the Unspoken, pp. 172-237.

150. Inter-War Years, pp. 112-128.

151. Bruézière, Histoire Descriptive, p. 104.

'drama/theatre/school/theory of silence', in French or English, do so without reservation,¹⁵² others qualify their expression in some way.¹⁵³ Rare are those who explain why Bernard himself preferred the phrase 'théâtre de l'inexprimé'.¹⁵⁴ After pointing out that the representatives 'of the dramatic tendency which ended by being baptized the "School of Silence" . . . are among the most eloquent interpreters of the contemporary scene', S.A. Rhodes goes on to explain what distinguished them, highlighting the "school's" 'careful avoidance of sententiousness in manner and speech' and its aim 'to suggest more than it expressed'.¹⁵⁵ It is noteworthy that in his summary of the movement John Lakich makes no more mention of 'silence' than Rhodes:

Using ordinary dialogue and gestures, relatively realistic situations, and a plausible psychology, the dramatists attempt to give an insight into the true states of the soul and mind, into verbally¹⁵⁶ incommunicable but truly significant feelings.

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152. See, for example:
Lieber in Dictionnaire Encyclopédique du Théâtre,
Corvin (ed.), vol. A-K, p. 111.
153. See, for example:
Tonnet-Lacroix, La littérature française, p. 177.
154. See p. 78.
155. The Contemporary French Theater, p. 12.
156. John J. Lakich, 'The Ideal and Reality in the French Theater of the 1920's', Modern Language Quarterly, vol. 31, no. 1, March 1970, p. 75.

Not only did Bernard gain his reputation as a 'chef d'école' involuntarily, he found it impossible to shake off and regretted its fostering the accusation of systematization. 'In truth', as David Whitton observes, 'Bernard's style of writing sprang from an intuitive tendency rather than the application of any precise theory'.¹⁵⁷ It should also be remembered that Martine saw the full light of day before the controversial 'théorie du silence' was officially born.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, few of Bernard's plays are similar in style and/or theme. His Théâtre includes plays of symbolism and mysticism, a satire, a humorous sketch, work for the radio and historical dramas. Bernard believed in defying challenges and set himself tough ones, but, apart from maintaining his high ideals, the only thing he did systematically was experiment. 'Il n'y a en définitive qu'une formule viable: celle du renouvellement perpétuel', he writes in the foreword to the first volume of his Théâtre (T I, 7). Realizing the dangers of allowing an innovation to turn into a system, he was particularly determined not to remain a slave to one convention, and in the 'Avant-propos' to the second volume of his collected plays he complains how 'alors qu'il tente de dégager, sous l'apparence quotidienne, la vie secrète ou mystérieuse des êtres, alors qu'il cherche, d'ouvrage en ouvrage, à élargir son univers', he all too often finds 'ses efforts ramenés à ce qu'il y a de plus superficiel dans cette

157. David Whitton, Stage Directors in Modern France (Manchester University Press, 1987) p. 117.

158. See p. 77.

"théorie du silence" qui n'a jamais été dans ses préoccupations qu'un accessoire ou un moyen' (T II, 7). Neither Bernard nor Lenormand considered his type of drama the only genuine or the best kind. 'Il ne faut rien condamner par système et même pas le théâtre verbeux', states Bernard in Témoignages (p. 30), and Lenormand sums up their shared views when he writes:

Nous ne fondons pas une chapelle, car nous savons que les chapelles ne deviennent pas des églises, mais des sacristies.

. . .
Nous ne sommes pas non plus une école, parce que nous ne croyons ni aux esthétiques collectives, ni aux recettes, ni aux secrets d'école . . . Or, chacun de nous entend préserver et développer librement son tempérament d'écrivain.

('Sur le seuil', pp. 138 and 139)

In his attempts to safeguard the liberty of his 'tempérament d'écrivain', Lenormand had above all to resist those who were determined to see him as a disciple of another leader. 'Une coïncidence entre les recherches d'un dramaturge et celles d'un psychiatre suffit-elle pour ranger définitivement l'un sous la bannière de l'autre?', he asks in 'Mon Théâtre', 'Il m'a semblé que non. C'est pourquoi j'ai protesté, dernièrement, à plusieurs reprises, contre certains jugements qui prétendaient faire de moi le disciple d'un homme de science' (p. 234). Allardyce Nicoll treats of Bernard in a section headed 'The Psychoanalysis of Love',¹⁵⁹ but it is unusual for him to be listed 'among the psychoanalysts and the

159. World Drama, p. 779.

Freudians' as he is by Régis Michaud.¹⁶⁰ For Lenormand, on the other hand, this is the norm. Although a number of critics have challenged the application of the unqualified label 'Freudian' to Lenormand,¹⁶¹ many more have been less discriminating. Such statements as 'He is emphatically Freudian',¹⁶² and 'Le théâtre de Lenormand . . . est l'adaptation à la scène des théories freudiennes',¹⁶³ are typical but far less accurate than Maurice Bruézière's more careful depiction of Lenormand as 'ouvert aux théories de Freud'.¹⁶⁴ For, although Freud's ideas influenced Lenormand, as he himself acknowledges ('Aidez-moi à détruire une légende', p. 1), a good number of his dramas, where subconscious or more deeply rooted drives and instincts play an important part, had been conceived or written before the dramatist read Freud.

An anonymous critic insists that it is 'roughly true, but much less than the whole truth, to speak of M. Lenormand's

160. Régis Michaud, Modern Thought and Literature in France (New York and London, Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1934) p. 249.

161. Daniel-Rops, Sur le Théâtre de H.-R. Lenormand (Paris, Editions des Cahiers Libres, 1926) pp. 107-152; Hewitt, Thesis, pp. 100-114.

162. Anon., 'The Theatre. Producers in Paris. The Plays of Henri Lenormand', The Spectator, no. 5093, 6 February 1926, p. 213.

163. Pillement, Anthologie, vol. 1, p. 18.

164. Histoire Descriptive, p. 107.

plays as plays of psycho-analysis',¹⁶⁵ but in fact the only play which treats explicitly and substantially of psychotherapy is Le Mangeur de Rêves. Care has to be taken here, too, for this drama is a demonstration of the limitations of psycho-analysis and a warning against its dangers when practised badly,¹⁶⁶ 'it is not simply a scenic transposition of Freud's ideas',¹⁶⁷ a crucial point François Mauriac failed to appreciate when he reviewed it in 1922.¹⁶⁸ In spite of the research that has been done on the subject, it is still impossible to say for sure exactly how much Lenormand - or Bernard - was directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, influenced by Freud's discoveries and/or publications. The most accurate conclusion would seem to be that 'il y eut moins là influence que rencontre heureuse', to use Bernard's expression in Mon Ami le Théâtre (p. 140).

On condition that the appropriate explanations, justifications and exclusion clauses are given, most of the classifications summarized above can be said to have validity. Unfortunately, if all the necessary explanations, justifications and exclusion clauses are given, the resultant label proves to be so detailed, complex and correspondingly clumsy as

165. Anon., 'M. Lenormand's Plays', p. 662.

166. See pp. 388-390 and 424.

167. White, Thesis, p. 231.

168. François Mauriac, 'Le Mangeur de Rêves', La Revue Hebdomadaire, 25 février 1922, pp. 497-498.

to negate its purpose. Even then an anomaly or blurred group boundary is likely to have gone unnoticed, as a few examples will serve to illustrate.

That he should not find himself classified alongside Supervielle or Cocteau is to be expected, but in La Folle du Ciel, for which Darius Milhaud wrote the music, 'Lenormand momentarily abandoned . . . his clinical studies to picture a world of talking birds, bird-women, and trolls'.¹⁶⁹ Nor should it be forgotten that Lenormand wrote four short ballets: Les Quatre Vérités (music by André Jolivet), Fumées dans le Bleu (music by Marius-François Gaillard), Le Mangeur de Rêves (music by Arthur Honegger) and Le Soupir de Famine (music by Georges Dandelot).¹⁷⁰ Critics rarely if ever mention Lenormand alongside Anouilh, Cocteau, Gide and Giraudoux when they discuss the playwrights who made modern drama of ancient myths and legends, updating the material stylistically and with the help of anachronisms. Yet Lenormand merits inclusion in such a list on the grounds of his successful transposition of the Medea legend in Asie.

Similarly, as was noted above,¹⁷¹ Bernard made a point of experimenting with types of theatre quite different from that

169. Knowles, Inter-War Years, p. 194.

170. Paul Blanchart, 'In Memoriam. Notes et Documents sur H.-R. Lenormand', Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre, II, 1951, p. 172.

171. See p. 37.

considered to be his speciality. Of Le Roi de Malousie Jacques Deval writes, 'Le sujet en est de pure fantaisie: il rappelle Ubu Roi¹⁷² si ce n'est quelque voyage de Gulliver ou de Panurge'.¹⁷³ One might not expect existentialist drama to have much in common with that of either Bernard or Lenormand, but in a number of his plays Gabriel Marcel's ideas 'seem to converge on those of Freud or recall Pirandello and the "school of silence"'.¹⁷⁴

Knowing that the French dramatic movement of the 1920s-1930s was 'd'une variété, d'une complexité presque déconcertantes et telles qu'elles rendent vain tout essai de classification'¹⁷⁵ has been little help to critics obliged to attempt the impossible by the need to present their material in a manageable form. John Palmer associates Bernard and Lenormand, in the separate chapters he devotes to them, with 'the theory of silence' and 'the play of psycho-analysis' respectively. In his opening, introductory chapter, however, he is careful to stress that none of the 'so-called revolutionaries', of which he considers Bernard and Lenormand to be two, 'is committed to any specific system or doctrine, and it is only by a wilful straining of their texts and

172. Alfred Jarry, Oeuvres complètes I (Paris, Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1972) pp. 345-398.

173. Jacques Deval, 'A travers les théâtres - Le Roy de Malousie', Revue des Deux Mondes, 15 juin 1928, p. 946.

174. Knowles, Inter-War Years, p. 250.

175. Sée, Le Théâtre, p. 151.

intentions that we are able to identify them with a given tendency or exhibit them as representative of any definite school or persuasion'.¹⁷⁶ Subject to this reservation, one might tentatively accept the work of Bernard and Lenormand as being representative of the 'théâtre de l'inexprimé' and the 'théâtre de l'inconscient' of the 1920s-1930s. This definition, however, invites opposition on at least four counts.

To begin with, the apparently distinct classifications of 'théâtre de l'inexprimé' and 'théâtre de l'inconscient' overlap each other. Gaston Rageot touches on their inseparability, when he 'addresses' Lenormand as follows: 'Vous voulez, cher Monsieur Lenormand, suggérer le mystère, dévoiler l'inconscient, exprimer, en un mot, l'inexprimable...'.¹⁷⁷ This means that the categorization of Bernard as the archetypal dramatist of the unspoken and Lenormand as a champion par excellence of the theatre of the unconscious is misleading, since much remains unspoken precisely because it is confined or semi-confined in the unconscious of the individual(s) concerned, whilst much of the content of the unconscious remains almost by definition unspoken. Hence Bernard's argument that the meaning of the word 'inexprimé' should be widened 'jusqu'à y englober tout ce qui relève de l'inconscient':

Si les hommes n'expriment pas toujours leurs sentiments profonds, ce n'est pas uniquement parce qu'ils les cachent, par honte, par pudeur ou par

176. Studies, pp. 94, 65 and 32.

177. Prise de Vues, p. 145.

hypocrisie. C'est encore plus souvent parce qu'ils n'en ont pas conscience, ou parce que ces sentiments arrivent à la conscience claire sous une forme tellement méconnaissable que les mobiles réels n'en sont plus perceptibles. (Témoignages, p. 29)

Secondly, given the emphasis critics have placed on the originality of Bernard and Lenormand,¹⁷⁸ it is easy to forget that they did not invent the kind of theatre in which they excelled. Drama of the unconscious could be said to be as old as drama itself, as Paul Blanchart points out in an article where he reviews its history in France and abroad.¹⁷⁹ What Bernard, Lenormand and their colleagues did do, was to focus their own and their audiences' attention on the unconscious in a way it had not been focussed before their common predecessor, Maeterlinck,¹⁸⁰ who, writes Bernard, 'fut le premier qui prit conscience de l'inconscient' ('Réflexions sur le théâtre. De la suggestion et de l'artifice', p. 51).

The article by Blanchart just referred to also shows up how much drama within the Inter-War period alone the label covers. In the course of his brief and selective survey the critic discusses a wide range of playwrights including ones whose work differs very much in style and purpose from that of Bernard and Lenormand. Some, for example, tackled the subject from the perspective of a religious faith. Others were

178. See pp. 14-16.

179. Paul Blanchart, 'L'Inconscient au Théâtre', Masques, numéro spécial: "Art et Transfiguration", 15 mars 1947, pp. 75-82.

180. See pp. 61-69.

influenced to a greater or lesser degree by the Surrealists' approach to the exploration of the unconscious. Consequently the only helpful way of stating that Bernard and Lenormand were representative of the 'théâtre de l'inconscient' of their day is to add that, a few exceptional plays apart, they wrote non-religious and fundamentally rationalistic drama of the unconscious where 'the speech and action . . . as closely as possible appear to be those of everyday life'.¹⁸¹ This means that, unlike the Surrealists, Bernard and Lenormand could not creatively imagine and metaphorically dramatize the unconscious, they could only depict the reverberations of their characters' unconscious and subconscious impulses as these would reveal themselves in 'everyday life', that is superficially, in outwardly observable behaviour and/or speech.

The 'drama of the unspoken' classification is similarly problematic insofar as playwrights have known about 'the unspoken' and demonstrated this knowledge in their plays since the Greeks. Passages of Sophocles, Shakespeare and Racine, to name but a few, could be cited to prove the point. The distinguishing factor is similar to that which can be applied when trying to define the type of early twentieth-century drama of the unconscious written by Bernard and Lenormand. Never before had the attention of French dramatists been drawn so

181. Raymond Williams, Drama from Ibsen to Brecht (London, Chatto & Windus, 1971, First published under this title 1968) p. 13.

specifically to the unspoken in everyday life and to its potential for dramatic exploitation on stage. The rejection of volubility for volubility's sake after the First World War, silent pictures and the repercussions of Freud's work contributed to this concentrated awareness which was further crystallized as dramatists shook off outmoded theatrical rules and found themselves free to discover anew, and experiment with, the interactive verbal, paralinguistic and non-verbal facets of dialogue.¹⁸²

Finally the classification of Bernard and Lenormand as dramatists of the unspoken and the unconscious is unsatisfactory because its intellectual and technical bias fails to do justice to the emotional and poetical quality of their drama, with which the following section of this Introduction will now concern itself.

4. The elusive nature of the playwrights' drama

Having described Bernard's work as 'un art essentiellement de sensibilité' and as 'exactement le contraire d'un art

182. Throughout this thesis the term 'verbal' communication will be used when the focus is on the content and meaning of the spoken words in question. 'Paralinguistic' communication will be used when the emphasis is on the pitch, tone, volume, pace and intonation of any spoken words and for involuntary utterances such as cries, laughs, screams, sighs, etc. 'Non-verbal' communication will be used to refer to overall appearance, attitude, posture, gait, gestures, small actions, body language, facial expressions, glances and gazes. These are personal definitions, although largely supported by those in most standard dictionaries.

intellectualiste ou cérébral', Paul Blanchart wonders 'en quelle mesure l'esprit collabore ici avec la sensibilité':

Il faut beaucoup d'intelligence, et une intelligence singulièrement souple et pénétrante, pour que l'art atteigne à cette acuité sensible, pour orchestrer ainsi les mots et les silences sur le clavier de la sensibilité. Cet art, non encombré d'intellectualité, est étonnamment intelligent.¹⁸³

The same critic finds a similar kind of synthesis in Lenormand's work. Having highlighted certain scenes 'd'une pure émotion, d'un pathétique intense', he subsequently refers to Lenormand's 'inquiétante intelligence'.¹⁸⁴ Men of superior intellect though they were, neither could believe in an art 'qui n'ait pas de racines, d'abord, dans la sensibilité', to use the words of Bernard in 'Réflexions sur le théâtre': 'La véritable sève de l'émotion artistique vient de la sensibilité, non de l'intelligence' (p. 53). 'A la base de chacune de mes pièces il y a un choc d'ordre émotif, non un dessein de l'intelligence', declares Lenormand ('Aidez-moi à détruire une légende', p. 1). Holding such views, Bernard and Lenormand turned naturally to poetry as the linchpin of their drama. 'Pour exprimer d'un mot ma pensée, je dirai qu'un théâtre ne me touche que s'il est poésie', claims Bernard in 'Réflexions sur le théâtre' (p. 54). A clarification of what Bernard - and Lenormand - meant by 'poésie' in this sense is best approached

183. Paul Blanchart, Jean-Jacques Bernard in Masques. Cahiers d'Art Dramatique, 11^e cahier, Paris, 1928, p. 27.

184. Paul Blanchart, Le Théâtre de H.-R. Lenormand, apocalypse d'une société (Paris, Masques, 1947) pp. 222 and 233.

obliquely through the ideas on 'le réalisme' which Bernard and Lenormand shared and which are intimately related to their common views on 'la poésie' as a desirable feature of drama.

'Le réalisme a fait faillite', maintains Bernard in Témoignages, 'La copie servile de la réalité est antiartistique par essence' (p. 17). Similarly, Lenormand writes: 'Les réalistes sont les impuissants de la vérité supérieure, celle qui simplifie, qui transpose, qui transcende' (Les Confessions d'un auteur dramatique, vol. I, p. 275). Notwithstanding its predictability given the pervasive 'flight from naturalism' which marked their theatrical generation,¹⁸⁵ the strength of the unequivocal reaction of Bernard and Lenormand against realism is striking in the light of much of their practice as dramatists. In most of their plays the outward appearance of reality is not only respected, it is a major feature. With few exceptions their plots are realistically credible, their protagonists are psychologically plausible and their dialogue is as natural to the characters speaking it as possible.¹⁸⁶ To a large extent this apparent anomaly can be explained by the confusing ambiguity of the words 'naturalism' and 'realism' when they are not defined with precision.

Raymond Williams points out the need, when speaking of naturalism, to distinguish between the 'passion for the whole truth, for the liberation of what can not yet be said or done,

185. See pp. 3-5.

186. See pp. 6-9.

and the confident and even complacent representation of things as they are, that things are what they seem'.¹⁸⁷ Representative of naturalism according to the former interpretation is Shakespeare himself, who was no mere imitator of outward appearances for their own sake and whom Gaston Baty considered 'le plus grand de tous les auteurs dramatiques parce qu'il a créé plus de vie que tout autre, et qu'il a tout aimé de la vie, parce qu'il est descendu plus profondément dans le secret des âmes et qu'il a frissonné plus humainement devant le mystère des destinées'.¹⁸⁸ Although Bernard and Lenormand are in a different dramatic league from that of Shakespeare, their work also appealed to Baty, and to Georges Pitoëff, because they discovered in it a similar preoccupation with the mystery of the inner life and an attempt to grasp, 'au-delà de la réalité des sens, . . . la présence d'une vérité impalpable et essentielle'.¹⁸⁹

Certain comments Bernard makes on the dual nature of truth bring into relief the two strands of reality he weaves into his work: the factual/material/provable, on the one hand, the emotional/spiritual/intuitable, on the other. In Mon Ami le Théâtre, for example, he writes:

187. Raymond Williams, Drama in Performance (London, C.A. Watts & Co. Ltd., 1968) p. 131.

188. Gaston Baty, Rideau Baissé (Paris, Bordas, 1949) p. 150.

189. France Anders, Jacques Copeau et le Cartel des quatre (Paris, A.G. Nizet, 1959) p. 166.

Ce qui, précisément, fait le grand historien, c'est l'intuition juste. Le dramaturge se trouvera naturellement plus libre devant la vérité des faits. Mais il ne sera pas moins tenu, sinon davantage, devant la vérité des coeurs. C'est sur celle-là qu'il importe de ne pas se tromper. (p. 211)¹⁹⁰

Although the dramatist has a historical context in mind here, the pertinent terms lose none of their validity when they are transferred to a more general one. It is undoubtedly Bernard's belief in the duality of truth, in the importance of a balance being maintained between its component elements and in the essential superiority, in the final instance, of the emotional/spiritual/intuitable, which explains why a reading or viewing of a number of his plays leaves the reader/spectator who is only interested in the intellectually apprehended 'vérité des faits' feeling frustrated, whilst the reader/spectator who is more open to the emotionally intuited 'vérité des coeurs' is correspondingly satisfied.

In Les Soeurs Guédonec the all-important 'vérité des coeurs' is so discreetly hidden as to be quasi-imperceptible. An inattentive reader/spectator going by superficial appearances could easily conclude that nothing happens in the play. Only those who are sensitive to them can appreciate that the emotional stirrings within the two lonely protagonists constitute little less than a dramatic miracle. If one looks no further than the 'vérité des faits' of A la Recherche des Coeurs, this play is about a political loser whose extravagant

190. Hermann Bogler argues in a similar vein in Deux Hommes (T V, 229).

gestures of self-sacrifice achieve nothing, whilst hastening his premature death by assassination. According to its author, however, it is a love story in which 'les deux partenaires ne sont plus un homme et une femme, mais un homme et une foule, un homme et ses ouvriers' (T III, 7). No doubt considering Nationale 6 from the perspective of 'la vérité des faits', May Daniels maintains that it is a 'fantasy, reminiscent of J.M. Barrie's less fortunate attempts' and 'concerned with the vague whimsies of two silly people, wholly wrapped up in themselves and unequal to the smallest demands of life'.¹⁹¹ For Lucien Descaves, on the other hand, it is 'une idylle, fraîche et reposante comme un conte de vacances et de fées',¹⁹² and for Pierre Audiat it is 'un conte bleu qui ne finit point par le mariage de la bergère et du prince charmant et qui pourtant finit bien. La plus fine pointe de l'art, si délié, de Jean-Jacques Bernard'.¹⁹³ To take one further example, the readers/spectators who are more open to 'la vérité des coeurs' of Bernard's Marie Stuart, Reine d'Ecosse will retain an overriding sympathy for the Queen, whilst those who are primarily concerned with the simple facts will be more censorious.

In Lenormand's theatre factual reality is represented by the unyielding thread of rationality which runs through each of

191. Drama of the Unspoken, pp. 219 and 221.

192.) Quoted by Robert de Beauplan, 'Nationale 6 au théâtre de and) l'Oeuvre', La Petite Illustration, Théâtre no. 376,

193.) 23 novembre 1935, pages not numbered.

his plays, whilst spiritual truth is accommodated by a concurrent preoccupation with the irrational. In the first volume of his Confessions Lenormand acknowledges how he learned to keep hold of these two poles:

Et toujours, dans cette chasse aux fantômes, Edgar Poe m'enseignait la rigueur analytique avec laquelle il importe d'étudier les phénomènes les plus troubles. C'est à lui que je dois cette espèce de logique policière de l'âme que je m'efforcerai, vingt ans plus tard, de faire régner dans celles de mes pièces qui semblent se détacher le plus du réel.
(p. 78)

One can argue that, having established for himself such a discipline in which to work, it was in Lenormand's professional interest 'to conserve, at least in part, a poetic interpretation of man's secret motives, including the suggestion that an aura of mystery must always hover over the most baffling features of man's personality'.¹⁹⁴ The science of psychology was no threat in this respect. On the contrary, it could not have been more helpful to Lenormand, because he could dramatically exploit the light shed by the discipline's progress with little fear that this illumination might prove total and correspondingly destructive of the enigmatic. Robert Posen claims that 'for Lenormand Freudian psychology and the methods of psychoanalysis could lay bare for observation by the rational mind the hidden motives and impulses of apparently

194. White, Thesis, p. 207.

irrational behaviour'.¹⁹⁵ This is largely true, but Lenormand did not believe they could do so entirely.

Lenormand's conviction that modern psychological insights, however illuminating, are unlikely to eradicate the psyche's essential mystery is highlighted by the speech which he made at a dinner given in his honour by the Club du Faubourg and extracts of which were subsequently published in the Bulletin de la Chimère of May 1922 under the title of 'L'Inconscient dans la littérature dramatique'. Lenormand's choice of words at that time is informative. His appreciation of Freud's contribution to the science of psychology is indisputable: 'Il nous tend la clé qui ouvre les portes secrètes de l'âme', he declares unequivocally, 'Il nous révèle les désirs cachés qui se dissimulent derrière nos rêves' (p. 75). Further on he refers to 'ces régions interdites de l'âme où Diderot, Rousseau, Stendhal, Baudelaire pénétraient de temps à autre . . . ces souterrains de la conscience, les voici relativement éclairés'. The all-important word here is 'relativement', and in the following sentence the crucial significance lies in the conditional not the main clause: 'Si l'âme a encore son mystère même de la vie, elle a livré de grands et nombreux secrets' (p. 77). At the climax of his speech he asks whether we should 'résister au courant qui cherche à nous entraîner vers les souterrains de la conscience' or 'céder à ce courant et laisser voguer avec nous le drame

195. 'A Freudian', p. 144.

jusqu'à ces cavernes d'où il ressortira certainement très différent de ce qu'il y est entré' (p. 78). Having considered the dangers of this latter course he concludes with a statement of his belief that 'il n'y a pas de vérité dernière à laquelle nous puissions être acculés', that 'l'âme recule toujours, sous des déguisements successifs, devant celui qui cherche à la connaître':

Si loin que nous allions, je crois que nous trouverons toujours en face de nous un fantôme assez incertain, assez énigmatique pour nous permettre de rêver, de douter, de chercher, d'aimer, de craindre - c'est-à-dire de créer. (p. 80)

The belief that the science of psychology can take man so far but no further is reflected in Lenormand's practice as a dramatist, for, although Robert Posen affirms that 'with Lenormand nothing is magical or accidental',¹⁹⁶ this cannot be proved beyond doubt. On the contrary, in eleven of the eighteen dramas in Lenormand's Théâtre complet, whatever rational explanations are proffered there is always a chance, however slight, that everything could be 'magical or accidental'. Just as the reader/spectator of Macbeth¹⁹⁷ can appreciate the tragedy whatever attitude he takes to the witches and ghosts, in the same way it is possible to read or view many of

196. 'A Freudian', p. 144. This is a surprising comment on the part of Robert Posen in the light of certain statements he makes in his article of May 1968. See p. 440.

197. William Shakespeare, Macbeth (Introduction and Notes by K. Deighton, London, Macmillan, 1896).

Lenormand's plays, where the plots can be given at least one rational and one irrational explanation. As this principle is demonstrated in some detail in Chapter 4 of this thesis,¹⁹⁸ and the role of word power as a recurring rational explanation is the subject of Chapter 6,¹⁹⁹ no further comment is appropriate here except to say that in Lenormand's opinion the reader/spectator who remains open to all the implications of Macbeth has the most to gain from it. Those who take an uncompromisingly rational approach obstruct the full dramatic impact the play is capable of making and risk blinding themselves to the potential reality of the apparently unreal:

Psychologiquement, il est aisé de motiver par l'emprise sexuelle qu'exerce Lady Macbeth sur son mari, l'évolution du caractère de Macbeth, qui passe de l'affectivité normale à l'endurcissement, à la diabolique hypocrisie, à l'ivresse de la destruction. Ce problème d'une mentalité criminelle suffirait à faire de Macbeth l'un des plus grands drames de la littérature. Mais le sentiment de la prédestination, cette certitude qu'en accomplissant ses crimes, il réalise un plan préétabli, un programme fixé d'avance par des puissances supérieures à sa volonté, font de Macbeth une tragédie mystique dépassant de beaucoup les données de la tragédie politique, sociale et intime.

Pour comprendre Macbeth, pour nous trouver devant Macbeth dans l'attitude qui pouvait être celle des contemporains de Shakespeare, il faut voir dans les prédictions des sorcières, dans l'apparition du spectre de Banquo, dans la pression que le monde invisible exerce à chaque instant sur les personnages, non pas des fantasmagories, non pas des autosuggestions, non pas les hallucinations d'une conscience troublée par le remords. Il faut y voir des réalités. ('Shakespeare et le Mystère', p. 8)

198. See pp. 276-282.

199. See pp. 396-404 for examples.

However one interprets Macbeth, these comments contain a vital key to a global appreciation of Lenormand's drama.

In his thesis on Bernard, Lloyd Bishop makes the point that the Symbolist movement has been criticized for being a soul without a body, whilst naturalism has been criticized for being a body without a soul.²⁰⁰ In these terms it can be said that in their different ways Bernard and Lenormand strove to merge the two into a single entity, their dramatic concept, like that of a number of their colleagues in the 1920s, finding 'its parallel in Baty's first dramatic principle: the maintenance of equilibrium between body and soul, matter and spirit, natural world and mysterious forces, symbolically expressed in the emblem of his theatrical group - the Chimera, a bird-woman, straining upward with its feet firmly planted on the ground'.²⁰¹ The attempted integration of these poles was anticipated by Saint-Georges de Bouhéliier, whose 'intention fondamentale fut de combiner le réalisme et le symbolisme'.²⁰² Although 'le chef - et peut-être même le seul représentant - de l'école naturiste', is not considered a significant dramatist today, according to Marcel Doisy, Le Carnaval des Enfants²⁰³

200. Lloyd O. Bishop, 'The Dramatic Work of Jean-Jacques Bernard' (doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1961. Ann Arbor, Michigan, University Microfilms, 1993) p. 319.

201. Lakich, 'The Ideal and Reality', p. 76.

202. Balazard, Le Guide, p. 24.

203. Saint-Georges de Bouhéliier, Le Carnaval des Enfants (Paris, Fasquelle, 1911).

'ouvrait la voie à tout le mouvement du réalisme poétique de notre époque, voire à l'école de l'inexprimé, dans son principe tout au moins'.²⁰⁴ Jacques Lanotte makes a similar claim.²⁰⁵

Interestingly, Lenormand's observations on the achievement of Saint-Georges de Bouhélier in Le Carnaval des Enfants bring the present discussion back to its starting point, namely the importance Bernard and Lenormand attributed to a poetic element in drama and what they meant by it:²⁰⁶

Accomplir cette alchimie, arracher à l'éphémère les formes et les apparences pour les fixer dans la durée par la puissance des images, c'est peut-être là le plus vrai, le plus important de la mission du poète. En tout cas, c'est ce qui lui vaut la tendresse et la reconnaissance de ceux pour qui ce monde est un chaos, tant que la poésie ne l'a pas clarifié et organisé. (Les Confessions, vol. I, p. 331)

Given the views Bernard and Lenormand shared on 'le réalisme', their common belief in the duality of truth and the stress they both placed on expressing the human experience as integrally as possible in their plays, Lenormand's appreciation of Saint-Georges de Bouhélier as a dramatic poet and the terms in which he expresses it fall into place and are a fitting complement to Bernard's definition of 'la vraie poésie de théâtre':

204. Le Théâtre, p. 222.

205. Jacques Lanotte, 'Introduction au "Théâtre de l'Inexprimé"', Cahiers de Littérature et de Linguistique appliquée, no. 1, juin 1970, pp. 12-13.

206. See pp. 47-48.

Poésie! Voilà, à mon sens, le secret profond, la vertu intime du théâtre. Poésie ne veut nullement dire pièce en vers. Il arrive qu'une pièce en vers soit poétique, mais, le plus souvent, c'est dans les ouvrages laborieusement ou facilement versifiés que gît le plus de prosaïsme. La versification a ses mirages. La vraie poésie de théâtre, c'est tout autre chose . . . Le vrai théâtre est poésie dans la mesure où la poésie est suggestion, car le théâtre est suggestion.

Or la poésie peut aussi être artifice, et nous constatons ici que le même véhicule peut apporter, selon les cas, la suggestion, qui est l'art, et l'artifice qui est son contraire . . . Il y a des mots . . . trompeurs; et il y a ceux qui portent en eux non point la réalité toute bête, mais la vérité humaine qui est bien autre chose que le réel. Et sans doute même le mot d'humain, pour qualifier cette vérité-là, ne suffit-il pas?
(*'Réflexions sur le théâtre'*, p. 54)

The poetry with which Bernard and Lenormand infused their drama is not comparable with that of some of their colleagues for two reasons. Firstly, Bernard and Lenormand were above all 'hommes de théâtre' whose talent differed in nature from that of poets like Claudel or Supervielle. Secondly, Bernard and Lenormand kept the dialogue of the majority of their plays plausible and natural to its speakers, deliberately refraining from making characters who were not poets speak poetry. Supervielle was free to give his plays 'le charme subtil d'une poésie dans les mots et hors des mots'.²⁰⁷ Bernard and Lenormand were restricted as far as 'une poésie dans les mots' is concerned but had greater, though not total, flexibility with regard to a poetry 'hors des mots'. They consequently

207. Mignon, Panorama, p. 123.

wrote poetic dialogue as appropriate, and, throughout their work, created 'la poésie tout court, sans forme et sans texte',²⁰⁸ with which they were conversant in spite of writing the psychological theatre Artaud condemned.²⁰⁹ In the terms of Cocteau's substitution of 'une "poésie de théâtre" à la "poésie au théâtre"', one might say that to the 'dentelle délicate' of the limited 'poésie au théâtre' they could write, Bernard and Lenormand added 'une grosse dentelle' of 'poésie de théâtre' of their own brand, which was not, even in the case of Lenormand, as thickly woven as 'une dentelle en cordages'.²¹⁰

In this context it is important to remember that Bernard and Lenormand created not only as solitary artists but also as members of a team and that each of their texts was only the basis - complete in itself though this may be - of a greater

208. Antonin Artaud, Le Théâtre et son Double suivi de Le Théâtre de Séraphin (Paris, Gallimard, 1964) p. 121.

209. Artaud's statement 'que le théâtre et nous-mêmes devons en finir avec la psychologie' (Ibid., p. 119) cannot be taken literally. Psychology cannot be ousted from theatre any more than it can be ousted from human life. Artaud no doubt expressed himself so vehemently on the subject to redress a large, entrenched imbalance in the other direction. However, he did advocate a much more radical course than the new but basically rationalistic path to the unconscious beaten by Lenormand: 'J'ai voulu en finir avec l'homme des périodes classiques, l'archétype de la dramaturgie nationale. Je l'ai livré, ce héros cartésien totalement analysable, aux puissances dissolvantes qui émanent de son inconscient' (Les Confessions, vol. I, p. 12).

210. Cocteau, Théâtre I, p. 45.

potential work, a 'drame intégral' in embryo.²¹¹ Much of the inevitably subtle poetry in the drama of Bernard and Lenormand had to wait for directors and companies to bring into evidence. Accordingly, we find John Fowles claiming that Martine is 'almost like an operatic libretto . . . all the music has to be created in the performance'.²¹² That the playwrights were successful in directly or indirectly creating their targeted poetry, is proved by the observations of critics. 'Suggestion et poésie: deux pôles de l'art de Lenormand', comments Paul Blanchart.²¹³ 'The special spellbinding quality of the theater of Lenormand arises, in good measure, from its poetic virtues', writes S.A. Rhodes, who also maintains that 'with Bernard, poetry caught up with realism and psychology in the theater'.²¹⁴ 'Un dialogueur-poète', writes Edmond Sée of Bernard,²¹⁵ whose 'sous-entendus', Daniel Mornet tells us, 'enveloppent l'humble drame d'une poésie insaisissable et profonde'.²¹⁶

211. See pp. 9-11.

212. John Fowles, 'Theatre of the unexpressed', The Times, 15 April 1985, p. 9.

213. 'H.-R. Lenormand: dramaturge d'apocalypse', p. 10.

214. The Contemporary French Theater, p. 276; and Columbia Dictionary, Bédé and Edgerton (eds.), p. 82.

215. Le Théâtre, p. 156.

216. Daniel Mornet, Histoire de la littérature et de la pensée françaises contemporaines (1870-1927) (Paris, Larousse, 1927) p. 156.

5. Critical assessment of the playwrights' dramatic heritage and legacy

Critics have compared the work of Bernard and Lenormand with that of other writers who might tentatively be considered their predecessors or successors. This has been done not so much to establish traces of conscious or unconscious influence in either direction, but rather to explore possible affinities which would attach the dramatists in question to an ongoing literary chain.²¹⁷

Bernard has been referred to, along with Sarment and Achard, as 'cette progéniture de Musset'.²¹⁸ Resemblances have also been noted between his work and that of Marivaux, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Maeterlinck, Jules Renard, the Henry Bataille of L'Enchantement,²¹⁹ Saint-Georges de Bouhélier,²²⁰ Norwid, Chekhov, Ibsen and Pirandello. Most of these links relate to Bernard as a dramatist of the unspoken. For more diverse reasons affinities have been spotted between Lenormand

217. The following survey does not claim to be exhaustive. It summarizes some of the principal observations made by critics since the 1920s, stressing those which have a particular relevance to the subject of this thesis. References are given only to works which are quoted. It should also be noted that, although this section further limits itself to the dramatic heritage and legacy of Bernard and Lenormand, some of the most important influences on Lenormand were not dramatists, e.g. Nietzsche, Poe.

218. Henri Peyre, Hommes et Oeuvres du XX^e Siècle (Paris, Corrêa, 1938) p. 224.

219. Henry Bataille, Théâtre complet II (Le Masque, L'Enchantement) (Paris, Flammarion, no date).

220. See pp. 56-57.

and the Marquis de Sade, Becque, de Curel, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Maeterlinck, the dramatists of the Grand-Guignol, Saint-Georges de Bouhélier, certain Elizabethan playwrights, Ibsen, Strindberg and Pirandello. Mention should also be made here of Lenormand's American contemporary, O'Neill.

On the question of the legacy left by Bernard to playwrights coming later in the century, Alfred Simon maintains in 1970 that 'bien des auteurs débutants retrouvent aujourd'hui encore la technique de Martine qui ne le disent pas et ne le savent peut-être même pas'.²²¹ John Fowles claims that Martine 'helped clear the ground for the triumphs of the mid-century French theatre, from Giraudoux on: Anouilh, Sartre, Ionesco, Beckett and all the rest', and he also points out that Pinter's enthusiasm on the occasion of the revival of Martine at the National Theatre was fitting, Bernard having been 'an important, if nowadays generally forgotten, pioneer of the theatre of which Harold himself is our leading exponent'.²²² Georges Versini comments on the similarity between Bernard's 'point de vue' and that of Marguerite Duras and Nathalie Sarraute.²²³ 'Bernard's use of the unspoken and the unspeakable and his focus upon withdrawal, isolation, and alienation anticipate and lay the foundation for post-World War II silent

221. Dictionnaire, p. 95.

222. 'Theatre of the unexpressed', p. 9.

223. Le Théâtre français depuis 1900, p. 21.

drama', asserts Leslie Kane.²²⁴ Kester Branford discusses at some length the similarities and variations between Bernard's 'théâtre de l'inexprimé' and later developments finding expression in the plays of Beckett, Ionesco and Pinter. He also makes some particularly interesting comments on Bernard's theoretical consanguinity with Artaud, and points out that 'one insufficiently explored question relating to Artaud's thought is the extent to which Le Théâtre et son Double is a restatement of some of the leading principles of Baty, Bernard, and other Compagnons de la Chimère'.²²⁵

With regard to Lenormand's legacy, Philip Hewitt discusses, among others, a Lenormand-Montherlant link, and in his summary comments on Lenormand's situation vis-à-vis the Absurdists:

Like Camus and Sartre, Lenormand describes the Absurd, while Beckett and Ionesco present it. Nonetheless, the similarities are strong, and while it must not be exaggerated, the way in which Lenormand parallels Giraudoux, throws light on Anouilh and Salacrou, anticipates Sartre and Camus, and foreshadows Genet, Beckett and Ionesco suggests that his contribution to the French theatre of the twentieth century is far from negligible.²²⁶

It is clear from the preceding survey of those dramatists from whom Bernard and Lenormand inherited and those to whom

224. Leslie Kane, The Language of Silence, On the Unspoken and the Unspeakable in Modern Drama (London, Associated University Presses, 1984) pp. 99-100.

225. A Study, pp. 205-218 and 202-205, especially p. 203.

226. Thesis, pp. 295-300, especially p. 300.

they left a legacy that one of their principal common ancestors is Maurice Maeterlinck and that one of their main common descendants is Samuel Beckett. This statement suggests the viability of a Maeterlinck-Bernard/Lenormand-Beckett chain which will be explored in some detail here as it is largely dependent on the four playwrights' shared concern with the unspoken and inexpressible. It must be stressed, however, that the connections which can be made between the work of Maeterlinck, Bernard/Lenormand and Beckett should not be exaggerated or considered in any way as exclusive.

The differences between Beckett's work and that of Bernard and Lenormand are manifest. Similarly, Maeterlinck's work differs in many respects not only from that of Beckett but also from his more immediate successors'. Maeterlinck's marked, pervasive mysticism, for example, and his systematized linguistic symbolism are not typical features of Bernard's Inter-War plays. Two variations between Lenormand's drama and Maeterlinck's are given by Marcel Doisy. Firstly, 'chez Maeterlinck, les personnages principaux sont plus souvent des forces obscures que des êtres humains':

De plus, là où l'auteur de L'Intruse²²⁷ plonge le spectateur dans une atmosphère délibérée de terreur, lui infuse, de force et par les voies les plus instinctives, la pitié ou la détresse, Lenormand fait appel au contraire à l'intelligence lucide et envisage les problèmes psychologiques les plus

227. Maurice Maeterlinck, Théâtre I (La Princesse Maleine - L'Intruse - Les Aveugles) (Bruxelles, Lacomblez, 1903).

troubles sous l'angle de la raison analytique ou
même parfois de l'examen scientifique.²²⁸

Differences notwithstanding, the kinship between Maeterlinck and Bernard and/or Maeterlinck and Lenormand has been highlighted by numerous critics. 'Bernard's drama', observes Frank Chandler, 'is one of nuances and intentions. In this regard it carries forward the purposes of Maeterlinck in a world more real'.²²⁹ Maeterlinck is Bernard's spiritual father according to Jacques Lanotte.²³⁰ David Whitton claims that 'Bernard's theatre is not unlike Maeterlinck's in content, consisting in the evocation of "states of soul", but in a style closer to expressionism than symbolism'.²³¹ 'Maeterlinck et Lenormand, si fraternels en leurs fins', writes Henry-Marx.²³² Paul Blanchart remarks on a direct line from Pelléas et Mélisande²³³ to La Folle du Ciel.²³⁴ Again with reference to Lenormand, Louis Cazamian states that 'over and above an appeal to unheard melodies his power lies in creating the anguished sense of

228. Le Théâtre, p. 198.

229. Frank W. Chandler, Modern Continental Playwrights (New York-London, Harper and Brothers, 1931) p. 252.

230. 'Introduction au "Théâtre de l'Inexprimé"', p. 13.

231. Stage Directors, p. 117.

232. Henry-Marx, 'La Psychanalyse et Le Mangeur de Rêves', Choses de théâtre, no. 6, mars 1922, p. 365.

233. Maurice Maeterlinck, Théâtre II (Pelléas et Mélisande - Alladine et Palomides - Intérieur - La Mort de Tintagiles) (Bruxelles, Lacomblez, 1904).

234. Le Théâtre de H.-R. Lenormand, p. 247.

tragedy that Maeterlinck before him had made his own'.²³⁵ Robert Emmet Jones maintains 'there are affinities between the works of Maeterlinck and certain plays of Lenormand, especially those set in foggy, damp climates where the characters, oppressed both outwardly and inwardly, can only suggest their emotions to each other'.²³⁶

In the four chapters she shares between Bernard and Maeterlinck May Daniels highlights the distinguishing features of the 'théâtre de l'inexprimé' of the two playwrights,²³⁷ but she does not look forward to Beckett. Katharine Worth, on the other hand, would appear to bypass Bernard altogether when she makes the Maeterlinck-Beckett connection:

'Drama of the interior', 'static drama', 'school of silence' are all phrases that were used by or about Maeterlinck in his own time and yet how modern they seem, as if they had been newly coined for the theatre of Beckett and Pinter.²³⁸

Leslie Kane, however, establishes a Maeterlinck-Bernard-Beckett chain unequivocally in The Language of Silence. She refers to the Belgian 'as a linguistically innovative precursor of both Jean-Jacques Bernard's theatre of silence and the theatre of the absurd'; she discusses silence as 'a multidimensional mode

235. A History, p. 447.

236. H.-R. Lenormand, p. 13.

237. Drama of the Unspoken, pp. 46-99 and 172-237.

238. Katharine Worth, The Irish Drama of Europe from Yeats to Beckett (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey, Humanities Press Inc., 1978) p. 72.

of expression intentionally chosen by Maeterlinck, Chekhov, Jean-Jacques Bernard, Beckett, Pinter, and Albee to convey both structure and statement'; and she isolates as follows 'the typifying elements of . . . methodology' shared by Maeterlinck, Bernard and Beckett: disjunctive speech, dialogue implicitly conveying more than it explicitly communicates, pauses, mute characters, repetition, silence as a metaphor for absence (Maeterlinck and Beckett), silence as a metaphor for isolation (Bernard and Beckett), and the silence of the playwright.²³⁹

As well as claiming that 'Acte sans paroles I²⁴⁰ stands as a monument to Beckett's preoccupation with silence, and can be described as an example of the théâtre de l'inexprimé taken to its furthest possible point', Kester Branford demonstrates how Bernard's drama of the unspoken can be placed approximately halfway between Les Aveugles²⁴¹ and En attendant Godot²⁴² which the Belgian play foreshadowed.²⁴³ Lenormand can be situated in the same position for some similar and some different but complementary reasons.

239. The Language of Silence, pp. 47, "15" (Introduction not paginated), 29-30, 84-85 and 113.

240. Samuel Beckett, Fin de partie suivi de Acte sans paroles (Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1957).

241. Maeterlinck, Théâtre I.

242. Samuel Beckett, En attendant Godot (Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1952).

243. A Study, pp. 11-71 and 193-227, especially pp. 208, 45 and 206.

Dorothy Knowles states that 'deux lignes de développement, qui semblent partir de deux aspects de l'oeuvre de M. Maeterlinck, se dessinent nettement. L'oeuvre de M. Lenormand est peut-être la meilleure expression de l'une, et M. Jean-Jacques Bernard fait chef d'école de l'autre'. Knowles then goes on to discuss Lenormand and Bernard under the sub-headings a) Le Subconscient and b) Le "Théâtre de Silence" respectively.²⁴⁴ This division is to a certain extent unnecessary, if one accepts the argument made above that the terms 'drama of the unspoken' and 'drama of the unconscious' as applied to Bernard and Lenormand inevitably overlap each other.²⁴⁵ However, other differences exist between the affinities linking Maeterlinck, Bernard and Beckett and those linking Maeterlinck, Lenormand and Beckett. Lenormand's plays do not reflect Bernard's penchant for Maeterlinck's 'tragique quotidien'²⁴⁶ or static drama, for example. 'The enforced absence from the stage of an important character' is a feature of Bernard's plays and Beckett's,²⁴⁷ but not of Lenormand's. On the other hand, the plays of Maeterlinck, Lenormand and Beckett convey a pronounced metaphysical preoccupation which is absent

244. La Réaction, pp. 492-493.

245. See pp. 43-44.

246. Maurice Maeterlinck, Le Trésor des humbles (Paris, Fasquelle-Mercure de France, 1949, First published 1896) p. 129.

247. Branford, A Study, p. 206.

from the majority of Bernard's Inter-War dramas.²⁴⁸ This Maeterlinck-Bernard/Lenormand-Beckett chain can therefore be said to be of double strength on account of the common element of 'théâtre de l'inexprimé' - particularly strong in the Bernardian half of the central link - and also on account of the common metaphysical strain - more marked in Lenormand than in Bernard.

6. The playwrights' 'cri du coeur': 'Je suis un auteur dramatique et c'est tout!'²⁴⁹

The naturalness of their dialogue, where the emphasis is on the unspoken as well as the spoken, and the accuracy of their psychological observations, where the focus is on the workings of man's unconscious as well as on those of his conscious mind, together with the specifically Lenormandian search, not so much for words, as for the Word to give meaning to all others, combine to make the theatre of Bernard and Lenormand particularly appropriate material for an investigation into the expressed and inexpressible. It must be stressed, however, that this thesis discusses what are in fact by-products of their work, by-products of the means they exploited to write good theatre.

Neither of the playwrights believed in using drama primarily as a medium for conveying principles of any

248. After the War and his Baptism a strong mystical element becomes a feature of Bernard's theatre.

249. Lenormand, 'Souvenirs sur Giraudoux, suivis de propos notés par Georges de Wissant', p. 23. Bernard shared the sentiment behind this statement.

description, a point on which Lenormand expressed himself categorically. 'On a voulu voir . . . dans mes ouvrages l'expression d'une philosophie, d'une morale, d'une métaphysique', we read in 'Mon Théâtre', 'La vérité me paraît plus simple et plus ambitieuse en même temps. Je ne suis ni un psychiatre, ni un philosophe, ni un moraliste, je ne suis qu'un homme de théâtre' (p. 234). On the other hand, if Bernard and Lenormand are dramatists worthy of detailed study, worthy of revival and worthy of a permanent place in the history of French theatre, it is precisely because their plays are layered with meaning and go to depths even the second- or third-time reader/spectator may not fathom. 'Les pièces de M. H.-R. Lenormand ressemblent à ces rivières qui ont une nappe souterraine', writes Robert de Beauplan:

En apparence, rien ne les différencie des autres: c'est pourtant dans la profondeur du sol que se cache leur cours véritable. Ainsi peut-on entendre L'Homme et ses Fantômes en prenant un agrément littéraire à cette tragi-comédie moderne. On n'en aura pas, toutefois, épuisé de la sorte la substance.²⁵⁰

The depth of Bernard's plays is pinpointed succinctly in Jean-Marie Besset's reference to Martine as 'une idylle qui n'a d'élémentaire que l'apparence',²⁵¹ and Kester Branford claims in the final sentence of his study that 'all the merits with which Bernard's theatre of the unexpressed is so economically

250. 'L'Homme et ses Fantômes', page not numbered.

251. 'National Theatre de Londres. Martine', p. 86.

packed . . . combine to give it its abiding fascination'.²⁵² Being multifaceted, the work of Bernard and Lenormand can be viewed and reviewed on different levels and from a variety of perspectives. This study focusses on only one of these, and its findings lie beneath the surface of the drama. Indeed the extent and certain details of some of them might well have surprised Bernard and Lenormand, so little did they consciously set out to make the points uncovered.

In this thesis considerable emphasis is placed on the plays themselves. Points are discussed and arguments are made with close reference to them. There are two reasons for this concentration on the texts. The first is especially pertinent to Part II. An appraisal of a cross-section of critical works devoted to, or touching on, Lenormand makes it clear that his plays per se have been relatively neglected. This is particularly unfortunate in the case of Lenormand - and Bernard - since their drama by its very nature is unusually impregnated with revealing but easily missed details, important subtleties and enriching half-tones, none of which can be fully appreciated without an in-depth analysis of the texts. As it is, the mistakes that mar the articles of newspaper and journal critics and even the major studies of specialists in Lenormand suggest that in some cases the plays were read hastily. Titles are misquoted, characters' names are misspelt and facts of varying significance are recorded inaccurately. With reference

252. A Study, p. 227.

to Les Ratés, Philip Hewitt tells us that Lui strangles Elle.²⁵³ There is no evidence in Volume I of the Théâtre complet to support this supposition, as Elle is killed between Tableaux XIII and XIV. Moreover, as the final Tableau opens we are shown Lui sitting 'un revolver à la main', and when Elle's body is uncovered we are told that 'un filet de sang coule de la poitrine' (T I, 130, 133). Helmut Hatzfeld makes several factual mistakes in the pages he devotes to Lenormand.²⁵⁴ Frank Chandler maintains that Pierre Tairraz 'breaks his vow' to Claire to stay off the Dent Rouge, but she actually releases him from it (La Dent Rouge, T III, 125) - a quite important discrepancy given the context of the play. Chandler also refers to the 'death by burning' of l'Homme's 'unwanted child'.²⁵⁵ In fact Laure burns her baby when it is almost certainly already dead. Philip Hewitt, for his part, refers to Laure's 'miscarriage' and insists that she 'does not murder her child: it is stillborn'.²⁵⁶ D.L. Orna's English translation can also be said to obscure the deliberate nature of Laure's abortion. 'C'est l'avorteuse que je haïssais' (L'Homme et ses Fantômes, T IV, 29) is translated as 'It was the woman I hated'.²⁵⁷ This

253. Thesis, p. 88.

254. Helmut Hatzfeld, Trends and Styles in Twentieth Century French Literature (Washington, The Catholic University of America Press, 1966) pp. 102-105.

255. Modern Continental Playwrights, pp. 259 and 258.

256. Thesis, pp. 133 and 306 (Note 10).

257. Three Plays by H.R. Lenormand (The Dream Doctor, Man and His Phantoms, The Coward) (Translated by D.L. Orna, London, Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1928) p. 132.

particular controversy is surprising since, in the 1925 Georges Crès and Albin Michel definitive editions of Volume IV of the Théâtre complet, the evidence is indisputable that Laure went to a backstreet abortionist and cremated 'cette chose, à moitié décapitée par les sondes' of which she was finally delivered (T IV, 28-30). Attention is drawn to these examples of errors or anomalies in order to explain the stress that is placed in this study on the primary material as published in the standard editions of Lenormand's Théâtre complet and Bernard's Théâtre.²⁵⁸

The second reason why the actual texts of the plays under investigation are highlighted as much as possible throughout this thesis is related to the first. In the case of Lenormand the aim was to offset the tendency to consider his drama very much in relation to his private life. Since the publication of his Confessions in 1949 and 1953, a number of studies devoted to Lenormand's work have either been coloured by the knowledge contained in these memoirs or deliberately oriented by the desire to make connections between Lenormand the man, and Lenormand the playwright. One obvious case in point is Henriette d'Arlin Lubart's doctoral dissertation: 'Lenormand's Drama in the Light of his Confessions'.²⁵⁹ This interest in

258. See pp. vii-viii.

259. Henriette d'Arlin Lubart, 'Lenormand's Drama in the Light of his Confessions' (doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1953. Ann Arbor, Michigan, University Microfilms, 1993).

Lenormand's life so frankly exposed in his memoirs, is wholly comprehensible, as Yves Florenne explains:

Si les Confessions ont été tout de suite mises au premier rang, c'est qu'elles témoignent, avec une sincérité, une véraçité poignantes, non seulement sur la création dramatique et sur le créateur, mais sur l'homme même. Jamais peut-être confessions ne méritèrent si loyalement leur nom. On n'y sent pas, chez celui qui se raconte et s'examine, le souci de se présenter en posture avantageuse, que ce soit d'ailleurs dans le 'mal' ou dans le 'bien'. Cet homme de théâtre est lui-même, non son personnage. Par là, il l'emporte sur Jean-Jacques et sur Gide. Plongées dans les troubles profondeurs, explorations des régions malades, brouillards, exotisme fiévreux, voyage pathétique autour du plaisir, magie des mauvais lieux et des filles - on ne peut se détacher, longtemps même après qu'on a quitté son livre, de ce 'mangeur de rêves' en quête de ses personnages.²⁶⁰

Such praise is not exaggerated. Over thirty years later Robert Emmet Jones claims:

This work is one of the major documents on life and art in the West, although most specifically in France, in the first half of the twentieth century. Lenormand's insights into himself and the world around him make him one of the important impressionistic yet analytical observers of his epoch.²⁶¹

Although the autobiographical and historical value of Les Confessions is considerable, this study endorses the move made by Philip Hewitt,²⁶² and examines Lenormand's plays as

260. Yves Florenne, 'Confessions et correspondance dramatiques', La Table Ronde, août 1953, pp. 141-142.

261. H.-R. Lenormand, p. 173.

262. Thesis, pp. 13-15.

independent creations in their own right. During the lead-up to the fiftieth anniversary of his death this would seem to be a fitting approach to a writer claiming to be 'un auteur dramatique et c'est tout',²⁶³ especially when one considers not only that the umbilical cord connecting the author to his work has been cut but also that the offspring has had time to mature - appropriate images, since, in Robert Emmet Jones' words, Lenormand 'constantly compares artistic creation to the process of conception, pregnancy, and birth'.²⁶⁴ In 'Comment j'écris une pièce' Lenormand warns against 'le vice du raisonnement qui consiste à identifier l'ouvrier avec son ouvrage':

Ce n'est pas en superposant étroitement l'un à l'autre que l'on connaîtra la vérité sur l'un ni sur l'autre, mais bien plutôt en cherchant à opposer l'un à l'autre. Car s'il y a, entre les deux, d'indiscutables affinités organiques, il y a aussi des contrastes, une disjonction profonde. L'ouvrage se dresse parfois contre l'ouvrier comme l'enfant rebelle contre son père. (p. 452)

Besides, the Inter-War drama of the unspoken and the unconscious provides ample evidence in itself that no one, Lenormand included, is fully known by anyone, not even, or perhaps least of all, himself. However Bernard and Lenormand created their plays, however much or little they put into them of themselves, however secure or insecure they felt as men or

263. See p. 69.

264. H.-R. Lenormand, p. 148.

as artists, the definitive texts are the only thing of which the reader/spectator can be wholly sure.

Bernard's work, too, can benefit from a foregrounding of his plays in an effort to correct certain misconceptions which arose, ironically, from some careless talk on the part of the dramatist himself who did not realize what a source of controversy it was to become. In Témoignages he quotes a number of statements he made in the fifth Bulletin de la Chimère, such as "Aussi le théâtre n'a pas de pire ennemi que la littérature". He goes on to concede that 'il y avait quelque imprudence à jeter à la critique de telles idées en pâture' (pp. 25 and 26). Bernard may have made such a faux pas in his unwilling capacity as a theorist,²⁶⁵ but in a number of his plays he proved to be a close to flawless practitioner and should be remembered and appreciated as such.

7. This study's approach to the expressed and the inexpressible in the playwrights' theatre

This thesis is concerned with the ways the theatre of Bernard and Lenormand illustrates the relative impotence of words as instruments of communication on the one hand as compared with their potency in other respects. It demonstrates this paradox through the analysis of various aspects of the expressed and the inexpressible in the playwrights' work between 1919 and 1945.

265. See pp. 37-38.

Both the expressed and the inexpressible are investigated, to differing degrees and at various stages, throughout this study, but their definition is clarified here with special reference to Bernard, since certain nuances of their meaning are particularly relevant to his 'théâtre de l'inexprimé'.

As was touched on above,²⁶⁶ Bernard's 'theory' did not exist until the eve of the première of Martine. In 'Réflexions sur le théâtre' Bernard recounts how in this instance the practice preceded the principles:

Gaston Baty m'avait demandé d'urgence un texte pour le programme. D'abord pris de court, je m'avisai que le personnage de Martine aimait tout au long de la pièce, sans pouvoir exprimer une seule fois ni son amour ni sa souffrance. N'était-ce pas une bonne occasion de parler de la valeur du silence au théâtre? (p. 48)

Although it is certainly true that Martine never says that she loves Julien, nor how hurt she is when she finds that this love is unrequited and impossible, nor how painful it is to come to terms with her disillusionment, no character on stage, with the exception of Alfred, nor spectator in the audience is in doubt about either her love or her suffering. This is because Martine does express them but wordlessly. May Daniels rightly maintains that in Martine, 'the beginnings of love show in little instinctive movements and hesitations; dismay at its hopelessness, agitation at the sight of her cultured rival, anguish at the torments thoughtlessly inflicted on her by the

266. See p. 37.

one she loves - all appear in attitude, gesture and expression'.²⁶⁷ The example of Martine alone is sufficient proof that, in the context of Bernard's theatre, 'l'inexprimé' means what is not expressed directly in spoken words. This point is reinforced by the dramatist's definition of 'silence':

. . . c'est tout ce que les personnages ne veulent ou ne peuvent dire, c'est toute la série des pensées ou des désirs qui échappent aux mots, qui ne peuvent s'échanger que par allusion indirecte, voire par le regard ou l'attitude, c'est toute la gamme des sentiments inexprimés, inavoués ou inconscients. Et c'est pourquoi, rejetant l'expression de théâtre du silence, j'ai toujours préféré celle de théâtre de l'inexprimé, que j'avais d'ailleurs employée dès la première fois. (Témoignages, p. 27)

This implies that 'l'inexprimé' includes whatever can be expressed to another 'par allusion indirecte, voire par le regard ou l'attitude'. To avoid such ambiguity, for the duration of this thesis 'the expressed' will be used for what is made known or shown by words, looks, actions, signs, whilst 'the inexpressible' will be kept, more simply, for what cannot be expressed in words either by anyone at all or by a particular character. 'The unspoken' will be used to refer specifically to whatever is not expressed directly in spoken words, hence the French 'théâtre de l'inexprimé' is translated as 'drama of the unspoken' rather than 'drama of the unexpressed'.

267. Drama of the Unspoken, p. 184.

To prove that the skilful actor's feelings are expressed across the footlights, even when there is no text or rather when the text is unwritten or written between the lines and therefore unspoken, one would only have to compare a normal performance of Martine with one where a 'figurante', trained in the required moves but ignorant of the heroine's personality and feelings, was asked to stand in for the lead in the scenes where she had no lines. One would quickly realize how much is expressed in good drama as in life through a character's presence, by his simply being. This apparently magical feature of the theatre experience can be explained in part by the fact that in normal circumstances significant feelings tend to be expressed in some physical way however slight. It may be a greater or lesser rigidity of the torso, a twitch of the finger, a marginally increased pace of breathing, a sigh. To the argument that consideration of such fine tuning of non-verbal and paralinguistic communication signals is exaggerated, and particularly in the theatre as opposed to the cinema, one only has to refer to the reviews and to certain written comments of the authors themselves praising the actors who created or later interpreted their most important protagonists. On the interpretations of Martine by Marguerite Jamois and Madeleine Renaud respectively, Bernard writes:

A la Chimère comme à la Comédie, c'était Martine avec sa voix et son visage, le visage plus éloquent que la voix, et le regard plus éloquent que le visage, et parfois les mains plus éloquentes encore...

Dans la scène où Martine muette regarde de loin les fiancés et n'arrive pas à partir,²⁶⁸ les yeux de Marguerite prenaient une intensité inexprimable... Dans la même scène, un simple mouvement des doigts de Madeleine au bout du bras immobile était d'un effet déchirant. (Mon Ami le Théâtre, pp. 183-184)

In the first volume of his Confessions, Lenormand has the following to say of Firmin Gémier's performance at the end of Le Simoun (T II, 164-165):

Après avoir tourné, de sa démarche saccadée, coupée d'arrêts spasmodiques, autour de sa fille morte, il apparaissait entre les rideaux jaunes qui se refermaient derrière lui. Cet éclair de demi-folie qui luisait dans ses yeux, ce corps peureusement replié, encore contracté sous les coups du destin, ces respirations traduisant l'affreux soulagement de la forme humaine enfin délivrée de son obsession, et cette détente animale, sous l'ultime rayon des projecteurs, le théâtre ne m'a rien transmis de plus poignant ni de plus sûr dans l'intuition de la grandeur tragique. (p. 169)

With the twofold proviso that very high standards of acting²⁶⁹ are upheld in a theatre of the appropriate size and design,²⁷⁰

268. See pp. 131-132.

269. Along Stanislavskian lines as opposed to the stylized ones of Artaud, Brecht, Grotowski or Meyerhold.

270. The importance of the choice of theatre is highlighted by the history of L'Invitation au Voyage, which was created at the Odéon but then moved to be set off to better advantage at the Studio des Champs-Élysées. 'On conçoit', writes René Bruyez, 'que le vaste Odéon et, aussi, le public qui y fréquente aient été peu favorables à cette pièce dont les fines et pénétrantes qualités demandaient à s'épanouir dans la discrétion d'une atmosphère déterminée'. 'L'Invitation au Voyage', Le Théâtre et Comœdia Illustré, nouvelle série no. 32, 15 avril 1924, page not numbered.

one can argue that in the French 'théâtre de l'inexprimé' between 1919 and 1945 little that is pertinent is totally unexpressed, as opposed to unspoken or inexpressible.

With regard to the expressed as investigated in this thesis, the focus of attention lies in two particular areas: firstly, an assessment of the efficiency/inefficiency of the spoken versus the unspoken expressed; secondly, an evaluation of the relative ineffectiveness of the spoken expressed as a conveyor of meanings, compared with its effectiveness as a medium of psychological influence. Consideration of the inexpressible further complicates the investigation into the unspoken expressed by pinpointing the distinction between what interlocutors choose not to speak and what they cannot express verbally because words prove inadequate in an earthly or metaphysical capacity. This complex approach to the expressed and the inexpressible in the theatre of Bernard and Lenormand emerged from the attempt to study these facets of the dramatists' use of language, in as structured and systematic a way as possible. This attempt was made to begin with firstly in the belief that the rich seams of linguistic, psychological and metaphysical complexity in the theatre of Bernard and Lenormand had not been fully scrutinized by critics hitherto, and secondly in the hope that such a comprehensive and detailed exploration would yield a new key to a full understanding and appreciation of the playwrights. This key has proved to be the paradox which the investigation has isolated, namely that the dramas of Bernard and Lenormand testify not only to the

relative impotence of words as tools of communication but also to their power as vehicles of influence. Apart from the intrinsically interesting nature of the evidence highlighting it, this central paradox has repercussions on the historical perspective from which Bernard and Lenormand have tended to be viewed in the past.

Although the linguistic, psychological and metaphysical findings of this thesis will confirm the viability of a literary Maeterlinck-Bernard/Lenormand-Beckett chain as far as the unspoken and inexpressible are concerned,²⁷¹ they will also show that, through their demonstration of the evocative, provocative and psychologically catalytic power of words, Bernard and Lenormand can be said to share a bond with other nineteenth- and twentieth-century dramatists who similarly reflect the paradox that the impotence of words as instruments of communication does nothing to offset their potency in other respects. A case will consequently be made for establishing additional links between Villiers de l'Isle-Adam and Bernard/Lenormand, and between Bernard/Lenormand and Sartre/Ionesco, and for considering Bernard and Lenormand as precursors, not of one, but of the two major categories of mid-century French dramatists defined by Edith Melcher as 'those who believe in the power and importance of words, and those who do not'.²⁷²

271. See pp. 63-69.

272. Edith Melcher, 'The Use of Words in Contemporary French Theater', Modern Language Notes, vol. 77, 1962, p. 470.

It should be noted that the depth in which this paradox of the impotence/potency of words is explored in the theatre of Bernard and Lenormand and the detail in which it is analysed are unique to this thesis. With regard to the first half of the paradox concerning the ineffectiveness of words, Lenormand's work has not been examined from this perspective as systematically as Bernard's has, and, whilst the distinct role Lenormand attributes to the unconscious mind has been highlighted, relatively little has been written specifically about the way in which the unconscious is shown to sabotage the communication process independently of the interlocutors' conscious will. Similarly, the frustrated search for the meaning of life conducted by Lenormand's anguished protagonists has not yet been considered in depth as a linguistic impasse.

There has been a different kind of imbalance in the usual approach to Bernard. Critics have certainly drawn attention to Bernard's exploitation of the inadequacy of language in the communication process, but they have tended to stress what his plays tell us about the challenges with which the mastery of lifelike dialogue presents the dramatist and the latter's progress in overcoming these difficulties during the first half of the twentieth century. The focus has been on the implications Bernard's work has for the stage, it has not been on the reverse process, on what Bernard's stage plays implicitly highlight about communication difficulties in everyday life. However, as Una Ellis-Fermor maintains, both Bernard and Pirandello attacked the problem 'of the intractable

matter that will not be spoken and yet must be conveyed . . . regarding it as one of human conduct as much as of dramatic technique'.²⁷³ Bernard certainly used his knowledge of human conduct to develop his dramatic technique. John Palmer explains the task he set himself: 'to convey to us by means of action and dialogue, . . . his only instruments, ideas and emotions which do not in life come to the point of action or get themselves explicitly declared'.²⁷⁴ In rising to the challenge, Bernard exploited to the maximum the ways in which such ideas and emotions in life do come to the brink of action or get themselves implicitly declared. Because its author was such an accurate observer of human nature as well as a skilled dramatic craftsman,²⁷⁵ the theatre thus created 'underscored certain basic truths about man and his linguistic behaviour that had been unduly neglected by playwrights'.²⁷⁶ Critics in their turn have tended to take the extent and subtlety of these for granted, so fascinated have they been by Bernard's technical innovations.

It is above all the second half of the paradox of the impotence versus the potency of words which has been overlooked by critics of Bernard - and, though to a lesser degree, Lenormand. Bernard's demonstration of how powerful words are in

273. Frontiers of Drama, p. 117.

274. Studies, p. 100.

275. See pp. 16-17.

276. Branford, A Study, p. 227.

spite of their inefficiency as tools of communication has been neglected. It is hoped, therefore, that the particular approach taken in this study will raise further doubt about the wisdom of attaching too much importance to such labels as 'dramatist of the unspoken' in connection with either Bernard or Lenormand.²⁷⁷ Indeed, it is one of the purposes of this thesis to show that they are both very much playwrights 'of the spoken' and not merely insofar as all dramatic art outside of mime and ballet has to be drama of the spoken, nor in the sense that all 'théâtre de l'inexprimé' is drama of the spoken since silence 'est un moment du langage; se taire ce n'est pas être muet, c'est refuser de parler, donc parler encore'.²⁷⁸ This study aims to demonstrate that Bernard and Lenormand are notable dramatists 'de l'exprimé' because they highlight the varied, sometimes mysterious possibilities of spoken words, possibilities which far exceed the intrigues they are expected to engender.

The thesis is divided into two main parts. The first is split into Chapters 1-3 which are devoted to aspects of the expressed and the inexpressible in Bernard's theatre between 1919 and 1945, Part II comprises Chapters 4-6 which treat of the same theme in Lenormand's Inter-War plays. The basic structure of Parts I and II is the same: the first two chapters show how the relative inefficiency of words as instruments of

277. See pp. 3 and 40-46 for other reservations in this respect.

278. Sartre, Situations II, p. 75.

communication is reflected in the plays of the dramatist in question; in the third chapter of each Part, that is, in Chapters 3 and 6, the focus shifts to the dramatist's exploitation of the effectiveness of spoken words. Each chapter contains an introduction analysing the points covered and a conclusion summarizing them. All the chapters are further subdivided into sections.

Following the Conclusion, a detailed account of the crucial misunderstanding between Maurice Gardier and Clarisse Brieuves in Act I of Le Printemps des Autres is given in Appendix A to exemplify Bernard's special skill and thoroughness in exposing the unreliability of the oral communication process in everyday situations. In Appendix B the conversation between Robert and Francine in Act III of Nationale 6 and the girl's account of it to her father are analysed in similar depth to demonstrate Bernard's competence and meticulousness in illustrating the power of the unconscious mind to manoeuvre and/or distort a dialogue at will. An exchange of correspondence between Bernard and Lenormand constitutes the subject matter of Appendix C, where an exceptional reference is made to the personal lives of the two dramatists at the end of the Second World War.

PART I

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JEAN-JACQUES BERNARD

(1888-1972)

Tel un magicien qui opérerait ses transmutations sur les sentiments, Jean-Jacques Bernard, maniant des pensées quotidiennes, remuant nonchalamment la masse des souvenirs, des associations, des penchants secrets dont les âmes ordinaires sont pétries, en extrait soudain une gemme spirituelle dont l'éclat nous éblouit . . . Nous la regardons briller un moment. L'émotion qui a dû s'emparer de lui, quand il amenait à la lumière ce joyau des profondeurs, nous envahit. Le spectacle est terminé; le magicien disparaît; mais un ébranlement se propage en nous, jusqu'aux régions obscures de l'être . . .

(Henry-René Lenormand, 'Chronique dramatique',
Chantecler, 12 juin 1926, p. 1.)

CHAPTER 1

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THE PARALINGUISTIC AND NON-VERBAL PACKAGING
OF TWO-TIER DIALOGUE

The first three sections of this chapter are devoted to an exploration of the way Bernard illustrates not only the total failure of words in certain instances but also the relative importance of paralinguistic and non-verbal signals and the interdependence of all the instruments of communication. In the fourth section two important types of silence and their significance are discussed. In the second half of the chapter attention is focussed on the way Bernard highlights the implications of the simultaneity of a spoken dialogue and an unspoken communing with self. First a comparison is made between contrived social masks and more automatically erected façades of speech as illustrated in Bernard's theatre. The repercussions on the communication process of the convention of small-talk and the cathartic role of talking are then investigated. Other ways in which spoken and unspoken words are shown to interfere with one another are highlighted in the final section of the chapter.

. . .

1. The enforced silence

Bernard sprinkles his work with examples of people being forced to express their strongest feelings silently because words fail them. At the end of L'Invitation au Voyage, for example, the two principal protagonists are reduced to silence. Through Marie-Louise, Bernard suggests how inadequate words are when it comes to explaining the minutiae of complicated

psychological reactions. As for Olivier, his ignorance of what has or has not been happening means that for approximately two years doubts and concern have been building up in him, not to mention the concentrated, acute suspense just experienced while waiting for Marie-Louise's return from Epinal. When he learns that she is not going to see Philippe again, joy and relief surge up in him with such intensity that his heart is literally affected. Here one is reminded of Martine who, when overwhelmed by her feelings, can neither speak nor move,²⁷⁹ or of Louise de la Vallière who, when specially chosen by the King in preference to the two other maids of honour, apparently for a role in a 'divertissement', faints, incapable of replying to his simple 'Comment vous appelez-vous?' (Louise de la Vallière, T VI, 50). Olivier is another Bernardian character who illustrates how the very intensity of a person's emotions can not only strike him dumb but debilitate him physically in other ways at the same time. He takes pains to remain articulate long enough to reassure Marie-Louise that he is not rejoicing in her sadness, but eventually breaks down and can say no more. Marie-Louise has too much to say in a quantitative sense - too many details which she would have to track down mentally herself before being able to express them verbally; Olivier has

279. See pp. 131-132.

too much to say in a more qualitative sense. For Marie-Louise words are too big, slow and laborious; for Olivier they are simply too small. Applicable to both cases, however, is a statement of Maeterlinck which Bernard quotes in 'Le silence au Théâtre' (p. 67): 'Dès que nous avons vraiment quelque chose à nous dire, nous sommes obligés de nous taire'.²⁸⁰ At the end of L'Invitation au Voyage it is not just a question of least said soonest mended, Marie-Louise and Olivier have no choice but to use alternative means of communication:

(Olivier se contient. Son regard va se fixer sur la petite table. Le regard de Marie-Louise a suivi le sien et s'accroche au même point... Et, soudain, elle saisit le Baudelaire et le porte à la bibliothèque. Puis, ayant pris l'éventail sur le piano, elle va le mettre dans le tiroir de la table. Enfin elle va au petit fauteuil et le tire loin du poêle... En reculant, elle arrive à la hauteur d'Olivier qui n'a cessé de la suivre des yeux avec une émotion contenue... Longue étreinte... C'est Marie-Louise qui se dégage la première. D'un pas léger, elle va au piano et commence le morceau qu'elle jouait au début de la pièce.) (T I, 351)

At this point Olivier does speak, 'd'une voix étranglée', to show his appreciation of the Chopin Marie-Louise has started to play, but then all he can manage is a simple 'Merci...' (T I, 351), and it is appropriate that this particular piece of music should take over where words fail.

280. Le Trésor des humbles, p. 10.

The dénouement of Le Printemps des Autres also illustrates the incompetence of words as tools for communicating strong emotions or the intricacies of certain mental processes. When Maurice arrives on the scene, Gilberte's feelings are so powerful that they render her inarticulate. Her pleasure and relief are enormous, not only because it becomes clear within a few seconds that he has an explanation and wants a reconciliation, but also because she desperately needs an emotional refuge from the bewilderment and repugnance which have inevitably accompanied her discovery of her mother's real motivations. At the very end Clarisse and Gilberte resemble Marie-Louise and Olivier in the closing scene of L'Invitation au Voyage. The great complexity of what is on their minds obliges them to say nothing.

Related to this general issue is the idea that the purer and truer the emotion in question, the harder it is to express verbally, an adage which implies that depth and sincerity of feeling can be judged on how volubly it is, or rather is not, expressed. Thus, the loquacious Fontaney tells Arvers, 'Oui, oui, vous vous dites: "Il n'est pas aussi amoureux qu'il le croit. Il en parle trop"' (Le Secret d'Arvers, T II, 15). More often than not, however, it is less the silence per se which is communicative than how the person looks - his posture, gait, appearance and countenance - and what he does - his gestures and mannerisms - during it.

2. The limitations and advantages of non-verbal and paralinguistic expression

A study of Bernard's drama reveals how paralinguistic and non-verbal tools of communication can be much more effective than they are often given credit for. That they obviously have their limitations, because of which words are generally considered to be very much more informative, is of course a truism beyond dispute, but it is the degree of the effectiveness of verbal instruments of communication as opposed to the relative ineffectiveness of paralinguistic and non-verbal ones which Bernard's theatre would have us question.

One problem with paralinguistic and non-verbal communication signals is the fact that they are normally given less consciously than words are uttered, with the result that they are correspondingly less specific and potentially more ambiguous, so that the Queen in Marie Stuart, Reine d'Ecosse, for example, can mistake Bothwell's symptoms of scarcely contained sexual passion and ambitiousness for fear (T VII, 65-67).

Another limitation of paralinguistic and non-verbal communication signals is the fact that they are usually less directed than words, and are rarely aimed at an interlocutor in a precise way - they may even be hidden from him on purpose. Even when deliberate concealment is not a factor, whilst an objective observer on the lookout for such signals may notice them consistently, the active participants in a dialogue may be too involved or not motivated enough to perceive them, or they may perceive them but disregard or misinterpret them.

The actress in Les Conseils d'Agathe notes the non-verbal signals of her 'interlocutor' with some precision and even tells her at one point 'Votre oeil gauche a vibré. C'est heureux. Il faudra garder ça...' (T V, 161). Agathe is a comic and exaggerated example of someone who actually registers non-verbal communication signals but fails to interpret them appropriately. Certainly, if they are to be interpreted correctly, non-verbal instruments of communication call for genuine receptivity on the part of the interlocutor, and this is often lacking or insufficient. However, if one looks no further than the satire Le Roy de Malousie, it would seem that the same can be said when the exchange of words is at issue. As the baby's 'avocate' tries in vain to tell the gentlemen of the court, the Malousiens' very loquaciousness and pedantry have made them lose their sensitivity to the meaning of the all-important words about which they talk endlessly but pointlessly (T IV, 227-228).

One risk which silence does not run is that of drowning a vital point in the same way a glut of words is shown to do in Le Roy de Malousie. On the contrary, Bernard's theatre suggests that it is more likely to elucidate than confound and that a silent listener can be more actively expressive than a relatively passive speaker. In the third Tableau of Martine, after Alfred has left the two women together, Jeanne talks about Julien's return from Germany, the wedding, where they are going to live and so forth (T I, 143-145). She becomes so caught up in these things as she mentions them that, although

she needs and wants Martine's listening ear, she might as well be soliloquizing. In the words of Kester Branford 'the effect is one of monologue in dialogue'.²⁸¹ Throughout Jeanne's 'monologue' Martine says hardly anything whilst absorbing everything as if her life depended on it. Her involvement is total. When Jeanne touches on the prospect of an eventual move to Paris, Martine is upset because this means that one day Julien will go out of her life altogether. When Jeanne envisages out loud the essential ingredients of the conjugal bliss to which she is looking forward, Martine is again distressed because these are all the things she will never enjoy, as she will never have them with the man she loves. As Martine's deep sadness is a more intense emotion than Jeanne's joyful expectancy, the monologue in dialogue effect of this scene is given an added twist: the person delivering the monologue comes over as less expressive than the silent listener because the latter's mental and emotional investment in the words spoken is higher than the speaker's. Something very similar happens at the end of Le Feu qui reprend mal, when Monsieur Mérin senior more or less soliloquizes in the company of his son and daughter-in-law in the wake of their climactic quarrel of which he himself knows nothing. As he voices his rather sombre thoughts about loneliness and the tenuousness of conjugal happiness since 'l'un est condamné à mourir trop tôt et l'autre à vieillir seul' (T I, 89), André says very little

281. A Study, p. 129.

and Blanche says nothing, but, quiet and motionless though they are, they can be considered the two most active participants in the scene.²⁸²

Ironically, silence is sometimes shown to be an effective instrument of communication because it is not explicit. Paradoxical though it may seem, the doubts and questions which it raises and nurtures and which words could remove, are precisely the element which gives silence special communicative impact. In Le Roy de Malousie the King says of his ministers, 'Ils adorent des mots, et cela les dispense / De réfléchir' (T IV, 184). Madeleine's taciturnity in Act III of Le Jardinier d'Ispahan has the opposite effect, provoking thoughts in an infuriated Daniel who complains to his sister:

Comprends, Marie, c'est cette femme... Sa façon de me parler sans rien dire, de me regarder...

. . . .

Tout le temps, et surtout quand elle se tait. C'est effrayant. En auto, je sens ses yeux fixés sur ma nuque. Ce n'est plus possible.

. . . .

. . . Est-ce que c'est sérieux ou est-ce qu'elle se moque de moi?... . . .

(T VI, 335-336)

Since he is the family's employed chauffeur at the time, Daniel has no choice but to put up with Madeleine's tantalizing presence, but where there is greater freedom, if one of the

282. See pp. 221-222, 225-227 and 242-243.

speakers in a duologue restricts what he says to the strictest minimum of 'politenesses', the conversation may simply become so unsustainable that it is terminated and further meetings are avoided. This does not apply where there are more than two interlocutors and in a number of Bernard's scenes the silence of a third person is shown to be potentially very effective as an instrument of communication. Thus, at different stages in the play, Martine's refusal to air her feelings intrigues not only Julien but also Jeanne and Madame Mervan and inevitably increases their sensitivity to her paralinguistic and non-verbal signals. The result is that, although her lips are firmly sealed on her plight, her very silence draws attention to the feelings she cannot or does not want to voice.

Words may be more precise, but in being so they lose a quality that silence retains. In the terms of one of Bernard's key postulates, of which he believed Shakespeare to be the origin, 'To name is to destroy / To suggest is to create' ('Réflexions sur le théâtre', p. 47). Spoken words can name and therefore be destructive, silence can suggest and therefore be creative. There are numerous examples in Bernard's theatre of this phenomenon at work in the communication process.

Bothwell does not voice his jealousy and annoyance in the opening scene of Marie Stuart, Reine d'Ecosse, although they are nevertheless well expressed non-verbally (T VII, 22-23). When Darnley enters, he naturally sees what the Count sees and his feelings are comparable, but he voices them (T VII, 23-24).

In doing so he is actually less expressive than Bothwell. This is because in the Count's case the reader/spectator is allowed to imagine the intensity of his feelings, whereas Darnley's words leave us nothing further to imagine. Thus, when they remove doubts, words not only reduce a listener's attentiveness to the paralinguistic and non-verbal signals of his interlocutor, they also dull his sensitivity by making his imagination redundant. The imagination of the audience is anything but blunted in Martine. Driven by a mixture of timidity, feminine intuition, common sense, self-respect and stubbornness, Martine never voices her feelings. Consequently we have only our eyes and imagination to help us empathize with her. Assuming that the reader/spectator agrees to play his part, making as full a use as possible of both faculties, by the end of the play he is maximally sensitized, and the final scenes prove so emotionally gruelling that they can even leave him with a sense of physical discomfort. It is at times like these that Bernard goes a long way to making the expressiveness of silence tangible.

Obviously, one has to be careful not to exaggerate the general effectiveness of silence. Sometimes it can be extremely non-communicative and/or a cause of major misunderstandings. With regard to the communicative value of a third person's silence, it depends heavily on the context, since its significance can be submerged by the talk of the other interlocutors. Kester Branford points out that this is precisely what happens in the opening scene of L'Invitation

au Voyage, which Bernard actually cut on revising the play.²⁸³ As Landreau presents his property and nail-making business to Galais and the latter makes polite comments in response, the two men and the reader/spectator can easily fail to register or interpret the latently meaningful silence of Marie-Louise and the signs she emits of irritation, restlessness and boredom.

As far as non-verbal instruments of communication are concerned, one of their greatest assets is the way they can convey information more succinctly than words. In Act III of Nationale 6 twelve pages of dialogue between Robert and Francine are subsequently reported by the latter to her father in another six pages of dialogue, whereupon Michel draws the conclusion that Robert has made his daughter a 'déclaration déguisée' (T V 87).²⁸⁴ In the following Act the facial expressions, dejected air and silence of Robert and Antoine are sufficient to tell Michel within a minute that Robert has not made his daughter such a declaration and that a bottle of champagne is consequently not called for (T V, 117).

Bernard's theatre highlights not only the speed and subtlety of non-verbal instruments of communication but also their great diversity and the wide range of emotions they can convey. Mention has already been made of the way the spectator sees Martine's incipient love and her subsequent dismay, agitation and anguish in her attitudes, gestures and

283. A Study, p. 122.

284. See pp. 147-149, 162-166 and 455-457.

expressions.²⁸⁵ In the fifth Tableau Martine expresses her joylessness and her resignation very clearly through her hairstyle (Martine, T I, 173).

The communicative quality that small actions can have is illustrated in a number of plays. Their potential symbolic value is highlighted particularly well in L'Invitation au Voyage where Marie-Louise expresses herself through her varying attitudes and behavioural reactions to a series of objects including a photograph, a fan, a book and a chair. In Act II of Le Printemps des Autres Clarisse's decision not to put any lipstick on just before her talk with Maurice tells us that in the discussion which follows she intends, consciously at least, to speak to him on behalf of Gilberte and not as her rival (T I, 230-231). In Les Soeurs Guédonec it is an action temporarily overlooked that actually does the talking. Not a word is said by either sister regarding the pleasure the children's presence gives them, nor does either of them say how much they miss the boys when they leave. In fact they claim the opposite on both counts. Nevertheless, they do express their true feelings indirectly, as Robert de Beauplan's succinct summary of the play makes clear:

Deux vieilles filles, cupides et grincheuses, acceptent d'héberger trois gamins de Paris, pupilles d'une oeuvre de vacances scolaires, car on leur offre 5 francs par jour et par enfant. Le mois s'écoule. Les deux paysannes gémissent sur la dépense excessive, sur les espiègleries des garnements. Mais quand on vient reprendre les enfants, leurs yeux,

285. See pp. 77-78.



tout à coup, s'embuent de larmes et elles oublient de compter leur argent: le sentiment de la maternité s'est insinué sournoisement dans leur cœur flétri.²⁸⁶

When the sisters get back to counting their money, they do so 'fiévreusement' (T III, 201) clearly in an effort to distract their thoughts from the boys and from the sharpened sense of loneliness with which their departure has left them. When du Groc comes to the point of his visit in the first half of Tableau VIII of Marie Stuart, Reine d'Ecosse, he speaks for three pages of script during which the Queen, who says nothing verbally, expresses her general attitude largely through her handling of a bunch of violets. When, for example, the Ambassador broaches the widely felt concern regarding her planned marriage to Bothwell, 'Marie, entre deux doigts, sort une violette du bouquet et l'envoie devant elle et dans ce simple geste, infiniment méticuleux et calculé, on sent tout ce qu'elle contient...' (T VII, 117).

That posture can be expressive is also illustrated in this same Tableau. Throughout du Groc's visit, Marie keeps the position she is in when he is announced, that is 'étendue à plat ventre en travers du lit, le visage tourné vers le public' (T VII, 113). Notwithstanding her hollow apologies, her physical attitude alone tells its own story. Similarly, her change of position and the manner in which she makes it have a

286. Robert de Beauplan, 'Les Soeurs Guédonec au Studio des Champs-Elysées', La Petite Illustration, Théâtre no. 287, 26 décembre 1931, page not numbered.

significance for the audience once the Ambassador has left and she hears Bothwell's voice behind her. In a flash we see her '**se retournant d'un bond et s'asseyant, farouche**' (T VII, 122).

Although he may not explore the subtleties of intonation as Nathalie Sarraute does, for example, in Pour un oui ou pour un non,²⁸⁷ Bernard nevertheless highlights the important role that paralinguistic signals generally play in the communication process. At the climax of Act III of Le Printemps des Autres the 'Oh! oh!...' Gilberte utters before she manages to stammer out her 'maman...' (T I, 259) should express a whole range of emotions if it is properly delivered by the actress: the heady sensation experienced when scales have just been removed from the eyes; confusion - "How did this happen?"; wonder - "Why didn't I see this as it was happening?"; horror at the realization of what her mother has been skirting, plus frustration and fear. It is the fierceness of Maryvonne's response in the following exchange from Les Soeurs Guédonec which tells the reader/spectator and Madame Le Cahu, if she is attentive enough to notice it, that the sisters are in fact anything but glad to be rid of the boys:

MADAME LE CAHU, **regardant autour d'elle**

Ça va vous faire un vide ici.

287. Nathalie Sarraute, Théâtre (Pour un oui ou pour un non - Elle est là - C'est beau - Isma - Le Mensonge - Le Silence) (Paris, Gallimard, 1993).

MARYVONNE, avec trop de violence

Pouvez dire que ça nous fait surtout un bon débarras.

(T III, 195-196)

Through a hesitation and a hiatus in the pronunciation of a word of one syllable Francine of Nationale 6 tells her father that her dreams extend beyond the house at which his own have terminated:

MICHEL

Petit fonctionnaire en retraite, peuh! je ne méritais pas mieux. D'ailleurs, j'ai longtemps rêvé d'avoir cette maison. Je l'ai. Nous l'avons. Tu t'en plains, toi?...

FRANCINE

...N...on...

MICHEL

C'est vrai, toi, tu n'as pas vingt ans, ce n'est pas pareil.

(T V, 9-10)

It was no doubt Bernard's realization of the crucial role played in the communication process by pauses and their timing which contributed to his being unjustly accused of writing plays with silences. 'N'ai-je pas lu quelquefois que je voulais écrire des pièces avec des silences!... Confusion entre les silences et le silence', writes Bernard in 'Réflexions sur le théâtre' (p. 48). In fact only in the exceptional Les Conseils

d'Agathe, where one of the interlocutors is physiologically mute, does Bernard put a combination of suspension, exclamation or question marks on their own in lieu of a 'réplique', although this device is used in normal dialogue in full-length plays by dramatists as divergent as Sacha Guitry and Jean Sarment. In the rest of his drama Bernard simply respects his basic precept of making his stage characters speak - or not speak - in a manner natural to them, within of course the limitations imposed on this aim by certain inviolable theatrical principles.²⁸⁸ As Kester Branford points out:

Bernard's abundant pause-dots (and other rest-indications) are of course conditioned by an anxious desire to transpose to the drama the speech patterns of life, and reveal the author's profound concern with the whole rhythmic design of the verbal score; moreover, such indications evidently multiply in importance in plays where words are employed with such tight economy, and where there is a perpetual cross-illumination²⁸⁹ between brief utterance and pregnant silence.

Whilst it would be as wrong to make light of these suspension points as it would be to disregard the other punctuation marks in the plays, the actual length of the pauses and silences in performance, like all the fine tuning of both paralinguistic and non-verbal communication signals, is inevitably determined

288. See pp. 6-9.

289. A Study, p. 24.

by the actors and director - although one can imagine Bernard wanting to make suggestions at rehearsals along the lines of one of the acting notes given by Samuel Beckett to Billie Whitelaw asking her to 'make those three dots two dots'.²⁹⁰

3. Paralinguistic and non-verbal signals as potential lie detectors and the interdependence of the various instruments of communication

It is rare for the various types of paralinguistic and non-verbal communication instruments to be found working in isolation. They are mutually complementary and none stands out as significantly more efficient than any other, with the possible exception of the eyes. When a sobbing Denise Murette tells Gérard that she was not born for love, he replies 'Je ne crois pas ce que vous dites. Je ne crois que vos larmes!' (Denise Murette, T II, 159). Tear-free eyes are also shown to be highly expressive and in many cases emotionally translucent. Louise de la Vallière's eyes tell the world how much she is in love with the King even before he courts her (Louise de la Vallière, T VI, 18). In Act IV of Nationale 6 it is the look in Michel's eyes which tells Elisa that a dreadful mistake has been made:

290. James Knowlson, 'Practical aspects of theatre, radio and television. Extracts from an unscripted interview with Billie Whitelaw. A television recording made on 1 February 1977 for the University of London Audio-Visual Centre', Journal of Beckett Studies, no. 3, Summer 1978, p. 86.

MICHEL

Elisa...

ELISA

Quoi?... (Elle le regarde et paraît tout à fait effrayée de son expression. Elle plonge machinalement la louche dans la soupière et, d'une voix changée:)
Je vous sers, monsieur Vanier?

(T V, 121-122)

Sometimes an unreciprocated glance or stare can convey information. During part of the conversation when Maurice, Gilberte and Clarisse are finishing tea at the beginning of Act II of Le Printemps des Autres we are told that Clarisse 'demeure silencieuse, les regardant' (T I, 216). Not only does Clarisse's taciturnity attract attention here because hitherto she has been actively participating in the conversation, but her fixed gaze informs the reader/spectator that she is subject to some significant emotion as the couple converse.

Eye contact has the advantage of being so immediate and localized that not only can two people rapidly exchange information using this method, but they can do so without a third party being made aware of the intensity or significance of what is 'said'. Although she is in the room with them at the time, one can argue that Claire is only superficially present at the first post-War meeting between Durban and Dariel in A la Recherche des Coeurs:

(. . . Dariel entre. Les deux hommes se regardent et c'est un regard profond qui va loin dans le passé, mais dont rien, ni dans les gestes, ni dans la voix, ne saurait trahir l'émotion. Figés dans une immobilité glacée, les deux hommes sont l'un devant l'autre, comme des adversaires. Enfin, Dariel parle, mais ce sont des paroles banales, dites sur un ton indifférent.) (T III, 68-69)

Similarly, Maurice would automatically be excluded from the ocular dialogue between Clarisse and Gilberte at the end of Le Printemps des Autres, even if he were aware of the psychological discovery made by the two women only a few minutes previously (T I, 262).²⁹¹

In other wordless exchanges where eye contact plays a role the communication may be more one-sided but none the less crucial. At one point in Marie Stuart, Reine d'Ecosse Darnley wordlessly and unwittingly 'tells' the Queen how she can set about revenging Riccio's murder. On seeing her husband for the first time after the assassination, Marie orders him twice in furious anger to go away. When he refuses:

(Ils restent face à face. Dans les yeux de Marie il y a de l'horreur et du mépris. Dans les yeux de Darnley il y a de la terreur et du désir: visiblement cette femme furieuse et légèrement vêtue l'épouvante et l'attire en même temps.

Marie Stuart semble saisir ce sentiment complexe. Quelque chose en elle paraît se transformer. Un étrange regard passe dans ses yeux. Une résolution farouche semble naître chez cette femme, il y a un instant accablée... . . .)

(T VII, 41)

291. See p. 117.

The fact that Marie-Louise can only bear the intensity of Olivier's gaze for so long in the following silent 'dialogue' from L'Invitation au Voyage is meaningful in itself:

GERARD

On a appris ma géographie, papa. L'Amérique du Sud.

(Long regard entre Olivier et Marie-Louise.)

OLIVIER, d'une voix blanche

Laisse-nous, mon petit... (Gérard sort. Silence. Ils sont l'un en face de l'autre. Il la regarde fixement. Elle soutient son regard. Visiblement, il attend une parole, mais elle ne dit rien. Elle hésite, sa poitrine se gonfle, puis, soudain, elle baisse la tête, traverse la scène et sort sans un mot . . .)

(T I, 314-315)

There are hints in Bernard's theatre that the eyes even have the potential to expose lies. However, any complacency regarding their reliability in this respect is shaken by the fact that it is Jeanne Liron of all people who, 'pesant ses mots', expresses the theory in Le Feu qui reprend mal:

Non, non! Croyez-vous que l'on puisse éternellement mentir quand on vit côte à côte? Le secret que la bouche retient passe par les yeux. Je n'ai pas pu. Qui pourrait? (T I, 56)

On learning later that Jeanne herself could and has done, and that she is actually lying to him as she says these words, André will not be reassured of his own wife's innocence by anything she says to him either with her lips or her eyes.²⁹²

In spite of the fact that even the essential honesty of the eyes can be challenged, non-verbal and paralinguistic communication signals generally are shown to have a certain, albeit limited, value of their own in dialogues where an interlocutor is deliberately telling someone an untruth as opposed to unconsciously misleading him. Whilst the deceit of the speaker's words may be undetectable, the way he says them and the accompanying non-verbal language are likely to sound and appear false or suspiciously strange. This is because the conscious selection of the word content of a convincing lie requires only extra preparatory thought, whilst the successful telling of it calls for acting talent. There are very few calculating liars in Bernard's theatre, but an excellent illustration of the point at issue is to be found in Marie Stuart, Reine d'Ecosse. When the Queen tricks Darnley into betraying his fellow-conspirators in the Riccio assassination, she controls her voice and her movements with great skill. At one point Darnley says to her 'Mais vous êtes une grande comédienne, Marie...' (T VII, 43). This statement is

292. See pp. 169-170.

ringing with dramatic irony, since it is made by Darnley with reference to the Queen's behaviour in Marie Seton's presence, whereas it is actually applicable to her behaviour in his presence. Be that as it may, the reader/spectator quickly starts to appreciate that the compliment is well deserved. Having decided on the course she is going to take, Marie has to wheedle the facts out of Darnley using all her seductive charms. Saying the appropriate things is less problematic than hiding her real feelings. Just after Marie Seton's exit we are told:

(. . . Ils restent un moment silencieux... Marie semble scruter l'âme de ce misérable jeune homme... Lui, sous ce regard accablant, chancelle... Brusquement Marie lui tend la main.) (T VII, 42)

A few moments later Darnley 'brusquement transporté . . . l'étreint. Elle se laisse faire, puis se dégage' (T VII, 43).

This oscillation between give and take continues throughout the scene. Only the reader/spectator realizes the effort Marie is having to make in dominating what would be her instinctive non-verbal communication signals:

. . . (Elle attire sa tête et prend ses lèvres. Au bout d'un moment elle le repousse doucement. Il demeure étourdi. Elle se lève et, derrière lui, essuie violemment ses lèvres avec un profond dégoût . . .) (T VII, 50)

At the really crucial moment Bernard specifies that the 'actress' is not to be subject to Darnley's gaze: 'Agenouillée à ses pieds, elle place sa tête contre lui, en sorte que l'on voit son visage que lui ne voit pas' (T VII, 52).

Luck rather than skill saves the day for her the following year when, under political pressure and Bothwell's influence, she finds herself speaking in a particularly treacherous manner to her husband. This time Darnley is physically separated from her in so far as he is lying ill in an 'alcôve fermée par une étoffe légère' (T VII, 86) - a logistical set-up which serves two purposes. It means Marie's non-verbal language can tell the audience something of her thoughts and feelings without enlightening Darnley, and at the same time it indirectly allows Bernard to stress the importance of paralinguistic expression. It is now not only a mercy that Marie is spared Darnley's ocular scrutiny but a prerequisite for the success of her mission, because for this performance the 'actress' is not on form. The developments which have taken place have clearly tired her. Since she is relatively sure about what she has to say and as she does not have to worry about her non-verbal signals, one might expect her to be able to invest the energy thus economized in her paralinguistic ones, but she is not very successful. At one point she cannot even speak, and even when she recovers, her voice control is poor:

(Marie n'a pas la force de parler tout de suite. Elle enfouit sa tête dans ses mains, silencieusement, et reste ainsi un instant. Enfin elle redresse la tête, et les mains crispées, elle arrive à parler d'un ton détaché, sous lequel par moments perce l'effort douloureux, aussitôt réprimé.) (T VII, 91)

A few moments later we are told that she speaks 'toute tendue, et d'un ton que la lutte qu'elle soutient contre elle-même rend agressif' (T VII, 92). Marie's paralinguistic faux pas do

nothing to assuage Darnley's suspicions which he finally voices in three consecutive 'répliques' (T VII, 94). It is at this point that Bernard highlights how treacherous paralinguistic communication signals can be. By the time Darnley asks Marie directly if she is telling him the truth her emotions are so wracked and her nerves so raw that she exclaims, '**dans un cri, dont on ne sait à qui il s'adresse**', 'C'est atroce de m'infliger une pareille épreuve!' (T VII, 94). Darnley assumes that the 'épreuve' in question for Marie is having a husband who refuses to trust her; we know that in actual fact the 'épreuve' for Marie is lying to him so traitorously that the more convincing she is, the more certain his downfall. What is significant here, however, is that Darnley does not misinterpret Marie's words so much as the volume, pitch and tone of the voice in which she utters them:

**VOIX DE DARNLEY, avec soulagement,
pendant que Marie regarde devant elle
avec des yeux hagards**

Ah!... Voilà enfin un cri... qui ne trompe pas... Je partirai avec vous en confiance, chère Marie... J'avais si peur que vous ne fussiez pas sincère... . . .

(T VII, 94)

This last example not only brings into relief the important fact that the paralinguistic signals which inevitably accompany words are inextricably bound up with them, it also demonstrates that the spoken expressed is frequently indissociable from some kind of non-verbal language: in this

case, although Darnley is not in a position to see it, the look in Marie's eyes. What is more, it becomes evident on closer examination of this and other plays that the relative independence of non-verbal instruments of communication is to a large extent illusory. Many of the non-verbal signals emitted by Bernard's characters are highly informative but only when they are considered in conjunction with the dialogue which precedes and/or follows them. When Jacqueline has gone out to find Olivier in the first Tableau of Act III of L'Invitation au Voyage we are told:

(. . . Marie-Louise reste agitée, anxieuse, et puis, en tremblant, elle va vers la petite table et, d'une main, sans s'asseoir, ouvre le Baudelaire et le feuillette machinalement... Silence. Et soudain, ayant entendu du bruit, elle referme le livre et s'écarte d'un air détaché. Jacqueline entre avec Olivier.) (T I, 325)

This example of a non-verbal monologue tells the reader/spectator much about Marie-Louise's psychological state at the time, but it only really speaks volumes when situated in its immediate and general context, when we bear in mind what Jacqueline and Marie-Louise have just been saying to each other and as we carry at the back of our consciousness all the Baudelaire has come to signify to Marie-Louise since the days she verbally, and non-verbally, dismissed it:

. . . Et ce Baudelaire qu'il m'a rapporté d'Epinal... (Elle prend un livre sur la table.) Sans doute ne pouvait-il deviner que mon poète préféré, c'était Chénier. Baudelaire, je comprends mal. Trop obscur, compliqué... (Reposant le livre.) Enfin, l'intention y était. (T I, 278)

Thus, whilst the expressed is indisputably more than the spoken words which frequently constitute its core but which it can at times bypass, only rarely is it meaningful to appraise the unspoken expressed in a vacuum. The correlative of this is even truer. Julien remarks to Jeanne in Martine (T I, 128), 'Nos lettres nous dénaturent' - inevitably since, however closely related to his correspondent the writer may be and however naturally and accurately he may record his thoughts as if he were saying them out loud to the person concerned, the all-important packaging in which spoken words are presented is missing. Accordingly, it should not be forgotten that verbal, paralinguistic and non-verbal tools of communication are heavily dependent on one another for their very existence. In fact it is misleading to assess the effectiveness of words as instruments of communication without reference to the way in which they are said and the timing of their delivery; similarly pitch, volume and intonation have minimal significance divorced from the words in the pronunciation of which they are used. So it is with gesture: a wave of the hand is just a wave of the hand out of context. Only in relation to the words and/or pauses coming before, during or after it does it become a really meaningful communication signal. Last but not least, silence itself 'is as much defined and suggested by words as space is by the objects which it contains'.²⁹³

293. Chiari, The Contemporary French Theatre, p. 12.

4. The paradox of silence

On the question of silence, Bernard shows it to be not only a significant vehicle of meaning but also a product of harmonious and effective communication.

When discussing Francine's picturesque conclusions about the cars she sees going by on the Nationale 6, Antoine compliments her on her 'sens exquis', her 'flair sans égal' for such things (Nationale 6, T V, 51). Such terms are also applicable in other Bernardian contexts where a kind of empathic intuition would seem to be involved. It is this which accounts for why Félicien understands the heroine's words in Jeanne de Pantin, whilst the students she is ostensibly addressing miss the point. The heart, as the symbolic centre of this intuition, rather than the head as the seat of reason is presented as the key to this special way of hearing what may be hidden in or by words. When Jeanne Chailland of Martine understands Julien even before he finishes speaking, when she tells him before he has uttered four words that he will not be able to explain what he is attempting to say, he suddenly comments, after an ocular exchange, on her intelligence. 'Qu'est-ce que mon intelligence vient faire ici?' she asks (T I, 129). Even with reference to the interpretation of something as factual as history, Robert of Deux Hommes insists along with Hermann Bogler that in the last instance it is not the intellect which plays the crucial role: 'Il faut bien, en effet, que le coeur nous aide à franchir certaines murailles où se heurte la raison' (T V, 229).

Irrespective of the type of relationship involved, in Bernard's drama whenever the hearts of any two protagonists are in intuitive harmony, communication is at its most effective. Ironically but logically, it is at such times that words become more or less redundant. Consequently some of the most meaningful 'dialogues' in Bernard's theatre are silent, witness the main parting scene between la Louise and Pierre Garbin:

(Il porte la main de la Louise à ses lèvres, puis la retient. Elle n'ose pas la retirer. Elle est troublée. Ils restent ainsi un instant, se regardant. Et puis il finit par la lâcher, à regret, et fait quelques pas en arrière pendant qu'elle va vers la porte. Elle disparaît. Il reste immobile... Silence...) (La Louise, T III, 243)

This principle applies even if the characters in question normally have difficulty communicating, or have recently had particular communication problems and may never communicate so well again. It is very likely that in the moment Clarisse and Gilberte part at the end of Le Printemps des Autres they understand each other better and are emotionally closer to one another than they have been for some time. Once Clarisse has shown her resolution to amend the situation and Gilberte has absorbed the shock of her discovery and become open again to a sense of filial compassion, their ocular exchange conveys their mutual comprehension to perfection:

(Les deux femmes se regardent fixement. Et soudain, comme attirée, Gilberte s'avance vers sa mère. Clarisse la prend contre elle. Très long regard muet, regard d'intelligence de femme à femme. Puis une étreinte. Et elles se séparent brusquement . . .)
(T I, 262)

Similarly, at the end of L'Invitation au Voyage it is as the emotional gap between Marie-Louise and Olivier gradually diminishes that the latter becomes increasingly inarticulate until words fail him:

MARIE-LOUISE, **avec des larmes dans la voix**

Mais je suis très contente, Olivier...

OLIVIER

Non, non... il ne faut pas me le dire maintenant...

MARIE-LOUISE

C'est bon de t'entendre me parler gentiment.

OLIVIER

Ne t'ai-je pas toujours parlé ainsi?...

MARIE-LOUISE **baisse la tête et murmure**

...J'ai tellement besoin de toi.

OLIVIER

C'est vrai?...

MARIE-LOUISE

C'est vrai...

OLIVIER, **la poitrine gonflée**

Marie-Louise... Alors...

(Il **s'arrête.**)

Bernard's theatre would thus suggest that a logical paradox lies embedded in effective communication: the more profound the emotions and the more complex the thought processes, the more impossible their verbal expression and the greater the need for the interlocutors to converse in the language of empathic intuition, success in which removes the need for words. The resultant silence is, of course, poles apart from the strained silence of a Martine, for example, who because she is too moved, too timid, too sensible, too proud or too obstinate to speak is left no alternative but to express - more or less involuntarily through her body language and facial expressions - feelings destined like the lost souls of L'Ame en peine never to find their earthly resting place. Two significant scenes in Martine highlight the difference between these contrasting types of silence. After Martine laughs when Julien uses the metaphor of a cornucopia, there follows a series of faulty and erratic exchanges at the end of which, a second before Madame Mervan enters with the news of Jeanne's arrival, **'ils restent un instant sans parler'**, creating a negative, dissonant silence (T I, 124-125). A short time later, when Jeanne and Julien have not been in each other's presence very long but are nevertheless having little difficulty overcoming their initial awkwardness, a simple meaningful exchange contrasts sharply with the ten abortive 'répliques' of the earlier dialogue between Martine and Julien:

JULIEN

Certaines choses ont un parfum d'autrefois qui monte à la tête. Votre entrée dans cette pièce... Avec quelque chose de nouveau pourtant, de plus grave que jadis...

JEANNE

Oui, je comprends ce que vous voulez dire...

(T I, 129)

Immediately after this we are told 'Ils restent un instant silencieux, rêveurs'. Here the silence is positive and resonant. This harmony established, we are not surprised by Jeanne's response to Julien's image of the 'corne d'abondance': 'Tiens, c'est vrai. C'est bien émouvant...' (T I, 130).

Julien succeeds in communicating effectively with Jeanne, largely because she 'hears' in the way he does and vice versa. Each selects his/her words and interprets what the other says - or does not say - according to a common code, which Julien does his best to explain in the following terms:

Je parlais une langue étrangère et je retrouve un parler familier, une façon directe de comprendre les choses... sans explications. Le langage de ce qui ne s'exprime pas... (Il la regarde.) Et il y a tant de choses qui ne s'expriment pas et qu'il faut comprendre... comme ça... n'est-ce pas?
(T I, 129-130)

Given the possibility of meaningful eye contact and the mutual ability to comprehend the language of what is unspoken and inexpressible, the exchange of words between Jeanne and Julien is to a certain extent superfluous.

5. Contrived social masks

The erection of an artificial façade to conceal their real character is generally acknowledged to be second nature to liars and hypocrites and a standard practice of politicians, diplomats, courtiers and others in positions of high social status. This kind of mask is illustrated in a number of Bernard's plays.

In her dealings with Louise de la Vallière, Madame de Montespan is so excellent in the role of the charming courtesan that her perfidious insincerity and unctuous hypocrisy are only rarely perceptible. Louis meanwhile plays the archetypal King to perfection. As a young man, however, he tells Louise how he has dreamed of meeting a girl for whom he would be 'un homme comme les autres', to whom he could say 'des mots de tous les jours . . . des choses très simples...' (Louise de la Vallière, T VI, 58-59). Indeed, Bernard makes it clear that if the King takes Louise as his mistress it is partly because for her he is primarily Louis and not 'le roi', because her courtly screen is transparent, because she is open and candid and because he can love her 'comme s'il n'était pas roi...' (T VI, 62). The regal façade is also in evidence in Marie Stuart, Reine d'Ecosse. When du Groc tells the Queen that he will not attend the wedding ceremony if she marries Bothwell, she is clearly devastated. She betrays her feelings paralinguistically in her '**voix blanche**' and non-verbally through her hands which, '**crispées sur le bouquet de violettes, tremblent légèrement**' (T VII, 121). To begin with, however, her

verbal screen remains intact. Thus, retaining her diplomatic formality, she manages to say 'Mais... mais songez donc... Songez à la signification que prendra votre abstention. Ne dira-t-on pas que la cour de France m'abandonne?' (T VII, 121). When this fails, Marie the diplomat withdraws: '...Si ce n'est pas l'ambassadeur, que ce soit au moins l'ami qui vienne' (T VII, 121). Finally, her queenly façade crumbles altogether, leaving behind the woman who says, 'désemparée', 'Et... si je vous suppliais...' (T VII, 122). Le Roy de Malousie, where the King is only allowed to speak in verse even to his wife, is a satirical parody of the extremes to which certain régimes are prepared to go in the erecting of courtly or administrative masks.

In A la Recherche des Coeurs - particularly at the beginning before he has started to live in accordance with his deeply held communist principles - Charles puts up a clear-cut professional front when talking business or politics with colleagues, subordinates or outsiders, but drops it when he is alone with his wife. As soon as the couple's tête-à-tête in Act I is interrupted by Roger with his news of the strike, Charles' reconstruction of his business front is visible:

CHARLES, après une seconde de réflexion

Bien... (Il s'assied et fait signe à Roger de s'asseoir.) Dites-moi ce que vous savez... (Depuis qu'il n'est plus seul avec Claire, toute trace d'émotion et de tendresse a disparu de son visage. Ce n'est plus qu'un homme d'affaires sec et précis.)

(T III, 15)

Although her motives are far from being simplistically unworthy, Denise Murette becomes an habitual liar when she prolongs her father's deceit, making the world believe that he is the creator of works which she paints. In doing so she eventually finds herself imprisoned by a confining and psychologically damaging façade of dialogue. This verbal mask, however, is so artificially and consciously manufactured that it is as obvious to the reader/audience as those which are worn in Bernard's historical and socio-political plays, and about which there is nothing particularly original. What is more innovative in Bernard's theatre is its strong evidence that communication screens are not the prerogative of liars, hypocrites, politicians, diplomats, courtiers and the like, that they are the norm outside of stylized, political or business environments, indeed right across the social spectrum.

6. Automatically erected personal façades of dialogue

It is generally accepted that in everyday dialogues, where there is nevertheless more than a purely functional use of language, people exchange words in order to communicate to one another their predominant thoughts, ideas, beliefs and feelings and that they are relatively successful in doing so. Bernard's theatre suggests that, however standard such an assumption may be, it is to a large extent erroneous, and that people are inclined not to voice their principal preoccupations or emotions. Of course, just because people tend not to voice these things does not mean that they are inclined to be silent,

although some, like Martine, may be more taciturn than others. They may well be quite voluble but their loquaciousness can be considered a more or less trivial façade, the very purpose of which is to conceal, for a variety of reasons, what they are really thinking and feeling.

A remark in Nationale 6 is relevant in this respect. When Francine tells Robert she thinks he has flattered her in his portrait, he exclaims that this is the first time a pretty girl has told him that. Naïvely Francine maintains '...Mais... je dis ce que je pense' (T V, 71). Now it is obvious from what we already know about Francine that she is innocent and artless, and the reader/spectator is prepared to accept that she says what she thinks when giving an opinion. What we cannot accept is that she says what she is thinking. For if one looks no further than the scene in question, we know from the context that Francine's unspoken thoughts as she converses with Robert are almost certainly centred on whether or not he could be the 'prince charmant' she has been expecting the road to bring (T V, 19). The extent to which the audience can conjecture at the unspoken thoughts of Bernard's characters varies from play to play, and the details of the surmised content inevitably vary minimally from one reader/spectator to another. More often than not, however, some kind of 'dialogue sous-jacent' - to use Bernard's terminology - is discernible 'sous le dialogue

entendu' ('Réflexions sur le théâtre', p. 48).²⁹⁴ Even though we cannot be sure of the exact words she is using, we can be certain that what Francine is saying to herself internally, her 'dialogue sous-jacent', is quite different from what she says vocally to Robert, her 'dialogue entendu'. Furthermore, the evidence of Bernard's theatre considered in its entirety leads the reader/spectator to conclude that Robert's reply to Francine, 'Vous dites ce que vous pensez?... Quel phénomène!' (T V, 71), harbours as much truth as it does cynicism. There are numerous examples of people who tend not to say what they think and even more rarely say what they are thinking. Indeed, most Bernardian characters erect some kind of communication screen regularly or intermittently and, like Francine, innocently without any real awareness that they are doing so.

The fact that such façades of dialogue are erected inconsistently and with varying degrees of unconsciousness inevitably complicates the communication process because of the paralinguistic and non-verbal packaging of speech. Since in everyday conversations speakers tend to have less control of

294. Bernard did not discover these two types of dialogue. In 1896 Maeterlinck makes a similar distinction between a 'dialogue extérieurement nécessaire' and 'un autre dialogue qui semble superflu', adding, with reference to the latter, 'Examinez attentivement et vous verrez que c'est le seul que l'âme écoute profondément, parce que c'est en cet endroit seulement qu'on lui parle' (Le Trésor des humbles, p. 138). Later, in a preface entitled 'A propos d'art dramatique' and dated 1907, Henry Bataille writes of a '**langage direct**' and a '**langage indirect**' (Théâtre complet II, p. 9). Bernard's originality lies in his analysis and skilful exploitation of these two 'dialogues' or 'langages' in stage-manageable plays. See also pp. 436-437.

how they say what they say than they have of the word content of their speech, the paralinguistic and non-verbal signals they emit may be appropriate packaging for their subjacent dialogue but totally incongruous with the words they voice, or else they may tally perfectly with these and jar with their more significant unspoken thoughts. Nevertheless, it would seem that in some instances interlocutors may at least become aware of, or even go some way to penetrating, each other's screen of 'dialogue entendu' if they are attentive to the paralinguistic and non-verbal signals being emitted.

In Act II of L'Invitation au Voyage Olivier implies that Marie-Louise was much more translucent at the beginning of their marriage, but now he can only guess vainly at the extent and nature of her mysterious unspoken thoughts. The existence of these, however, is betrayed, predictably, through the eyes:

. . . Qu'est-ce que tu étais quand je t'ai épousée? Une enfant, n'est-ce pas? Et notre bonheur t'avait conservée enfant... Il n'y avait que de l'insouciance dans ces bons yeux-là... Mais maintenant... (**Il lui touche le front.**) qu'y a-t-il là derrière? Je sens des tas de pensées... si profondes... si cachées... (T I, 302)

We learn at the very beginning of A la Recherche des Coeurs that even if Claire is not invited behind all Charles' screens of 'dialogue entendu', she is cultivating the art of detecting their existence. A certain way of joking informs her in this instance that something is troubling him. When he denies this, she ignores what he says, registers his '**faux enjouement**' and presses him to tell her what is on his mind (T III, 10).

It would appear that Francine of Nationale 6 never sees behind her mother's façade. She does not really understand why she is so talkative: 'Maman ne sait pas se taire . . . ce n'est pas dans sa nature, voilà tout' (T V, 8). Michel has a better picture and realizes that Elisa is more complex than appearances would suggest. He understands, for instance, that his wife 'qui se plaint de porter tout le poids du ménage . . . n'est jamais aussi contente que quand on lui donne une fatigue supplémentaire . . . Seulement elle ne l'avouera pas' (T V, 57). On the other hand, one wonders how fully even he knows the inner Elisa. When Michel informs her that Robert has as good as told Francine he wants to marry her, she is too moved to put up her usual screen of fussing volubility. Every time Michel tries to get a response from her she can only reply 'Oui', 'Oui...' or '...Oui...' even after a particularly long 'réplique' on Michel's part where he speaks for more than a page of densely packed prose (T V, 89-92). Only when he leaves her on her own does she gradually give vent to her thoughts and emotions in an arm movement which '**se fait plus lent**' and in a few words murmured '**d'une voix mouillée de larmes**' (T V, 92).

It is partly to protect her vulnerable psyche from the outside world that Martine never says anything about her real feelings. By not talking about her love and suffering herself she discourages others from trespassing on her inner sanctuary. Her bulwark of silence is fairly efficient, but what she may not appreciate is that, paradoxically, silence can be quite an

effective instrument of communication.²⁹⁵ By not voicing her deep emotional concerns, and by not filling the resultant silence with some kind of superficial conversation, she is not putting an opaque fence around the tabernacle of her soul but a perspex screen.

7. The convention of small-talk

Sometimes communication remains at a superficial level or becomes complicated because one or both of the interlocutors simply talks for the sake of talking. Robert is guilty of this at the beginning of Act III of Nationale 6. Later Francine tells her father that Robert 'parlait, il parlait sans arrêt, comme s'il avait peur de rester silencieux avec moi...' (T V, 88). In fact the threat of mutual silence in this scene is not that frightening. It is not unusual for people to be silent together when some activity requiring concentration is being carried out. Robert does not actually have to speak to Francine. However, he maintains that talking, even absent-mindedly, helps him work. 'C'est comme le bruit du moulin', he explains, 'Si le moulin ne faisait pas de bruit, il ne tournerait pas...' (T V, 73). If both interlocutors talk for the sake of talking and are aware that they are engaged in this kind of superficial dialogue, there may be no really meaningful communication but no confusion will ensue either. Problems arise when a speaker making small-talk inadvertently trespasses

295. See pp. 95-100.

on the deepest emotional concerns of his interlocutor. A succinct example of this is to be found at the beginning of Le Printemps des Autres. Maurice has to find a way of opening up a conversation with Clarisse, who has never met him, so that he can work his way round to confessing his love for her daughter. The task is a delicate one and he decides to take the tack of a friend in common. In mentioning the friend's name, however, he unwittingly and indirectly probes a relatively fresh and still smarting wound in Clarisse's heart. When her response appears reticent, Maurice shows some embarrassment which she in turn undoubtedly misinterprets (T I, 188-189).

Sometimes people have a dual purpose in speaking superficially. Whilst filling the vacuum of silence which would otherwise exist, they try with varying degrees of success to engineer the dialogue so that it hides their real preoccupations from others and/or diverts their own attention from these concerns. In the first Act of Le Printemps des Autres, once Maurice has started up the conversation with Clarisse he finds that the courage to tell her what is really on his mind is not forthcoming. Any silences in the dialogue are threatening for him because, given his tenuous relationship with Clarisse at this stage, he feels hounded by them either to get to the point or to terminate the conversation and leave, neither of which he wants or can bring himself to do. Clarisse who is trying to penetrate his screen of 'dialogue entendu' eventually hits on a subject about which, at the expense of a small white lie, he can talk volubly and innocuously:

CLARISSE

Alors, quoi?... Je ne suppose pas que vous venez pour les championnats de tennis...

MAURICE, précipitamment

Oui, oui, justement.

CLARISSE

Pourquoi ne le disiez-vous pas tout de suite?... Parce que ce n'est pas vrai?

MAURICE

Mais si, c'est vrai. Je suis très fort au tennis, très fort... J'aime tous les sports d'ailleurs . . .

(T I, 203-204)

And so he continues until, twelve lines of speech later, he runs out of material and is forced to conclude 'Vous voyez qu'au fond je n'ai aucun mérite à aimer le tennis...' (T I, 204). After a telling silence Clarisse smiles and says significantly 'Tout cela pour ne pas me faire de confidences...' (T I, 204).

Most of Act IV of Nationale 6 is composed of dialogue where the interlocutors 'make conversation' to fill an uncomfortable silence. Eventually the atmosphere at the dinner table becomes saturated with intense unspoken emotions, and, in the intermittent silences which interrupt their forced exchanges, Michel, Elisa, Antoine and Robert find they have nothing to distract them from their personal feelings of embarrassment, disappointment and sadness, not to mention their

shared sympathy for the mute, emotionally bleeding Francine whose almost audible silence they are anxious to drown (T V, 122-126). Here we see characters who are determined not to voice their real thoughts but rather to suppress them by saying anything else they can. Words are not being used as instruments of communication - effectively or otherwise - but rather as psychological buffers.

A somewhat similar phenomenon occurs in the fourth Tableau of Martine. The final seal is put on Martine's disillusionment when Julien marries Jeanne, but by no means does their union mark the end of her suffering. Indeed, her torment is aggravated when Jeanne tells her that she is almost certain that she is pregnant (T I, 154). Given the fact that Jeanne is currently experiencing the bliss of carrying the child of the man she loves, a joy Martine herself is destined never to experience, the latter's emotional pain at this point is excruciating. A few seconds after Martine has been given the news, Julien arrives. He and Jeanne clearly have things to tell each other and emotions to express; the last thing they want to do is indulge in small-talk, but they are obliged to do so by Martine's presence. They deliver and manipulate this small-talk in such a way that it is blatantly obvious that Martine is 'de trop'. Martine herself is very conscious that her presence is obtrusive but cannot react in consequence, largely no doubt because she is still shaking interiorly from the emotional

impact the news of Jeanne's pregnancy has had on her and partly because she also wants to savour the pleasure of seeing Julien again. Seemingly '*rivée au sol*' (T I, 155), she can do nothing but stare at the couple, too paralysed to speak. The conversation between Jeanne and Julien becomes increasingly strained, but they are unable to take the initiative and retire to their room, because '*Simone fait la chambre*' (T I, 157). Eventually, just after they have dropped a particularly strong hint to prompt her departure, Martine makes a real effort to speak but in vain. Dumbstruck she suddenly, silently, leaves without being able to say even a polite goodbye. In this scene, '*dont aucune analyse ne peut rendre l'angoisse muette*',²⁹⁶ we have a situation where two interlocutors cannot say what they want to say nor can they stop speaking because they do not want to 'hear' the highly expressive silence of a suffering and mute third party.

8. The cathartic role of talking

Of course not all human beings consistently hide their real preoccupations. Some have a tendency to talk openly and to say what they are thinking more often than others. Here one is

296. Léon Lemonnier, '*Le Théâtre de Jean-Jacques Bernard*', *La Revue Mondiale*, no. 15, 1^{er} août 1925, p. 295.

reminded of Fontaney, Charles Nodier and Marie in Le Secret d'Arvers or of the King in Louise de la Vallière, who tells Henriette how he has suffered 'd'être privé de cette chose essentielle au bonheur qu'est la conversation' (T VI, 42).

Sometimes both characters in a dialogue are quite happy to express their thoughts verbally but in the process each becomes so absorbed in what he himself is saying that he does not listen to his interlocutor at all. The effect of this is two 'monologues in dialogue',²⁹⁷ of which, as Kester Branford points out, André and Blanche Mérin provide an excellent example in Act I of Le Feu qui reprend mal.²⁹⁸ However glad they may be to have one another to talk to again after four years' separation, they are both more or less soliloquizing together only a quarter of an hour after André's return from the army (T I, 32-33).

Occasionally both introverts and extroverts may want to talk about their deep emotional and normally unspoken concerns for the cathartic effect such an airing produces. There comes a point in Act I of Le Feu qui reprend mal when Blanche can no longer keep her thoughts regarding the American's proposition to herself. 'Je ne voulais d'abord pas vous le dire. Je ne voulais le dire à personne au monde. Mais cela me pèse...' she says to Jeanne just before unburdening herself (T I, 17-18).

297. See p. 96.

298. A Study, pp. 48-49.

After his major dispute with Blanche in Act III of the same play, André is 'tout prêt à vider son coeur' to his father but hesitates and probably only decides against doing so because the latter says how weary and old he is feeling (T I, 87). In Act III of Le Jardinier d'Ispahan Daniel experiences some relief from his guilt when, having told Madeleine that he is leaving, he goes on to use her as a confessor: 'Ah! ça me fait du bien, madame, de vous dire cela... Il y a longtemps que je voulais, mais je ne pouvais pas...' (T VI, 332).

At times the psychological need for deep emotions to find some kind of vocal expression is so strong that it will seek fulfilment unbeknown to and/or against the individual's conscious will. Martine is obliged to seek this type of cathartic relief through the intermediary of Madame Mervan and Jeanne who do express their feelings for Julien. Hence her uncontrollable tears when Madame Mervan says 'C'était trop beau et cela ne pouvait durer...' followed seconds later by 'J'ai beaucoup de chagrin, mais je ne veux pas qu'ils le sachent' (Martine, T I, 164), which would be Martine's own words if she let herself say them. When, in Act IV of Nationale 6, a bitterly disappointed Antoine starts to come to terms with the idea of moving on, he makes a supreme effort to crowd out his depressing thoughts with talk of other things, 'de choses sérieuses' he says ironically (T V, 112). However, he finds it difficult, and eventually his real preoccupations resurface vocally. At one point Robert, trying to help his father focus on the future rather than the present, asks, 'Que vas-tu

faire?' (T V, 115). In his reply Antoine's subjacent thoughts speak through the tenuous façade he and his son have erected:

Un roman, peut-être? D'ailleurs, j'avais promis à ces braves gens de leur dédier un roman. Aujourd'hui, j'ai trouvé mon dénouement... (D'un ton détaché.) ...Seulement, voilà, peut-être pas très public. Un peu triste... mélancolique... (T V, 115)

In instances of this kind, where deeply felt emotions and/or subconscious feelings and impulses show their determination to co-operate with a screen of 'dialogue entendu' so as to achieve some kind of expression through it, the listener(s) may be sufficiently informed to be able to understand the message being covertly expressed through this strategy, which is the case in the exchange between Antoine and Robert just cited and in other similar instances during the meal in the second half of the same Act of the same play. At other times, the semi-submerged thought may be too complex or subtle to be discernible to the listener, but one presumes that the attempted airing of the repressed idea or emotion for its own sake nevertheless serves a purpose for the speaker, even if he himself is unconscious or quasi-unconscious of the psychological mechanism at work. A good example of this is to be found in Act II of Le Printemps des Autres when Clarisse, 'la voix brisée', explains her concern to a surprised Maurice:

Mais j'adore Gilberte. Mais je vois cette petite enceinte, lasse, inquiète. Si elle ne sent pas ces choses, je vous jure que je ne les sens que trop pour elle. Peut-être que son affection l'aveugle. Ou peut-être qu'elle ne veut rien vous montrer. Mais moi, je peux vous dire ce qu'elle ne vous dira pas... Ah! vous êtes un enfant, vous êtes un enfant. Vous ne

savez pas quelles souffrances provoque un geste maladroit. Vous ne savez pas ce qu'un regard de vous mal dirigé peut blesser un coeur qui vous aime. Enfant, enfant, vous faites mal, vous faites mal... Vous ne devez pas faire tant de mal... (T I, 235-236)

Here Clarisse is talking about Maurice's causing Gilberte suffering, but at the same time her own subconscious resentment against Maurice for causing her suffering is struggling to surface. Similarly, in the following speech from L'Invitation au Voyage Marie-Louise talks to her husband about Jacqueline's marriage whilst her own dissatisfaction tries indirectly to voice itself:

L'essentiel est que Jacqueline soit heureuse... (Songeuse.) Et elle saura l'être. Son mari lui donnera tout ce qu'elle peut désirer: un intérieur, la paix bourgeoise, un budget bien équilibré, des enfants, Paris deux fois par an, des amis de leur milieu, des petits potins... Jacqueline n'a pas beaucoup... d'aspirations... (T I, 306-307)

When Denise Murette is ostensibly exulting in her father's gift of self in the presence of Martin and Charolles, she is really talking about her own self-sacrifice and in so doing finding a much needed outlet for her personal pain and frustration:

. . . Il ne faut pas croire que nous... (Comme si elle avait buté sur ce mot, elle se reprend.) Il ne faut pas croire qu'il travaille comme un autre. C'est lui-même qu'il met dans ses oeuvres; c'est un peu de sa substance, un peu de son coeur... Produire, mais c'est donner de sa vie... Savez-vous même que ça fait mal?... Ma chair, mon sang! Ces paroles seront toujours vivantes pour des créateurs. Car c'est bien cela qu'ils vous donnent! Cela? Mes souffrances, mes joies, mon orgueil, ma jeunesse... (D'un autre ton.) Ma jeunesse... (Denise Murette, T II, 108-109)

It is likely that Denise's move from the third to the first person singular with 'Ma chair, mon sang!' is accidental, as she has already made a similar mistake earlier in her speech. It is interesting that she quickly and deftly corrects any damage done vis-à-vis her interlocutors in such a manner that it allows her to return to the first person which is cathartically satisfying for her.

When people are drawn to do some psychological 'filing' which entails classifying their thoughts and feelings verbally in order to find an emotional resting point in words, a more or less silent interlocutor acting as a sounding board is all that is required. It is this sort of service that the as yet unmarried Jeanne appreciates from Martine when she still has a week to wait before Julien's return from Germany. Monsieur Mérin senior uses his son and daughter-in-law in a similar way in Act III of Le Feu qui reprend mal. On other occasions the assistance of a more actively participating interlocutor may be necessary. In the final scene of L'Ame en peine Marceline urgently begs Philippe to listen to her and try to understand:

Au secours, Philippe. Tu vois comme je viens à toi, sans défense, sans pudeur, sans crainte que nous souffrions... Aide-moi, Philippe... Ah! je voudrais m'exprimer autrement, classer tout ce que j'ai dans la tête, mettre de l'ordre... Mais comment veux-tu? Tu vois, les idées sortent n'importe comment. Excuse-moi, ne fais pas attention à ce que je te dis. Tu es assez intelligent pour comprendre quelque chose dans cette confusion. (T II, 285)

In the fifth Tableau of Martine Julien appears desperate to make Martine talk about what has happened, although the

unhealed wound which part of him knows such a dialogue will aggravate is a pressing reason for him to respect her silence. He persists in his questioning, motivated, in the words of Henry Bidou, by 'la curiosité, mêlée d'une cruelle tendresse, de vouloir connaître le mal qu'il a fait'.²⁹⁹ Similarly, Edmond Sée points out how Julien's relentless probing can be put down to a form of inborn male vanity, to the cruelty of a man 'acharné à constater et à faire dire qu'il fut aimé'.³⁰⁰ At least one other co-existent explanation is probable. His grandmother's death marks the end of a carefree, happy era for Julien, one in which Martine played a special part. Just as he is leaving Grandchin physically tidy with possessions cleared and house sold, unconsciously he also wants to leave things psychologically tidy with no emotional loose ends or gnawing questions. Although he would never consciously put it in such terms, this means indirectly drawing from Martine some kind of covert absolution or blessing. He comes close to succeeding, as much through his paralinguistic and non-verbal communication signals as through his words: '(Il s'avance. Martine plie légèrement, honteuse, mais déjà prête à s'abandonner.) Martine... Martine...' (T I, 179). At the last minute, however, he suddenly withdraws, allowing Martine to maintain her protective screen intact to the bitter end.

299. Henry Bidou, 'Chronique Dramatique. Martine', Journal des Débats, no. 1473, 19 mai 1922, p. 841.

300. Edmond Sée, Ce Soir... notes et impressions dramatiques (Paris, La Renaissance du Livre, no date) p. 248.

9. The mutual interference of the 'dialogue entendu' and the 'dialogue sous-jacent'

Quite often people make superficial conversation when their thoughts are elsewhere and they are quite happy for them to be elsewhere - indeed when they would rather be alone to muse. The opening of Le Feu qui reprend mal illustrates this point. When Jeanne Liron asks Blanche, 'On ne vous dérange pas?', it is clear from the way she replies 'un peu trop vivement' that she really means 'Si' and not the 'Non, non...' she actually says (T I, 11).³⁰¹ However, since Jeanne does not register this paralinguistic signal or ignores it, Blanche is obliged to divert her attention from her inner dialogue, temporarily at least, in order to converse with her friend. As it happens, Jeanne almost immediately touches on a topic which overlaps Blanche's 'dialogue sous-jacent'.

However essentially trivial its content, a façade of speech may require most of the person's concentration, or it may leave him relatively free to commune with himself. Unbeknown to their interlocutors, people can actually use the superficial spoken dialogue they are engaged in to feed and sustain their unspoken self-communion. In Act II of L'Invitation au Voyage Marie-Louise finds herself in this happy situation as she tells her son Gérard about Argentina. In a subtle, indirect way what is apparently a straightforward Geography lesson for the unwitting Gérard, enables his mother to talk to herself about Philippe (T I, 307-314).

301. See pp. 103-104.

Sometimes a speaker may become so absorbed by his unspoken thoughts, whether he is happy to have them or not, that his surface conversation, through an interaction with the mind's other preoccupations, is affected by them so that he gives bizarre verbal, paralinguistic or non-verbal signals which are liable to be misinterpreted. To a small degree, this is true of the opening scene of Le Feu qui reprend mal referred to above where Blanche's concentration is torn between her inner dialogue and her 'dialogue entendu' with the result that the latter is influenced and coloured by the former. Unable to appreciate the full significance of Monsieur Meunier's role in Clarisse's subjacent dialogue in Act I of Le Printemps des Autres, Maurice is understandably perplexed by the contradictory way in which, only a few moments after saying she would prefer not to talk about Monsieur Meunier, Clarisse brings him back into the conversation herself (T I, 195). Where a long-standing preoccupation has become an obsession, the person's everyday conversation may be consistently distorted by his 'dialogue sous-jacent' and he may not even register what is said to him. The best example of this is to be found in the opening 'répliques' of Act II of L'Invitation au Voyage, which, considered devoid of their accompanying stage directions, smack of some of the abortive dialogue exchanged between Vladimir and Estragon in Beckett's En attendant Godot:³⁰²

302. See p. 67.

(Au lever du rideau, Olivier, au bureau, range des papiers, prend des notes. Marie-Louise est assise près du piano. Elle travaille à un ouvrage, assez distraitement.)

OLIVIER, sans s'arrêter

Qu'est-ce que tu fais?

(Marie-Louise ne tourne même pas la tête. Elle n'a pas paru entendre. Un long silence. Les mêmes jeux de scène continuent de part et d'autre.)

MARIE-LOUISE, sans lever la tête, comme un écho
lointain

Qu'est-ce que tu fais?

OLIVIER

Je range de la paperasse. Oh! j'ai fini, d'ailleurs. (Mais Marie-Louise semble déjà avoir oublié sa question. Elle ne continue pas la conversation. C'est Olivier qui, ayant mis une dernière lettre sous un presse-papier, quitte son bureau; il va vers elle et la regarde.) Et toi?

MARIE-LOUISE

Moi?

(T I, 297-298)

Later, 'tout à fait lointaine', Marie-Louise tells her son about the rivers in Argentina until her voice trails off. 'Et puis?' asks Gérard timidly after a silence:

MARIE-LOUISE sursaute, comme arrachée à son rêve

Et puis?... (Elle regarde le petit et, soudain, lui prend la tête à deux mains.) Oh! toi, peut-être que tu peux encore comprendre... Ah! qu'est-ce que je dis?

(Elle le lâche et se lève en tremblant. L'enfant la regarde, interdit . . .)

(T I, 313)

The sort of dialogue which can result when a speaker charged with pent-up questions and emotional tension attempts to break through the façade of an interlocutor equally anxious to keep his private world of unspoken thoughts carefully concealed is exemplified very well in the following extract from the end of Act II of the same play. Olivier has just run to the door calling Marie-Louise back:

. . . (Au bout d'un instant, elle reparaît sur le seuil. Il lui prend la main et l'attire en tremblant vers le milieu de la pièce.) Ecoute... Je voudrais... te... Je suis si... tourmenté...

MARIE-LOUISE, d'une voix blanche

Tourm...

(Elle le regarde. Elle n'achève pas.)

OLIVIER

Tu n'as... rien à me dire?...

MARIE-LOUISE, la tête basse

Quoi?

OLIVIER

Vraiment rien?

MARIE-LOUISE

Mais... Olivier... non...

OLIVIER

Pourtant...

MARIE-LOUISE

Quoi?

OLIVIER

...Je ne sais pas.

MARIE-LOUISE

Alors... . . .

(T I, 315)

. . .

Enough evidence has probably been given in this chapter alone to indicate how there is no guarantee that when words are being exchanged anything really significant is actually being said or that mutual understanding is being established. Bernard's drama also suggests that the heart, not the head, holds the key to effective communication and that genuine emotional bonds are forged intuitively, indirectly and/or silently. More particularly, this investigation has so far highlighted that the expressed is a combination of verbal, paralinguistic and non-verbal signals which in itself complicates matters, that communication screens are the rule rather than the exception and that the co-existence of a 'dialogue entendu' and a 'dialogue sous-jacent' automatically throws doubt on the value of the words exchanged and causes or

aggravates communication difficulties. The innate self-centredness and isolationism, of which screens of speech are presented as symptomatic, are the object of further scrutiny in the following chapter, along with other fundamental characteristics of dialogue and additional factors contributing to faulty and abortive communication.

CHAPTER 2

MISTAKES, MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND
MISINTERPRETATIONS

An analysis of the mistakes, misunderstandings and misinterpretations which constitute the drama of a number of Bernard's principal plays is made in this chapter as it sheds light on some of the major factors which, in combination with the paralinguistic and non-verbal packaging of speech and the two-tier nature of dialogue, are shown to sap the effectiveness of words as instruments of communication. The general lubricity and fickleness of words, the tunnel vision of interlocutors who are intrinsically egoistic and the poltergeist effect of a largely unconscious, unruly and unfathomable psyche are explored in some depth in sections 1-4 and 6. Halfway through the chapter an examination of some instances in Bernard's drama where words are exchanged smoothly and with relative efficiency is introduced as a complement to the survey so far made of those portions of text where the dialogue is abortive or less meaningful. In the final two sections certain socio-economic and cultural factors which Bernard suggests affect the efficiency of the verbal communication process are considered, together with a particularly significant type of personality clash.

. . . .

1. The lubricity and fickleness of words

Although the characters and action of Nationale 6, which focusses on a classic 'malentendu' and has another misunderstanding at the centre of its sub-plot, lie just within the bounds of plausibility, this, like L'Ame en peine, Jeanne de Pantin and Le Roy de Malousie, is best considered as a play

of symbolism. Of course, this does not make it essentially less truthful than the rest of Bernard's drama. Moreover, a number of points regarding interpersonal communication are to be found woven implicitly into the fabric of its text. Amongst these is the fact that in the exchange of words, meanings are subject to the same phenomenon as their component phonemes in a game of Chinese whispers. Francine is confused by Robert's words when she sits as a model for him in Act III, but the misunderstanding really crystallizes when she reports her conversation with him to her father immediately afterwards. It is also noteworthy that, by the time Michel tells Elisa what has happened, Robert's original statement 'C'est un conte de fées...' (T V, 72) has not only been misapplied but also deformed out of all recognition: 'Car c'est une espèce de fée, notre Francine... Il le lui a dit, d'ailleurs' (T V, 90).³⁰³ That words can be subject to such modification, even when reported by conscientious and well-meaning people, is in itself evidence of the spurious effectiveness of words as instruments of communication.

After listening to Francine's report Michel puts a proviso on his conviction that Robert has made her a 'déclaration déguisée':

MICHEL

Si vraiment tu as bien entendu...

303. See pp. 455-457.

FRANCINE

Oh! ça, j'en suis sûre.

(T V, 87)

In a way Francine has both heard and not heard. Given the ambiguity of the French verb 'entendre' one can say that she has accurately registered most of Robert's words but she has not understood their real meaning. When Robert and Antoine have left, and father and daughter are reviewing what happened with the benefit of hindsight, Francine in no way recants:

FRANCINE

. . . Pourtant, je ne m'étais pas trompée...
Pourtant, j'avais bien entendu...

MICHEL

Entendu quoi? Ce qu'il t'a dit?... Mais t'a-t-il
dit une seule chose précise?...

(T V, 129)

Francine's repetition of an affirmation made a fortnight earlier is not accidental, for in it, and Michel's reply, lies one of the principal keys to Bernard's dramatic exposure of the general ineffectiveness of words as instruments of communication. However tantalizingly enigmatic it may seem, two contradictory statements can be made about the central dialogue between Robert and Francine. On the one hand it is undeniable that Robert says certain things to Francine which she hears and comprehends; on the other hand it can also be maintained that

Robert says practically nothing to Francine who misunderstands virtually everything. One is reminded here of the accuracy and the falsehood which are implicit in the sentences uttered by the disconsolate and confused Francine in Act V. In her reluctance to accept the pain of her disillusionment she wonders whether, after all, Robert really does love her. In so doing she unwittingly states the truth whilst overtly questioning it. Unlike Michel who is too involved, the reader/audience can fully appreciate the mixture of pathos, gentle humour and dramatic irony with which her words ring as she concludes: 'Il a peut-être cru que j'avais mal compris. C'est peut-être un malentendu' (T V, 129).

Technically speaking there is no actual misunderstanding in Martine. Nevertheless the words which pass between the two principal protagonists can be said to be flawed as instruments of communication because Martine attributes an importance and enduring significance to Julien's which as he utters them they do not have.

That words can be capable not only of various interpretations but also vastly differing degrees of intensity is brought home to the reader in the fifth Tableau when Julien is trying to make Martine talk about what has happened:

. . . Il y a un moment... où nous étions très amis... Vous vous rappelez? (**Martine reste immobile, sans répondre.**) Moi, je me rappelle... Je me rappellerai toujours...

(Un silence.)

(T I, 176)

The reader/spectator knows that in the silence before Martine simply reminds Julien about his drink she is saying to herself, "Oh! mais oui, je me rappelle... Moi aussi, je me rappellerai toujours...". He also knows that in spite of the fact that the same words are being used, Martine's, unspoken though they are, have a higher level of meaning than Julien's in terms of intensity, energy and resonances.

Le Printemps des Autres is another of Bernard's plays where the literal meaning of a protagonist's words is fully understood but his intentions are radically misinterpreted. Clarisse hears and interprets Maurice's words accurately linguistically speaking, but she nevertheless misunderstands him, because what he says is open to at least two interpretations, of which the wrong one is as plausible as the correct one, even when both are considered from an objective standpoint. Indeed Act I of this play is one of Bernard's best dramatic indictments of the ineffectiveness of words as instruments of communication because in the gestation of this misunderstanding, as opposed to the one in Nationale 6, the paralinguistic and non-verbal packaging of what Maurice says implicitly contains the same potential ambiguity as the spoken words per se. Consequently the deceived heroine cannot be accused, as Francine can, of ignoring or rationalizing the discrepancies between what her interlocutor says and what he expresses paralinguistically and non-verbally.³⁰⁴ The awkward

304. See pp. 167-168.

pauses, the embarrassment and the will to please showing in the eyes are as symptomatic of a shy debutant suitor as they are of a young man about to ask for his girlfriend's hand in marriage.

2. The tunnel vision of the intrinsically egoistic interlocutor

The potential perfidy of words as demonstrated in Nationale 6, Martine and Le Printemps des Autres means that if interlocutors are to communicate effectively, they have to select the words they speak, and interpret the ones they hear, according to common criteria. Bernard's plays suggest that in practice this is often not the case, largely because the code governing a person's selection of the words he speaks and the meanings he hears is dictated by his dominating personal concerns which are rarely similar to his interlocutor's, never identical and sometimes very different.

The reader/spectator of Nationale 6 is informed of the personal preoccupations of both Francine and Robert before the fateful conversation at the beginning of Act III. We learn from Francine's talk with her father in Act I that it is with very strong and precise expectations that she enters into dialogue with Robert. She really wants to be in conversation with him. The fulfilment of her sweetest dreams is at stake in the words they exchange. It is made equally clear that Robert's attitude to any dialogue he has with Francine could scarcely be more dissimilar. If Robert's presence in the house is a dream come true for Francine, Bernard gives his hero every opportunity to let the reader/spectator know that for him it is a nightmare.

'Quelle guigne!', 'C'est une catastrophe!', 'Ah! fichue panne!' he interjects at intervals during his conversation with his father in Act II (T V, 38, 41 and 46). When Robert finally takes notice of Francine, he sees her above all as a potential model for his painting. On starting up the conversation at the beginning of Act III he is making the best of an unsatisfactory situation, and trying to make sure that at least his work benefits from the untoward circumstances. Francine's dearest aspirations as she converses with Robert are clearly defined, lie in the forefront of her mind, and involve Robert specifically. Robert's on the other hand are vague, are not in the forefront of his mind, and do not involve Francine in particular. Mentally Francine is geared to the future, as she more or less tentatively entertains the idea of marrying Robert. The latter, however, is living very much more in the present.

It is through the non-verbal communication signals which Martine gives at the very beginning of the play that Bernard informs his reader/audience how she is predisposed to take Julien's light-hearted flirting seriously. When she spots the shade of the apple tree, before picking up the baskets again she stretches her hands '**avec joie**' and '**se précipite vers le talus où elle se laisse tomber**' (Martine, T I, 97). The terms in which we are told she appreciates the shade are also significant: '**Sa tête, renversée en arrière, semble aspirer avec ivresse la fraîcheur de l'ombre**' (T I, 97). This is clearly a healthy country girl who has a zest for life and

knows how to savour it. When she realizes a man is coming, she is certainly not indifferent to his approach. She could have simply checked that she was presentable and hastily tidied herself up as any woman might do in such circumstances if only out of innate vanity or instinctive coquetry. Bernard is much more explicit: **'Vivement elle baisse sa jupe, relève ses cheveux, en tapote les extrémités sur les tempes, défripe son corsage, remet ses paniers droit'** (T I, 97). The girl who only a few minutes before was her natural self, flinging her arms and legs **'à droite et à gauche, n'importe comment'** (T I, 97), all of a sudden wants things to be and to look just right. Significantly Bernard makes it quite clear that all this is in aid of a man and not just a person by reinforcing the point with text. It is appropriate that a prototype of the French drama of the unspoken between the Wars should open with a silent monologue. That this should develop into a traditional soliloquy is surprising, since in reality people rarely speak their thoughts aloud when they are alone.³⁰⁵ Bernard nevertheless presented his leading lady with the challenge of opening the play with a 'Qui est-ce?' addressed to herself. If the inevitably nerve-wracked actress did not have exactly the right intonation when answering her own question with such simplistic statements as 'C'est un homme' and 'Un jeune homme...' (T I, 97), she could raise a laugh which would destroy the ambiance of the opening Tableau, threaten Martine's

305. See pp. 6-9.

viability as a credible character and put the entire play at risk. Moreover, these particular statements appear to be redundant. After all, as soon as Martine says 'Comme il a chaud!...' (T I, 98), the reader/spectator knows that the person coming from Bateux is male. Bernard, however, was an arch-enemy of redundant text. One can only conclude, therefore, that he accepted the challenge of making Martine say these statements in order to draw the reader/spectator's attention clearly and rapidly to her essential emotional preoccupation and to the fact that she is especially male-conscious at the time.

Similarly with Julien, Bernard is quick to inform the reader/spectator of the principal factors behind his flirtation with Martine. Within minutes of his appearance he has said enough for the audience/reader of 1922 to have guessed that he is a recently demobilized survivor of the First World War, and he shortly confirms this. Returning to civilian life for Julien means a fresh start, and he is open to all the beauty this new life has to offer him. Grateful to be alive, free of military discipline and full of expectant hope, he, no less than Martine, is full of the 'joie de vivre'. This is stated explicitly later when he explains to his grandmother why he has been so restlessly impatient since returning to Grandchin:

Grand'mère, depuis quinze jours que je suis à Grandchin, est-ce que tu ne m'as pas vu souvent aussi agité? C'est la joie, c'est l'immense joie d'être libre, d'être en France, d'être ici, près de toi...
(T I, 116)

Initially it would seem that Julien's mood and personal preoccupations are sufficiently compatible with Martine's for their encounter to have happy consequences. These fail to materialize, Julien's flirtation proving in its essence to have only marginally more substance than Robert's in Nationale 6. Although he has no intention of behaving dishonourably, for Julien his relationship with Martine amounts to nothing more than 'une jolie histoire, qui pourrait être plus jolie... ou moins jolie... C'est la même chose...' (T I, 119). When Madame Mervan asks him at one point what he actually wants from Martine, his reply is significant: 'Ah! grand'mère, le sais-je, ce que je veux?... Des projets?... J'en ai trop fait quand je ne pouvais pas les réaliser. Aujourd'hui je me laisse vivre' (T I, 118). On the other hand, as the play develops, we learn Martine's reasons for being as male-conscious as Bernard suggests she is in the first Tableau: pressure is being put on her to marry Alfred whom she does not love, and she knows that for practical reasons she is not going to be able to refuse him indefinitely. On a second reading or viewing of the play we understand why so much emotion is stirred up in Martine by Julien's flirting and realize that Alfred's interruption of their initial dialogue probably aggravates this process, making her all the more inclined to charge Julien's words with an intensity he never intended. Martine's future is potentially at stake. Harsh reality, however, could not be further from Julien's mind, and for him only the immediate present is engaged. Indeed there are repeated indications that for Julien

his first encounter with Martine has something unreal about it, something out of earthly time and space. 'On dirait vraiment qu'il n'existe plus rien en dehors de cette ombre' he says and, still referring to the shade of the apple tree, continues 'Il fait si accablant "dehors"...' (T I, 103). A little later he tells her 'Rien que de vous regarder me prouve que Grandchin c'est quelque chose d'un peu féérique. C'est un monde à part. C'est la lune' (T I, 104). Robert may not call Francine 'une fée' but Julien unequivocally calls Martine one, suggesting that as such she has the ephemeral quality of an apparition. In the course of time, therefore, it becomes very evident that in the opening two Tableaux of the play Martine's subjacent dialogue with her intimate self and Julien's with his are sufficiently divergent for us to conclude that they, like Francine and Robert, are talking to one another along totally different wavelengths. A fortnight after his initial encounter with Martine Julien tells his grandmother:

. . . Je ne suis pas toujours avec toi aussi expansif que je le voudrais. C'est ma nature. Ce qui fait le fond de ma vie, je l'aime sans manifester et, à côté de cela, je m'extasierai sur une fleur passagère. (T I, 116)

Unfortunately Julien is not a 'fleur passagère' for Martine, he is a potential life-saver.

Marie Ménessier, née Nodier, of Le Secret d'Arvers, is not desperate for a suitor. She is happily married and knows she is popular, so she is not on the lookout for disguised or semi-disguised overtures on the part of anyone. She does not

suspect that Arvers's problem is his hopeless love for her, even when his feelings and her obtuseness are as good as spelt out for her, or at least very strongly hinted at, in his sonnet. This is largely because she is so caught up with the practicalities and physical realities of the present moment. Moreover, although she is no stranger to compliments, she is used to being the focus of direct, expansive adulation. She is not used to people who are indirect or reticent in expressing their emotions either in their speech or their poetry. Moreover, this kind of reticence is not one of her own particular characteristics. She is someone who, at least in the company of friends, does seem to say most of what she thinks as she thinks it. When Fontaney asks after her husband, she not only makes a point of gently reproaching him for not enquiring sooner, she also shows that she is quite happy to talk about her love (T II, 18). No doubt because she believes that if she were in Arvers's position, she would confide honestly in a good friend, she takes at face value his explanation that his unhappiness is due to his boredom in the solicitor's office where he works. In this sense Marie Nodjier-Ménessier offers a classic example of a phenomenon that Bernard indirectly suggests is a major factor contributing to faulty or abortive communication, namely people's tendency to assume that others think, react and consequently talk very much as they do.

Any reader/spectator of Martine, Nationale 6 or Le Secret d'Arvers who is tempted to say that he would never have such tunnel vision is offered a salutary lesson in Act I of

Le Printemps des Autres where Bernard allows the reader/spectator to fall into the same trap as the leading female protagonist, who this time is neither credulous nor young but a mature and fairly strong-minded woman of the world.

The opening of this play confirms a point made implicitly in the first Tableau of Martine, namely that physical surroundings, because of the atmosphere created by them and the influence this exerts on the mood of the interlocutors, can have an important bearing on the way words are received and exchanged. There can be no doubt that the leafy apple tree and Summer sunshine set Martine and her blond hair off to perfection so that Julien is encouraged to praise her in terms he might well not have used in a more sombre setting favouring objectivity. The dialogue would almost certainly have taken a somewhat different course if Martine and Julien had met under clouds and in ugly surroundings. The reader/spectator appreciates the full significance of the actual décor as the Tableau develops. Similarly, the importance of the details Bernard chooses to give in his stage directions at the beginning of Le Printemps des Autres becomes clear in the course of Act I. From her conversation with Maurice we learn that Clarisse's principal preoccupation at the time they meet is an emotionally consuming one. Widowed at twenty-five she had numerous admirers, then a serious liaison terminated only two months previously. Now in her forties, she is currently feeling lonely, unsure about her continuing seductiveness and afraid that she may be destined never to find love again. On a second

reading or viewing of the play we realize that when Maurice approaches Clarisse, her most recent 'activity', namely relaxing on a chaise longue listening to gypsy music, has done nothing to divert her mind from her emotional life. On the contrary, her mood and thoughts have been so conditioned that, although far less credulous than her theatrical sisters, Francine and Martine, Clarisse is predisposed to take Maurice's words, if she possibly can, in a way that is comforting to herself.

Clarisse quickly suspects that Maurice is beating round the bush and deliberately hiding his real concern(s). She senses the vibrations of his inner dialogue but completely misinterprets them, assuming that his unspoken thoughts are running along the lines on which she would like them to be running. Maurice, meanwhile, is totally absorbed by his love of Gilberte and the need to win her mother's approval. This means that the words Clarisse and Maurice speak to one another when they meet, and the way each interprets those (s)he hears, are governed by very different personal criteria. Their hearing and vision are dictated by the tunnels along which each insists on moving. The pattern is familiar, but on this occasion Bernard chooses to take the audience down one of the tunnels, that is Clarisse's, until the very end of the conversation. The first-time reader/spectator, therefore, is almost as deceived as Clarisse until Gilberte rushes in, realizes that she has gatecrashed Maurice's tête-à-tête with her mother and subsequently finds herself obliged to pour out all the young

couple have been keeping secret for weeks. However, what the second-time reader/spectator loses in suspense and in the surprise element at the end of the Act he gains in a different form of dramatic interest.³⁰⁶

Maurice could hardly do more to confuse Clarisse if he tried but this is not his aim. Of course, he can be charged with procrastination, but his intentions are honourable, and he is essentially honest. He is clearly no more accustomed to trifling callously with the feelings of vulnerable women than Martine's tormentor. As for the factors exonerating Julien, one cannot help feeling that there would have been something distinctly inhuman about a young and single freshly demobilized soldier who resisted the temptation to flirt with Martine under the shade of an apple tree by a 'route noyée de soleil, en juillet, à midi' (Martine, T I, 97). In fact Robert Vanier and Julien Mervan are essentially no more unfeeling than Francine and Martine. Both girls suffer genuinely when stripped of their illusions, but they are no more respectful of the emotions of the men who love them in vain. At her most sympathetic all Francine can say with reference to Antoine is 'Je regrette si j'ai pu le peiner. Mais que veux-tu que j'y fasse? J'ai eu assez de chagrin pour mon compte, va, papa...' (Nationale 6, T V, 131). Martine, for her part, is quite brutal with Alfred.

306. A detailed analysis - possible only with hindsight - of the crucial misunderstanding in the making is given in Appendix A (pp. 451-454) as a further example of Bernard's skill and thoroughness in exposing the unreliability of the oral communication process in everyday situations.

It is cruelly ironic that Martine never verbally expresses her feelings for Julien who at one point is crying out for her to do so,³⁰⁷ but expresses in unequivocal language her feelings for Alfred who refuses to hear her, remaining impervious to her threat to leave, to her saying that she does not want him to touch her and to her blunt 'Je ne veux pas de toi. Ça ne te suffit pas?...' (Martine, T I, 134).

The adored Marie Nodier-Ménessier of Le Secret d'Arvers cannot be written off as particularly insensitive either. She is neither selfish nor unobservant. Far from it, she is caring, considerate and sympathetic. She notices Fontaney is not looking well and expresses her concern in terms that we can only assume are sincere: 'Toujours le même, ce bon Fontaney... Il ne changera jamais, je crois. Mais il a bien mauvaise mine. Cela m'inquiète. Pauvre garçon, cela m'inquiète...' (T II, 35). She comments on Arvers's gloomy expression when she looks up from the piano (T II, 28). She genuinely wants to help him. She simply cannot hear what he cannot express vocally, and she does not grasp the import of what he expresses non-verbally.

The lack of judgementalism invited on our part by Bernard's presentation of Robert Vanier, Julien Mervan, Marie Nodier-Ménessier and Maurice Gardier is significant in itself. It suggests that the combination of tunnel vision and egoistic insensitivity which is the hallmark of his characters' failure to penetrate, or to attempt to penetrate, their interlocutors'

307. See pp. 137-138.

screens of 'dialogue entendu' should not be confused outright with more blatantly reprehensible strains of selfishness, but be considered as something of which people are not usually conscious and, to a certain extent, as the norm in any dialogue irrespective of the individuals involved.

3. The poltergeist effect of unconscious motivations

One of the most interesting points insisted upon in Nationale 6 is that misunderstandings can occur for which nobody can be held culpably responsible. Even Antoine has to concede that he cannot blame Robert personally for initiating the 'malentendu': 'Non, non ce n'est pas ta faute... Et pourtant si, Robert... c'est ta faute, parce que... tu es jeune, mon petit... jeune . . . Oui, oui, c'est bien ta faute... Tu as vingt-deux ans' (T V, 110). Robert certainly does not consciously intend to court Francine. In as far as he does flirt with her, he is merely conforming to a social convention, and he genuinely pays very little attention to what he is saying because he is concentrating on his work at the time. It is obvious that Francine does her best to give her father an honest summary of her conversation. As for Michel, intent only on his daughter's ultimate happiness, he presses Francine repeatedly to tell him as much as she can remember so that he can help her interpret Robert's statements correctly. Together father and daughter review and analyse these in some detail. Unfortunately, however, once they have come to one wrong conclusion, the other errors follow almost as a matter of

course. Thus blame for the classic 'malentendu' which constitutes the dramatic substance of Nationale 6 cannot be laid at the door of any of the three characters involved. Robert cannot be written off as an unfeeling cad any more than Francine as a gullible simpleton or Michel as an irresponsible parent. The rest of the play belies such straightforward labelling. It is as if Bernard were at pains to make the point that there are no easy answers to interpersonal communication difficulties - nor any really comforting explanations. Afterwards, none of the characters can say how the misunderstanding occurred. Robert is genuinely amazed when he learns how Francine interpreted his words. Antoine's explanation 'Mais elle a tout pris à la lettre' (T V, 109) is only half-correct. In trying to understand Robert's intention from what Francine tells him, Michel does not take everything literally. On the contrary, he is on the lookout for hidden meanings. When it is all over, Francine is as uncomprehending as she is sad. Michel tells her that they will never really know what happened. It is ironic that the character who comes closest to an appreciation of the root of the problem is Elisa who would appear to be the least privy to inside information. Michel tells Francine, 'Peut-être que ta mère a un peu raison quand elle dit que tu t'étais monté le bourrichon... et moi aussi' (T V, 129). Although she draws it without realizing its full significance and without using any technical terms, Elisa's conclusion touches on the all-important role played in the communication process by unconscious motivations.

Consciously Francine and Michel do not want to be misled or to mislead; unconsciously they are misled and they do mislead.

Michel is a particularly good example of the way people can embark on a conversation with preconceived ideas, which make them unconsciously interpret the words they hear, and select the words they use, in accordance with principles that might well be fitting in other circumstances but are inappropriate for the occasion. Michel makes the mistake of assuming suitors always court in a certain way to which he has the key. His comments to the confused Francine, just after Robert has left, are significant:

MICHEL

Hé... Je sais bien que dans ces cas-là on dit le contraire de ce qu'on veut dire...

FRANCINE

Le contraire?

MICHEL

On louvoie, comme disent les marins... C'est la seule façon d'aller contre le vent. Et, dans la vie, on s' imagine toujours avoir le vent debout, même quand il vous pousse.

(T V, 82-83)

This exchange takes place before Francine starts her detailed report of her conversation with Robert. Immediately after hearing her father's words she becomes 'rêveuse' (T V, 83). Nevertheless, by her reluctance to take Robert's calling her a

'phénomène' as complimentary Francine shows that she is still not entirely undiscerning:

FRANCINE

Pourtant, il arrive qu'on traite les gens de phénomène pour se moquer d'eux.

MICHEL

Eh! justement, c'est clair. On prend un terme ironique, mais à double sens, pour exprimer une vérité profonde. C'est beaucoup plus facile.

FRANCINE

Tu crois?

MICHEL

Tu n'avais pas compris cela?... . . .

(T V, 83-84).

It is from this point on that Francine seems to become more credulous. Thus Michel guides her blindly into the trap into which he himself has unwittingly fallen, so she is encouraged to misconstrue Robert's words partly by her father's preconceived ideas. However, it is above all the unconscious hold of the girl's long-nurtured dreams and anticipated emotions which is primarily at the origin of the confusion.

It would seem that the apparently fairy-tale nature of Robert's coming into her life makes Francine all the more consciously determined to question her immediate assumptions, and it is no doubt her reluctance to be the victim of her own

gullibility that encourages her to put her trust in her father's judgement. Her rational, conscious desire for his impartial opinion is genuine, but unconsciously she engineers her report so that her deepest aspirations receive the support they want without detriment to her conscience or peace of mind. Similarly, because of his love for her, Michel consciously wants to give Francine sound advice but unconsciously chooses to interpret her report in such a way that he gives her the greatest immediate pleasure.

A comparison of Francine's actual dialogue with Robert and the exchanges reported by her to Michel makes it clear that, however innocently and unwittingly, Francine gives her father a very erroneous report of her conversation with Robert.³⁰⁸ In fact, most of the statements Francine makes to Michel are partially right and at the same time highly misleading. The discrepancies between Robert's actual conversation with Francine and the latter's report of it to her father are so many examples of the extremely subtle way Francine unconsciously and therefore innocently selects from her memory the words she wants to recall, and reports them to her father in such a manner that he draws the conclusion her unconscious and, indeed, his unconscious want him to draw.

308. A detailed analysis of the verbal content of both the conversation and the report is given in Appendix B (pp. 455-457), as it is the the best way of demonstrating Bernard's competence and meticulousness in illustrating the irresistible determination of the unconscious to manipulate the communication process as it wishes.

It goes without saying that the same principles apply as far as paralinguistic and non-verbal communication signals are concerned. Francine does not mislead her father simply by reporting a particular selection of Robert's words and by omitting certain crucial nuances which she did not hear, understand or register at the time or cannot remember ten minutes later; she also misleads him by failing to give him an adequate description of the paralinguistic and non-verbal packaging in which Robert's words were wrapped. If one fails to take into account the power of Francine's unconscious, this seems surprising, for elsewhere in the play she shows that she is not insensitive to atmosphere, facial expressions and attitude. Although she does not acknowledge it at the time, she has no difficulty accurately discerning Antoine's paralinguistically and non-verbally expressed feelings for her. Being particularly influenced in her conversation with Robert, however, by her deep desire to find the love of her life in him, she unconsciously disregards the paralinguistic and non-verbal signals he gives, or misinterprets them so that they are in her favour. That Robert's 'C'est un conte de fées...' is negative rather than positive - a gentle criticism of her pipedreaming rather than a compliment - is conveyed by an all-important 'Peuh!...' which precedes Robert's statement and which Francine omits to mention to her father, in spite of the fact that she clearly registers it at the time, asking, 'Pourquoi dites-vous "peuh"?' (T V, 72). There are repeated indications in the scene that Robert's concentration is very

much on his work and that his inattentiveness to Francine and to her reactions is not feigned. After talking to her father, Francine becomes convinced that Robert's strange way of speaking to her was disguising 'une idée cachée' (T V, 87). In fact it can simply be put down to Robert's painting her portrait at the same time as he is conversing. Francine opts for the former interpretation because deep down this is what she wants to believe. Here one is reminded of Marie-Louise in L'Invitation au Voyage. When she is besotted with a figment of her own imagination, alias Philippe, she retrospectively attributes not only to the latter's words but also to his paralinguistic and non-verbal communication signals meanings which he never intended:

Oh! j'ai des souvenirs qui ne me trompent pas...
Des paroles, des regards, des serrements de main, des
façons, à table, de me passer les plats, ou, au
tennis, de m'envoyer la balle... et tant de choses
encore que tu ne sais pas... (T I, 322)

Jacqueline realizes that these words, glances and gestures were almost certainly delivered in a more or less neutral manner, but she cannot prevail against the power of Marie-Louise's unconscious wishful thinking.

Thus, although Bernard's theatre emphasizes that what is expressed paralinguistically and non-verbally can be of as much significance as the spoken words per se, it also makes the point that attentiveness and sensitivity in this respect are no match against the powerful will of a dominant unconscious. In Marie Stuart, Reine d'Ecosse Darnley interprets the anguish in

Marie's voice when she is with him in Glasgow as a sign that she is telling him the truth,³⁰⁹ because that is what he fundamentally wants to believe. 'Il ne demande qu'à te croire, ce petit imbécile', Bothwell tells the Queen before sending her off on her mission (T VII, 84). Marie's 'acting' can be poor with impunity on this occasion, because Darnley is unconsciously preconditioned to be convinced by her. When Blanche Mérim of Le Feu qui reprend mal tells André that in his obsessive jealousy he is like a sick person whom she will look after and help to get better 's'il veut bien se laisser faire', he replies 'Il ne demande que cela' (T I, 57-58). However, until the crisis in Act III, an instinct rooted in André's unconscious wants him to believe Blanche is guilty of infidelity more strongly than he consciously wants to accept her innocence.³¹⁰ Consequently, although it may seem as though he is crying out to believe Blanche, as Darnley is crying out to believe Marie Stuart in the previous example, under the influence of his unconscious, André is actually crying out more loudly not to believe her and accordingly never does for any length of time.

Through the example of André, the fact that people tend to see what they unconsciously want to see is shown to hold good even with regard to the eyes - the purest and most reliable of

309. See pp. 112-113.

310. See pp. 240-242.

communication tools though they may be.³¹¹ This is illustrated in the following exchange when, urging him to be reassured, Blanche refers to the honesty in her eyes:

BLANCHE, **s'accrochant à lui et cherchant son regard**

Alors, regarde-moi, André. Mes yeux te laissent pénétrer jusqu'au fond de moi et je ne rougis pas. Vois si mes yeux mentent...

ANDRE, **penché sur elle**

Non, ce regard ne ment pas... (Il la regarde **fixement. Et tout à coup.**) Pourquoi rougis-tu?... Pourquoi détournes-tu la tête?

BLANCHE, **se dégageant**

C'est toi qui me gênes. Il passe dans tes yeux des pensées affreuses.

ANDRE, **dur**

Va, tu n'as pu voir dans mes yeux que ce qui était en toi.

(Il **s'écarte.**)

(Le Feu qui reprend mal, T I, 44)

The role of intuition in the communication process is relevant in this context. At the beginning of A la Recherche des Coeurs Charles understands the gravity of the situation less from what is said on the subject than from what he senses. 'Il y a des intuitions qui ne trompent pas' he tells Claire (T III, 11). The evidence of Bernard's theatre suggests that,

311. See pp. 106-110.

although this kind of intuition frequently has some kind of foundation in fact, it can at times become the pawn of a person's unconscious, or it may even be an irrational unconscious instinct masquerading as an essentially rational and factually based intuition. Irrespective of what she has or has not heard and seen, Francine's intuition makes her sceptical of Michel's conclusion that Robert has made her a 'déclaration déguisée' (Nationale 6, T V, 87). Unfortunately this intuition falls victim to the power of her deepest driving wish. Antoine, for his part, is intuitively convinced that Francine is in love. When Robert asks him on what he bases his conviction that she will welcome his, Antoine's, overtures, he replies, 'Des riens... des riens... Fie-toi à moi... J'ai l'habitude du coeur des femmes... (souriant.) C'est mon métier, l'oublies-tu?' (T V, 96). Later he adds, 'Ah! je vais peut-être un peu vite. Mais j'ai confiance, vois-tu, et je suis un homme que ses intuitions trompent rarement...' (T V, 98). In fact Antoine is not deceived by 'ses intuitions', Francine has been struck by Cupid's arrow. However, he is misled by his unconscious which blinds him to the possibility that she could be infatuated with his son rather than himself.

4. The meddlesome consequences of a complex and unruly psyche

That every interlocutor in every conversation has an impenetrable, more or less active, essentially uncontrollable and potentially meddlesome unconscious is easily forgotten. The reader/spectator thinks he has a reasonable understanding of

Jeanne de Pantin and Denise Murette until Bernard gives him a privileged and inevitably unrealistic glimpse into their unconscious through the stratagem of materializing their dreams on stage. Jeanne's dream, as she dozes while waiting to appear in court, drives home amongst other things the fact that she has a powerful imagination, illusions of grandeur and a natural tendency to exaggerate and exult in the dramatic. Although some of these traits find sublimated expression in the day-to-day reality of her life, this more direct and explicit presentation of them helps us to a better understanding of her behaviour elsewhere in the play. It also helps us to understand more fully certain remarks she makes. Thanks to her dream the reader/spectator has a good idea of the whole Jeanne so that he is not surprised, as he might otherwise be, by the conceit implicit in her question when she asks Félicien, referring to her own words, 'Et elles ne vous grisait pas?' (Jeanne de Pantin, T IV, 148). Although one has to bear in mind that she is in mourning at the time, Denise Murette's dream gives the reader/spectator a fuller picture of the mixed and to a large extent conflicting feelings which govern the heroine's actions and words in Acts I and II. Through this third Act, which in Bernard's words constitutes 'l'envers, la trame, l'explication secrète' of the previous two (Denise Murette, T II, 6), we are made explicitly aware of Denise's strong filial love, her constant anxiety to please her father, her insatiable need for his approval, help and attention, and her rivalry with the memory of her mother in this respect. In

conjunction with these emotions we see her regrets at having sacrificed marital love and her own career for her father, and her consequent resentment against Michel bordering on hate and giving rise to a secret wish for his death. It is in the light of this privileged information that the reader/spectator retrospectively ceases to be puzzled by certain sections of dialogue between Denise and the other characters, in particular by her frantic indecision as to whether or not to tell Gérard the truth about the paintings. Denise is a puzzle to Gérard largely because he does not know her secret. Henri comes close to understanding her but, deprived of the insight we are subsequently given, not as close as the reader/spectator. The very fact that the audience of Jeanne de Pantin and Denise Murette can understand their heroines' words better after being allowed, in a manner of speaking, inside their unconscious, indirectly implies that in the normal course of events the full impact of much of what is spoken is lost on its hearers.

A number of Bernard's plays, moreover, provide - with no sacrifice of their realism - some particularly complex examples of the way the unconscious can interact consistently or spasmodically with the conscious or subconscious mind so that issues become blurred, the straightforward exchange of reliable information is threatened or dialogue ceases to be viable. When old Monsieur Mérin is still waiting for André to return from the army, he describes him as 'un type épatant'. 'Il est si scrupuleux et si bon qu'il en devient bête' he says to Jeanne Liron, who adds 'Je souhaiterais à tout le monde d'être bête de

cette façon-là' (Le Feu qui reprend mal, T I, 24). Whatever the nature of the psychological damage done by his War experience, the unfounded jealousy of such a man causes his dialogue with a wife, whom he loves and who loves him, to become so tense and stressful that she resolves to leave him and he resorts to physical violence. 'Aujourd'hui, nous ne parlons plus la même langue', he says at one point in Act III (T I, 84), and eventually communication literally breaks down when Blanche, frightened by his tight grip on her wrists, struggles free and runs off into the bedroom. At least André knows he has a problem. The protagonists of L'Invitation au Voyage, Le Printemps des Autres and Le Jardinier d'Ispahan become more unwitting pawns of their conflicting impulses, which makes their statements all the more consistently contradictory and confusing. This is true up to a point, even for the student of these plays, as the dramatist offers no explicit guidance to an understanding of his characters in the form of supplementary stage directions or notes.

One minute Marie-Louise of L'Invitation au Voyage is saying hard and unsympathetic things to Jacqueline about Philippe, the next minute she is asking for her complicity in a mooted elopement. Although we are reduced to conjecture in such cases, it is practically certain that this change in Marie-Louise is due primarily to Philippe's suddenly becoming associated with a country which symbolizes all the expansive exoticism, romance and adventure lacking in her own restricted existence and also, perhaps, to one, or a combination, of two

other secondary psychological mechanisms. The first possibility is that Philippe becomes interesting to her when he becomes totally inaccessible in the same way that children in a play school want the toys which are not available to them rather than the ones they can have. The second possibility is that Marie-Louise does find Philippe attractive in some ways from the beginning but her moral sense makes her repress her nascent fascination and replace it with dislike. Her groundlessly exaggerated antipathy against Philippe during his 'stage' would suggest that this second possibility or a combination of the two is likely to be the case. When Philippe leaves France to go as far away as Argentina 'pour longtemps . . . peut-être toute sa vie' (T I, 282), the reaction formation mechanism becomes redundant,³¹² and Marie-Louise can indulge in her imaginary love affair with impunity. Jacqueline has no inside information regarding these processes as they occur in her sister's psyche, so the following unnaturally charged, disjointed and largely abortive dialogue, just after Jacqueline has told Marie-Louise that Philippe is at Epinal for two days, is to be expected:

312. 'A defense mechanism in which unacceptable or threatening impulses are denied by going to the opposite extreme . . . and, as pointed out by R.M. Goldenson, The Encyclopedia of Human Behavior (1970), "the outward behavior may, at least in some cases, provide a disguise or unconscious outlet for the tendencies it seems to oppose . . .". Goldenson (ed.), Longman Dictionary, p. 621.

MARIE-LOUISE, **défaillante**

Mon Dieu!... Mon Dieu!...

JACQUELINE

Eh bien, tu es dans un bel état... Si j'avais su...

MARIE-LOUISE

Jacqueline, c'est une telle nouvelle, une telle nouvelle...

JACQUELINE

Qu'est-ce qu'elle a de si extraordinaire? On croyait Philippe en Amérique. Il est en France. Il est venu à Epinal... Voilà!

MARIE-LOUISE, **brisée**

Qu'est-ce que je vais faire?

JACQUELINE

Ce que tu vas faire?

MARIE-LOUISE

Mais le sentir à Epinal, c'est... Oh! c'est intolérable...

JACQUELINE

Intolérable?... Et pourquoi donc?

MARIE-LOUISE

Pourquoi?... Une... une impression... que tu ne peux pas comprendre, toi, oh! non!

(T I, 318-319)

How can Jacqueline possibly understand Marie-Louise's reaction to her news, when even the objective and initiated reader/spectator can only suggest an explanation with hindsight? To have nourished an imaginary love affair on the scale of Marie-Louise's with Philippe Valbeille of Argentina, then to find that he is suddenly accessible in geographical terms but that she is nevertheless unable to go to him on other grounds is 'intolérable' for emotional reasons. At the same time, whilst Marie-Louise's conscience allows her to idealize Philippe as much as she likes when he is geographically inaccessible in Buenos, to think of him at all whilst he is physically accessible in Epinal is just as 'intolérable' for moral reasons. She understandably needs at least a few minutes to accustom herself to the new situation. When Jacqueline makes the possibility of actually seeing Philippe appear blindingly easy, Marie-Louise is no less 'affolée' (T I, 322). Again she has to get used to the idea. Her conversation with Jacqueline gives her this adjustment time, and in the end her deep longing to see Philippe wins the battle of impulses raging inside her, with the result that Marie-Louise finally does what she fundamentally wants to do. Meanwhile, Jacqueline inevitably finds much of what Marie-Louise says contradictory and outlandish.

The misunderstandings which arise because of the interference of the imagination or the unconscious mind can become so complex that they never get cleared up. Even if

circumstances develop so that people finally become aware of what has happened and manage to analyse the psychological processes that have taken place with a fair degree of accuracy, explaining their findings is another thing. We are left with the impression that Olivier may never get to the bottom of Marie-Louise's imaginary non-affair. For all we know he could spend the rest of his life assuming that she really did have some kind of illicit relationship with Philippe. The reader/spectator can tell from the delivery, style and content of Marie-Louise's report of her conversation with Philippe at Epinal that she was disillusioned there and has come back actually holding the opinion of Monsieur Valbeille that she unconsciously pretended to have two years earlier, at the beginning of the play, when she categorically dismisses him as nothing but the 'fils d'un marchand de clous . . . pas un mauvais garçon' but one who nevertheless 'sent sa ferraille à vingt mètres' (T I, 276-277). Olivier, however, who is more personally involved and far less informed than the privileged reader/spectator, cannot be so easily convinced. To his 'Dis-moi... quand dois-tu le revoir?' Marie-Louise simply replies 'Mais jamais...' (T I, 350). Consciously or unconsciously she opts to say as little as possible, partly, no doubt, because nothing has actually happened and partly because, as was noted above, even if she were lucidly aware of them herself, she simply would not know how to begin explaining

all the romantic peregrinations of her imagination and the way they influenced her feelings.³¹³

Le Printemps des Autres is another play which illustrates the power of the unconscious or subconscious mind to turn dialogue into a minefield of error and confusion. Once Clarisse's eyes have been opened regarding her misunderstanding of Maurice's intentions in Act I, she is besieged by a variety of emotions of which the two main ones are almost certainly a suppressed jealousy of her daughter as a victorious rival for Maurice's affection, and a repressive guilt controlling in particular her thwarted but unquenched infatuation with Maurice, which smacks of the incestuous when he becomes her son-in-law. Two reaction formation mechanisms are thus activated. In Kester Branford's words:

Clarisse's love for Maurice, once repressed, is replaced on the surface by dislike; so much so that the couple positively feel that she bears him malice. At the same time, her malevolence towards her daughter disguises itself as unstinted devotion.³¹⁴

Inevitably the more Clarisse is exposed to Maurice's presence and the stronger her infatuation with him grows, the more fully the first of these two mechanisms is activated, but this logic does not make its effects any less puzzling for the young couple. Gilberte complains to her mother:

313. See pp. 90-92.

314. A Study, p. 106.

Quelquefois tu es brusque avec lui, même un peu... désagréable. Nous ne savons pas bien pourquoi. Tout à l'heure encore... Maurice ne comprend pas. Et c'est surtout depuis que nous vivons chez toi. Il n'a pas changé, lui . . . (T I, 228)

Although she is undoubtedly more aware at certain times than at others, Clarisse is never fully conscious of her conflicting emotions until her total recognition of the truth at the end of the play. Meanwhile, as she tries in a semi-confused state to purge, control or make sense of her feelings, her conversation is laced in consequence with a string of verbal contradictions which inevitably perplex Gilberte and Maurice and, though to a lesser extent, the reader/spectator.

We note Clarisse's attempt to engineer a relationship between Madame Desgrées and Maurice, but only with hindsight do we understand why Clarisse says or does not say certain things and why she says what she says in the way that she does. When she promises, and later renews her resolve, to talk to Maurice about Madame Desgrées and to ask him not to go riding that evening, she tells Gilberte to go and fetch her husband in an abrupt tone of voice clearly expressing a kind of urgency:

CLARISSE, **brusquement**

Va, je vais lui parler... . . .

. . .

. . . (**Brusquement.**) Envoie-moi ton mari.

. . .

. . . Va, ma chérie, vite...

(T I, 229-230)

At the same time Clarisse is finding it hard to hold back her tears. With regard to these paralinguistic and non-verbal signals, Gilberte can only accept her mother's explanation that she is 'nerveuse' (T I, 230). We have a strong inkling why she is in this state, but we cannot appreciate the subtle complexity of the psychological mechanisms behind it until the end of the play. Clarisse is torn between two conflicting impulses. Clarisse the jealous woman does not want to do what Gilberte is asking her to do. Clarisse the good mother does. Her nobler self realizes that unless she acts '**brusquement**' she will lose the impetus to help her daughter, and the pressure of her conflicting jealousy-driven impulse to work against the latter's marriage will exert itself. Such details start to become clear in the course of Act III. Clarisse's double reaction to Gilberte's initially ambiguous news that 'tout est fini' (T I, 244), the encouragement she subsequently gives her daughter's fears and her exaltation at the prospect of a definitive rift between the couple confirm our suspicions, but it is not until Clarisse lies to Maurice on the telephone that all our reservations are removed and that she loses her right to the benefit of any doubt. Now Gilberte's eyes are also opened to the fact that Clarisse has been working against and not for her. She grasps at her mother's motive for doing this in a series of wild interrogative exclamations following Clarisse's categorical denial that she hates Maurice. At the same time Gilberte's 'Alors? alors? alors?...' (T I, 258) prompts Clarisse's dramatic self-discovery. Only now does

everything begin to fall into place retrospectively. The hitherto more or less perplexing verbal, paralinguistic and non-verbal communication signals given by Clarisse since the end of Act I cease to perplex.

The genuineness of Clarisse's realization that she has been the plaything and pawn of her own insidious unconscious and conflicting impulses is a crucial element in this play. If she were simply a consciously scheming woman driven by obsessive jealousy, or a meddling mother-in-law, or a calculatingly possessive mother, Le Printemps des Autres would be an entirely different kind of drama and less relevant to the subject currently under discussion in this thesis. Clarisse is even less culpable than Madeleine Landier of Le Jardinier d'Ispahan. We may understand the latter and feel for her in her plight, but her treatment of Germaine and her manipulation of events, even if they are carried out subconsciously, are so actively sustained and so dire in their consequences that we find it hard to exonerate her from all blame. At no stage, on the other hand, does Clarisse lose her essential innocence. Clarisse differs from Madeleine Landier in another respect. Rightly or wrongly, the latter's obsession with her parentage leads one to consider her to some degree as mentally unstable. Nor does Clarisse suffer from constant restlessness and dissatisfaction like the disturbed Marceline of L'Ame en peine. Clarisse is in no way unbalanced or eccentric. She has suddenly but simply suffered a very real disappointment, after which

much of what she says to her daughter and son-in-law sabotages rather than aids the communication process.

It is through the creation of Clarisse that Bernard best makes the point that words can be rendered ineffective instruments of communication by the machinations of an individual's unconscious and conflicting impulses. Anyone reviewing the text of the play cannot fail to be disturbed by the way a fundamentally innocent, honest and well-meaning woman can in all sincerity say to her daughter, 'la caressant', such things as 'Tu sais bien que je n'ai jamais pensé qu'à ton bonheur' (T I, 248), whilst she is actually working in that very conversation to destroy the girl's happiness. What makes words so treacherous in instances of this kind is the fact that the more consciously genuine the speaker is, the more the paralinguistic and non-verbal packaging is likely to tally with his spoken word. Had Clarisse been a cruel, hypocritical woman, something in her tone of voice, her facial expression or her caress might well have registered as spurious and alerted Gilberte. This is not the case because Clarisse's unconscious jealousy of her daughter does not preclude her feeling at the same time a wholly authentic and normal maternal love. This example alone demonstrates the fact that, although paralinguistic and non-verbal instruments of communication are sometimes more reliably informative than words, alone or in conjunction with the latter, they are subject to the poltergeist effect of the unconscious, which can doctor or distort them without fear of detection. Some kind of shock may

trigger off the repressed feelings prompting them to express themselves involuntarily, witness the '*cri involontaire*' accompanying Clarisse's 'Gilberte...' when she walks in on the couple in Act II and finds them not improperly, indeed very naturally, '*enlacés*' (T I, 220), but even then the involuntary signal still has to be correctly interpreted.

'Frankly, I don't know what this play is about', admits James Agate with regard to Le Jardinier d'Ispahan in a review, the very title of which is significant: 'An Odd Play'.³¹⁵ Much of what Madeleine Landier says perplexes her interlocutors and the reader/spectator, because she thwarts systematically and excessively inclinations and impulses which are amongst her predominant personality traits.³¹⁶ She is afraid that she may have inherited her mother's sensuality. Instead of accepting this probability, coming to terms with it and controlling any potential excesses through a firm but moderate self-discipline, her anxious determination to be virtuous at all costs makes her overreact to the detriment of her psychological health. When she is attracted to the virile and athletic Daniel who is to be the caretaker of her mother's estate, she is so frightened by her instincts that she precipitately marries a man whom she has hitherto flatly rejected, whom she does not love and who has

315. James Agate, The Contemporary Theatre: 1944 and 1945 (London, Harrap, 1946) p. 90.

316. The present analysis could not have been made with confidence without the support of Bernard's novel on Madeleine Landier. See Madeleine Landier & New-Chicago (Paris, Albin Michel, 1933).

none of the physical qualities of Daniel which she finds attractive. Confusion, tragedy and a complete breakdown of communication between Madeleine and her husband ensue, because her deep drives refuse to be repressed and exert themselves with a vengeance in spite of Madeleine's conscious will.

Madeleine is a character who knows a major part of herself, but wants to run away from what she knows. In this she resembles Charles Durban of A la Recherche des Coeurs. Unfortunately, there is no equivalent of Claire in her life to help her. She feels unable to unburden herself to anyone, least of all Robert, and when, in desperation, she finally makes a real attempt to explain her fears to her mother, she is interrupted by Robert's entrance and his declaration that Germaine has drowned herself, after which she undoubtedly believes that a heart-to-heart discussion with anyone is to a large extent futile. Before this tragedy a reaction formation mechanism is activated in Madeleine, who, because she consciously wants to be a dutiful wife, forces herself to be as pleasant as she can with Robert whom she actually dislikes intensely. She is largely successful in maintaining her mask, until Germaine's suicide removes the scales from her eyes. She then realizes that she has blotted her copybook as a good woman so radically by indirectly causing the girl's death that forcing herself to be pleasant with Robert becomes pointless. Since she has killed a lamb, ill-treating a sheep is of no consequence, particularly as she finds herself increasingly drawn towards an act of adultery with the now free Daniel.

This kind of analysis is difficult enough for the objective reader/spectator to make let alone Madeleine's interlocutors. Even when they confer with one another, Robert, Lorin and Madame Landier find her a puzzle. There is no way, for example, Robert can understand why Madeleine starts speaking cruelly to him after Germaine's death. At the same time his very incomprehension of her psyche does nothing in its turn to alleviate their communication difficulties. When Robert tells Madeleine that he appreciates her occasionally preferring to be alone and that nothing could do her more good than to go for a drive with Daniel, adding 'Tu as besoin de calme et l'atmosphère de cette campagne est si reposante... Sors une grande heure... Dis à Daniel de conduire doucement...' (T VI, 304), he has no idea of the internal battle he is fuelling inside her. On the one hand she knows she has only a dozen words to say to Robert to set events in motion that will remove Daniel from her proximity for good, and in so doing satisfy her rational and moral self. On the other hand her emotional and sensual self is pressurizing her to be in Daniel's presence as much as possible. Torn between these two competing impulses, Madeleine is in psychological torment. However, as she listens to Robert of all people unwittingly making it easy for her to take the latter course she cannot fail to be struck by the cruel irony and humour of the situation. To the initiated reader/spectator the verbal, paralinguistic and non-verbal signals she gives in response to his suggestion are perfectly logical but they understandably

leave Robert, who has simply suggested a run in the car, utterly nonplussed. When 'Madeleine, qui l'a écouté avec stupeur, est prise brusquement d'un rire nerveux', he asks her what the matter is:

MADELEINE, luttant contre son rire

Excuse-moi... Je ne peux pas... C'est effrayant... Je ne sais pas... Ah! excuse-moi...

(Elle sort rapidement.)

ROBERT

Mad...

(Il demeure atterré... . . .)

(T VI, 304-305)

It is at such moments in Bernard's theatre that our attention is drawn to the power of the pressurized psyche to make a complete mockery of the convention of dialogue.

Whether or not Madeleine Landier is more blameworthy or more psychologically disturbed than Clarisse Brieules, her story illustrates the same point that is made in L'Invitation au Voyage and Le Printemps des Autres, namely that, irrespective of the reason, if the excesses or aberrations of an uncontrolled imagination, an indisciplined drive or a rebellious impulse are allowed to hold sway, any dialogue between the individual in question and those around him is likely to be hampered or seriously adulterated.

5. Deux Hommes and La Louise

Although the wartime circumstances of Deux Hommes and La Louise make the conditions prevailing in both dialogues somewhat exceptional - not to mention the coincidences of the former and the special peculiarities of the latter - these one-act plays can be considered Bernardian blueprints containing implicit guidelines for the establishment of maximally effective oral communication.

In Deux Hommes Robert briefly quits his role of impersonal guard to make a gesture of human kindness to Hermann, thus showing that he is prepared to relate to him primarily as a man rather than as an enemy, a German or a prisoner. The German, however, does not respond when Robert speaks to him, giving the impression that he does not understand French and thereby erecting the ideal communication barrier, whereupon he lies down to sleep. Shortly afterwards Robert actually drops his mask completely when, believing himself to be as good as alone, he lets his thoughts dwell on his fiancée, to whom he is writing, and in so doing becomes visibly sad. Meanwhile, the apparently sleeping Hermann is surreptitiously watching a Robert '**rêveur, les yeux fixés devant lui, lourds de tristesse**' (T V, 216). At this point Robert, in writing the date, inadvertently mutters it out loud, thereby prompting a crucial ocular dialogue:

(Se rendant compte qu'il a parlé tout haut, il tourne la tête vers l'Allemand. Il s'aperçoit alors que celui-ci le regarde. Les deux hommes restent un moment immobiles, les yeux dans les yeux . . .)
(T V, 216)

Seeing behind Robert's protective mask is more than just a cue for Hermann to open up the conversation, it is a prerequisite. When pressed by Robert, after their initial verbal exchange, to say why he did not want to speak to begin with but subsequently changed his mind, Hermann eventually tries to explain:

L'ALLEMAND, après une hésitation

Ecoute... quand je suis arrivé ici... cette impression... cette solitude... c'était affreux.

ROBERT

Et maintenant?

L'ALLEMAND

Maintenant?

ROBERT

Tu n'as plus cette impression?

L'ALLEMAND

...Moins.

(Un long temps.)

ROBERT

Mais pourquoi?

L'ALLEMAND

J'ai vu que tu étais triste.

(T V, 218-219)

Not only is Hermann made aware of Robert's deepest feelings, he also finds he can readily identify with them. It turns out that beyond their common work and interests they both have a nineteen year old fiancée, from whom they are currently separated and whom they could well never see again. Hermann and Robert consequently have no difficulty empathizing with each other's most pressing emotional concerns, and such a meaningful bond is formed between them that by the end of their conversation each is prepared to sacrifice his life for the other.

The chances of there being any meaningful communication between la Louise, for whom it is apparently the norm to sleep routinely with different soldiers put up in her one-bedroom accommodation, and Pierre Garbin, who we are told 'croirait faire une infidélité à sa femme en regardant une fille décolletée' (La Louise, T III, 211), would seem to be as slim as between two men of different nationalities currently fighting in opposing camps. In fact, it is precisely because of their theoretical incompatibility that Pierre's companions think it will be a good joke to billet 'le modèle des maris' for one night with a girl 'qui aurait le prix de vertu dans le monde renversé' (T III, 211, 207). Indeed, to begin with, Pierre and la Louise communicate in a very faulty way. Just as Hermann catches a furtive glimpse of Robert's sensitive inner core at the beginning of Deux Hommes, la Louise observes Pierre's without his realizing it:

(Il porte lentement une photographie à ses lèvres. Et puis il la place sur la table, prend une feuille de papier et reste songeur. La porte de la chambre s'ouvre doucement. La Louise reste dans l'embrasure et le regarde un long moment. Soudain, Pierre, les coudes sur la table, prend sa tête à deux mains. Il reste un instant ainsi, et puis on entend un sanglot. La Louise fait un mouvement. Pierre se retourne brusquement et se lève.) (T III, 225)

Having thus seen behind her lodger's societal screen, la Louise is nevertheless more circumspect in her relations with Pierre than Hermann is at the corresponding juncture with Robert. At no point does Pierre talk to her as a type. He never says anything to her which he could not say to any woman. Yet she clearly believes, partly, no doubt, because of the way she has been primed by Sermain and partly from her own experience, that, given the minimum of coaxing and notwithstanding his marital status, Pierre will prove to be like all the other men she has lodged and will end up sleeping with her. When she encourages Pierre to make himself at home and says that she has always given a good reception to 'les pauvres gars' billeted with her (T III, 227), she is anticipating the sort of response made by previous lodgers and is embarrassed by the innocence of his reply which suggests he could be different. The meaningful dialogue between Pierre and la Louise and their openness with one another start to develop from this point. When she ventures tactfully into the sanctuary of his love and loneliness for his wife, he allows her to enter as far, possibly, as he would

allow another human soul. La Louise and Pierre cannot empathize with one another as directly as Hermann Bogler and Robert do, but Pierre appreciates the elements of feminine sensitivity which la Louise has retained, and she can identify the person she would have liked to be with the object of Pierre's love. It is for this woman whom she does not know that la Louise willingly effaces herself, just as it is indirectly for the fiancée of the other that Robert and Hermann are prepared to make their supreme sacrifice.

An analysis of these two plays confirms a conclusion that can be drawn from Bernard's theatre in its entirety, namely that although the problems inherent in any dialogue cannot be radically obviated, oral communication can be rendered considerably more meaningful given three conditions. The first of these is the determination, on the part of both interlocutors, to keep prejudices and preconceived ideas in check. The second is that, whilst being prepared to be known themselves, they should make the required effort to know their interlocutor by being attentive to all his verbal, paralinguistic and non-verbal signals. The third condition is that each should be as sensitive as possible, innately or altruistically, to the other's subjacent dialogue and deep emotional concerns once they are known. The evidence of Bernard's theatre also suggests that the second of these three

conditions, whilst being of considerable importance, is probably the hardest to fulfil.

6. The unknowable self, the unknowable interlocutor

It would certainly seem that, alongside prejudice-free openness and emotional sensitivity, a key element in effective communication must be knowledge of one's interlocutor. Evidently, crucial allowances and adjustments of attitude can only be made if the interlocutors know the relevant aspects of each other's temperament and personal history, the words exchanged being selected and interpreted in consequence. This knowledge is shown to be particularly hard to achieve, primarily because people are consciously or unconsciously too distrustful to allow themselves to be known. On this point it is worth noting that neither Robert of Deux Hommes nor Pierre Garbin of La Louise volunteers his vulnerability. In a manner of speaking Hermann and la Louise steal their initial and vital glimpses behind their interlocutors' social fronts.

Moreover, Bernard's theatre poses the problem of whether a person has only one real self, let alone whether or not it is knowable. If one looks no further than the beginning of Le Printemps des Autres, both the women involved can be said to have at least two identities. For Maurice, Gilberte is a young woman whom he would like to marry; for Clarisse she is 'une

toute petite fille' (T I, 208). Neither attitude to Gilberte is surprising. It is equally understandable that Maurice should approach Clarisse as a potential mother-in-law. The fact that this is precisely what she is is proven by Maurice's shortly becoming her son-in-law. That at the same time it would have been better had he not totally disregarded her identity as a still desirable widow in her forties is also true, but this begs the question of how many other identities Clarisse could have and how many of them Maurice could be expected to take into account when approaching her. This in turn leads one to consider whether any of these identities can claim to be the essential Clarisse more than the others. In the opening scene of Act III of A la Recherche des Coeurs Dariel says that he knew one Durban during the war, found another just six months previously and is now apparently about to meet a third (T III, 92). This ticklish issue central to the drama of Pirandello and touched on in Bernard's plays is double-faceted, and in any investigation into the efficiency of the oral communication process it is impossible to rest at considering the problems posed by a speaker's lack of knowledge of his interlocutor, one also has to take into account those engendered by his lack of knowledge of himself.

Self-knowledge is clearly of considerable importance as far as the communication process is concerned, since people may be prevented from expressing their thoughts and feelings because they do not know themselves, or they may make wrong assumptions about themselves and false statements based on

these assumptions thereby unconsciously misleading others. However, Bernard's plays imply that, try as he might, a person can never define his identity or fathom his essential self totally. Moreover, the degree to which an individual may subconsciously or unconsciously be the dupe of his own self-deception is shown to be disturbing. When Charles Durban finds Claire's reproach that he is hiding things from her 'presque humiliant', she tells him 'Je suis certaine que tu ne me caches rien de ce que tu veux bien t'avouer à toi-même'. He insists, however: 'Je t'assure que je suis très lucide sur moi-même' (A la Recherche des Coeurs, T III, 61). Only when she goes on to say that he is in danger of gaining a reputation as 'un homme cruel' is he prompted to choose between confronting the psychological conflict tormenting him, and making a deliberate move to escape conscious awareness of it. He opts for the latter course by trying unsuccessfully to change the subject. Later, when he maintains that the real Charles is the current one, Claire is more explicit: 'Tu mens... tu te mens à toi-même' (T III, 67).

The very fact that individuals vary in their ability or inability to know themselves and/or others throws yet another spoke in the wheels of interpersonal communication, especially since, as Bernard's drama highlights, there is as much difference between theory and practice in the field of psychology as there is in any other sphere. As far as the principles are concerned, Maurice of Le Printemps des Autres is quite a discerning, observant psychologist. 'Vous êtes une

impulsive', he tells Clarisse, 'Et c'est pour cela qu'il vous arrive d'être poussée par des sentiments contradictoires que vous avez souvent l'air de ne pas comprendre vous-même . . . Oh! est-ce que personne est jamais sûr de se comprendre?...' (T I, 215). Maurice is much less competent in practice. He thinks he knows Clarisse, but in actual fact he does not even come close to fathoming the mysteries of her psyche. He unwittingly but none the less catastrophically misleads her in Stresa and never realizes he has done so. Then he believes to the end of the play, and no doubt beyond, that Clarisse genuinely dislikes him and that this attitude is due to maternal jealousy.

Robert Darmon of Le Jardinier d'Ispahan, who thinks he understands his wife better than she does herself, is another example of how a largely theoretical and incomplete knowledge of others can be more of a hindrance than a help.³¹⁷ The extent of his understanding of the theory of Madeleine's case on the one hand and his ignorance of the practice on the other are blatantly evident in some of the advice he gives her. When she begs him desperately to take her away from Vilnay, he replies 'Tu crois fuir ton mal et tu cours après' (T VI, 298). Apart from the fact that this was above all applicable a year previously before she married him and that it is now rather

317. See pp. 186-187.

late for such principles, he thinks her 'mal' is currently in Paris when it is actually only too present at Vilnay in the shape of Daniel.

Antoine Melvaux of L'Ame en peine is certainly wise to be sceptical when Emile says that he knows him well even after their talk in the Tuileries gardens (T II, 226-227 and 234). Whilst being aware of the inadequacy of his self-knowledge, Antoine would seem to have a better understanding of his own psychology than his friend. In some cases, however, a person may know himself less well than he is known by others, or he may be less capable of putting his own thoughts, feelings and motivations into words than certain interlocutors are on his behalf. In Act I of Le Feu qui reprend mal Blanche Mérim tells Jeanne Liron, 'Oui... oui... vous savez bien exprimer ce que je ressens... Pour cela, c'est un peu vous qui me remplacez André' (T I, 16). Until Marceline of L'Ame en peine rejects Robert as a confidant precisely because she does not like the home truths he has to tell her, he acts as a kind of analyst for her. The following exchange concerning her relationship with Philippe is significant in this respect:

ROBERT

Tu n'as même pas cru l'aimer. Tu as éprouvé pour lui un sentiment différent, très beau, d'ailleurs, et même très courageux. Mais m'as-tu jamais parlé de lui comme tu m'as parlé de ceux que tu as vraiment aimés? Non, tu m'as dit: "Je suis bien fatiguée par la route et par les orages..."

MARCELINE

Je t'ai dit cela?

ROBERT

Non, mais je traduis: "Je suis fatiguée. Voici une maison d'aspect solide. Je vais entrer là-dedans et je m'y reposerai bien." Tu vois comme j'ai compris ton langage . . .

(T II, 213)

A number of Bernardian characters go so far as to expect this kind of translation service from their family/friends or even take it for granted. It is quite impossible for Jacqueline of L'Invitation au Voyage to find a way in, let alone through, the labyrinth of her sister's imagination and yet at one point Marie-Louise says she ought to understand (T I, 333). Ironically, the discerning Jacqueline actually does have an excellent appreciation of the essential, very simple reality which she pinpoints to a tee when she tells Marie-Louise 'J'ai des yeux pour voir. Et je sais bien que l'Argentine t'a fait rêver'. In contrast, the extent to which a human being may not have the eyes to see into his own psyche is epitomized no less perfectly in Marie-Louise's reply clearly uttered with a disarming artlessness: 'Qu'est-ce que tu dis? Ce n'est pas vrai' (T I, 319).

7. Socio-economic and cultural factors affecting the efficiency of the communication process

The belief that total and lasting communion between lovers is unattainable in practice is conveyed in a symbolic way through the Maeterlinck-based theme and storyline of L'Ame en peine. Even if there is such a thing as uniquely

matched soulmates, they first have to meet one another. Robert explains the theory to Marceline:

. . . C'est Maeterlinck qui raconte cela. Et d'ailleurs, c'est une vieille idée: l'âme complète est à la fois mâle et femelle; et les deux moitiés de l'âme se cherchent à travers le monde. Mais le bonheur parfait ne peut naître que de leur réunion. Et c'est pour cela qu'il est si rare.

. . .

C'est peut-être un homme que tu ne connais pas... s'il existe... car il est peut-être déjà mort, car il n'est peut-être pas encore né... Et même s'il existe, il peut vivre en Chine ou en Patagonie... . . .

(T II, 215-216, 217)

Unions of this kind being quasi-impossible, most people 's'accommodent très bien d'un bonheur imparfait' (T II, 216). Since perfect and lasting harmony between two sexually complementary soulmates is presented as implausible, and since there is no suggestion in the plays that people of the same sex communicate more effectively amongst themselves, the gender of the interlocutors in conversation would appear to be relatively unimportant.

People within a common age bracket are not shown to get on any better than others between whom there is a generation gap. Nor is there any indication that communication is rendered more effective just because the people involved are intimately connected by a close blood tie. It is generally accepted that one of the closest familial bonds is the mother-daughter relationship, and yet the heroine of Jeanne de Pantin and

Francine of Nationale 6 both find it difficult to talk to their respective mothers. In months Gilberte of Le Printemps des Autres finds neither the courage nor the opportune moment to tell Clarisse about Maurice. 'Et à Paris, c'est si rare les moments de vraie intimité avec toi...' she explains at the end of Act I (T I, 207). In this case the mother's sense of solitude vis-à-vis her daughter is shown to be no less acute, as Clarisse confides to Maurice:

. . . Pourtant, c'est bien dur de se sentir seule auprès d'un être qu'on adore. On s'en va ensemble de palace en palace - hier Lucerne, aujourd'hui Stresa, bientôt peut-être Venise - chaque soir on s'embrasse éperdument, mais chacune garde pour elle ce qu'elle pense... Vous devez comprendre ces choses-là... (T I, 199)

With regard to their ability to communicate with one another the siblings in Bernard's theatre fair marginally better. Ironically it is the very openness and honesty of the dialogue between Robert and Marceline of L'Ame en peine which the latter eventually finds unacceptable. Before their rift Robert points out to his sister what a good personal interpreter he is for her,³¹⁸ adding:

. . . Pour cela, il faut un dictionnaire que je suis seul à posséder. J'ai appris tout petit. Quand tu me parlais de tes poupées, je comprenais des choses que nos parents n'ont jamais comprises.
(T II, 213)

318. See pp. 197-198.

However, there is no evidence that the acquisition of such a knack is a question of time or intimacy per se, a point which is made explicitly later in the same play. When Lemesle refers to himself as an old friend and Marceline points out that she has only known him three months, he replies:

Le temps ne fait rien à l'affaire. Il y a des gens que vous avez toujours connus et qui sont pour vous des étrangers. Est-ce que vous connaissez votre père? Est-ce que vous connaissez votre mari?
(T II, 247)

Whilst questions of sex, age or shared blood may not be shown to help or hinder effective communication to any significant degree, the plays do suggest that there is a tendency for more communication difficulties to occur between people who have significantly different religious beliefs or divergent socio-economic and cultural attitudes.

As far as Bernard's Inter-War plays are concerned, there is generally no way of telling whether the characters have or do not have a specific religion or to what extent they practise it. In Louise de la Vallière, however, there is an indication that people whose faith differs in intensity have additional problems communicating with one another. During the last meeting between Louis and Louise, the king has dropped his regal mask, the duchess her ducal one, and they are talking heart to heart.³¹⁹ Nevertheless their communication is hampered because Louis cannot comprehend the religiously spiritual path

319. See p. 121.

Louise has chosen to follow, whilst Louise has gone too far down that path to understand Louis (T VI, 184-186 and 190).

Although the evidence is inevitably limited, since most of Bernard's characters are French, the question of national allegiance would not seem to be of fundamental consequence if Deux Hommes is anything to go by. As for socio-political differences, Bernard's theatre suggests that they do put up communication barriers, although these are not necessarily insuperable ones. Jeanne de Pantin has more in common with the middle-class students whom she is overtly supposed to be inspiring than with the more working-class café owner's son who is originally destined to take over his father's business and only listens in on Jeanne's speeches from a back room. It is to Félicien, however, that she actually communicates her real message even if it is through a half-open door. In A la Recherche des Coeurs both workers and management are genuinely disconcerted and unbelieving when Charles speaks differently from what they consider to be the norm for an employer. On the other hand, once he starts being true to his deepest convictions and is alone with Dariel, the two men communicate as equals and realize that the mutual understanding they had during the war was not so shallow as to be threatened by the political divide which has emerged between them in civilian life.

The difference in social standing between Julien and Martine is highlighted when, a few minutes after her arrival, Jeanne **'qui semble apercevoir Martine pour la première fois au**

moment où elle sort' asks a disconcerted Julien 'C'est la bonne?' (Martine, T I, 126). However, the social class difference between Martine and Julien is only really relevant in so far as it is indirectly responsible for more crucial cultural and educational differences. These are illustrated well in the second Tableau. Looking through the window, Julien recites some lines of André Chénier. Martine is clearly at a loss, giving the impression that she has never even heard of Chénier let alone learned any of his poetry by heart:

JULIEN

. . .

Je tiendrai la faucille ou la faux recourbée
Et devant mes pas l'herbe ou la moisson tombée
Viendra remplir ta grange en la belle saison...

MARTINE, après un silence

Qu'est-ce que vous dites?

JULIEN

Des vers...

MARTINE

Des vers?

(T I, 123)

Before the end of the same Tableau we know that whatever communication difficulties Julien may have with Jeanne they will not be aggravated by a difference in their educational background. Julien starts to recite his Chénier again:

JULIEN

. . .

Je tiendrai la faucille ou la faux recourbée...

JEANNE l'arrête d'un geste et, à sa joie,
continue lentement:

...Et devant mes pas l'herbe ou la moisson tombée
Viendra remplir ta grange en la belle saison
Afin que nul mortel ne dise en ta maison...

(T I, 131)

Another difference of a similar nature which is shown to have significance is that between the simple and the worldly-wise. The best representatives are Francine and Robert of Nationale 6, the former with her sheltered lifestyle, the latter with his much more worldly one. The innocent Francine has almost certainly never frequented the social circles in which Robert moves routinely, and she has only dreamt of going to the places he has actually visited. It is scarcely surprising that at one point communication between them breaks down totally. After commenting on the fact that more often than not painters have to use inappropriate models for their work, Robert concludes: 'Et pourtant avec ça on fait des choses magnifiques: des madones avec des courtisanes, comme Raphaël, des jeunes filles au bain avec des... oui, enfin!' whereupon Francine asks 'Des quoi, monsieur Robert?' with such ingenuity that Robert, understandably, does not attempt to answer (T V, 75).

8. The realist-romanticist divide

By far the most fundamental pair of contrasting personality types that emerge from Bernard's theatre as a whole are the imaginative dreamers and visionaries on the one hand, as opposed to the down-to-earth pragmatists and realists on the other. Of course, within and between each extreme there are variations of degree so that the visionaries and the realists differ amongst themselves. In the symbolic Nationale 6 the whole gamut of nuances of realism and romanticism are to be found represented in the personalities of the characters:

EXTREME REALISM

Elisa Robert

EXTREME ROMANTICISM

Antoine Michel Francine

Michel has his feet more firmly on the ground than Francine. Robert may be in the realists' camp, but he is less of a pragmatist than Elisa. As an artist we must assume that he is not devoid of imagination but disciplines it and keeps it for his work. Antoine is in a halfway house position between Robert and Francine: although he has the psychological realism of the novelist who is very much in the world, Francine's 'logique miraculeuse' appeals to his artistic imagination (T V, 54).

There is no indication in the plays that people belonging to the same basic category are bound to communicate more successfully and meaningfully than those of contrasting character types, irrespective of the context and other

variables. Nevertheless Bernard's theatre does suggest that, either apart from, or in conjunction with, the individually slanted interpretations or nuances of meaning which speakers consciously, subconsciously or unconsciously give to the words they say and hear, people have a general tendency to attribute to words one of two types of significance which correspond approximately to the two major personality groupings under discussion, and this naturally aggravates communication difficulties.

One cannot help wondering whether communication would have broken down quite so radically between Madeleine and Robert in Le Jardinier d'Ispahan, if their personalities had not been diametrically opposed. Madeleine is horrified when Robert pledges his support in clinical terms:

ROBERT

J'aurai toute la patience qu'il faudra... Je m'appliquerai avec méthode...

MADELEINE, l'interrompant

Avec méthode... Hélas! Robert, les sciences t'ont déformé. Je ne suis pas un problème de mathématiques...

ROBERT

Tout est problème...

(T VI, 300)

Would Arvers have found it impossible, one wonders, to communicate his message to Marie Nodier-Ménessier if she had

been temperamentally sensitive to innuendoes and veiled meanings as is the heroine of L'Invitation au Voyage? Marie-Louise automatically expects her imaginary lover to converse with her via artistically significant symbols such as gifts of fans and poetry. Notwithstanding all the evidence to the contrary she attributes to Philippe Valbeille thoughts and intentions he probably never could entertain, as for him they would be quite out of character.

Apart from the fact that Marie-Louise manages to 'misunderstand' Philippe because she assumes he has the same romantic, imaginative streak as herself, much of the abortive communication in L'Invitation au Voyage can be put down to the fact that the heroine's vision of the world is different from that of both her sister and her husband. Landreau tells Olivier that Marie-Louise, who has inherited her imagination from her grandmother, is 'une rêveuse, une romanesque' (T I, 335), whilst Jacqueline is like his wife: 'plus posée' (T I, 336). When Jacqueline looks through the extensive windows of the living room in Act I, she sees trees which could well be replaced by other trees, their species being largely irrelevant. Marie-Louise, on the other hand, sees a symbolic mass of boring and claustrophobic sameness (T I, 274-275). Once Marie-Louise has given her imagination free rein with regard to Philippe, this polarized double vision is accentuated and illustrated in a specific way. When Marie-Louise, Olivier and Jacqueline look at the photograph of Philippe towards the end of Act I, the imaginative visionary of the three sees a

totally different image from that seen by the other two. Olivier's words in the following exchange are particularly significant:

OLIVIER

Voyez comme c'est curieux. Voilà un homme qui n'est pas parti depuis deux mois et nous ne sommes déjà plus d'accord sur la ressemblance d'une photo. Il y a au moins l'un de nous trois qui a trop d'imagination.

MARIE-LOUISE, s'écartant, avec un peu d'humeur

Eh bien, mettons que ce soit moi et n'en parlons plus.

OLIVIER

Oh! On peut simplement supposer que nous n'avons pas les mêmes yeux. C'est assez normal . . .

(T I, 293-294)

Nationale 6 could scarcely make it clearer that the exchange of words between the Elisas and Roberts of this world, on the one hand, and the Michels and Francines, on the other, is bound to be problematic, even if they love or like one another across the personality gulf. On an initial reading/viewing of the play it is tempting to argue that if Francine and Robert had been able to discuss only indisputable, unambiguous facts there would probably have been no misunderstanding. However theoretically sound such a conclusion might seem, it is in fact erroneous because Francine is such an imaginative dreamer that she has a tendency to confuse facts with fancy, to mix what others would keep apart in two separate

categories. At one point Michel refers to Francine and himself as 'deux fantaisistes'. Her reply is significant: 'Où est la fantaisie, papa? Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça? Où est la vie? Où est le rêve? Pourquoi les séparer?' (T V, 17).

Whilst her father understands her dreams and her expectations of the Nationale 6, Francine could not begin to explain them to her mother. When Elisa enters in Act I, her husband and daughter immediately have to change the subject. Here we find Bernard suggesting that in conversations between opposite personality types words can sometimes lose their *raison d'être* to such a degree that they are not worth exchanging. Michel does not even attempt to answer his wife's simple question 'Qu'est-ce que vous faites?' truthfully; he tells her they have been talking about cooking. Even an exchange of comments on the weather proves controversial: Elisa sees rain, where Francine and Michel see none (T V, 15-16). Almost as remarkable is Francine's referring to her home as 'la charmante petite maison qui domine la colline avec sa glycine et sa vigne vierge' (T V, 20), whilst for Robert it is 'le logis le plus banal, le plus quelconque, le plus insignifiant, le plus... le plus...' (T V, 43). It is hardly surprising that there should be a major misunderstanding between Francine and Robert when each can use such different terms to describe the same building. Antoine pinpoints the problem when he helps Robert complete his description of the house:

Le plus moche, le plus impersonnel, le plus terne, le plus incolore, le plus vague. Si tu veux encore quelques adjectifs, je pourrai t'en trouver... Ah! jeune homme qui ne savez pas voir, et vous avez des yeux pourtant, et savez vous en servir à l'occasion, jeune peintre, et qui ne manquez pas de talent! . . . (T V, 43-44)

The same pattern is to be seen in Martine, where Julien is the imaginative visionary, Martine, the down-to-earth pragmatist. Having literally showered her with flowering broom and metaphorically worshipped her, Julien concludes 'Promettez-moi que nous reviendrons ici en pèlerinage et que nous adorerons ce petit pommier', in reply to which all Martine can manage is 'C'est comme vous voudrez' (T I, 105) - and there is no indication in the text that she expresses a deeper appreciation non-verbally. When Julien looks forward to a night-time assignation with Martine and tells her how he imagines the scene will be, he includes all the ideal ingredients: 'le parapet du vieux pont . . . un petit ruisseau très limpide . . . un grand arbre sombre; et, au-dessous, la lune!', to which Martine responds with a deflating and pedantic 'Elle ne sera pas levée':

JULIEN

Allons! bon! la lune ne sera pas levée...

MARTINE

Il faut attendre un mois pour la revoir comme l'autre soir, à l'heure que vous dites. Et encore, s'il fait beau...

JULIEN

Mais je n'ai pas besoin d'attendre. Je vois tout cela en ce moment. Pas vous?

MARTINE, **incrédule**

Où?

JULIEN, **touchant son front**

Là... (**Martine se met à rire sans comprendre. Julien s'écarte avec un malaise.**) . . .

(T I, 122)

Here, once again, we are shown two people failing to communicate effectively with each other, because one of them transforms much of what he sees with the power of his creative imagination whilst the other does not.

. . .

The examples of misunderstandings, confusion and other communication difficulties analysed in this chapter illustrate the essential lubricity and fickleness of words and how various factors can dictate a person's speech and the way he listens to others. These include his mood and his emotional preoccupations which can be affected to varying degrees by external stimuli such as the general attitude of his interlocutor(s) and the atmosphere of his physical surroundings. To these can be added his innate egoism, his individual life history and unique personality and the poltergeist effect of his largely unconscious, unknowable and frequently unruly psyche. Whilst openness, knowledge and empathy are presented as important keys

to meaningful personal relationships, the questions of age, sex and family intimacy per se would appear to be largely irrelevant. Certain socio-economic and cultural factors, such as religious and educational differences, are also shown to make communication more problematic. Last but not least, Bernard's theatre suggests that people may actually see the world and circumstances differently, this 'sight' being dictated to a large extent by one of two fundamentally divergent attitudes - that of the pragmatist on the one hand and that of the visionary on the other. This realist-romanticist divide inevitably plays its own part in complicating the communication process still further.

CHAPTER 3

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THE POWER OF WORDS

It is significant that Bernard's indictment of the verbal communication process is not prompted by his belief that words are intrinsically ineffective. In Bernard's theatre words are repeatedly shown to have some kind of effect however indirect. It may not be the effect they were originally designed to have or their speaker intended or anyone might ever imagine they could have, but they have an effect. This chapter is devoted to a review of the ways in which, throughout Bernard's drama, words are shown - in conjunction with, as a by-product of, or divorced from their inefficiency as instruments of communication - to be highly effective and in some cases dangerously so. The rhetorical, evocative and provocative power of words are discussed in the opening three sections. The four sections which constitute the second half of the chapter are devoted to various aspects of the psychologically catalytic power of words.

. . .

1. The power of rhetoric

In spite of the fact that spoken words are rarely shown to be definitively illuminating and never infallible pointers to reason, let alone any absolute truth, a number of plays illustrate how well they can be manipulated in debating situations. This is because Bernard was well aware that words are not simply potential carriers of meaning, but also, to a certain extent, notes of music, and that the sonority of their phonemes and the rhythm of the sentences and phrases in which they are combined, can, even in the prose of everyday speech,

give them a poetical quality which is expressive in itself. Bernard's exploitation of this is evident throughout his theatre. In his thesis Lloyd Bishop writes at some length on the dramatist's use of stichomythy maintaining that it 'offers many lyrical possibilities even with the simplest vocabulary and so is well suited to Bernard's type of dialogue'.³²⁰ Bernard employs this device to achieve a special rhetorical effect in Jeanne de Pantin. Although we are not privy to any of the sessions in which Jeanne speaks to her student friends with the sole purpose of inspiring them, we hear about them in the fourth Tableau which Bernard says '**doit être joué dans un mouvement de plus en plus rapide**' (T IV, 42). Here, as Bishop points out, stichomythy is used 'to show the fervor that the heroine has created in the hearts of her comrades'.³²¹

Another example of the rhetorical power of words in action is to be found in Act II of Denise Murette. Responding to the requests of Martin and Charolles to see Michel, Denise accompanies her negative answer with an exalted speech which conveys her passionate devotion and enthusiasm so well, through both its content and its delivery, that it moves her interlocutors and allows her to send them off feeling satisfied in a way they would not have felt had she simply told them

320. Thesis, p. 273.

321. Ibid., p. 275.

that seeing her father was out of the question. 'Grâce à vous, nous venons d'avoir un peu de lui...' Charolles tells her (T II, 110). This comment is dramatically ironic because the reader/spectator knows that in fact Denise has just given them not a little but a lot of the artist whom, without realizing it, they actually came to see. Be that as it may, Denise's unplanned rhetorical outbursts not only have a cathartic effect on herself,³²² but just as positive a one on her interlocutors.

Perhaps the best example of the potential rhetorical power of a combination of verbal, paralinguistic and non-verbal signals is to be found in Marie Stuart, Reine d'Ecosse. At the juncture in question Marie could scarcely be in a more vulnerable position. Bothwell has had to flee. She is unprotected with Crookston's household behind her when the enemy lords menacingly invade Borthwick Castle. The way they '**franchissent la porte et s'arrêtent en apercevant la reine, mais sans plier le genou**' (T VII, 155) makes it instantly clear that posturing will play a vital role in the confrontation about to take place. By adopting a strong, authoritative stance Marie forestalls bloodshed and wins the ensuing debate before it even begins. The ratio of verbal to non-verbal communication in the following exchange is significant:

MARIE, à celui qui est en tête

Salut, lord Hume.

322. See pp. 136-137.

HUME

Votre Grâce...

MARIE

Salut, Lindsay! Morton! Tullibardin! Salut, Glencairn... Vous pouvez poser vos armes, mylords! (Et comme ils hésitent, elle fait un pas en avant, la poitrine offerte, les mains ouvertes.) Suis-je armée, moi?

(Devant ce geste, devant ce ton royal, brusquement les lords semblent dominés. D'un même mouvement, ils mettent un genou à terre, les têtes se courbent. Marie les contemple un instant, non sans orgueil.)

(T VII, 155)

Marie goes on to select her words with skill and discernment. She knows how long she should speak or pause; to what extent she should allow her listeners to respond; when to bombard them with rhetorical questions, disguised and overt reproaches or flattery; and the crucial moments at which to punctuate her speech with eloquent gestures or paralinguistic nuances. The Queen's eloquence, however, is shown, like Denise Murette's in the previous example cited, to be as good as the driving force motivating her is strong. At Borthwick Castle she has everything to fight for. Later, at Lochleven Castle, the situation has deteriorated. Nevertheless Marie's regal pride triumphs over her depression when she receives the lords, and her rhetorical skills come to the fore as at Borthwick, until Lindsay arrives to tell her that Bothwell has left Scotland (T VII, 175-178). With this news Marie capitulates totally: she

signs the three acts and does not utter another word (T VII, 178-179). The same principle is illustrated in Jeanne de Pantin. Unlike her legendary/historical prototype, Jeanne never has any other weapon except her skill in rhetoric, but she is totally disarmed when she goes to the offices of the Défense in the sixth Tableau. The heroine fails to convince Gravard, largely because she has no confidence in her ability to do so. Pressurized by the students she makes the attempt but with no inner conviction, believing her efforts to be doomed from the start.

In the final instance, however, Bernard insists that the rhetorical power of words is less dependent on their speaker's morale than on the conscious or unconscious willingness of their hearer(s) to be convinced or moved. The discussion between Gravard and Brisquet, before Jeanne is allowed her interview, tells us that the newspaper chairman is determined in his conversation with her to prove a point. However much he may dream 'de rencontrer des hommes désintéressés' he firmly believes that 'cela n'existe pas' (T IV, 94). When he finally agrees to talk to Jeanne, he is predisposed to misinterpret or mock every word she says rhetorically or otherwise. The bombast of the Malousien governors in Le Roy de Malousie is instantly rendered powerless as soon as enough rebels refuse to subscribe to it, but it is in A la Recherche des Coeurs that the importance of the psychological attitude of the hearer(s) is brought home best, as far as the rhetorical power of words is concerned. For a long time the workers' suspicions resist

Charles' eloquence at the May Day meeting although he is an excellent and a sincere speaker. He pinpoints the problem himself when he tells the crowd 'Ah! sans doute y en a-t-il parmi vous qui, malgré tant de preuves, sont décidés d'avance à ne pas se laisser convaincre' (T III, 105). Ironically they only yield when he loses his temper and starts to use a tone with which they are more familiar.

The fact nevertheless remains that whatever the reasons for, or limitations of, the rhetorical power of words, its results speak for itself: in Marie Stuart, Reine d'Ecosse rhetoric influences the course of history, in A la Recherche des Coeurs Dubray believes that Charles might never have been shot if the speakers at the fatal meeting had delivered their speeches in a different order (T III, 137), and in Le Roy de Malousie, although it is eventually overthrown, the Malousiens bolster up a ridiculous and self-destructive régime for a considerable length of time through their abuse of the power of rhetoric.

2. The evocative power of words and their ability to inflict mental pain

In the survey just made of some of the more specifically rhetorical passages in Bernard's drama one of the most important aspects of eloquent language, namely the evocative power of the words which are rhetorically strung together, is deliberately bypassed. This is because the principle is relevant to the words exchanged in any dialogue, whether the language is poetical, impassioned or extremely prosaic.

An incident in L'Invitation au Voyage illustrates the subtleties at issue. It is obvious that Marie-Louise winces when Jacqueline uses the word 'béguin' to describe her imaginary love affair with Philippe. 'Ah! qu'est-ce que c'est que ce mot stupide?' she asks her sister reprovingly (T I, 320). This reaction is almost certainly due to the fact that, in being bluntly accurate, Jacqueline impoverishes what is now boundlessly romantic and serious in Marie-Louise's mind, reducing it to what she says it is, namely a mere 'béguin'. In a way, by speaking the word, Jacqueline instantly creates the reality of a 'béguin', which Marie-Louise rejects because it is incongruous with her mental image. The resonances of Jacqueline's spoken words clash with those of Marie-Louise's unspoken ones again a few minutes later but for the opposite reason. At this point, just before she decides on the trip to Epinal, she is subject to a bout of scruples because the rational, sensible Marie-Louise can see her imaginary romance turning into a real extramarital affair. Jacqueline questions her 'Ce n'est pas possible' in the following terms:

Pourquoi? Veux-tu vivre avec le regret de n'avoir pas eu cette conversation? Je commence à te connaître, cela ne te vaudrait rien. D'ailleurs, aucun danger. Il va repartir pour l'Argentine, on me l'a dit. Et puis, si tu l'as... aimé...

MARIE-LOUISE

Jacqueline!...

(T I, 323)

This peremptory interruption of her sister is not due to the fact that in Marie-Louise's view Jacqueline's use of the verb 'aimer' diminishes something in her unreal world but very probably to the fact that it anticipates the creation of something concrete in her real one.

In several plays Bernard shows how spoken words can create very clear images in the mind of a listener and with them, depending on the subject matter, correspondingly painful sensations. Denise Murette recoils when Henri uses the word 'diminution' with regard to her father's condition. She immediately puts up a physical and verbal defence against it:

DENISE

Taisez-vous... (**Faiblement.**) Taisez-vous...

HENRI

Ma pauvre Denise...

DENISE, **se cachant la figure**

Ce mot qui n'aurait jamais dû venir au jour...

(Denise Murette, T II, 56-57)

Here Denise is made to visualize a current situation. Usually in this kind of process the memory of the listener is activated so that he relives in his mind past experiences and their concomitant emotions, or else his powers of imagination are triggered off so that he mentally sees and feels in advance what he could or will be subject to in the future. In his

speech in the penultimate scene of Le Feu qui reprend mal. Monsieur Mérin senior paints verbal pictures which remind Blanche of her acute sense of loneliness during the War, whereupon she imagines what the future will hold in store for André if she leaves him. At the same time the following cameo also helps André sense 'la douleur de la solitude' (T I, 89) which Blanche has already endured and which he will suffer if she goes:

Souvent, à la tombée du jour, j'entrais ici. C'est peut-être cela qui m'a frappé quand je suis arrivé. La pièce avait le même éclairage incertain. Blanche était assise justement sur la chaise basse où tu es assis, tournée vers le feu, comme toi, et elle jouait avec les pincettes, comme tu fais maintenant. (T I, 90)

However, it is above all in Martine that it is made very clear, to the malaise of the sensitive reader/spectator, that spoken words can inflict a mental pain which can be as wounding as any physical discomfort. Although Martine is not an imaginative visionary and does not transform reality with her mind's eye,³²³ she can imagine realistic scenes, as they were or will be, vividly and accurately. Indeed, when Julien describes in advance their night-time rendezvous, Martine readily accepts his references to the parapet of the old bridge, to the small, limpid stream and to the tall, dark tree, because she knows that at the meeting place in question all these features will be present. However, she rejects Julien's

323. See pp. 205 and 210-211.

incorporating a factitious moon which she realizes physically cannot be there that night.³²⁴ In fact, the ability of spoken words to paint pictures and engender sensations in the mind is exemplified particularly well in Martine precisely because its heroine has such a crystal sharp imagination.

Jeanne and the reader/spectator cannot help being surprised by the way Martine seeks out the company of her victorious 'rival', and in so doing inevitably aggravates her emotional wounds. Jeanne puts her attitude down to 'l'inconscient désir de se raccrocher à cela...' (T I, 158). We must assume that Martine takes some kind of pleasure in hearing both Jeanne and old Madame Mervan talk about Julien because it enables her to visualize him and his life, a situation which she prefers to no contact of any kind. Alfred's words, on the other hand, only make her suffer without giving her any compensatory pleasure. Although he is basically good-natured, Alfred is the one character in the play who is utterly tactless with regard to Martine's feelings. When he explains to Jeanne and Julien in Tableau V why she will not be able to go to Paris in the Spring, he 'unwittingly but none the less cruelly tortures her' (T I, 181). Martine's spirit is clearly broken at this stage, but earlier in the play she struggles to defend herself against the verbal blows with which Alfred courts her as strenuously as she resists his grip on her arm:

324. See p. 210.

ALFRED

Martine, entends bien ce que je vais te dire. Je t'ai dans le sang... Je te veux... Toi et moi, on est fait pour se marier. Tu ne seras heureuse qu'avec moi... Faut qu'on vive ensemble tous les jours, dans la même maison.

MARTINE

Tu vas te taire?...

ALFRED

Faut qu'on ait les mêmes meubles, les mêmes champs. Faut que tu prépares la soupe pour moi tous les soirs.

MARTINE

Tu vas te taire?...

ALFRED

Faut que tu aies des enfants avec moi. Faut que tu les nourrisses près de moi. Faut qu'on soit tout un, toi et moi. Faut que tu sois la mère et moi le père.

MARTINE

Tu vas te taire?... Tu vas te taire?...

(T I, 135-136)

A similar pattern is to be found in L'Invitation au Voyage when Jacqueline tries to make Marie-Louise think about what could be at stake if she puts her marriage at risk:

JACQUELINE

Ton ménage, le mien, celui de nos parents, la vie paisible, le bonheur...

MARIE-LOUISE

Tais-toi... tais-toi!...

JACQUELINE

Veux-tu ruiner cela dans un coup de tête?

MARIE-LOUISE

Tais-toi!...

JACQUELINE

Cette maison où tu es née, où tu as connu toutes
tes joies, où tu as été jeune mariée...

MARIE-LOUISE

Tais-toi!...

JACQUELINE

Où tu as été mère...

MARIE-LOUISE, **se bouchant les oreilles**

Jacqueline!...

(T I, 333)

It would seem that these repeated 'Tu vas te taire?' and 'Tais-toi!' are effective, probably because, as the victim utters them, his concentration is diverted from the painful images that have been evoked. André and Blanche are particularly vulnerable to the evocative power of old Monsieur Mérin's words in the penultimate scene of Le Feu qui reprend mal, as they cannot put up this kind of defence since

it would mean explaining to their father(-in-law) how close they have come to separating.

On the question of why some people should suffer more than others from the power of spoken words to evoke mental images and corresponding sensations, the speaker's intention and feelings are shown by Bernard to be of little consequence. It is the vividness of the listener's imagination and his general susceptibility to the subject matter that are the significant factors, and it would seem that these do not increase with the dynamic input of the speaker in the way one might expect. Alfred's lack of awareness of his verbal cruelty to Martine, for example, does not diminish the pain he inflicts. Nor does the hurtfulness of his tactless words depend on the robustness with which he utters them. On the contrary, the almost harrowing discomposure of the reader/spectator, let alone Martine herself, in the peaceful scene with Alfred at the end of the play is worse than it is in the third Tableau when he tries to bully her into accepting his proposal. This suggests, along with other pointers in Bernard's drama, that words can exert a maximum degree of evocative power when the speaker does not intend them to have any effect, and when he does not expressly charge them with energy or intensity. This would appear to be due not only to the fact that in these circumstances the listener has no justification or impetus to retaliate verbally in self-defence, but also to the additional power of understatement which comes into play. Once again it is

the penultimate scene of Le Feu qui reprend mal which provides an excellent example of this feature in action.

Old Monsieur Mérin could not have arrived at a more opportune moment to deliver his soliloquy on the sadness of widowhood. He knows a little about André's suspicions, and he might well have been unconsciously guided by his intuition to come and talk to the couple when and how he does, but it is very unlikely that he has the intention - or if he does it is extremely well disguised - of giving them a covert sermon on how lucky André is to have come out of the War alive, how fortunate they are to have one another and how they should enjoy each other's company as much and as long as they can. If he had come over with that aim in mind, one wonders whether his speech would have been so effective. What he might have gained in rhetoric he would have lost in simplicity and understatement, whilst risking the arousal of resistance through human perversity in two stubborn individuals. This conclusion would seem to be confirmed by the fact that the unwitting Mérin senior almost certainly succeeds, whereas Jacqueline's conscious attempt to dissuade Marie-Louise from going to Epinal and thereby jeopardizing her marriage fails (L'Invitation au Voyage, Act III Tableau I). Although the pain inflicted by an oblivious speaker triggers off a positive reaction on the part of his interlocutors at the end of Le Feu qui reprend mal, in Bernard's theatre this is the exception rather than the rule.

3. The dangerously provocative power of words

When Antoine of Nationale 6 remonstrates with his son about the damage his small-talk has done, Robert exclaims in his defence 'Si on ne peut plus plaisanter maintenant! S'il faut se méfier de l'imagination des gens!... . . . Je ne sais pas ce qu'elle a pu comprendre, cette petite fille, mais elle est terriblement dangereuse...'. Antoine, however, knows that Francine is no more dangerous than Robert, and concludes 'Voilà comment, sans le savoir, on fait du mal...' (T V, 109). Bernard's plays repeatedly highlight the fact that people can never be too careful about what they say. As they cannot possibly know all the potential resonances of the words they use, they cannot be sure what they mean to their interlocutor and consequently what effect they may have on him. There are numerous examples in Bernard's plays of characters' unwittingly saying the wrong thing at the wrong time. The content of Gilberte's disclosure at the end of Act I of Le Printemps des Autres would be the height of tactlessness if she had the slightest idea of her mother's feelings with regard to Maurice. Blissfully unaware of his cruelty, Robert Darmon of Le Jardinier d'Ispahan torments Madeleine in exchanges like the following, when for a split second she is led to believe that he might actually understand:

ROBERT

. . . Sèche tes larmes, voici Daniel...

MADELEINE, relevant la tête

Pourquoi dis-tu cela?

ROBERT, sans intention

Parce qu'il ne faut pas qu'un subalterne te voie pleurer...

MADELEINE, machinalement

Ah!... oui...

(Elle essuie ses yeux.)

(T VI, 303)

Similarly, in the following exchanges from L'Invitation au Voyage, the audience can sense Marie-Louise's discomfort, although Olivier and Jacqueline are quite ignorant of the effect their words are having on her:

OLIVIER

Au fond, cet homme qu'on ne reverra sans doute plus, c'est assez drôle de penser qu'il n'y a pas six semaines il était encore dans ce fauteuil à plaisanter avec nous.

MARIE-LOUISE, regardant fixement le fauteuil bas entre les deux autres, devant le poêle

C'est vrai... Dans ce fauteuil... Que c'est loin...

OLIVIER

Non, ce n'est pas loin... Oh! c'est loin si tu veux, comme tout ce qui ne reviendra plus... . . .

(T I, 287)

. . .

JACQUELINE

En somme, dans peu de jours, il sera en Argentine.

OLIVIER

Il y est peut-être déjà.

JACQUELINE

Voilà un voyage qui me tenterait assez. Pas vous, Olivier?

OLIVIER

Tous les voyages sont tentants, surtout quand on ne peut pas les faire. (Il rit.) N'est-ce pas, Marie-Louise?

(T I, 294)

In none of these instances is any great harm caused by the words spoken, beyond, that is, the painful or unpleasant emotions aroused in Clarisse, Madeleine and Marie-Louise at the time. Unfortunately, on some occasions the words of an unknowing speaker can inflict a pain which prompts a highly negative and detrimental reaction. At such times the oblivion of the speaker, and the fact that even the victim may not be fully conscious of the reaction triggered off, do nothing to mitigate the destructiveness of the words spoken. On the contrary, the potentially autonomous or semi-autonomous power of words to provoke harmful reactions is increased by the same lack of knowledge of self or others, which considerably

aggravates communication difficulties and is discussed in depth above.³²⁵ The more unknown, complex and mysterious the interlocutor in question, the greater the risk becomes.

That the well-intentioned, but insufficiently informed confidant can unwittingly exacerbate with words the very problems he is working to alleviate, is an implicit message of Bernard's theatre. Having let out to Madame Landier in a burst of hitherto pent-up emotion that her determination to be 'une femme fidèle', 'une femme propre' is not a sign of her love for Robert and that she detests him, Madeleine might not have retracted her statement, if it were not for the words of comfort her mother begins to murmur. By telling Madeleine that she experienced similar 'peines de coeur' in the past (Le Jardinier d'Ispahan, T VI, 311), Madame Landier deters her daughter from voicing her real feelings and aggravates her mental torment, because the root of Madeleine's problem is her fear of becoming another Adèle Landier. Likewise, Robert, who comes closer to the truth but not close enough, makes Madeleine feel more, not less, isolated, in spite of his love for her and his pure intentions. During one particular attempt to counsel her he unwittingly enflames Madeleine's worst fears regarding her genotype, with the result that his well-meant and, theoretically speaking, constructive advice proves harmful instead of helpful (T VI, 301-302).

325. See pp. 193-198.

Excellent examples of words' having this kind of destructive effect where the speaker is not in a counselling role are to be found in Le Printemps des Autres. Bernard makes it clear that Clarisse goes into her conversation with Maurice in Act II intending to ask him not to go riding that evening with Madame Desgrées.³²⁶ She does not do so in spite of her conscious resolve, largely because Maurice unwittingly goads her into 'forgetting' her promise. One or two exchanges stand out in this respect. Shortly after Clarisse has brought up the subject of Madame Desgrées, Maurice violently agitates her wounds:

. . . Mais, Clarisse, votre crainte est saugrenue, passez-moi le terme. Je me moque de cette madame Desgrées... (**Avec un rire forcé.**) Je vous assure qu'elle ne me fait pas plus d'effet que... enfin, je ne sais pas... que moi à vous, par exemple...

(Il rit.)

(T I, 234)

On hearing these words Clarisse must wince internally, although her hurt is only faintly perceptible in her paralinguistic signals when she replies, '**grave, après un silence**', '...Ne plaisantez pas. Vous vous en défendez trop pour qu'il n'y ait pas en vous... au moins un peu d'émotion...' (T I, 234). Clarisse's finer inclinations must also be blunted and her

326. See p. 101.

resolve weakened by the emphasis Maurice subsequently puts on the intensity of his feelings for Gilberte. 'Ce qui compte, ce qui existe, c'est mon affection pour Gilberte', he insists (T I, 236). When he concludes this long speech in his defence with 'Oh! sachez ce qu'il y a dans mon coeur: Gilberte, Gilberte et Gilberte seule...', Clarisse's echoing of his final words is charged with pathos for the audience (T I, 237). When Maurice later makes a move to go, Clarisse stops him, but still does not say anything about his going riding, even when Maurice asks her directly whether she has anything else to say to him:

CLARISSE

Vous n'êtes pas pressé. C'est important, ces paroles entre nous...

MAURICE

Oui, mais j'aurais voulu les entendre de la bouche de Gilberte, pour pouvoir la rassurer...

CLARISSE, **déseparée**

Elle ne vous les dira pas... Elle ne peut pas...
Elle ne sait pas...

(T I, 239)

It is not certain whether Clarisse becomes '**déseparée**' at this point because Maurice says he wants to talk to Gilberte, or because her conscious self knows that she has something to tell him before he leaves, but her unconscious self is preventing her from saying it. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that

at this particular moment Maurice taunts Clarisse further with the covert implication of his 'Elle ne me les dira pas... non... Elle m'aime trop...' (T I, 239). Analysing this scene, it is easy to lose track of who is being victimized, and it is sobering to consider that if the innocent and happily married Maurice had been manipulative and machiavellian, he could scarcely have achieved better results in an attempt to wound Clarisse and indirectly destroy Gilberte's happiness by making her mother sick with jealousy.

Related to the potentially disastrous effect of verbal stimulants of this kind is the damage that can be done when words plant thoughts and ideas in the psyche of a hearer, which subsequently grow until they are substantial enough to disturb, transform or devastate entire lives.

4. The power of words to trigger off dynamic and tenacious psychological processes

By a third of the way through Le Printemps des Autres and Martine, the initial misunderstandings, which are the subject of analysis elsewhere,³²⁷ have paled into insignificance. The confusion in Le Printemps des Autres is explicitly cleared up by Gilberte when she explains the nature of her relationship with Maurice at the end of Act I. In Martine the true state of the situation is made evident by Jeanne's arrival on the scene. The fact remains that at the beginning of both plays innocent and apparently harmless words trigger off a drama that will

327. See pp. 149-162 and 451-454.

have repercussions throughout the protagonists' lives and particularly unhappy ones in the case of Martine.

In Act I of Le Printemps des Autres a horde of conflicting impulses are aroused in Clarisse's psyche, the overall results of which highlight particularly well how subtle and potentially insidious the power of words can be. Through a combination of words omitted and words spoken a serious-minded, honest young man goes within a hair's breadth of seducing his future mother-in-law without ever realizing he has done so, then, as a consequence of this initial psychological reaction, she, a fundamentally good and well-meaning mother, comes equally close to breaking up her own daughter's marriage with almost the same degree of oblivion.

With regard to the effect of Julien's words on Martine, it cannot be proven that she only falls in love with him because he flirts with her. That could have happened without a word being exchanged. Although it is ironic that the only time Julien ever has to walk from Bateux to Grandchin is the day he meets Martine under the apple tree (Martine, T I, 150), she was destined to meet him and probably to see him frequently anyway. It is very likely that, given her personal circumstances, she would have been attracted to him even if she had been introduced to him formally by Madame Mervan, and even if Julien had taken care not - or had not felt in the mood - to go into raptures 'sur une fleur passagère' (T I, 116).³²⁸ Had Martine

328. See p. 156.

become infatuated with Julien in these conditions, pipedreams might well have crossed her mind, but they would probably have remained pipedreams. As it is, a few words innocently spoken by Julien sow in Martine's psyche a thought which rapidly matures to become a feasible idea. This in its turn ripens into a much needed hope, which, in the fortnight before it is dashed, has both the encouragement and the time required to beget a very strong and genuine love. The end result, in the words of Serge Radine, is 'une destinée brisée'.³²⁹ That Martine's heart is broken irreparably is made clear in every paralinguistic and non-verbal signal she emits after her hopes are shattered. Although she had been resisting Alfred's advances for months prior to meeting Julien, once the latter marries, Martine doubtlessly considers there is no point in putting off the agony of accepting her fate. Francine can pick up the pieces at the end of Nationale 6 by rationalizing her disappointment and telling herself that Robert was not her real 'prince'. No such expedient is available to Martine because she knows Julien was, and is, the love of her life. Martine comes the closest she ever comes to a reproach when Julien tries to talk her into voicing her feelings in the fifth Tableau:

MARTINE

Si ça ne sert à rien, pourquoi me dire tout ça maintenant?... Ça ne vous suffit pas, ce que vous m'avez fait?

329. Essais, pp. 123-124.

JULIEN

Ce que je vous ai fait?...

MARTINE, **effrayée de ses paroles**

Enfin... j'ai mal dit... Vous comprenez...
Enfin, je ne sais pas, moi...

(T I, 178-179)

In fact Martine is the only one who knows what Julien has done to her. As Jeanne says, 'nous ne saurons jamais ce qu'un flirt de quelques jours . . . a pu laisser dans cette âme simple...'
(T I, 158). What is indisputable, however, is that words, in triggering off a psychological reaction, have indirectly created something which may have no substance in physical or chemical terms but is none the less indestructible. Once again Jeanne shows her discernment when she tells Julien 'Tu as mis en elle un peu de toi' (T I, 159). In the last speech of the play Alfred tells Martine that Madame Mervan's house has been sold and that the windows are going to be closed on their side. Then a heavy, uncomfortable silence, broken only by the ticking of the clock just before the final Curtain, leaves the reader/spectator with the impression that, whilst an era may have finished for Julien, Martine will continue to live with a painful reality which words created. It is in this play above all that Bernard drives home the message that certain emotional reactions, triggered off by the catalytic effect of words, may never be neutralized.

Through L'Invitation au Voyage, where the uttering of two phrases, and of one word in particular, seriously jeopardizes a fundamentally happy marriage, Bernard again makes the point that words can exert a powerful and enduring influence on their hearer which is out of all proportion to anything their speaker could have intended or imagined. A kind of shock treatment is apparently responsible for finally neutralizing in Marie-Louise's imagination the stubborn reaction 'déchaîné comme la catalepsie par le seul son du mot Argentine'.³³⁰ It would seem that the reality she encounters at Epinal so jolts her psyche that her rationality is allowed to reassert itself and she realizes that she does not want to have any kind of relationship with Philippe after all. Ironically, as René Doumic points out, 'pour se guérir de son rêve, il lui a suffi de l'approcher'.³³¹

Le Feu qui reprend mal is another play which clearly suggests that if the reaction triggered off by the catalytic action of spoken words develops into a full-blown emotion, the effects can not only be very dramatic but also very difficult to undo verbally. Going by the example of Blanche, this is true even in the initial stages of such a reaction. When Jeanne tells her that she is worrying unnecessarily about the delay in André's return, she replies 'Je suis bête, je le sais. Mais

330. Marcel Azaïs, Le Chemin des Gardies (Paris, Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1926) p. 389.

331. René Doumic, 'Revue Dramatique - L'Invitation au Voyage', Revue des Deux Mondes, 15 mars 1924, p. 467.

quand une mauvaise idée me trotte par la tête, je ne m'en débarrasse plus' (T I, 15). The nagging fear behind her preoccupation with the American's proposal refuses to be allayed:

BLANCHE, *songeuse*

Ce n'était pas possible, ce qu'il me demandait...

JEANNE

Ne pensez donc plus à cela.

BLANCHE

Ah! oui, je ne sais plus ce que je dis. (*Elle regarde autour d'elle.*) Il est parti... Eh bien! cela vaut mieux... Maintenant, je serai plus près d'André... Rien ne m'empêchera de le retrouver chaque jour dans chacun de ces objets qui l'attendent avec moi.

JEANNE

Oui, le pauvre garçon a assez souffert. Ce n'est pas au moment où il va revenir que vous pouvez avoir autre chose en tête.

(*Un silence.*)

BLANCHE

Et s'il ne revenait pas...

(T I, 25-26)

Jeanne's reassurances and recommendations clearly prove fruitless. Only her husband's safe return succeeds in releasing Blanche from the psychological spell cast by the American's

request. Then it is André's turn to fall prey to her words. In no time he finds himself alternating between bouts of overwhelming jealousy which defy all reasoning, and moods of complete rationality when he realizes that his accusations are unfounded. In one of the latter moments he explains to Blanche: 'Un doute infernal, par instants, m'obscurcit la raison. C'est comme une fièvre qui vous prend et contre laquelle on ne lutte pas' (T I, 59). Knowing deep down that Blanche is innocent, the consciously reasoning André makes repeated but unsuccessful efforts to master his obsessively suspicious thoughts. Others also try in vain to arrest the psychological process that has been set in motion. André's father, who is sure of Blanche's innocence and reproves his son for his suspicions, nevertheless appreciates that they will not be subjugated by words. 'Tout ce que je te dirai, je le sais bien, n'y fera ni chaud ni froid', he tells André (T I, 51). Ironically, words spoken once, casually or unthinkingly, may have the catalytic power to trigger off a dynamic reaction, whilst other words spoken subsequently prove ineffectual against it, however frequently and expressly they are repeated.

Whereas the seed sown by the billeted officer's words "Venez en Amérique avec moi" (T I, 19) does not become firmly established in Blanche's mind because of André's return, her words 'J'ai dû loger un Américain' (T I, 38) have the opportunity to do their worst, especially since the convalescing André is relatively inactive and can dwell on the subject. Rapidly the thought planted becomes firmly rooted,

and, in time, this perversely reactivates the officer's "Venez en Amérique avec moi". Once resurrected, the American's words work with a vengeance: before long they have gained enough ground for Blanche to argue away her continuing love for André, her doubts and scruples and Jeanne's warnings and reproaches. Although Blanche almost certainly changes her mind in the end, at one point it looks very much as if the two groups of words are going to prove prophetic. Indeed Blanche comes so close to going to America with 'him' and André so close to having something to be jealous about that Le Feu qui reprend mal can be said to endorse the accredited theory of the self-fulfilling prophecy, according to which spoken words can indirectly dictate the future.³³²

Although the ending of Le Feu qui reprend mal is open to interpretation, there are strong suggestions that the psychological abscess of André's jealousy is finally cauterized, but once again shock treatment is required. Blanche administers this, without explicitly intending to do so, for it is not her repeated declarations of innocence which yield results but the desperate decision she makes when she is at her

332. 'The phenomenon in which the more convinced a person is that an event will occur, the more likely the person will behave in a manner that will increase the likelihood of its occurrence . . . In interpersonal relations, expectations about how others will behave can influence one's own actions toward them, which in turn may influence the other's behavior in the expected direction.' Terry Pettijohn (ed.), The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Psychology, Third Edition (Guilford, Connecticut, The Dushkin Publishing Group, Inc., 1986) p. 251.

wits' end. André is stunned when Blanche tells him she is going to America with the officer (T I, 79-80). He is horrified not only by the prospect of the loneliness Blanche's leaving will mean for him, but by the implication that she might have actually done in his absence what for weeks he has been accusing her of doing. When André's hollow suspicions suddenly and unexpectedly turn into real possibilities, they become unbearable, and he quickly sinks into a lethargy out of which there is no issue but a genuine volte-face. When he talks of changing, Blanche is understandably sceptical, but it is very likely that his conversion is now radical and lasting because the stakes are so high. André shows signs of deep-rooted contrition rather than his superficial repentance of the past just before his father enters. The shock dealt by Blanche's news makes him receptive to his father's evocative speech in a way he would not have been beforehand.³³³ Old Monsieur Mérim's words are thus able to consolidate the effect made by Blanche's announcement. Finally, when they are alone again, Blanche deals André a series of verbal blows - although her empathy with him is such that they are also to a certain extent self-inflicted - and we can assume from his reaction that these likewise play their part in arresting the process triggered off by the fateful 'J'ai dû loger un Américain' spoken at the end of Act I (T I, 38). At the same time the catalytic effect of the

333. See pp. 221-222 and 225-227.

officer's "Venez en Amérique avec moi" (T I, 19) would appear to lose its hold on Blanche who has been no less shaken than André by her father-in-law's words. It is probable, therefore, that as the final Curtain falls André and Blanche are granted the reprieve Martine is denied.

Even if one assumes that all ends reasonably well in Le Feu qui reprend mal and L'Invitation au Voyage, both plays successfully make the point that, however insubstantial or chimerical the reactions triggered off by the catalytic power of words may initially seem to be, their long-term effects can be so serious and tenacious that radical countermeasures are eventually called for. The autonomous nature of the verbal power in question is brought into relief by the fact that neither the American officer in Le Feu qui reprend mal nor Philippe Valbeille in L'Invitation au Voyage ever appears on stage. As they are unaccounted for in the list of dramatis personae, one can argue that they have no existence whatsoever, yet words spoken by and about them create the havoc which forms the dramatic substance of the plays. The full significance of this as far as Le Feu qui reprend mal is concerned can be engulfed by the play's central theme. For most critics Le Feu qui reprend mal is an excellently dramatized but simple story of jealousy. 'La jalousie exaspérée d'un homme faisant naître l'amour dans le coeur d'une femme, pour celui justement dont son mari est jaloux, n'est-ce point du Tristan poussé au noir?'

asks René Wisner,³³⁴ whilst Fernand Gregh claims, 'C'est une étude de la jalousie comme j'en connais peu au théâtre et même dans le roman, et qui, à force de vérité, retrouve les caractères des oeuvres classiques'.³³⁵ According to James Agate it is an impoverished version of Othello:³³⁶

We, in this country, have heard all that M. Bernard has to tell us about jealousy since we could first read poetry, and a thousand times better put. And in any case, his schoolmaster is worrying about something which either never happened or is all over and done with. What we really wanted him to tackle was the situation arising if Blanche had had something to confess, and if she had met him with confession.³³⁷

Mr. Agate does not seem to have realized that the point and the irony of Le Feu qui reprend mal lie precisely in the fact that Blanche, 'une femme exceptionnellement fidèle' (T I, 16), has nothing to confess. Unlike Shakespeare's Desdemona, she has no false evidence to refute either. Bernard's artistry lay in taking a non-event and making from it a drama, not justly comparable with Othello, but as plausible, as genuine and, potentially, as tragic. The critic does not appear to have noticed that there is no equivalent of Iago in Bernard's play, the triangle is made up of three ordinary, sympathetic people

334.) Quoted by Gaston Sorbets, 'Le Feu qui reprend mal, au and) Théâtre Antoine', La Petite Illustration, Théâtre, nouvelle série no. 47, 6 août 1921, pages not numbered.

336. William Shakespeare, Othello (Edited by Alice Walker and John Dover Wilson, Cambridge at the University Press, 1971).

337. James Agate, Red Letter Nights (London, Jonathan Cape, 1944) p. 157.

one of whom never appears on stage. There is, in short, no human villain, only the power of words.

5. The crystallization of verbally stimulated reactions

Bernard does not simply emphasize how difficult such processes are to terminate, he subtly draws attention to them as they begin, crystallize or complete their preliminary stage. Although what is actually happening may only become fully clear with hindsight, the following examples illustrate that, whilst the speaker remains comparatively objective and uninvolved, the hearer wittingly or unwittingly charges the words in question with a special significance. The exchange in which the ill-fated conversation between Clarisse Brieules and Maurice Gardier at Stresa culminates is such a moment. Suggesting they seal their friendship with a handshake, Clarisse 'lui tend la main':

MAURICE, prenant sa main avec transport

Vous ne pouvez pas savoir combien je suis content de ce que vous me dites.

CLARISSE, surprise

Mais... il n'y a pas de quoi, monsieur Gardier. (Elle le regarde longuement. Il a la tête basse.) Vous m'avez distraite un instant. Toute la reconnaissance est de mon côté... (Au loin, on entend les tziganes.) . . .

(Le Printemps des Autres, T I, 205)

To what extent Clarisse is infatuated with Maurice at this stage is debatable, but from this point until Gilberte enters she is the one who is the more confused and behaves very much like someone falling in love.

Francine of Nationale 6 takes seriously all that Robert Vanier says to her during the portrait session in Act III, but one particular moment stands out. Although he is totally oblivious of the effect his words are having on her, Francine is 'médusée' by his reference to his being 'parfois amoureux' (T V, 78-79). A similarly crucial crystallization occurs at the end of the first Tableau of Martine. When they set off for Grandchin after their rest under the apple tree, Julien playfully takes Martine's arm saying 'Voyez, c'est parfait! En route vers Grandchin, Martine... comme deux amoureux', whereupon Martine 's'arrête brusquement' clearly as 'médusée' as Francine in the corresponding scene of Nationale 6, and Julien, almost as heedless as Robert, asks 'Eh bien! qu'est-ce que vous avez?... Allons!' and the Curtain falls (T I, 114).

In L'Invitation au Voyage the crucial words are 'pour l'Amérique' and, more especially, 'en Argentine' (T I, 281-282). The build-up to their being spoken is significant in this instance. The reference to Gérard's experimental dismantling of the hosepipe makes the relatively exotic verbal catalysts stand out in contrast. Moreover, Marie-Louise's echoing of them means that the reader/spectator can savour their resonances with her:

OLIVIER

. . . Il cherchait - devine quoi - la pression!

MARIE-LOUISE

Oh!

JACQUELINE, **riant**

La pression! Qui est-ce qui lui a parlé de cela?

OLIVIER

Ce doit être Philippe. Naturellement, le petit a compris de travers. J'ai tâché de lui expliquer quelque chose, mais je ne crois pas avoir été plus heureux.

MARIE-LOUISE

Quel besoin Philippe...

OLIVIER

Oh! ce n'est pas très grave. C'est même gentil... Au fait, il s'en va après-demain.

JACQUELINE

Philippe?

MARIE-LOUISE

Bon voyage!

JACQUELINE

C'est tout nouveau, alors? Il ne m'a rien dit.

OLIVIER

Une lettre de son père, à l'instant. Je viens de le voir. Il faut qu'il s'embarque mercredi pour l'Amérique...

MARIE-LOUISE, **surprise**

L'Amérique...

OLIVIER

Oui, une grosse affaire dont il m'avait parlé, en Argentine. C'était en suspens depuis quelques mois. C'est fait. Oh! il n'est pas à plaindre.

MARIE-LOUISE, **d'une voix toute changée**

En Argentine?

(T I, 281-282)

On an initial reading/viewing of Le Feu qui reprend mal, Act I appears to be as preparatory as the first Act of Le Printemps des Autres, and the last two 'répliques' of the Act, when Blanche tells André that she has had to put up an American in his absence, appear to be the equivalent in this play of the exchange in L'Invitation au Voyage where Olivier mentions that Philippe is going to Argentina, and which has just been quoted. Upon more careful examination, it becomes clear that the words which start off the MÉRINS' drama have actually been spoken before the Curtain rises by a character who is never seen. However, we are told what they are as early as possible in Act I when Blanche repeats them word for word to Jeanne and even describes their non-verbal packaging:

BLANCHE

Eh bien... tout à l'heure, avant de partir, il a pris ma main. Il l'a gardée longuement contre ses lèvres et puis, les yeux pleins de larmes, il m'a dit...

(Elle hésite.)

JEANNE

Il vous a dit?

BLANCHE

"Je souffre de vous quitter. Je suis libre.
Venez en Amérique avec moi..."

(T I, 19)

At the very beginning of the play we are only aware that Blanche has something on her mind, but we realize in due course that the American's proposal is ringing in her ears as the Curtain goes up and is the centre of focus in her subjacent dialogue when Jeanne comes in to keep her company.³³⁸ As soon as Blanche tells her of the American's proposal, Jeanne helps us measure how far the reaction has progressed:

JEANNE

Par exemple!

BLANCHE rêve un moment et, soudain

Vous imaginez comme j'ai protesté. Abandonner André! Souffrir qu'il trouve son foyer vide en rentrant... Ah! est-ce que j'aurais pu me regarder dans une glace sans rougir?

JEANNE

Comment? Vous n'avez pas repoussé cette idée du premier coup?

338. See pp. 139-140.

BLANCHE

Mais c'est bien ce que je vous dis.

JEANNE

Alors pourquoi avoir perdu votre temps à vous demander ce qui serait arrivé si vous étiez partie?

BLANCHE

Je ne comprends pas bien.

JEANNE

Quand on s'est mis dans la tête de ne pas faire une chose, on n'y pense plus, et voilà tout. Mais si l'on se met à imaginer tout ce qui se serait passé si on l'avait faite, eh bien! c'est qu'on n'est peut-être pas sûr d'avoir raison.

(T I, 19-20)

The thought triggered off by the American's words is clearly maturing.

Bernard is more obvious in the way he draws attention to the vital words in Marie Stuart, Reine d'Ecosse. This is largely because here he makes an additional important point, namely that there may be a time-lag between the moment the listener first hears the spoken words in question and the moment he becomes subject to their power as psychological catalysts or the moment their effect becomes apparent. The Bothwell of Bernard's play is driven by two motivating forces: desire for the Queen and political ambition. The key to the fulfilment of both is pinpointed for him by Riccio towards the end of the first Tableau. Bernard makes it quite clear that

Bothwell not only hears and registers the crucial statement made to a background of violin chords, but also takes time to file it:

RICCIO

Cette femme deux fois mariée n'a jamais... comment vous dire... vibré... vous comprenez? (Il le regarde, Bothwell ne répond pas.) Pas sa faute... Elle n'a épousé que des enfants... (Mystérieusement.) Ma... ma... il y a en elle une force... des possibilités extraordinaires... Celui qui fera vibrer Marie Stuart sera maître du monde...

(Machinalement il caresse les cordes de son violon.)

BOTHWELL

Qu'est-ce que vous dites?

RICCIO

Tenez, c'est comme ce violon, si personne n'avait jamais su s'en servir...

BOTHWELL, la voix étranglée

Ce violon...

RICCIO

Oui, mylord...

(Il commence à jouer sur son violon.)

(T VII, 34)

We are led to assume that the emotions stirred in Bothwell by this exchange remain more or less dormant until Marie offers to make him powerful in return for his loyal protection of the throne. Bothwell is now subject to a combination of impulses:

sexual desire, intoxication at the thought of the power being offered him and, possibly, repressed scruples due to a vague awareness that he will not be satisfied just guarding the throne. It is appropriate that it is at the very moment when Bothwell is having to make a supreme effort to contain this strong concoction of emotions that the previously made 'recording' of Riccio's words should play itself back:

MARIE, **reculant un peu, avec un sourire forcé,
qui cache mal son effroi**

Bothwell... Mais... Qu'y a-t-il?

BOTHWELL
dans un immense effort pour se contenir

...Rien... Pardon... (Il se lève, se tourne, fait deux pas en titubant... L'espace de quelques secondes l'éclairage de la pièce devient trouble... Bothwell entend la plainte légère d'un violon, puis la voix de Riccio: "Celui qui fera vibrer Marie Stuart sera maître du monde..." Il se retourne avec fureur.) Laissez ce violon!

MARIE, **riant**

Ce violon! Mais je ne l'ai pas touché! Qu'est-ce que vous avez?

(T VII, 68)

6. The preconditioned receptivity of the hearer as the key to the psychologically catalytic power of words

Bernard's plays do not explain why individuals fall prey to the catalytic power of words. The innocent and childlike Francine of Nationale 6 and Blanche Mérim of Le Feu qui reprend mal are understandably susceptible but so are the more

worldly-wise Clarisse Brieuves of Le Printemps des Autres and James Bothwell of Marie Stuart, Reine d'Ecosse. There is certainly no indication that 'les rêveurs et les illuminés' (T V, 90) are more vulnerable than the pragmatic realists,³³⁹ although they may be more prone to the imaginative kind of process that takes place in Marie-Louise of L'Invitation au Voyage. The only common characteristic which stands out in the various examples Bernard gives of verbally triggered reactions is the conscious, subconscious or unconscious receptivity of the person who falls prey to the catalytic effect of the words spoken. If, after an 'idée fixe' has taken hold, words said subsequently with a view to dislodging it are shown to have little or no chance of making a successful counter-attack, it is precisely because the victim's mind is not receptive to them. Thus, it is the hearer, not the speaker, who is shown to be ultimately responsible for the reaction triggered off. Indeed, in most of the examples in Bernard's theatre where spoken words prove powerful psychological catalysts the intention of the speaker is largely irrelevant.

This is illustrated particularly well in L'Invitation au Voyage. Certainly no one except Marie-Louise can be held responsible for her imaginary love affair. On this occasion the verbal catalysts, 'pour l'Amérique' and 'en Argentine' (T I, 281-282), are spoken to both Jacqueline and Marie-Louise by Olivier, who suffers most as a consequence, and who would be

339. See p. 205.

horrified if he ever learned of what he had unwittingly been an instrument. In case any readers/spectators are tempted to apportion blame Bernard makes the exercise futile by taking the chain of responsibility back to the little Gérard's enterprising spirit of enquiry. The long prelude to the 'dropping' of the all-important words also indicates how they might well never have been spoken; certainly pure chance is responsible for the timing.³⁴⁰

Judging by all the examples so far reviewed, it would seem that the effectiveness of words as psychological catalysts is largely dependent on their falling on prepared soil. Martine's tragedy cannot be considered an inevitable result of Julien's flirting. His words might have had no effect on another girl. The same holds good for the disillusionment of Francine in Nationale 6 and Clarisse in Le Printemps des Autres. Evidently, the factors which predispose Martine, Francine and Clarisse to be misled, and which are explained in detail in Chapter 2,³⁴¹ also make them vulnerable to the catalytic effect of the words spoken to them by Julien, Robert and Maurice respectively. One of the main functions of the content of the first three quarters of the opening Tableau of L'Invitation au Voyage is to inform the reader/spectator of the fertility of Marie-Louise's psyche in this respect. Similarly, Bothwell's desire and

340. See pp. 246-248.

341. See pp. 151-159.

ambition make him susceptible to Riccio's words in Marie Stuart, Reine d'Ecosse.

Initially Le Feu qui reprend mal appears to challenge the principle of the predisposing of the subject. Why should André be so instantly inclined to suspect his wife of infidelity just because an American officer was billeted with her for a period during the War at the mayor's insistent request? The answer to this question lies not only in André's unfathomable unconscious but also to a certain degree in his wife's very innocence and scrupulousness. As soon as Blanche knows, or strongly senses, that André is actually on his way home, her thoughts go exclusively to him. '**Nerveuse, exaltée**', she exclaims 'André! André! Ah! est-ce que quelque chose d'autre existe à présent?' (T I, 28). Then, when André walks in, Bernard takes pains to make it clear that his return really does release Blanche from any preoccupation with anyone or anything except him. Every word and gesture betray a woman who genuinely loves her husband, who is sincerely enraptured to have him back and who, so long as she knew he was alive, could not entertain the thought of establishing a relationship with another man. Consequently, once the fear which predisposed Blanche to fall prey to the power of the American's words has vanished from her consciousness so do the words in question.³⁴² The fact remains, however, that André returns to a home where the woman he loves and has not seen for the duration of the War, has been

342. See pp. 238-240.

considering an elopement proposition and discussing it with a neighbour. The proposal was made over a lunch freshly cleared away, by a man who has just left, after staying with her for four months, and whom she made a point of seeing off at the station. André does not need to know any of these details for him to sense something of the atmosphere they have created. Blanche compounds matters, because she is so scrupulous that she feels guilty about things she has no need to feel guilty about. This accounts for the fact that some of the paralinguistic and non-verbal signals she gives Jeanne at the beginning of the play suggest that she really does have something to hide. At the very end of the Act this tendency for Blanche's scrupulosity to get the better of her reasserts itself. When André is moved to find his serviette still next to hers in the drawer, she reacts perfectly naturally with the fussiness of an excited perfectionist anxious to please a loved one who has just returned after a long absence. However, had Blanche been guilty of infidelity and not of a mere peccadillo in her housekeeping, she might well have reacted in a very similar manner:

(Il sort les deux serviettes.)

BLANCHE, vivement

Non, non, laisse donc ces serviettes sales... Ce n'est pas à toi, tu penses bien...

ANDRE

Mais...

BLANCHE

Je te raconterai. J'ai dû loger un Américain...
Allons! mets-toi à table.

(Elle sort rapidement.)

(T I, 37-38)

It is consequently not totally surprising that on Blanche's exit we see a war-wracked André rapidly succumbing to the catalytic power of words:

ANDRE, s'approche machinalement de la table, s'assied, prend une fourchette, la repose et, tout à coup, redresse la tête, se lève et, songeur, troublé, murmure:

Un Américain...

(T I, 38)

With André's jealousy, grows his sensitivity to the physical environment which recently sheltered the American, until the very objects surrounding him turn symbolically into so many words of accusation (T I, 45). Ironically, André's waxing suspicions eventually predispose Blanche to fall prey again to the American's words. As Blanche's essential driving emotion is her love for her husband and as he is now safely with her, the American's written message would almost certainly not have taken effect, if André's repeated accusation of infidelity and the unpleasantness of her current life with him had not predisposed her to be susceptible to the renewed proposal.

7. The power of the spoken versus the unspoken word and its negative versus its positive potential

The level of predisposition in the case of Francine and Martine is such that the women's thoughts could be considered the prime initiators of the reactions that take hold of them. Francine's words to her father immediately before Robert enters make it quite clear that she thinks he is going to be an aspiring suitor even before he speaks (Nationale 6, T V, 19-20). Similarly, in the opening Tableau of Marie Stuart, Reine d'Ecosse, one wonders whether Bothwell's unspoken thoughts might not have prompted Riccio to deliver his catalytic 'Celui qui fera vibrer Marie Stuart sera maître du monde...' to his highly receptive interlocutor (T VII, 34).³⁴³ The text would support this in so far as Riccio's searching look and mysterious tone of voice at one point indicate that he senses his words are going to have an effect on Bothwell. The end of the Tableau also suggests that Riccio is to some extent privy to Bothwell's 'dialogue sous-jacent' (T VII, 34-35). According to such principles, it was not the American's words which triggered off the drama in Le Feu qui reprend mal, but Blanche's own spoken and unspoken ones: 'Et s'il ne revenait pas...' (T I, 26).³⁴⁴ This kind of speculation can quickly lead into a somewhat futile debate since it may well be that previously spoken words triggered off the thoughts which predispose the individuals in question to succumb to the effect

343. See p. 251.

344. See pp. 238-239.

of the actual words under investigation. However far back one traces the chain of cause and effect, and even if one has to admit that spoken words only have as much power as the mental soil on which they fall gives them, the fact remains that they are frequently very influential psychological catalysts.

Madeleine's obsession with her parentage in Le Jardinier d'Ispahan may appear to have materialized without verbal assistance, but it is highly likely that she heard something about her mother's affairs at some early and correspondingly crucial stage in her upbringing. Having said that, Madeleine is an excellent example of people whose unspoken words nurture and sustain a reaction within their psyche over a long period of time. It can be argued that through her subjacent dialogue Madeleine silently talks herself into becoming the licentious woman she consciously does not want to be.

With regard to the significance of the actual vocalization of words, it would appear to vary depending on whether spoken or unspoken words maximally activate the imagination of the individual in question. In the case of Madeleine it is likely that the vocal expression of her fears to her mother earlier in her life would have helped curb her imagination and cauterize her obsession, for then at least she would have been told before it was too late that Monsieur Landier was her father. In other instances in Bernard's plays the person's receptivity would seem to be increased by his speaking his thoughts aloud. It is unlikely that Francine of Nationale 6 would have been quite so preconditioned to take Robert for a prospective

husband, if she had only mused about her hopes interiorly prior to his entrance instead of voicing them with absolute conviction to her father.³⁴⁵ Conversely, by not expressing her disappointment verbally and by not explicitly voicing her detailed objections to marriage with Alfred, Martine sacrifices the cathartic relief she would get from talking but keeps her revolt in check, which she knows she has to do, quite simply because farms have to be run and in the 1920s unmarried Martines could not run them.

A few Bernardian characters seem to understand the principles behind the catalytic power of words and try to defend themselves against what they consider to be negative reactions. In so doing they actually highlight the relevance of the vocalization of words. To Henri's 'Ah! j'en veux à votre tâche, cette folle tâche où vous gâcherez votre jeunesse et votre santé' Denise Murette replies 'Si vous me dites cela, vous, quel courage me restera-t-il?' (Denise Murette, T II, 116). In Act I of L'Ame en peine Marceline says to Robert 'Admets que je sois triste. Est-ce en le disant que j'arrangerai les choses?' (T II, 207). Marceline also has a negative presentiment with regard to Robert's telling her about Maeterlinck's Blue Bird, and she explicitly asks him not to touch on the subject again: 'Tout ce que tu m'as dit là ne peut pas me faire de bien. Donc, c'est entendu, il ne sera plus jamais question de ces sottises entre nous' (T II, 218). 'Je

345. See pp. 151 and 258.

t'en prie, Robert, tu vas finir par créer des maux imaginaires... et me faire du mal...', Madeleine tells her husband when he is urging her to confide in him (Le Jardinier d'Ispahan, T VI, 283).

As these examples help to illustrate, Bernard's dramatic evidence implies not only that the actual vocalization of words is significant in itself, but also that spoken words generally sow seeds of negativism more easily than they sow optimism. Try as she might, Marie Seton fails to encourage her mistress at Lochleven Castle. 'Il me semble que toute ma faiblesse pourrait devenir pour vous de la force...' she tells the Queen, who replies 'Marie, Marie... Il faudrait que vous me répétiez chaque jour ce que vous venez de me dire là...' (Marie Stuart, Reine d'Ecosse, T VII, 175). Unfortunately, the catalytic power of potentially beneficial words is shown, like that of noxious ones, to be proportionate to the credence given them, and the Queen is insufficiently receptive to any benign reaction Marie Seton might attempt to muster in her. Having told her lady-in-waiting that every day she must verbally condition her to be strong, Marie asks, '**après un temps**', 'Ah! mais cela sert-il encore à quelque chose?' and '**demeure accablée**' (T VII, 175).

Act V of Nationale 6 suggests that, where the individuals in question have retained a basic attitude of openness and receptivity, and a strong conscious will, they can regulate their mood by their words, rather than passively allow the words they exchange to be governed by their mood. However, a

relatively big effort is required on the part of Michel and Francine to talk themselves out of their disappointments even with each other's help, whilst in Act II of Le Printemps des Autres it takes Clarisse Brieuales only two or three subtly and carefully placed phrases to unsettle the confidence of both Gilberte and Maurice in the solidity of their marriage.

. . .

However feeble Bernard may prove spoken words to be as instruments of communication, his theatre certainly demonstrates that they make up for this weakness in other more or less formidable ways. The relative autonomy of words vis-à-vis their speaker, the tenacity and magnitude of their power and their ability to trigger off not only single psychological reactions but chains of them are their most disturbing features. Mention should also be made of the facility with which people would seem to be predisposed to fall victim to negative processes of this kind, whilst apparently having little natural inclination, training or practice to help them exploit the principles of word power for positive ends. However, to appreciate the lethal potential of words when wielded by not only the innocent but also the unscrupulous, the criminal and the megalomaniac, one has to turn to the theatre of Henry-René Lenormand.

PART II

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HENRY-RENE LENORMAND

(1882-1951)

Impulsif et généreux aussi fut Lenormand, grand dramaturge français. Nul ne s'étonnera à l'étranger que je le place très haut: l'oeuvre d'Henri-René Lenormand a rayonné au-delà de nos frontières . . . Quand il est mort, ceux qui savent bien quelle place il est assuré de garder dans notre histoire dramatique ont pu s'irriter de voir trop de journalistes faire son panégyrique du bout des lèvres, comme celui d'un auteur quelconque.

Il serait vain de s'en indigner: c'est là le kaléidoscope du théâtre, et ce jeu alterné d'ombres et de lumières n'empêche pas les vérités de se fixer. Lenormand n'en reste pas moins "l'un des dramaturges les plus considérables - peut-être le plus considérable par ses apports personnels - de cette époque d'entre deux guerres".

(Jean-Jacques Bernard, Mon Ami le Théâtre,
p. 138.)

CHAPTER 4

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THE SEARCH FOR THE 'INEXPRESSIBLE'

This chapter explores a theme which plays only a very small role in Bernard's theatre but is central to Lenormand's, namely twentieth-century man's spiritual unease and his inability to find bearings by which to plot a purposeful and moral course through life. This is relevant to this thesis in so far as his characters' conception of their dilemma can be translated as a preoccupation with the need to find a verbal sign for a someone or something that is as yet by definition inexpressible. Their awareness that a crucial word is missing and their need to search for it are discussed in section 1. In the following five sections detailed consideration is given to Lenormand's treatment of his characters' search for the 'inexpressible' in knowledge, in religious faith with particular reference to Christianity, in death and in love of varying degrees of purity. In the final section the rare protagonists who claim to have found the 'inexpressible' become the centre of attention.

. . . .

1. The missing 'mot' and the need to search for it

No great metaphysical questions are asked in Bernard's Inter-War drama. Religious belief or unbelief is not an issue. It is simply taken for granted that some believe, others do not, and that in Christian circles certain people, like Louise de la Vallière, for example, have or develop a particularly deep faith. On the other hand, a significantly large number of Lenormand's principal protagonists live frustrated lives because of a strong, unfulfilled metaphysical aspiration. His

characters' conscious awareness of being in a restless and dissatisfied state because they cannot find the answer to the mystery of life varies with the individual, but for some it is a consuming obsession.

It is not so much doubt regarding the existence or non-existence of this inexpressible something which plagues Vera Zvierlof of Une Vie secrète as its inaccessibility:

. . . Je sens parfois, avec une certitude absolue, qu'il y a, dans un endroit déterminé, une chose mystérieuse qu'il faut que je voie. Il faut que j'aille vers elle... Si je l'atteignais, ce serait fini de souffrir... Et je ne peux pas. Je ne sais pas où elle est... Je ne l'atteindrai jamais.
(T III, 216)

In those who give up hope of finding this 'chose mystérieuse' a death wish grows stronger. It is Vera's despair in this respect, as much as her terror of becoming mentally ill again, which makes life so unliveable that, initially lacking the courage to do the deed herself, she tries to persuade Michel to help her commit suicide (T III, 288).

The idea that this as yet inexpressible something may not exist is unacceptable, even abhorrent, to Lenormand's tormented protagonists. Lui and Elle of Les Ratés are cases in point. In the second Tableau of the play Lui tells Elle that there were times in the past when he came to think 'qu'il n'y a rien à chercher, rien à trouver au delà de notre inquiétude':

ELLE

Non; ce serait trop affreux!

LUI

Assurément. Faire les mêmes gestes, dire les mêmes mots, comme des machines, un jour après l'autre, sans jamais savoir pourquoi!... Si l'homme ne pouvait tirer autre chose de la vie...

ELLE, **bas et vite**

Il y a autre chose. Il est impossible qu'il n'y ait pas quelque chose . . .

(T I, 30)

For some of Lenormand's characters it is not just the possibility that there may be no inexpressible something which is disturbing but the fact that there is no word to express whatever it is. However, one can argue that in the thinking of certain Lenormandian heroes no nuance can be made between the need to find a word for the 'inexpressible' and the need to find the 'inexpressible' itself, for in spite of the fickleness and lubricity that words are shown to have as instruments of communication,³⁴⁶ there is a suggestion in Lenormand's theatre that things would have no existence, no reality at all, however illusory, if it were not for the words given them. 'Je me demande si la honte, la jalousie, la colère existent vraiment... Ce ne sont peut-être que des mots...', Lui tells Elle in Les Ratés (T I, 67), whilst Nico Van Eyden of Le Temps est un Songe indirectly tells Saïdyah that there would be no past, present or future if words had not been invented for them: 'Hier, aujourd'hui, demain, ce sont des mots, Saïdyah...

346. See Chapter 5, especially pp. 337-348.

Des mots qui n'ont de réalité que pour nos mesquines cervelles' (T I, 213). According to this logic the reality of anything depends on there being a word to represent it. A problem inevitably arises in this respect as soon as the question of a potential absolute truth is at issue.

A variety of provisional expressions are used to represent the inexpressible something which Lenormand's characters are seeking. Amongst these are 'la vérité' and 'le mot de l'énigme'. Sometimes the word 'vérité' is replaced or supported by the word 'mot' standing alone and charged with a special connotation as the representative of the elusive mystery of life. This is appropriate since Lenormand's plays suggest that the crucial failure of the sum total of human language lies precisely in its inability to encompass the metaphysically inexpressible. As Lui explains to Elle in Les Ratés, the one word that really counts is missing:

LUI, absorbé

Je sais pourtant bien nettement que l'énigme est posée. Il y a un mot, une vérité, qui nous échappe, qu'il faut trouver... On ne peut pas vivre en paix, tant qu'on n'a pas trouvé.

ELLE

Quel mot, mon chéri? Quelle vérité?

LUI, les yeux à terre

Est-ce que je sais, moi? Voilà des années que je cherche... . . .

(T I, 29)

Others who have a thirst for something metaphysical, like Lui, are keen to fathom anything mysterious, in case the secret they are looking for is hidden at the bottom of it. Meanwhile they accustom themselves to living with a pervasive 'doute' and 'inquiétude' (e.g. La Dent Rouge, T III, 69). They cannot be more precise about what ails them, because they have no language for that of which they have a need but no experience. In Le Temps est un Songe Nico Van Eyden's condition rapidly deteriorates to clinical proportions, and he is seriously debilitated not only by his doubts regarding the potential existence of a metaphysical 'reality', but also by a concomitant uncertainty about the physical 'reality' in which he lives.

Although Nico's is a particularly bad case, one is left with the impression that in searching, consciously or unconsciously, for the missing 'mot' or a compensatory experience which will dull their spiritual anguish, Lenormand's characters as a group leave few stones unturned. In addition to the more orthodox avenues which they explore, they toy with psychoanalysis, spiritualism or black magic, invert their society's time-honoured moral principles, dabble with drugs, surrender themselves to sexual debauchery and/or sacrifice everything to artistic creativity, believing, rather like Keats, that 'la Beauté est l'essence éternelle du monde et se confond ainsi avec la vérité'.³⁴⁷ Such a list may remind the

347. Léon Lemonnier, 'Front littéraire commun', Mercure de France, 15 juillet 1935, p. 231.

reader/spectator of some of the avenues the restlessly dissatisfied Marceline explores in L'Ame en peine, but whilst its parapsychic element is exceptional in Bernard's Inter-War drama, a strong metaphysical strain is much in evidence throughout Lenormand's plays.

2. - through the pursuit of knowledge

One of the ways in which Lenormand's characters try to fill this verbal lacuna is through the acquisition of various types of knowledge.

The Vérificateur tells the Receveur in Le Simoun that the Percepteur's passion is 'la connaissance des horizons', adding, 'Vous avez vu avec quelle inquiétude il les pourchasse' (T II, 130). At one time Lui of Les Ratés also looked for an answer to his all-important question in travel, as he explains to Elle:

. . . Quand j'avais dix-huit ans, il me semblait que tel pays, telle ville me donnerait une réponse... C'était stupide!... Enfin!... Je rognais sur mes salaires pour voyager... Je partais... Naturellement, rien ne m'était révélé que des formes, des couleurs... et je revenais, encore plus désirant, encore plus tourmenté qu'avant... . . . (T I, 29-30)

To begin with, Albert of L'Amour magicien has a similar kind of illusion with regard to research. Referring to his life before Berthe's death, he tells Fernande:

Tant qu'elle était là, j'avais l'impression que de toutes ces recherches éparses, il allait sortir une lumière, une réponse unique. Je me disais: "Un jour, j'aurai ma vérité à dire, une vérité simple, éblouissante."... . . . (T VI, 16)

Some believe, like Riemke Van Eyden of Le Temps est un Songe, that 'le mot de toutes les énigmes est en nous-mêmes' (T I, 205), which might explain why a number of Lenormand's characters are particularly introspective. Others behave as if the 'truth' were to be found in a sum of truths. They insist on honesty at any cost and prefer to be confronted with unpalatable facts rather than be duped. Thus, just before l'Homme tells Laure exactly why he is leaving her, she asks for his absolute honesty:

LAURE

J'aime mieux tes sarcasmes que tes inventions hypocrites. Je suis digne de la vérité.

L'HOMME

Oui. Mais serais-tu capable de la supporter?

LAURE

Essaie.

(L'Homme et ses Fantômes, T IV, 27)

Rose of Les Trois Chambres talks of Florence's 'soif de vérité' (T VIII, 16). Related to this, in the same play, is Pierre's 'respect/manie/superstition de la vérité' (T VIII, 63, 72 and 104). In his 'passion du vrai' (T VIII, 65) Pierre resembles Michel Sarterre of Une Vie secrète whom Vera describes as 'glacialement curieux' (T III, 213) and the Luc de Bronte of Le Mangeur de Rêves, who coldly tries to find the 'secret' by studying the psychological secrets of his patients. As is noted

below,³⁴⁸ Pierre and others like him are opposed to the erection of screens of dialogue out of concern for the feelings of self or others. Apparently, in their efforts to get to the secret of life, these protagonists try to sound the lowest level of man's basest instincts, instead of following the more conventional avenue and looking metaphorically 'upwards' to the restraining influence of his moral conscience. In taking their rebellious course, they reject any façades of 'dialogue entendu' which may be used to cloak and hide, with a socially acceptable veneer, the 'joli marécage' and the 'monstres' they are anxious to investigate (Les Ratés, T I, 92).

Lenormand's characters do not find any crucial answers through the acquisition of knowledge apart from the realization that learning is no panacea. Indeed, it would seem that, as a response to metaphysical anxiety, the pursuit of facts could be not only ill-advised, because it is rendered vain by the nature and inexhaustibility of the material explored, but also counter-productive, since people are shown to avoid this kind of anguish in the first place by remaining unaware that a crucial item of vocabulary is missing. Some argue that it is wiser not to ask too many questions. 'Il n'est peut-être pas prudent de demander à la vie autre chose qu'un demi-sommeil', Riemke tells Madame Beunke in the opening Tableau of Le Temps est un Songe (T I, 155). A few live in blissful ignorance of the dilemma, because they have never been alerted to

348. See pp. 361-363.

philosophical issues. In the course of time Pierre Tairraz comes to resent Claire's efforts to enlighten him, efforts which she insists during their argument towards the end of Act III have been essentially vain:

CLAIRE, **accablée**

. . . Personne ne change et on ne change
personne, voilà la vérité!

PIERRE, **avec une grande inquiétude**

Si, tu m'as changé, moi... Je ne suis plus le
même qu'autrefois. Depuis que je parle avec toi, je
me pose des questions qui me rendent malheureux...
J'ai plus de goût à rien... Y a en toi quèque
malédiction!...

(La Dent Rouge, T III, 116)

Earlier in the play, when talking about her education, Claire is more explicit: 'J'ai lu, j'ai réfléchi, j'ai appris le doute et l'inquiétude', she tells her father in Act II (T III, 69).

3. - in religious faith generally

Lenormand implies that, wittingly or unwittingly, simple and more worldly-wise characters look to religion either for a vaccination against, or a response to, the anxiety provoked by the elusive 'mot de l'énigme'. Some accept an inherited network of beliefs formulated by their forefathers in order to make up for the deficiency in human languages as far as the inexpressible 'quelque chose' is concerned. Even Fearon, alias Lady Sullivan, has recourse to theosophy and fetishism. She

flippantly explains the rationale behind her belief in reincarnation to Monique:

FEARON

. . . Quand je renaîtrai, je renaîtrai voleuse,
c'est décidé . . .

MONIQUE, **riant**

Quand vous renaîtrez?

FEARON

Vous ne saviez pas que j'étais théosophe? Oui, oui. C'est une bonne religion pour les vieilles putains, parce qu'elle leur donne l'espoir de redevenir de jeunes putains, dans une autre vie!

(Mixture, T VII, 178)

On her deathbed at the end of Terre de Satan, she maintains, 'dans un demi-délire', that only the expressible exists. The Soeur Noire has just confirmed that the nuns will take care of her 'pour l'amour de Dieu':

Parlez pas du bon Dieu à qui va quitter la vie... Parlons de ce qui existe. Et qu'est-ce qui existe? Goré-Goré lui-même n'est plus qu'un morceau de braise! Qu'est-ce qui existe?... Le sang dans ma bouche, oui, il existe.

(**Chant de l'aranran.**)

Et le petit oiseau au-dessus de nous, il existe aussi. Darling. Darling!

(**Elle ferme les yeux.**)

(T X, 310)

Unconsciously, Fearon cannot be as certain as she sounds, for shortly afterwards we are informed by Le Cormier that, still rambling, she claims to have heard 'Goré-Goré lui crier, pendant qu'il se consumait: "Je suis le roi du monde"' (T X, 313). Are we to presume she prefers to die a fetishist rather than an atheist?

That Fearon might be right in taking the option to believe in someone or something rather than nothing is never refuted in Lenormand's theatre. The existence of a spiritual superpower is not denied any more than it is affirmed in his collected plays in general. In Le Mangeur de Rêves, Le Lâche, L'Innocente, Mixture, Les Trois Chambres and Crépuscule du Théâtre no paranormal intervention of any significance is mooted, but the reader/spectator can explain the plots of the other plays in the Théâtre complet, excluding the fabulous La Folle du Ciel, either rationally or with reference to the intervention of supernatural agencies, which in their turn are dependent on the existence of an inexpressible someone or something:

One can say that Lui and Elle of Les Ratés find peace and redemption in death through their mutual love and suffering in life; it is no less arguable, however, that they are simply two failures one of whom kills the other under the influence of alcohol and subsequently commits suicide.

In Le Temps est un Songe one can believe either that Romée time-travels or that she happens to have,

and talk about, an unpleasant daydream - although the latter theory is heavily dependent on one or two large coincidences.

In Le Simoun one can sense the supernatural forces aiding and abetting the machiavellian Aïescha as she formulates and implements her evil schemes; or one can say that the tragedy has its roots in the striking resemblance between Clotilde and her mother, and that the climatic conditions prevailing at the time exacerbate not only the emotional tension and pressures Laurency is consequently subjected to, but also the passionate jealousy and excitability of a highly volatile woman.

As for La Dent Rouge, either Claire is a sorceress, or the tragedy is simply due to a climbing accident which is not improbable given the risks involved, almost 'tous les hommes de la famille' for generations having met their death that way (T III, 108), not to mention the actual circumstances of Pierre's fall (T III, 143-144).

One can take the view that the resurgence of inspiration in Michel Sarterre at the end of Une Vie secrète is due to the fact that he and his creative genius have been mystically redeemed by Vera's death. On the other hand one can maintain that his suddenly accrued sense of guilt for his part in causing Vera's desperate plight, together with the shock dealt

first by her talk of suicide and then by the deed, have activated his imagination and retriggered his temporarily dormant artistic talent.

The women abandoned by the 'Don Juan' of L'Homme et ses Fantômes take vengeance on him from beyond the grave; or else, debilitated by a life of debauchery and an understandably guilty conscience, he is a tragic victim of auto-suggestion.

In A l'Ombre du Mal Madame Le Cormier is brutally murdered because at the end of Act I Scene V the fetishist priest, 'au comble de la rage', casts a spell on her house (T IV, 153); or simply because of the natives' decision to copy Rougé and act in accordance with his perverse law of (in)justice.

In L'Amour magicien Béatrice becomes a spiritualist medium for the deceased Berthe whose ghost eventually kills her; or else Béatrice hallucinates under the influence of a repressed, jealous passion for Albert, and, when this love is openly requited, dies from the effect of the resultant joy, guilt and remorse on her already fragile constitution.

In Asie a devoted pagan mother takes her own life having killed her children to redress the wrong done to her, and the three of them finally find peace with one another in a spirit-ruled afterlife; or else

a jealous, vengeful woman murders her children to punish their father and then commits suicide.

At the end of La Maison des Remparts Lolita is given a real faith in a loving deity, or, to use Michel Sarterre's terminology in Une Vie secrète, she finds the illusion created by her desires (T III, 242).

Whilst some would insist that the battle fought in Terre de Satan is of a purely earthly nature, others would see it as symbolic of a global and metaphysical clash between the Forces of Good and Evil, God and the Devil. Those taking this latter view might say that in the final scene of Act II le Père Sahler is '**entamé dans sa résistance et sa décision**' (T X, 258), and gradually becomes more and more ill from then on, because the ritually invoked 'démon-singe' Goré-Goré takes vengeance on him in this way. Those in the strictly rationalist camp would simply maintain that the priest is slowly but lethally poisoned by the arrow he removes from his cassock or, more probably, by the green powder the N'Gil shakes over him.³⁴⁹

The simplified, 'either/or' nature of the above résumés fails to do justice to the wealth of angles from which a number of

349. With regard to the double aspect of Soeur Marguerite's fate, see pp. 286-287.

Lenormand's plays can be viewed, as is highlighted by Martial-Piéchaud's analysis of one of them:³⁵⁰

Drame de psychologie freudienne? Simple légende bretonne transposée sur le plan moderne? Essai théâtral sur le spiritisme? Pièce philosophique sur l'incessante compénétration du monde des vivants et du monde des morts, de l'ici-bas et de l'au-delà? Pièce, inconsciemment chrétienne, sur la réversibilité des mérites, et le rachat de tout péché par l'amour? Il y a de tout cela dans l'Amour magicien . . .³⁵¹

For the purpose of the discussion in hand stress is laid here simply on the fact that both rational and supernatural explanations can be given for the tragedy in these plays. Which of these we are expected to accept has been the subject of much debate. With regard to L'Homme et ses Fantômes, for example, Robert Emmet Jones argues that the fire, 'apparently set by the ghost of Alberte', undermines Luc's claim that l'Homme is 'seeing only his inner world' and makes it impossible to view the play as a vivid visual presentation of 'the world of the subconscious'.³⁵² However, the fire is only 'apparently' started by Alberte's ghost; apart from the possibility of natural arson, fires can and do happen accidentally, and the theory of a carelessly extinguished cigar is mooted in the play (T IV, 108-109). As Gabriel Marcel points out, 'Lenormand a su habilement ménager jusqu'au bout l'équivoque qu'il lui eût été

350. See also pp. 70-71.

351. Martial-Piéchaud, 'L'Amour magicien', La Revue Hebdomadaire, 18 décembre 1926, p. 364.

352. H.-R. Lenormand, p. 73.

si aisé de dissiper par un décret arbitraire'.³⁵³ Robert Emmet Jones maintains that 'Lenormand cannot have it both ways',³⁵⁴ but he can and does. He sees to it that in all the plays through which these rational and supernatural threads run, the psychological/rational could explain everything but cannot be proved to do so and the supernatural/irrational could also explain everything but cannot be proved to do so. Consequently the only thing which is indisputable is that Lenormand provides a choice of interpretations, even if one is substantiated or foregrounded more than the other. A close examination of the plays in question reveals that throughout them pieces of evidence in support of the rational explanation are offset by others in support of the irrational theory. In both cases these pointers may be obvious or veiled, weighty or subtle, but they cannot be ignored by the reader/spectator wishing to make an objective interpretation of the dramas under scrutiny. There is ample evidence in L'Amour magique, for example, that a psychological explanation can be given for the play's events,³⁵⁵ but Lenormand never lets us forget the alternative interpretation la femme Quémer and her associates would give them. Moreover, as the final Curtain falls, immediately after Béatrice's death, does not the learned and now illusion-free

353. Gabriel Marcel, 'L'Homme et ses Fantômes', La Nouvelle Revue Française, 1^{er} juillet 1924, p. 124.

354. H.-R. Lenormand, p. 73.

355. See pp. 368-369, 386-388, 390 and 394.

Albert Carolles feel a presence which makes him turn round and ask 'Berthe?' (T VI, 113).

It is also significant that the one or two characters who declare categorically that there is no 'inexpressible' and ruthlessly suppress any physical or metaphysical aspirations, making a doctrine of their very negativity, are the least appealing of Lenormand's creations. The nihilistic Prophet in Le Simoun is a case in point. His depressing speeches in the eighth Tableau are offset by a good-natured and life-appreciating monotheist, and through their exchanges the desirability of the latter's faith finds expression if only by comparison with the alternative (T II, 79-82). Furthermore, in the closing speech of the Tableau the Vieillard points out to the Prophet that nihilism is itself a type of creed and that nihilists are as susceptible to doubt and its concomitant anguish as any other 'croyants' (T II, 82).

The fact remains that Lenormand frequently and unapologetically presents all beliefs as palliative forms of escapism and self-deception. With regard to Madame Beunke, Nico Van Eyden tells Romée, 'Elle ne peut supporter le poids de ces responsabilités... Pour y échapper, elle va à l'église... où elle s'endort d'ailleurs aussitôt...' (Le Temps est un Songe, T I, 193). In the same conversation, explaining why his metaphysical anguish has been reawakened since his return to Holland from India, Nico goes on to tell Romée how much he would like to take a sedative similar to Madame Beunke's:

. . . L'esprit s'apaise vite, là-bas... On ne souffre plus de l'inconnaissable. On accepte la vie. Ici, on la refuse. On demande à comprendre! (**Aprément.**) Comprendre?... Croire, voilà ce qu'il faudrait... Destinée ou liberté, âme ou matière, il faut se confier à l'un quelconque de ces mots vides. Le repos est à ce prix. Mon mal, c'est de ne pas vouloir, de ne pas pouvoir être dupe... (T I, 198)

Lui of Les Ratés also yearns to believe in God and thus be freed of his 'inquiétude' and 'doute':

ELLE, énervée

Quel ennui d'être à côté du beffroi! Ce carillon, tous les quarts d'heure, c'est insupportable!

LUI, la tête penchée en arrière, rêvassant

Non... c'est joli... c'est caressant... c'est comme une idée qui cherche à vous séduire... c'est l'idée de Dieu qui vous dit: "Je suis là, au-dessus de vous, attendant... Tâchez donc de venir jusqu'à moi"... Evidemment, il faudrait. Ce serait la paix... l'acceptation...

(T I, 114)

. . . .

ELLE, tendrement

Il ne faut pas se tourmenter, mon chéri. Il ne faut rien regretter. On ne peut pas manquer sa vie.

(Un carillon sonne.)

LUI, ricanant

Et l'autre, là-haut, qui vous tend ses pièges!... Ah, si seulement on pouvait s'y laisser prendre!

(T I, 123)

Romée Cremers, on the other hand, is wary of the faith solution. To Riemke's 'Nico est malade...' she replies 'Mais oui. Qui ne l'est pas? Le doute peut être une maladie... La foi en est probablement une. Il y a des gens qui sont malades de certitude. J'en connais' (Le Temps est un Songe, T I, 203).

4. - in Christian versus pagan beliefs

Some of Lenormand's characters mix Catholic practices indiscriminately with sorcery. At one point in Le Simoun Aïescha claims that an overturned tortoise struggling to right itself is an evil omen. Three Tableaux later we see the same woman crossing herself and the victim she has just murdered (T II, 113, 163). Alberte of L'Homme et ses Fantômes describes herself as 'une âme chrétienne' in almost the same breath as she threatens to take ghostly vengeance on l'Homme, haunting him in this life and the next, should he leave her (T IV, 13-15).³⁵⁶ In Act II of La Maison des Remparts Lolita prays humbly to the Christian God for Julie's safe return. Shortly afterwards, without making any kind of apology but shifting simply from the use of 'vous' to 'tu', the same woman calls on Quetzalcoatl, 'l'esprit dou tonnerre', for help in avenging Julie's murder (T X, 135 and 138). The duality of the religious thinking of Aïescha, Alberte and Lolita in the three examples just cited reflects Lenormand's insistence on the essential

356. See pp. 397-398.

ambivalence of the human personality.³⁵⁷ It also implies that at least two types of religious system are available to his characters and may be called upon as and when they wish.

When Charlier challenges the Christian Demoiselle in Le Lâche about her 'superstitions', her predictable defence does little for the cause she represents:

LA DEMOISELLE

J'ai la foi. Je n'ai pas de superstitions.

CHARLIER

L'autre jour, dans la grotte de glace, vous étiez à demi asphyxiée de peur, vous poussiez des cris d'hystérique et vous disiez que, pour rien au monde, on ne vous ferait traverser seule cet endroit puni.

LA DEMOISELLE

Il y a vraiment des endroits punis, où les morts reviennent.

CHARLIER

Et le printemps dernier, cette nuit où la glace craquait sur le lac, vous entendiez gémir les âmes du purgatoire.

LA DEMOISELLE

J'ai pu me tromper, mais les âmes gémissent véritablement dans le purgatoire... Et puis, restons-en là, je ne discute pas religion avec les athées.

(T V, 35)

357. See pp. 328-334.

This type of exchange is one of the means by which Lenormand indirectly suggests that nominal or adulterated Christianity is no more a solution to the riddle of the inexpressible 'quelque chose' than any of the other fruitless avenues his characters explore. However, he is careful to present a fair cross-section of different types of believers in his theatre. To offset the evil Christian or semi-Christian characters such as Aïescha, and the narrow-minded, pathetic, uninspiring ones like the Demoiselle of Le Lâche, Madame Lerouesnier and Sophie Malfilâtre of La Maison des Remparts and Madame Beunke of Le Temps est un Songe, Lenormand gives us the ardent and genuinely devout Catholics of Terre de Satan, who simply cannot be put into the same category. Notwithstanding its flaws, Soeur Marguerite's prayer towards the end of the final Act is saturated with a religious purity that would not be out of place in the theatre of Paul Claudel (T X, 315-316). Lenormand, however, was not a Paul Claudel 'malgré lui', a fact which is reflected in the dénouement of the play in question. To all intents and purposes, Soeur Marguerite commits what is for her the sin of suicide and runs into the jungle to a certain death. She is presumably driven to do so by a fear or consciousness of demonic possession. This sense is enflamed by her religious scrupulosity and the guilt aroused by her freshly awakened and rebelling sexual instincts, instincts which had hitherto been stringently repressed as opposed to effectively sublimated. The real message this entire incident is clearly meant to convey is

well contained in the final exchange of the play, just after Le Cormier has returned with Soeur Marguerite's dead body:

(La Soeur Noire se laisse tomber à genoux et se caresse le visage avec la chevelure pendante de la morte.)

LA SOEUR NOIRE, dans un cri d'amour et d'espérance

Mon Dieu, vous ne permettrez pas qu'elle soit damnée!

LE CORMIER, sourdement, dans une colère sans éclat

Oh! votre Dieu... Taisez-vous!... Ne la touchez pas!

LE MILICIEEN, hochant la tête

Tout ça n'a choses di blancs. Moi pas comprendre.

(T X, 319)

As the Curtain falls the reader/spectator is left to contemplate the appalling sense of waste with which Le Cormier is filled as a result of a sincere if misguided Christian's zeal.

The practical consequences of belief are also an issue at the end of La Maison des Remparts. Lolita's final three 'répliques' as she talks alone with André constitute a simple and beautiful affirmation of faith (T X, 182-183),³⁵⁸ but

358. See pp. 313-315.

indirectly they made it impossible for this play to reach its first rehearsal, as Dorothy Knowles explains:

Immediately on its completion in 1936 it was accepted for production by Gaston Baty, who then, suddenly, rejected it, just as rehearsals were about to begin; there was a threat of excommunication not only for Baty but also for his public, and Baty was a practising Catholic. The Church could not accept the prostitute's vision of God. Lenormand, it seems, was not learned in the matter of converted prostitutes and had not provided the right vision!³⁵⁹

The Church might not have been able to 'accept the prostitute's vision of God', but it could certainly accept her repugnance with her existence. The hatred of and disgust with their work shared by Julie and Lolita render questionable any interpretation of La Maison des Remparts as a dramatic 'apotheosis of the prostitute'.³⁶⁰ Julie hates what she has to do for her living sufficiently to become an accomplice to a crime in order to be in a position to give it up, and whilst she understandably rejects with vehemence René's hypocritical insults, she acknowledges that if a priest or 'mère de famille' reproached her, she would say nothing in reply (T X, 96). Lolita detests her way of life even more, possibly, than Julie and longs desperately for an escape from it. Her comments on the ugliness and sordidness of her work come from the heart and the page-long speech they constitute is an intensely powerful indictment of the horrors of prostitution (T X, 181-182). Part

359. Inter-War Years, p. 101.

360. Hewitt, Thesis, p. 275.

of the problem as far as the Church is concerned may well have been the fact that, as the final Curtain falls, Lenormand has not given the slightest hint that Lolita will be able to change the practical realities of her life and in so doing change her profession, however much she deplores the latter and always has deplored it. She tells André that he is one client she will never have and reproaches him for suggesting that she should take Julie's place in his sexual life, but we are still left with the impression that, faith or no faith, she is doomed to spend the rest of her working existence physically soiled and exploited.

Lenormand would seem to be at pains to stress that Christian or humanistic altruism provides no immunity whatsoever against suffering. The terrestrial victory of evil over innocence is the principal implicit message of Terre de Satan and a recurring leitmotiv throughout the other plays. Perhaps the most innocent and self-sacrificing character in the Théâtre complet is the Toca of L'Innocente, who is not only mentally retarded but cruelly victimized by her fellows. The compassionate and caring Madame Le Cormier, who is actually committing a selfless act of charity when she is brutally murdered in A l'Ombre du Mal, fails to survive to the end of one play, whilst the troublemaker Fearon indirectly murders Jeannine in Le Mangeur de Rêves, continues her life of crime and mischief in Mixture and returns only somewhat world-weary and depressed to stir up further confusion and discord in Terre de Satan, where she is one of the last to die.

Lenormand's intellectual arguments against Christianity, as they are made through his dramas, are certainly damning. Lenormand's theatre, however, can be judged from two angles no less than Bernard's.³⁶¹ Viewed from the standpoint of 'la vérité des faits', his plays present Christianity as an anti-survivalist variation on a theme, different from, but not intellectually superior to, the black magic of the witches and the fetishists who figure prominently in them. Viewed from the standpoint of 'la vérité des coeurs', they reveal an attitude towards Christianity which is more complex.

It is in his characterization that Lenormand's emotional leanings become most apparent. Although the charismatic Lady (Fearon) Sullivan cannot be written off simplistically as 'evil' in spite of her malevolence, the most generally likeable characters in Lenormand's theatre are those who are moderate and 'good' in the traditional sense of the word.³⁶² As it happens, many of these characters practise Catholicism and/or live by principles which could be considered either Christian or humanistic: the Christians collectively in Terre de Satan, especially le Père Sahler, the curé in La Dent Rouge, Fanères and Thérèse in Une Vie secrète, Aimée de Listrac in Asie, and Madame Le Cormier in A l'Ombre du Mal. In spite of the way he

361. See pp. 49-51.

362. See pp. 345-346.

taunts the Christian Demoiselle in Le Lâche, Charlier has to concede that even she has her merits:

**CHARLIER, lui touchant les cheveux
du bout des doigts**

Vous êtes quand même une bonne fille. Vous croyez à des tas de sottises. Au fond, j'aime ça. Et je sais bien que, si j'avais une rechute, vous êtes encore la seule dans cet hôtel qui me soignerait convenablement.

. . .

A propos, est-ce que vous priez toujours pour moi?

LA DEMOISELLE

Certainement, comme pour les malfaiteurs et les assassins.

CHARLIER

C'est très gentil.

LA DEMOISELLE

Moquez-vous. Le jour où vous rendrez compte de vos actions...

CHARLIER

Je ne me moque pas. Je vous trouve touchante . . .

(T V, 36-37)

This exchange, however, raises questions regarding Charlier's sincerity. Is he mocking or patronizing the Demoiselle, or is he genuinely touched? Scepticism of this kind is typical of the

reaction constantly provoked in the reader/spectator with regard to any inference he might make concerning the dramatist's depiction of belief and believers.

Anyone familiar with all the plays is consequently left with a very ambivalent impression regarding Lenormand's presentation of Christianity. A certain light is shed on this by a statement which Lenormand made some time between 1946 and 1948 in a letter to Andrée Sikorska and which is quoted here from the doctoral thesis of Alexina Macpherson:

Si on revient aux valeurs chrétiennes, je suis archi-cuit! Car le secret de tout ce théâtre, c'est une haine et une colère ardente contre l'âme chrétienne, la morale chrétienne - tout ce que, en somme, l'homme ne peut pas rejeter sans tomber dans la barbarie. Là est ma faiblesse et ma contradiction intime.³⁶³

The attitude which the dramatist would seem to foster is exemplified particularly well in Le Cormier of A l'Ombre du Mal and Terre de Satan. His disregard for Soeur Marguerite's religion does not alter the fact that he is emotionally drawn to her goodness which reminds him of his deceased wife. In Act II of Terre de Satan he tells Soeur Marguerite:

. . . Depuis que vous êtes à la mission, je suis redevenu un être à peu près vivant... Ce n'est pas cette ressemblance, qui n'est qu'un hasard de la création, c'est la présence de cet univers de bonté, de naïveté presque enfantine qui est en vous, qui était en elle... et dont j'ai absolument besoin pour supporter la vie . . . (T X, 239-240)

363. Thesis, p. 197.

In the terms of Bernard's two truths³⁶⁴ one could say that Le Cormier rejects 'la vérité des faits' which the Christian religion represents to his intellect but accepts 'la vérité des coeurs' which, properly practised, it represents to his emotions. Similarly, whilst being guided intellectually to yield at least partially to the flawed, but nevertheless compelling, logic of the cleverly argued inverted moral principles of Rougé in A l'Ombre du Mal or Lady (Fearon) Sullivan, the reader/spectator is drawn to the benevolence of the caring Christians in Lenormand's theatre and repulsed by the pagans or amoralists.

Consideration of the rationale behind these conflicting cerebral and emotional responses to Lenormand's dramatic representation of Christians paves the way for an examination of those of his characters who believe they have found the 'inexpressible', or know where 'it' might be, and make their claims using imagery and terminology which have indisputably Christian resonances.

5. - in death

A number of Lenormandian characters believe, or come to believe, that the mystery of life will be resolved in death. At the end of Tableau V of Le Temps est un Songe Nico tells Saïdyah that he now wonders whether the missing 'mot' might not be found in the depths of the pond (T I, 215-216). In the next

364. See pp. 49-50.

Tableau Saïdyah tells Romée that Nico is suffering 'parce qu'il cherche la voie':

ROMEE

Quelle voie?

SAIDYAH

La voie de la vérité... Je sais ce que c'est... J'ai vu de saints hommes, aux Indes, qui lui ressemblaient. Femme, soeur, enfants, aucun être n'est agréable à leur coeur. Alors, ils partent... avec un disciple ou un boy pour mendier leur riz... et ils vont... ils visitent les villes, les bazars, les lieux saints... ils marchent des années. Un jour, ils rencontrent le Bouddah sur une montagne ou dans un carrefour et ils sont heureux... Mais il y en a qui ne rencontrent pas le Bouddah. Ceux-là se laissent mourir de faim au fond d'une jungle... (**Un silence, hochant la tête.**) Je ne crois pas que notre enfant rencontre jamais le Bouddah... Je savais bien qu'il partirait un jour, mais j'espérais qu'il m'emmènerait avec lui. Je l'aurais suivi partout... et je l'aurais laissé seul avant la fin... car il arrive que le Bouddah se manifeste à la dernière heure, à la dernière minute... . . .

(T I, 225-226)

Within an hour of this speech Nico finally tries to discover 'si la vérité n'est pas au fond de l'eau... tout au fond... sous la vase...' (T I, 216), and we are left to speculate whether he is successful 'à la dernière heure, à la dernière minute...' (T I, 226). In this instance the implication is that should Nico's yearning be satisfied on the brink of, or in, death, his fulfilment could be due to the mediation of Buddha, but in other plays the possibility of a Christian intermediary is mooted. Lui of Les Ratés addresses the following speech to

Elle's corpse at dawn. Its Christian overtones and real glimmers of hope in an afterlife are unmistakable:

LUI, après l'avoir longuement contemplée, étreint par une émotion puissante

Chérie... Tu m'as tellement aimé... il y a encore tant d'amour dans tes yeux... je me demande... Voilà qu'un nouveau doute m'assaille... et plus formidable que tous ceux d'autrefois... Tes yeux ont l'air de savoir... de comprendre quelque chose... Si l'espoir n'était pas aussi absurde que je l'ai toujours cru?... S'il était possible que tout ne fût pas encore fini?... Revois-tu nos souffrances? Les comprends-tu? Et l'infini, que nous avons cherché dans la misère, dans la boue... t'est-il enfin révélé?... (Un silence anxieux.) Ou bien n'as-tu plus de souvenirs?... plus de conscience?... Es-tu seulement sur une rive où autre chose commence?... au premier jour d'une autre vie? (T I, 138)

When the police come to make their arrest, Lui opts to seek direct answers to all these questions:

LARNAUDY

Vous voulez vous faire traîner? Vous n'irez pas en prison comme un homme?

LUI

En prison? (Il sort l'arme de sa poche et l'appuie contre sa poitrine. Il regarde devant lui avec une expression d'avidité curieuse.) Peut-être pas...

(T I, 140)

Immediately afterwards Lui kills himself, whereupon 'aussitôt, par la fenêtre ouverte, arrive, puissante, éclatante, la musique du carillon', which speaks a language all its own for any who may choose to charge it with significance (T I, 140).

The theme of redemption through suffering and death is also present in Une Vie secrète and La Folle du Ciel, although there is an interesting twist at the very end of the latter play. The couple's dilemma is resolved as far as possible when they achieve an imperfect communion through their shared trials, and as they die together they are as united as they could hope to be, given the impossibility of another miracle. They voice their anticipation of a death and transfiguration process in a warm and brightly lit décor to a backing of appropriately magical music. The play could easily have ended at this point, but its ambiance and tone change radically only minutes before the final Curtain:

(Il retombe et meurt. La mouette incline la tête et meurt sur son épaule. La musique cesse. Obscurité. On entend le ricanement du Troll qui apparaît au-dessus de la cabane et contemple les corps.)

LE TROLL

Te voilà morte, viande à rêves et à folies! Et maintenant, allez geler sur la grève, à côté de la baleine. Elle aussi rêvait peut-être d'ailes, quand elle est venue s'échouer là, stupide montagne de chair sortie des montagnes d'eau! L'homme et l'oiseau... Vous ne formiez pourtant qu'une seule race, quand le monde était jeune... quand ces déserts de glace étaient un paradis verdoyant. La cruelle nature vous a séparés... **(Un silence de méditation, puis, avec émotion.)** Trop tard. L'aile et le chant ne rejoindront pas la pensée... Pauvres frères désunis... Rêverez-vous toujours l'un à l'autre?

(T IX, 249)

What motivated Lenormand to cap a poignant dénouement with the sneers and taunts of the ugly, nihilistic Troll? Was he simply

anxious to make sure his audiences went away with a clear understanding of the symbolism of the play, as far as the split personality of both the individual and the male and female couple is concerned? Or was he not also aware that the surest way of sustaining belief in the potential existence of a metaphysically inexpressible 'quelque chose' is to challenge such a hope? Moreover, after his meditative pause even the Troll is moved to pity, and his last, questioning words, on which the final Curtain falls, pick up the note of pathos he interrupted. In this play, as in so many others, Lenormand could not have done more to maintain the ambivalence outside of which the 'inexpressible' by its own definition cannot exist.

6. - in love of varying degrees of purity

As they search consciously or unconsciously for the inexpressible 'quelque chose' in sexual romance, some of Lenormand's characters, notably the male ones, ignore the distinction between love and lust. The overall implication of the plays is that in doing so they jeopardize their chances of finding the 'vérité' they are seeking. A striking example is l'Homme of L'Homme et ses Fantômes. He is one of several Lenormandian protagonists who, temporarily at least, would seem to be intrigued by the age-old belief that the 'mot de l'énigme' is locked in the mystery that woman has traditionally represented for man. There is even a suggestion that the more unknown or unusual and therefore more mysterious the woman, the greater the lure. 'Pourquoi aurait-il aimé cette femme, sinon

pour les distances infranchissables qui la séparaient de lui?', asks the Vérificateur with reference to Aïescha's parents (Le Simoun, T II, 131), and de Mezzana of Asie tells the Princess that he may have loved her for the 'immense charge d'inconnu' weighing on her shoulders (T IX, 84). A number of the women l'Homme pursues love him, but for special reasons he cannot respond in kind so that neither his nor his partners' 'soif d'infini' can be even partially slaked by mutual love (L'Homme et ses Fantômes, T IV, 25). Although the difficulties are complicated in the case of l'Homme, the principle is highlighted in the following conversation he has with l'Ami:

L'HOMME

Je croyais la séduire et c'est elle qui me soufflait les mots qui ont éveillé mon désir. Elle m'aime... Et l'amour n'est pour elle qu'un moyen d'apaiser un tourment qui n'est pas l'amour. Du plus profond de la volupté, quelque chose, en elle, se refuse, me repousse, regarde ailleurs . . . Ces femmes-là nous retiennent par l'illusion qu'elles sont porteuses d'un secret.

L'AMI

Et si elles portaient vraiment un secret qu'on pût violer, comprendre et délaisser à l'égal de leur corps?

L'HOMME

Non, leur secret ne vaut pas la peine d'être connu.

L'AMI

Pourquoi?

L'HOMME

Parce qu'il s'appelle maladie . . .

L'AMI

Elle est belle.

L'HOMME

Charmante et pitoyable, surtout. Dangereuse aussi.

L'AMI, **souriant**

Quel danger t'a-t-elle fait courir? Celui de la fixité?

L'HOMME

Il y en a d'autres.

L'AMI

Lesquels?

L'HOMME

L'amour étranger à l'amour... la passion épuisante d'une chimère de femme... la poursuite d'un démon insaisissable.

(T IV, 24-25)

In the next Tableau we find l'Homme terminating his relationship with Laure and explaining the detachment process to her '**avec une cruauté mesurée**' :

. . . L'homme qui aime une femme lui superpose toujours un fantôme. Un jour vient où ce fantôme disparaît et fait place à un autre fantôme, que l'homme appelle réalité. Mais ce fantôme-là n'a plus rien des séductions de l'autre . . . (T IV, 27)

L'Homme's 'chasse au mot' fails concomitantly with his 'chasse à la femme'. Having destroyed the lives of Alberte and Laure and taken crude advantage of women like l'Hystérique, l'Homme complains to l'Ami: 'Pas une vierge, pas une matrone, pas une prude, pas une fille ne m'a dit le mot que je cherche... le mot qui rendrait mon ciel clair et mes jours paisibles' (T IV, 45). At this stage in the play l'Homme is still a puzzle to himself and to the reader/spectator, but in the next Tableau the now insane Laure hints at the diagnosis the psychologist Luc de Bronte makes officially in Act III: whilst he finds carnal satisfaction in women's bodies, l'Homme's soul craves for the mental, emotional and spiritual attributes of a male partner.

Although they are not classified as latent, complex homosexuals like l'Homme, other characters stumble over a similar sort of obstacle, because, as de Mezzana explains to Aimée in Asie, 'l'homme s'enivre d'inconnu et se trompe sur la nature de ses passions. Il prend ses curiosités pour de l'amour' (T IX, 39). In Act II of Les Trois Chambres Pierre maintains that Rose 'renferme un trésor ambigu, un bien tellement secret qu'il n'a pas de nom', even for him, 'dont c'est le métier de trouver des noms aux choses' (T VIII, 79). In the same speech Pierre assures Florence that, with Rose, his 'temps d'amour', as opposed to his life of uncomplicated debauchery, is just beginning. However, the dénouement of the play makes it clear that there will be a succession of Roses after Rose, and that none will yield up the 'nom' that he is really in search of.

With regard to the Luc de Bronte of Le Mangeur de Rêves, Fearon indirectly implies that he values carnal pleasure with women less than taking psychoanalytical advantage of them, and she is well aware that his probings for soul secrets are not as altruistically motivated as he cares to believe (T II, 211-213). Jeannine also realizes that Luc is more anxious to fathom her psyche for selfish reasons than he is concerned with her well-being:

Tu aimes l'énigme irritante qui se cache dans le dernier repli des consciences.

. . .

Tu te connais si mal, mon chéri... Tu prends tes émotions d'artiste pour de l'amour.

. . .

Et je sais, moi, que du jour où tu auras déchiffré le mot que je porte, tu cesseras de m'aimer. L'amour, pour toi, ce n'est qu'un moyen de forcer les âmes...

(T II, 251-252)

Constantly driven to discover some kind of hitherto unknown language in and through his musical compositions, Michel Sarterre of Une Vie secrète is determined to feed the wellspring of his creative genius at any cost. In the process, for which he is prepared to sacrifice anything and anyone, he explores avenues similar to those investigated by l'Homme of L'Homme et ses Fantômes, and for some time he is convinced that his life of debauchery is necessary to achieve his objectives. The discerning Vera Zvierlof knows how duped he is:

. . . La femelle, pour toi, c'est un gouffre uniforme, un élément dans lequel tu te plonges, sans plus identifier ces vagues de peau que le nageur n'identifie les lames qu'il affronte. Tu ne m'as pas aimée une heure. Je n'ai été, pour toi, qu'un des mille fantômes de la chose que tu cherches. Dès la première nuit, tu m'as atteinte et souillée au delà de ma chair. Un désir plus profond que le désir demeurait en toi, inapaisé... . . . (T III, 212)

Protagonists like Michel were undoubtedly instrumental in consolidating Lenormand's reputation for depicting 'un monde halluciné et hallucinant, où règnent la névrose, l'inceste, le meurtre, toutes les déchéances et toutes les turpitudes'.³⁶⁵ It is worth stressing, therefore, that at no point are we left with the impression that they are following an advisable course. Lenormand gives Luc de Bronte and Michel Sarterre moralizing sounding boards: Jeannine and Fearon in the former case, Thérèse, Vera and Fanères in the latter. In the final scene of Le Mangeur de Rêves, Fearon does her best to dislodge Luc's comforting illusions, telling him, 'Tu ne cherches pas la vérité; tu cherches la volupté, en palpant lentement des confidences honteuses' (T II, 290). 'Tu es comme l'ivrogne qui prétend tirer sa force de son poison', Thérèse tells Michel one day, 'C'est le même mensonge, la même illusion' (Une Vie secrète, T III, 237). Whilst Vera's suicide affords the

365. Surer, Cinquante ans, p. 136. See also pp. 21-22.

reformed Michel a breakthrough in his musical search for a 'langage tout neuf' (T III, 262), l'Homme is less fortunate. He wastes away in every sense. Having failed to find the crucial 'mot' in woman, he eventually realizes that the secret of his own homosexual psyche is not the 'secret' either. The final exchange of the play makes it clear that l'Homme does not find the unknown, inexpressible 'quelque chose' this side of death:

LE FANTOME DE LA MERE, **le dorlotant**

Es-tu bien, comme cela, dans mes bras?

L'HOMME

Oui, mère. (Un silence apaisé, puis, il s'agite.) Je voudrais savoir...

LE FANTOME DE LA MERE

Quoi, mon chéri?

L'HOMME

J'ai oublié... Il y a quelque chose que je voulais savoir, avant de mourir...

LE FANTOME DE LA MERE, **souriant**

Tu ne vas pas mourir. Tu vas t'endormir contre moi, comme autrefois.

L'HOMME, **s'agitant**

Je veux savoir...

LE FANTOME DE LA MERE

Ne te tourmente pas... Ne pense à rien... Dors.

L'HOMME

Savoir...

(Il meurt. Le fantôme disparaît.)

(L'Homme et ses Fantômes, T IV, 122)

At the same time, it is worth noting that the self-centredness of l'Homme, Luc and Michel is not entirely responsible for their excesses. When Jeannine tells Luc de Bronte that his 'passion la plus profonde est étrangère à l'amour' (Le Mangeur de Rêves, T II, 253), he agrees, but maintains that he is less egoistic than she suggests:

C'est vrai, mais cette passion de connaître que tu crois stérile et glacée, elle a sa source dans l'amour, comme toute passion. J'aime. J'aime l'innocence qui est au fond des crimes. Et je me suis donné. A une chimère, peut-être, mais je me suis donné. Regarde ma vie. Je me semble un termite enfoncé dans ses galeries souterraines. Jamais de repos, jamais d'air libre. Je ne peux plus approcher un être sans être obsédé par le signe indéchiffrable qui est gravé en lui. Je ne connais pas le bonheur. Où est la femme que j'ai pu chérir en paix? Un homme éteint? Non pas. Un homme altéré de plénitude et que son démon oblige à passer de l'une à l'autre, dans une ardeur pleine de tristesse. Un faux don Juan, qui se refuse à l'amour, pour l'amour d'autre chose... . . . (T II, 253-254)

We may be reluctant to accept this self-vindication, but it would certainly seem that Luc de Bronte, Michel Sarterre and l'Homme are not straightforward Don Juans.³⁶⁶ Even the debauched Michel shares Luc's inverted sense of innocence. He

366. See pp. 272-273.

tells his wife that to invent and speak a 'langage tout neuf . . . il faut être innocent comme une panthère' (Une Vie secrète, T III, 196). Later, when Vera tells him he is 'comme un enfant, ou comme un animal', he replies 'La comparaison ne m'offense pas' (T III, 211). Why Michel should look for the innocence of animal instincts rather than the traditional variety, can be explained partly by the fact that, as Thérèse says, 'quand on ne veut pas lutter contre son désir, on dit que son pouvoir d'artiste en dépend' (T III, 237), and partly by his belief that Christian methods and principles are effete and ineffective (T III, 180-181). From this, one is only a step away from concluding that Michel suppresses his conscience and 'sentiments humains', to use Fanères's words, partly because his 'amour inquiet d'un infini quelconque' has lost its way (T III, 199), and he lacks the direction he needs to find the 'langage tout neuf' which would give him his bearings.

Not all the sexual relationships in Lenormand's theatre are as metaphysically sterile as those of *l'Homme*, Luc de Bronte or Michel Sarterre. A significant number of his characters have or gradually develop the conviction that absolute truth is somehow bound up with the love experience.

After his wife's death, Albert Carolles regrets the time he spent seeking his 'vérité à dire', his 'vérité simple, éblouissante' in research:³⁶⁷

367. See p. 271.

^ . . . Et tout à coup, je me suis vu... Un pauvre homme rongé par de petites curiosités, abritant derrière des recherches incohérentes les contradictions de sa nature... Un cerveau en désordre, un impuissant de la pensée. En même temps, j'ai compris une chose très belle, quoique décourageante: cette vérité dont je parlais, je l'avais tous les jours à mes côtés. Elle s'appelait Berthe. Il n'y en aura jamais d'autre pour moi . . .
(L'Amour magicien, T VI, 16-17)

If nothing else, one or two of Lenormand's protagonists find temporary solace through the love experience. Lui tells Elle in Tableau IX of Les Ratés:

Quelque chose s'est apaisé en nous. Ah, me suis-je assez tourmenté! Ai-je assez cherché le mot, la vérité vers lesquels je me croyais poussé!

. . .

Il n'y avait pas de mot, pas de vérité, mais seulement cette façon de nous aimer qui est la nôtre... cette pitié de nos lèvres pour nos lèvres... nos deux âmes attachées par la misère, comme le gibier encore vivant qu'on porte au marché... . . .

(T I, 89)

Certain Lenormandian protagonists believe that the experience of human love is a stepping-stone to the indefinable metaphysical panacea. Not surprisingly, Soeur Marguerite of Terre de Satan touches explicitly on the Catholic idea that human love can be a vehicle of divine grace, whilst, equally predictably, Le Cormier is less sure:

SOEUR MARGUERITE

. . . . Ce besoin de retrouver dans un autre être celui qui vous a été enlevé... il vous conduira plus loin que les êtres.

LE CORMIER

Je ne sais pas.

SOEUR MARGUERITE

Moi, je sais. L'âme humaine, c'est un chemin. Il conduit à Dieu. Vous ne resterez pas en route.

(T X, 240)

Vera Zvierlof of Une Vie secrète appears to have an inkling of the existence of some loving power during her remissions in the asylum: 'Alors, du fond de ce néant, il naissait une sorte d'amour, de sagesse ardente... La raison n'a rien à dire là-dessus' (T III, 281). Later she expresses her belief that to love could well be the key to her salvation: 'Je ne peux pas vivre sans amour... Si je pouvais aimer, une heure, un instant, je serais peut-être sauvée' (T III, 288). It is significant that Vera's emphasis here is on the need for her to love rather than to be loved. It is easy to infer from this and from similar pointers in other plays that the self-preoccupation of Nico Van Eyden in Le Temps est un Songe could go some way to explaining his failure to find a durable inner peace through his love relationship with Romée, whilst his more selflessly loving partner is relatively successful. The Nico we see in the play does not confuse love with lust, nor is he as obviously or culpably egoistic as Michel Sarterre,

the Luc de Bronte of Le Mangeur de Rêves or l'Homme, but he certainly fails to achieve a balance between loving and being loved. In the penultimate Tableau Nico tells Saïdyah that for a long time he thought only Romée could give him 'l'apaisement, la certitude' (T I, 215), but he no longer has such an expectation. Romée, on the other hand, tells Nico, 'l'entourant de ses bras', how she has come to realize that love fully experienced dissipates the anguish engendered by unanswerable metaphysical questions:

J'ai appris quelque chose, mon chéri. Tous ces tourments de la pensée sont en nous à la place de l'amour... Tous, même la pitié, même la justice, dont j'ai tant souffert autrefois. A présent, je suis indifférente à tout ce qui n'est pas toi... Tu dis que tu m'aimes... M'aimes-tu assez? (T I, 198)

Paradoxically, his reply, 'Je t'aime jusqu'à l'angoisse', is as objectively false as it is subjectively sincere. However he may judge his feelings for her, Nico's love for Romée is eclipsed by his own self-centred introspection. We are consequently not surprised that, as he goes on to explain, he fails to progress through the mystery of human love to any answers beyond:

Ce lien qui est entre nous... ce pouvoir de ta présence... Qu'est-ce que c'est?... S'il n'y avait que le désir... tout serait simple, rassurant... C'est à la tendresse que l'énigme commence... Et il n'y a pas de réponse. J'ai cru que ton corps enfermait une réponse... Non... J'ai cru qu'on pouvait écraser la pensée sur ton coeur... Non... C'est dans tes bras que cette exaltation devient le plus mystérieuse... Là, paroles, silence, tout a son venin... Qu'est-ce que c'est?... (T I, 198-199)

Nico is not alone in failing to 'écraser' his mental torment on a woman's heart. Elle of Les Ratés believes, even quite early in the play, that the consuming passion of a mutually loving couple genuinely assuages man's 'inquiétude', whilst for Lui it can only be a distraction from it and at best a stopgap:

ELLE

. . . Quand on est pris, roulé dans une grande passion, on ne pense plus à s'interroger, à s'inquiéter sans cesse! Il n'y a plus d'énigmes, plus de questions. Tout ce fatras est balayé!

LUI

Oui, mais après?

ELLE

Comment, après?

LUI

L'inquiétude revient forcément... le doute... les questions... Tout le fatras, comme tu dis.

(T I, 31)

Although Elle never wavers from her essential conviction that the secret of life is embedded in, or intimately connected with, the love experience, Lui eventually ceases to be satisfied with the appeasement afforded by their relationship. Whilst Elle attempts to convince him that the answer lies in loving and feeling more rather than in thinking and intellectualizing so much, Lui insists on regarding the quest

for the solution to the enigma of life as a mental issue rather than an emotional one. In this he takes a similar view to that of the agnostic Vérificateur in Le Simoun who tells Laurency, 'Je ne crois rien, mon pauvre vieux, parce que je ne sais rien... Personne ne sait rien...' (T II, 140), apparently failing to appreciate that, in the final instance, belief, by its very definition, is not knowledge-dependent. When Elle agrees with Lui in Tableau II that there must be something 'à trouver au delà de notre inquiétude',³⁶⁸ she adds, 'Mais ce n'est peut-être pas une vérité, une explication que l'esprit peut comprendre':

LUI

Que veux-tu que ce soit?

ELLE

Peut-être... une manière de sentir... une façon d'aimer...

LUI

L'amour ne peut pas donner la réponse dont j'ai besoin...

ELLE

Il me semble, à moi, que si tu m'aimais davantage... tu te tourmenterais moins.

LUI, **surpris**

Est-ce que je ne t'aime pas?

368. See pp. 267-268.

ELLE

Tu n'as pas beaucoup de coeur, mon chéri. Tu es un cérébral...

(Les Ratés, T I, 30-31)

Another exchange between Elle and Lui is relevant in this respect. Lui actually reproaches Elle for believing that 'la réalité est dans les sentiments':

LUI

. . . Tu crois toujours que la réalité est dans les sentiments... Elle est dans les faits, rien que dans les faits. Et le fait, c'est que nous avons... (Il crayonne.) pas tout à fait quatre francs par jour, alors qu'il nous en faudrait au moins vingt. En dehors de ce chiffre, il n'existe rien pour nous!

ELLE

Si, mon chéri... Je sens qu'il existe autre chose... quelque chose qui échappe à cette réalité-là, qui l'écrase, qui se moque d'elle.

LUI, **souriant**

Je voudrais bien savoir ce que c'est.

ELLE, **bas, s'évertuant à raccommo-der un gant noir**

C'est en nous... tout au fond... petit... né depuis peu... Cela n'a pas encore de nom... . . .

(T I, 44-45)

The fact that 'cela n'a pas encore de nom' does not prevent Elle from approaching an emotional awareness of the inexpressible 'vérité' they are anxious to find. However, it is a major stumbling block to Lui who fails to see human love as a

remedy for his spiritual torment, because it does not provide an intellectual answer to his questions. Les Ratés is one of a number of plays which suggest that those who insist on thinking through the issue with their head have considerable difficulty tracking down the 'inexpressible', whilst others who feel more readily with their heart would seem to approach an awareness of the apparently love-related 'quelque chose' correspondingly more easily.

Jeannine Felse of Le Mangeur de Rêves tries to tell Luc de Bronte why he is wasting his time probing for her secret his way: 'On n'apprend rien que par l'amour', she explains, 'On ne peut savoir qu'en se donnant' (T II, 253). Like Romée Cremers and Elle, Jeannine believes that once the inexpressible 'quelque chose' has been found through this kind of human love, it can remain inexpressible. When Luc suggests he cannot help her because she is resisting his analysis, her reply is significant: 'Je me dis parfois que si tu étais venu à moi d'un coeur plus simple, ah! tu aurais tout deviné, tout compris sans paroles' (T II, 253). The resonances of this comment are striking. As is noted below, like Bernard, Lenormand highlights the way verbal exchanges become relatively superfluous between interlocutors whose hearts are in communion.³⁶⁹ A similar paradox is to be found in the search for the 'mot de l'énigme': once Lenormand's characters experience the 'inexpressible', they cease to be concerned by its inexpressibility.

369. See pp. 334-336.

7. The inexpressibility of the 'inexpressible'

'Don't care for the word! J'ai besoin de la chose' are the cryptic statements of a jaundiced Fearon in Mixture (T VII, 73),³⁷⁰ but surprisingly they have a strange relevance here, for the two Lenormandian characters who claim with the greatest conviction and explicitness that they have found the 'inexpressible', namely Lolita of La Maison des Remparts and Thérèse Sarterre of Une Vie secrète, are much more preoccupied with the 'chose' than they are with the 'word'. Indeed, in the light of their discovery, both these women seem to be noticeably disinclined to find a word for it.

Lolita does not convert to Christianity at the end of La Maison des Remparts. Earlier in the play there is evidence to suggest she is already at least a nominal Catholic, even if she also has recourse to pagan spirits.³⁷¹ Recovering from her illness, she tells André that 'oune chose' came to her when she was close to death (T X, 182). The results speak for themselves: in so far as she was a Christian beforehand, Lolita is a different kind of believer now. Whatever she has in her spiritual life at the end of Act III does not smack of her former escapism, and she appears to have sloughed the need to neutralize the horror of her existence by indulging in certain old daydreams:

370. See p. 342.

371. See p. 284.

Dépouis qué jé lé connais, célouï-là, j'ai plous besoin de croire à la barque espagnole. M'est égal de savoir qué ié reverrai pas le Costa-Rica. Dépouis qué jé lé connais, mes dieux de là-bas, avec leurs ploumes et leurs becs d'oiseaux, ils peuvent plous rien pour moi. J'ai plous peur de vivre dans lé brouillard, au-dessus des marécages... J'ai plous peur de l'hiver, ni dou travail, ni dé la mort. J'ai plous peur de rien du tóut. (T X, 183)

The woman speaking here still has the special, inexplicably soothing quality of her essentially romantic, imaginative nature, the indefinable something in her personality which makes existence bearable for the other inmates of the 'maison des remparts' and for André (T X, 107 and 179). She is the same Lolita with a difference. What is particularly noteworthy in the present context, however, is that the 'new' Lolita is less predictable and traditional as far as her deistic terminology is concerned. It would seem that she is no longer afraid of anything because the 'quelqu'un' she has found closely resembles the unconditionally loving God of Christianity and other major world religions, and yet at no point in her moving declaration of faith - approximately thirty lines in length, interruptions excepted - does the word 'Dieu' cross her lips. (T X, 182-183). Such an omission cannot fail to have significance when prior to her 'conversion' she uses the word four times in eleven lines (T X, 135). The fact that, in the earlier incident, she is actually praying cannot account entirely for this difference in her choice of words. One is thus left with the impression that the Lolita at the end of Act III is more conscious of the inexpressibility of the 'inexpressible' than hitherto. In trying to explain her fresh

insight she uses a variety of terms: 'oune chose', 'oune confiance', 'oun bonheur de l'âme', and more or less succinct paraphrases containing images that hold a wealth of meaning for her: 'quelqu'un dé plous fort qué tous les salauds qui nous ont passé sour le corps...' (T X, 182):

. . . Quelqu'un devant qui nous sérons toujours pources, innocentes, intactes, quelqu'un qui nous laissera jamais tomber, quelqu'un qui ramassera toutes les crapoules de la terre - oui, même ton père, même oun Floret, même oune Pélagie, - et qui leur donnera la même amour qu'il donne à ses anges... . . . (T X, 182-183)

When André interrupts her at one point crying out 'Donne-moi ton Dieu, Lolita!', she replies 'Jé té lé donnerai' (T X, 183), but here André's use of the possessive adjective is significant in itself: Lolita has found her passionately sensed but unnameable and personal 'Dieu'; she has not found, or not primarily at least, the dictionary-defined God of the history books or theological doctrine.

'Est-ce que tu n'as pas deviné qu'il te manquait, à toi et à ton art, une chose nécessaire, inconnue, mais qui existe, pourtant?' Thérèse asks Michel in Une Vie secrète (T III, 241), but even when she is pressurized by his scepticism to be specific she cannot give him an all-embracing, straightforward definition. Like Lolita she has to paraphrase:

THERESE, tombant brusquement à genoux devant lui

. . . Je n'ai pas d'orgueil et je ne mens pas. Je sais! Je sais que tu ne vis pas toute la vie! Je sais qu'il y a autre chose!

SARTERRE

Pas pour moi!

THERESE, avec une conviction profonde

Il y a autre chose!

SARTERRE

Pas en moi!

THERESE

En toi comme en tout être humain! Il existe, au-dessus de nous, une vérité. Je l'ai trouvée! Je la possède et j'en vis.

SARTERRE

Tu as trouvé l'illusion créée par tes désirs.

THERESE, avec une certitude presque extatique

J'ai trouvé ce qui me rend éternelle.

(T III, 241-242)

What is particularly noticeable about the above exchange is, on the one hand, Thérèse's absolute conviction, which she insists amounts to knowledge rather than belief and, on the other, her concomitant lack of concern that language fails her when she tries to express what she knows. It is the cerebral Michel who insists on its being nameable:

SARTERRE

Nomme-le.

THERESE

Appelle-le âme, amour, infini, peu m'importe.
J'ai trouvé ce qui exalte ma chair misérable et ce
qui la sauve. J'ai trouvé ce qui efface honte et
douleur, ce qui ouvre le grand espoir... Si tu te
révoltes aussi furieusement contre cela... c'est que
cela est déjà dans ton coeur.

(T III, 242-243)

Thérèse continues in the same vein when she goes on to prophesy
Sartre's ultimate conversion to 'cela': 'Oui, peut-être, un
jour . . . cela surgira-t-il . . . Cela fondra sur toi . . . et
tu diras: "Cela seul est vrai... Cela seul existe"
(T III, 243).

Given the traditionally God-like attributes of the
phenomena Lolita and Thérèse describe to André and Michel, it
can be no accident that neither of them uses the word 'Dieu'.
We can only surmise about why they should avoid doing so. Is it
simply because each is well aware that her interlocutor is not
known for his pro-Christian sentiments and is likely to jibe at
words like God, Christ or Saviour? Are they unhappy about
referring to their divine being using a word that has become so
hackneyed, impoverished and bland over the years through misuse
that it would seem totally inappropriate? Or, through their
experience of the 'Ineffable', have they realized that He/It is
ineffable and that it is futile to try to label and verbally
circumscribe that which by its very nature cannot be labelled
or verbally circumscribed?

There are several more hints in Lenormand's drama that his
characters are on the wrong track in trying to seek the

'inexpressible' through the linguistically expressible. Even if Laure of L'Homme et ses Fantômes is less successful than her dramatic sisters, Thérèse Sarterre and Lolita, and even if she never finds what she views, when beset by mental illness, as a utopic lost world, she senses that a special language will be used there:

Il y a un monde parfait comme la musique. Un monde où chaque parole apaise comme un accord majeur... Mais c'est un monde perdu. Il nous faudra peut-être des années pour le retrouver. (T IV, 50)

Expressing the idea that words can sometimes be more of a hindrance than a help in comprehending people, Vera Zvierlof tells Michel Sarterre 'Plus je parle avec vous, moins je vous comprends', whereupon he replies 'Il suffit de comprendre ma musique...' (Une Vie secrète, T III, 188). In view of such a statement and Michel's profession, his awareness that music is likely to be a superior instrument for grasping the mystical and metaphysical is not surprising. Accordingly, at the end of Une Vie secrète, it is he who implicitly makes the point that words are incapable of expressing what so many Lenormandian protagonists seek to capture verbally. With reference to the dead Vera lying bleeding on the mezzanine landing, he tells Thérèse 'Il faut que je lui parle... que je lui demande pardon...' (T III, 298). Understandably, Thérèse assumes he insists on going down to her and tries to calm him:

SARTERRE

Laisse... J'ai tant à lui dire!... Et des paroles absolument fraîches, neuves!... Les paroles

qu'elle voulait entendre... Elles m'emplissent tout à coup!... Je ne peux plus les retenir!

(Il se lève.)

THERESE, suppliante

Reste ici... Ne descends pas.

SARTERRE, se dirigeant vers la gauche

Non, non... Son corps ne peut pas m'entendre. C'est à son âme, que je veux parler... Et son âme... n'a pas besoin de mots... Je vais lui parler... mon langage à moi... Elle comprendra... Laisse-moi seul avec elle... dans le noir... Elle comprendra...

(Il entre dans son cabinet de travail . . .)

. . .

. . . (On entend . . . quelques accords sombres et lents, plaqués sourdement sur le piano . . .)
. . . (La musique reprend; des accords plus clairs, plus sonores, d'où se dégage une phrase douloureuse, suppliante . . .)

. . .

THERESE

. . . Voilà deux ans que je n'ai rien entendu de pareil... (. . . Les phrases sombres et angoissantes du début se sont définitivement éclaircies, en thèmes chaleureux qui naissent, se perdent, renaissent, se développent, s'amplifient, s'exaspèrent.) Il est sauvé!

FANERES

Oui. La mort a fait de la vie. C'est toujours le même miracle.

. . .

(. . . Sarterre joue toujours, dans un enivrement croissant. Toute pensée de mort est maintenant absente de son improvisation. C'est un chant de vie et d'amour qui s'élève, ardent et inspiré.)

(T III, 299-301)

. . .

In spite of the multiplicity of their efforts the majority of Lenormand's metaphysically tormented characters search in vain for the 'mot de l'énigme', while a few sense that it is to be found somewhere in the mysteries of death and/or love. Only one or two claim in a dynamic and appealing way that they have encountered the 'inexpressible', but even they cannot supply the missing word and have no choice but to try and describe the phenomenon using vague and inadequate paraphrases. The fact that words are both useless and unnecessary for their appreciation of the 'insaisissable' is no help to those who cannot take such a Pascalian leap of faith.

Almost all the Lenormandian characters who would seem to come close to finding the 'inexpressible', or claim that they have done so, are women, and in this respect Lenormand's treatment of his characters' search for the metaphysically inexpressible can be said to join up unexpectedly with Bernard's 'pièces sentimentales'. Although Bernard's principal protagonists tend to be female and Lenormand's male, and although religious faith or the lack of it is not an issue for Bernard's characters as it is for Lenormand's, both playwrights suggest that women have the advantage over men in the grasping

of the mysteries of heart or soul. As Elle tries to explain to Lui her conviction that the 'inexpressible' is something which has to be felt through the experience of human love rather than something one understands, words appropriately fail her so she has recourse to a musical image - thereby showing an affinity with Laure of L'Homme et ses Fantômes and with the Michel Sarterre of the last two scenes of Une Vie secrète:

. . . Quand j'étais enfant, il y avait une chanson qui m'apaisait toujours, je ne sais pourquoi; elle n'avait pas grand sens... Eh bien, ce dont je parle est comme elle... Cela chante tout à coup... et l'heure la plus triste, la plus décolorée s'éclaire... . . .

. . .

Tu ne l'as jamais entendue, notre chanson à nous?... Elle n'a pas grand sens, non plus... Seule, une femme peut sans doute l'entendre... . . .

(Les Ratés, T I, 45)

Here Elle is illustrating the conviction Pierre Garbin expresses in Bernard's one-act play, La Louise, when he tells his hostess that she can understand the preciousness of love because she is a woman:

Oui, vous, une femme, vous pouvez comprendre. Eux, ils ne peuvent pas. Ils sont trop bruyants pour entendre ces choses mystérieuses. Vous, vous les sentez directement. Pas besoin d'explication . . .
(T III, 239)

Most of Lenormand's male characters fail to find the 'inexpressible' discovered by one or two of their female counterparts, precisely because they are so determined to

encapsulate it verbally, failing to realize that, in so far as it can be said to exist, it has to be felt directly 'sans paroles' (Le Mangeur de Rêves, T II, 253) and that, apart from silence, music is the only medium in which it is viable. Whilst it might be an exaggeration to infer from this that woman indirectly holds the place of honour in Lenormand's theatre as she does discreetly in Bernard's, it is hoped that enough evidence has been given in the last two sections of this chapter and in these closing remarks to refute Robert Emmet Jones's semi-dismissal of Lenormand's major female characters bar 'Aïescha, Fearon, Vera, and the Princess in Asie' as 'foils or sounding boards for the men in whose lives they participate'.³⁷² In a genre as inimical to irrelevancies as drama, characters such as Thérèse Sarterre, Elle, Romée and Jeannine say too much with too great a clarity and conviction for their speeches to be written off so lightly.

372. H.-R. Lenormand, pp. 62 and 45.

CHAPTER 5

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THE RELATIVE INEFFICIENCY OF VERBAL
COMMUNICATION

The first two sections of this chapter are given over to Lenormand's presentation of the disruptive role played in everyday communication by the average interlocutor's largely unknowable, split and unruly psyche. The third section, entitled Oases of communion, constitutes a kind of oasis within the chapter, as it treats of certain isolated interludes of particularly harmonious dialogue which are to be found in Lenormand's theatre. The fourth section is devoted to the playwright's exposure of the fundamental lubricity and insufficiency of words, and the fifth to a number of general factors which are shown to make them still more unreliable as instruments of communication. The focus of attention then shifts to Lenormand's demonstration of the advantages and limitations of paralinguistic, non-verbal and indirect communication signals. His illustration of the unhelpfulness of explicit honesty - in so far as it is possible - is discussed in the final section.

. . .

1. The unknown and unknowable self and its ability to undermine communication

Lenormand makes it clear that none of his characters is wholly known or knowable by others or himself. The dénouement of Asie proves that even the dramatist's own comment regarding de Mezzana, '**Il se connaît et s'exprime intégralement**', cannot be taken literally (T IX, 12). Had he known how vulnerable his forthright nature and living again as a European made him in dealings with characters of the Princess's ilk, de Mezzana would never have taken the risk of trusting her.

Some of Lenormand's protagonists resemble the Bernardian ones who, in the words of Jean de Lassus, 'se devinent à peine; ils voudraient pourtant lire en eux-mêmes, mais sans se faire l'aveu de cette lecture'.³⁷³ A few are aware of their scope for self-deception. 'C'est singulier le peu qu'on sait de son propre coeur', observes Elle in Les Ratés (T I, 45). Through others, who are less ready to make such an admission, Lenormand demonstrates how those who think they know themselves well may be the most deceived. Lui of Les Ratés, for example, makes an analysis of Elle which is more applicable to himself:

. . . Tout ce qui vit s'élançe vers la joie...
Toi, je ne sais quel obscur instinct t'en éloigne...
On dirait que tu as peur d'elle et qu'une force
secrète t'incline vers la tristesse... Tu aspirés à
souffrir... Tu espères sourdement le malheur.
(T I, 43)

'Illusions? Je ne m'en suis jamais fait', Fearon tells Monique in Mixture, 'Je me connais depuis toujours' (T VII, 179). Apart from the fact that she omits to mention here the revelation made to her by Luc de Bronte earlier in her life, has she, one wonders, ever stopped to ask herself whether, since being 'enlightened' by him, she has really become a more whole human being, or whether she has simply used her acquired insight to shift the nature, rather than the size, of the imbalance in her personality? In L'Homme et ses Fantômes it is a relatively

373. Jean de Lassus, 'L'inquiétude freudienne dans le roman et le drame français contemporains', La Grande Revue, janvier 1927, p. 413.

humble Luc de Bronte who says with regard to mediums, 'Ils sont, le plus souvent, dupes d'eux-mêmes, comme vous, comme moi peut-être, comme tout le monde!' (T IV, 99). In Le Mangeur de Rêves, however, the psychologist is very much his own dupe. 'Je l'ai révélée à elle-même. Elle ne se connaissait pas. Elle m'a permis, jadis, de lire en elle...', he boasts with reference to Fearon (T II, 220), fully intending to render Jeannine the same service. Ironically, Fearon and Jeannine analyse Luc far more accurately than he does them.³⁷⁴

However self-analytical and lucid Lenormand's characters are, they all miss something about themselves - very often the most crucial aspect - which becomes submerged or overlooked in the labyrinth of their mind, where it nevertheless affects what they do and say, frequently impairing their attempts to communicate effectively with their interlocutors and in some cases having devastating repercussions on their personal relationships.

The case of Jeannine Felse of Le Mangeur de Rêves is a particularly complex one for which high standards of psychological analysis are required.³⁷⁵ What is relevant in this context is the fact that, apart from her behaviour, many of Jeannine's words raise questions because as a young child her unconscious mind was affected in a particularly dramatic way by an incident which she can no longer remember and which,

374. See pp. 301, 302 and 312.

375. See p. 424.

on some deep level of her psyche, she does not want to remember. As in Bernard's Le Printemps des Autres, we are allowed to sample a little of the resultant confusion ourselves: since the key to Jeannine's psychological problem is not revealed until halfway through the ninth and final Scene, the significance of all this central character says can only be fully appreciated with hindsight or on a second reading/viewing of the play.

As early as the opening Tableau of Mixture we are left in no doubt that the strong-minded Monique is not the sort of woman one might expect to be duped by her own psyche, and yet she is - for years. The extent of Monique's self-deception is thrown into relief when one considers how she complains in Act I about her own mother's doing to her what she starts to do, in a perniciously subtle way, to Poucette. She even shows a competent understanding of the psychological process in question:

. . . C'est un besoin maladif, inconscient, de
me voir à sa merci, de m'entendre pleurer la nuit
dans ma chambre, de me savoir prête au suicide. Elle
ne s'est jamais résignée à mon bonheur . . .
(T VII, 9)

It is interesting that until Poucette opens her mother's eyes, and with them those of the reader/spectator, we are almost as oblivious as Monique is herself to the insidiousness of the motivations underlying, and competing with, her conscious attitude towards her daughter. Prior to Poucette's disclosure we can only muse vainly over certain things Monique does and

says, things which, on a second reading or viewing of the play, take on a new significance.

2. The disruptive role in the communication process of a split and unruly psyche

Lenormand repeatedly affirms that the personality of every human being is naturally split into two enmeshed divisions: his conscious self which is more or less moral, disciplined and known to him, on the one hand, and his unconscious self which is essentially amoral, unruly and unknown to him, on the other. This is the central theme of Mixture and, indirectly, of the symbolic La Folle du Ciel, but it is also a recurring leitmotiv throughout the Théâtre complet. Lenormand would seem to be at pains to air the idea that no one can claim he is lacking in either of these two selves and that every saint is a potential sinner and vice versa. In L'Homme et ses Fantômes Luc de Bronte tells l'Homme, 'Les diables devenus ermites entendent aussi des voix. Et ils y croient fermement, comme ils croyaient aux réalités qu'ils étreignirent avec tant de vigueur, pendant leur carrière de diables' (T IV, 98). Similarly, in Act III of Une Vie secrète Vera Zvierlof tells Michel Sarterre, 'On dirait qu'à présent tu t'enivres de tes remords, comme jadis de tes vices... Tu as changé de poison... Mais tu es resté le même', and earlier in the same play Michel himself maintains that 'les mystiques sont des sensuels qui se passent la camisole de force' (T III, 285 and 231).

Whilst the emphasis in Bernard's theatre is on man as an essentially well-intentioned being, in Lenormand's greater attention is paid to the evil aspects of his nature. This has undoubtedly helped to fuel the exaggerated accusations made against Lenormand of pessimism and unwholesomeness.³⁷⁶ However, the stress Lenormand places on the double-sided nature of the human personality is in itself as optimistic as it is pessimistic. As Fearon colourfully puts it, 'Bah, tout le monde a le pied fourchu... et aussi les petites ailes dans le dos!' (Mixture, T VII, 180). The wise Poucette also knows that the purest strain of human love may be tainted but it is not wholly impure either:

MONIQUE

Je croyais que l'amour d'une mère pour son enfant, c'était comme de l'eau pure. Qu'on n'ose plus en parler devant moi.

POUCETTE

Quel amour est comme de l'eau pure, maman? Le tien a pourtant fait de moi ce que je suis. C'est pourtant à lui que je dois d'être là, telle que tu avais rêvé que je fusse. Plus sage, trop sage, peut-être.

(T VII, 160)

Indeed, the fact that 'tout ce qui vient des hommes est double' (La Folle du Ciel, T IX, 185) might not be such a great issue,

376. See pp. 21-22 and 302.

if human beings at least realized that they are a mixture of conflicting impulses and drives. Talking to Monique Léoncel, Fearon sums up the problem in her crucial speech in Mixture:

. . . Il y a de la peau d'évêque autour des tripes des meurtriers et des pensées de puritains dans les cervelles des faux-monnayeurs. Dites-moi ce qui n'est pas mélangé dans le coeur de l'homme? All mixed up, my dear, embrouillé, incohérent, comme les ondes de T. S. F. qui se contrarient dans l'orage. Je connais un juge qui aime qu'on lui vole ses caleçons et un capitaine de pompiers qui tremble de joie, quand le feu est maître. Oh, si c'était méchanceté, trahison ou hypocrisie, all right! But it's worse! C'est le cocktail, la mixture, la liqueur jaune qui coule dans la verte... et l'orange bitter qui vient brouiller le tout. Cochons! Ils ne savent même pas qu'ils sont mixtes! Ils se croient tout gin ou tout sirop. Pouah! C'est pour cela qu'ils ne peuvent rien terminer, réussir, faire . . . (T VII, 108)

In Lenormand's earlier play, Le Mangeur de Rêves, Fearon makes the essential point concerning man's duality more simply:

. . . Les choses humaines sont doubles: les êtres sont à la fois inconscients et responsables, pleins de scrupules et de cruauté, de sagesse et d'incohérence, de logique et de folie . . .
(T II, 294)

The fact that the human animal is not 'tout d'une pièce, - la brute qui veut le bien, ou la brute qui veut le mal, - the real beast' (Mixture, T VII, 108) and that all too often he acts and speaks in ignorance of his duality, let alone the minutiae of its complexities, inevitably has repercussions on the communication process, for no one can ever be sure that his own words or those of his interlocutor are being selected and delivered by their 'responsible, scrupulous, sensible and logical' self or by the part of them which is 'reckless, cruel,

inconsistent and crazy'. Any certainty in either respect is out of the question since no individual can be fully aware of his own or other people's deep underlying motivations. In Mixture Fearon may be Lenormand's 'porte-parole' as far as the theory is concerned, but Monique's subtly treacherous treatment of Poucette, especially as the girl reaches adolescence and early adulthood, is a brilliant illustration of the practice. When the scales are removed from her eyes, Monique is genuinely appalled:

S'imaginer qu'on a sacrifié sa vie au bonheur d'un être et découvrir tout à coup qu'une bête est installée en vous, qui pourrissait chacune de vos pensées, salissait votre tendresse, empoisonnait votre dévouement! Quelle duperie! (T VII, 160)

Monique is far from being the only Lenormandian character to be duped with regard to his or her essential duplicity. Lolita of La Maison des Remparts is unusual in being aware that she is psychologically split and feeling strangely out of place as a consequence (T X, 78). Certain protagonists try consciously or unconsciously to achieve a semblance of wholeness by existing on one of the two planes of their double-sided personality, unnaturally suppressing the other. Whilst Michel Sarterre of Une Vie secrète, for example, goes to great lengths to silence his conscience and to prevent its being awoken, Soeur Marguerite of Terre de Satan goes to the opposite extremes in her attempt to efface her 'animal' self. Although many of Lenormand's characters are unaware of, or indifferent to, their intrinsic ambivalence, life's

circumstances eventually force one or two of them to confront the issue. Then, with varying degrees of consciousness, or rather unconsciousness, they repress any forbidden or unacceptable emotion or impulse, of which they have been made aware, and replace it with its opposite, speaking and behaving in such a way that they puzzle certain interlocutors who have become used to quite different verbal, paralinguistic and non-verbal communication signals. The end result confirms the message implicit in Bernard's A la Recherche des Coeurs, namely that relatively sudden, radical developments or changes in a person's self-awareness or self-expression can cause communication difficulties in themselves.³⁷⁷

When, in Le Simoun, Laurency begins to suspect that his feelings for his daughter are bordering on the incestuous, he is irritable and cold with her and starts to avoid her, none of which Clotilde can understand because it differs so much from his previous attitude. Whereas the privileged reader/spectator, the personally motivated Aïescha and the wise Vérificateur are able to make sense more or less rapidly of Laurency's paralinguistic and non-verbal signals,³⁷⁸ the sensitive but artless Clotilde is too innocent and too involved to make such a diagnosis. When she questions her father on the subject, she can only grope her way through his overt reassurances to a largely inaccurate conclusion:

377. See pp. 202 and 218-219.

378. See pp. 358-359.

Sais-tu ce que je pense, de temps en temps?
C'est que tu ne veux plus sortir avec moi... Je
t'ennuie.

. . .

C'est que tu étais fâché contre moi...

(T II, 98)

. . .

Ah, je suis contente!... Il y a des moments où
tu as l'air de t'en vouloir à toi-même.

(T II, 99)

. . .

J'ai compris, maintenant!

. . .

Pourquoi, par instants, tu as l'air de m'en
vouloir... C'est qu'à ces instants-là, je te rappelle
maman. Tu penses à elle... et tu ne m'aimes plus!

(T II, 101)

In the course of the first twelve Tableaux of L'Homme et ses Fantômes Lenormand makes it clear that l'Homme and l'Ami are sufficiently good friends to converse openly with one another at some length. However, as soon as l'Homme is informed by Luc de Bronte that one of the particular quirks of his mixed psyche stems from a latent and complex form of homosexuality, he is so repulsed by this acquired element of self-knowledge that he reacts excessively against his platonic relationship with l'Ami, avoiding him without explanation. The end result is

an amicable, embarrassing breakdown of communication between the best of friends (T IV, 69-70). Unable to apprehend what his friend's own psyche cannot come to terms with, l'Ami is left to wonder, no doubt indefinitely, why there can be no further dialogue with l'Homme.

3. Oases of communion

There are no more examples in Lenormand's theatre of individuals communicating perfectly on a permanent basis than there are in Bernard's. Lenormand nevertheless implies, as does Bernard, that where the hearts of the interlocutors in question are for whatever reason closely in tune, interludes of genuine communion are possible and that, during these, words become paradoxically redundant. Although the times when his characters commune in this kind of harmony are limited in length and frequency, through them Lenormand endorses Bernard's view that a common emotional and non-linguistic code is such an effective key to successful dialogue that it can break down other communication barriers, at least temporarily. At the beginning of their tête-à-tête in Act IV Scene VII of Terre de Satan Le Cormier and Soeur Marguerite meet the same sort of communication difficulties as Louis XIV and the Duchess turned postulant in Bernard's Louise de la Vallière.³⁷⁹ Reminiscing, Le Cormier recalls that his wife's first nights in Africa 'étaient des nuits d'amour', whereupon Soeur Marguerite explains that hers 'furent des nuits de prière' (T X, 302):

379. See pp. 201-202.

LE CORMIER

C'est la même chose. (L'oiseau.) Ecoutez! Il dit: "Ma voix est douce. Elle tombe dans les ténèbres, comme de petites gouttes d'eau."

SOEUR MARGUERITE

Non, il dit simplement: (S'appliquant à traduire en syllabes les trilles de l'oiseau.) Délé-délé-délé-déko-déko-déko-déko.

(T X, 302)

Soeur Marguerite soon begins to hear the language of the birds with a less pedantic bias, until she eventually concedes, '(A voix très basse.) Oui... Vous aviez raison... Ce sont des paroles d'amour' (T X, 304). As the scene reaches its physical and emotional climax, music and silence eventually take over as surely as they do at the end of Bernard's L'Invitation au Voyage, where the setting and circumstances are nevertheless entirely different:³⁸⁰

LE CORMIER

Le crapaud, de ses bulles claires, crève la vase du marigot. Il dit: "Dans la boue, la douceur. C'est de la fange que sort ma voix pure."

(Tous les cris de la forêt s'élèvent à la fois, en un puissant crescendo qui s'arrête brusquement et après lequel on n'entend plus, très lointain, que le brrissement de l'éléphant. Puis, silence. Brusquement, Soeur Marguerite se cache le visage dans la poitrine de Le Cormier.)

380. See pp. 90-92.

Peur?

SOEUR MARGUERITE

Non... Si l'on n'a bu que de l'eau, peut-on dire qu'on est ivre?

LE CORMIER

Mais oui.

SOEUR MARGUERITE

Alors, je suis ivre.

LE CORMIER

Ma bien-aimée!

. . .

SOEUR MARGUERITE

Je ne sais plus... ce qui est moi.

(Ils restent enlacés, un long moment, pendant lequel la symphonie animale de la forêt atteint de nouveau son paroxysme. Ils se séparent dans le silence qui suit . . .)

(T X, 305-306)

This interlude is cut short by the arrival of the mortally wounded Lady Sullivan, alias Fearon, and the next time the couple are alone together the religious abyss separating them is foregrounded once again:

LE CORMIER, près d'elle, avec douceur

Je voudrais que vous ne pensiez plus à cette malheureuse... ni à Goré-Goré... ni à Satan. (**Avec une émotion profonde.**) Je saurai vous gagner à la vie. Je suis plus fort que le fiancé de votre adolescence... Nous sortirons d'ici, - et je ne vous quitterai plus. (**Penché au-dessus d'elle avec une foi et une décision inébranlables.**) Vous entendez? Quoi qu'il arrive, ni Dieu, ni diable, jamais, ne vous arracheront de ces bras d'homme!

(Il s'aperçoit qu'elle a fermé les yeux et qu'elle est en oraison.)

(T X, 314)

4. The fundamental hollowness, unreliability and insufficiency of words

Although the relative inefficiency of verbal communication is demonstrated implicitly in his plays, Lenormand is better able than Bernard to highlight specific aspects of the problem explicitly as well. This is because a number of his protagonists discuss the deeper issues of life more loquaciously than Bernard's and are less guarded about what they say and to whom.³⁸¹

Nico Van Eyden of Le Temps est un Songe speculates on how reliable words can be in a fundamentally unreal world:

NICO

. . . Sept et trois neuf.

381. See pp. 272-273 and 361-364.

MADAME BEUNKE

Dix, monsieur Nico, dix.

NICO

Pourquoi pas neuf, ou douze?

MADAME BEUNKE, *interloquée*

Sept et trois font dix...

NICO

Démontrez-le?...

MADAME BEUNKE

Mais...

NICO

On ne peut pas. On ne peut même pas démontrer que deux et deux font quatre. Les nombres n'existent pas. C'est une convention de la pensée... Vos comptes ne sont pas réels. Ce ne sont que des signes de choses mangées, bues, dispersées, détruites. Vos comptes seront toujours faux, madame Beunke.

(T I, 231-232)

Préfailles of A l'Ombre du Mal clearly recognizes how shallow and cosmetic words can be. He tells Rougé and Madame Le Cormier that they should not congratulate themselves on having lost their 'idéal': 'Par quoi l'avons-nous remplacé? Par des paroles. Mon porteur... portait' (T IV, 168). A point similar to Préfailles's implication in this final statement is made by the Russian, a minor character, in Le Lâche. Although he is drunk at the time, he argues, as does Bernard's play

Le Roy de Malousie, that a plethora of words is sometimes no more than an empty cover-up, the action which really matters being obscured by verbosity itself:

. . . Tous ces gens me répugnent, avec leurs paroles... Est-ce là des hommes? Non, des gueules pleines de mots! L'homme doit agir... Moi aussi, depuis deux ans, je ne fais que parler. Parler et penser... Eh bien, j'en crève, entendez-vous, bavards? J'en crève! Je ne peux plus supporter les paroles, quand l'humanité danse au milieu du feu, sur la terre trempée de sang . . . (T.V, 116)

The mobility of truth and the fact that words spoken at one particular moment may lose their validity over time are discussed by a few Lenormandian characters. Rose of Les Trois Chambres tells Pierre one day that scrupulously uncompromising truthfulness is impossible:

Parce que la vérité n'est pas immobile: elle se déplace, elle change tout le temps. Ce qui était vrai hier ne l'est plus ce soir. Ce qui est vrai ce soir ne le sera peut-être plus demain. (T VIII, 42)

After Florence's suicide Pierre comes to accept Rose's judgement on the subject. When in Act III the girl who has been inspired by Pierre's 'sincérité' tells him enthusiastically, 'Je me suis juré de dire toujours la vérité', Pierre strongly recommends that she should not make such a futile resolution:

Eh bien, moi qui ai souffert, ma vie durant, pour ce mot-là, j'ai l'impression que je n'ai jamais pu atteindre la chose. Un magicien l'escamote d'un coup de baguette, chaque fois que je vais la toucher . . . (T VIII, 103-104)

A distraught Michel Sarterre of Une Vie secrète also makes the point that words cannot have any stable communication value, the things they refer to being constantly in flux. Having analysed at length the effect his wife, Thérèse, has had on him, he concludes:

. . . Et tout ce que je viens de dire est peut-être faux, comme tout ce que je rumine depuis deux ans, comme tout ce que l'homme a jamais cru savoir sur lui-même. Les mots éveillent la pensée, qui produit d'autres mots. La pensée est une ogresse qui dévore ses enfants. Penser, c'est mettre des mots à la place des mots. C'est nier ce que j'affirmais l'instant d'avant. Alors, que puis-je croire? J'ai dit: "Thérèse m'a détruit." Et si je n'ai jamais eu de génie? Si je ne suis qu'un névrosé? J'ai dit: "C'est la conscience." Mais qu'est-ce que c'est, la conscience? . . . (T III, 273-274)

Lenormand frequently presents words as being open to such a variety of personal interpretations that their stability and objective value are correspondingly limited. Using an everyday incident as a symbol and the judge of La Maison des Remparts as his 'porte-parole', Lenormand metaphorically suggests not only that modern man has unsatisfactorily shifting moral guidelines by which to chart his course but that even the simplest of statements cannot be trusted because there is no definitive yardstick against which to measure its significance, a different interpretation being possible for every speaker uttering it:

LE JUGE

. . . (Huit heures sonnent.) Huit heures. Ce n'est pas l'heure de la justice.

. . .

(Huit heures, au plomb de la cathédrale.)

FLORET

Encore huit heures.

LE JUGE

A la cathédrale, cette fois.

(Huit heures sonnent successivement à différents endroits.)

FLORET

Au séminaire...

LE JUGE

Au couvent...

FLORET

A l'Hôtel de Ville.

LE JUGE

Quand il est huit heures à dix horloges, en dix instants différents, il n'est nulle part huit heures. Il n'est jamais huit heures. La loi morale est devenue aussi incertaine dans le coeur de l'homme, que l'heure, débitée en sonneries, aux clochers de la ville.

(T X, 173-174)

This point is illustrated in an earlier play, Mixture, when Fearon defends her conception of justice:

FEARON

. . . Si les voleuses et les prostituées mettent au monde de petits anges de Noël, en chemise blanche, je prends mon browning et je me fais sauter. I want some justice!

MONIQUE

Comment osez-vous prononcer ce mot-là?

FEARON

Don't care for the word! J'ai besoin de la chose.

MONIQUE

Et pour vous, il serait juste que mon enfant devînt aussi mauvaise que moi?

FEARON

Juste qu'elle passe par les mêmes chemins que vous. Voilà! Mes parents m'ont fait passer par tous leurs petits chemins à eux. Je n'ai rien contre. C'était juste. Mais je vous promets que si j'ai un enfant, . . . il passera par mes petits chemins à moi. Les mêmes. Et je lui apprendrai à passer gaîment, comme Fearon passe. Now, that's justice. See?

(T VII, 73)

Writing with the objectivity of the theatre critic, Gérard d'Houville points out the feasibility of the opposite of Rougé's 'thèse' in A l'Ombre du Mal: 'Une créature ayant souffert, instruite du malheur et de la peine peut s'efforcer à jamais d'épargner à autrui les souffrances qu'elle

supporta'.³⁸² Kenneth Muir also draws attention to the 'unexpressed corollary to the play's theorem'.³⁸³ Reassuring though such clarifications may be, they are blurred in the context of the play because of the principal protagonist's 'manière si subtile de torturer les faits' (T IV, 158). Indeed, Rougé would seem to be a character tailor-made to prove the lubricity of words by showing how they can be manipulated to justify any argument. Although Préfailles can sense better than he can pinpoint the flaws in Rougé's perverted logic, the latter is not easily challenged or facile.

Although there is nothing original about the dramatic exposure of deliberate oral perfidy, a number of Lenormandian protagonists are such masters of the calculated and sometimes unethical use of ambiguous statements that, apart from being a rich source of dramatic irony, they throw into relief the compliant and potentially treacherous malleability of spoken words. Thus the reader/spectator of Le Lâche is likely to be disturbed by the poignantly black humour of some of the exchanges in its final Tableau:

JACQUES, au Monsieur en gris

Je vous présente ma femme.

382. Gérard d'Houville, 'A l'Ombre du Mal', Le Figaro, 27 janvier 1933, p. 5.

383. Kenneth Muir, 'The Plays of Henri-René Lenormand', Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society (Literary and Historical Section), vol. VI, Part VI, November 1948, p. 388.

LE MONSIEUR EN GRIS, **saluant largement**

Madame, nous avons, Charlier et moi, mille excuses à vous faire. Nous enlevons votre mari.

CHARLIER, **mécaniquement**

Oui, c'est un véritable enlèvement.

THERESE

Ne vous excusez pas; mon mari est trop content de se laisser faire.

(T V, 212)

Other incidents of this kind are to be found in Act III of Asie in the Princess's exchanges with de Mezzana and the children before and after she poisons the latter (T IX, 124-125 and 139-140).³⁸⁴ A number of examples could be cited in Le Simoun where Aïescha plays cruel verbal games with double meanings.³⁸⁵

Apart from its obvious undesirability, the fact that an interlocutor's conscious motivations may be evil has an unhelpful spin-off: sometimes people anticipate a treachery that was never intended thereby making any chance of genuine trouble-free communication even more remote. The fear-ridden Jacques of Le Lâche becomes convinced that there is some disparaging intent behind everything that is said to him. He

384. See pp. 355-356.

385. See pp. 381-382.

detects a gibe in a servant's harmless gossip and is unconvinced by Thérèse's reassurances (T V, 134-136).

The disruptive role played generally in the communication process by the double-sided nature of man's personality has already been discussed.³⁸⁶ Lenormand's theatre also hints at the way the essential inefficiency of words as vehicles of meaning is exacerbated by the presence within the psyche of a network of mysterious drives and pulls, many of which seem monstrous when considered in the light of moral awareness, but are intrinsically as innocent as the instincts foregrounded in the animal kingdom, where the concepts of 'right' and 'wrong' have no sense. The very existence of such a psychic realm means that in some circumstances certain words can lose any value they might otherwise have. By the end of Scene IX of Le Mangeur de Rêves two statements can be made regarding Jeannine: firstly, she drew attention to her mother in the cave and was therefore responsible for the latter's abduction, possible rape and/or death; secondly, she is innocent of any wrongdoing.³⁸⁷ Similarly, words like 'innocent' and 'coupable' make little sense when applied to Béatrice Clomber of L'Amour magicien. However guilty Béatrice may feel when she is told that her unconscious has been manipulating the scenario of her trances, Albert knows that 'on peut être à la fois coupable et innocent de ses crimes' (T VI, 101). Although the dénouement of Mixture

386. See pp. 330-334.

387. See pp. 423-424.

is not tragic, a similar principle is involved. Once light has been shed on Monique's unconscious motivations, it becomes impossible to give simple answers to straightforward questions such as 'Does Poucette have a good mother?'. In all consciousness Monique has done her best to be a solicitous, caring, good mother, protecting her daughter from the negative aspects of her own unwholesome adult life, but in all unconsciousness she has done much to undermine any results thus achieved.

The failure of words in moments of great emotion, irrespective of how much they might be needed at the time, is demonstrated effectively and implicitly in Le Simoun. In the seconds following the full realization, in the conscious mind of father and daughter, of the former's incestuous passion, the emotions aroused are so strong that, after Laurency's initial outburst, a charged silence and separation are the only possible response:

LAURENCY, allant à elle

Etends-toi là... (D'une voix saccadée, inconsciente.) . . . J'ai à te parler, ma petite Yvonne... . . . (Il la prend dans ses bras.) Yvonne!

CLOTILDE, épouvantée, se déroband

Père!

LAURENCY, d'un accent furieux et désespéré

Ah!... Va-t'en!... Mais va-t'en donc!

. . . .

(. . . Clotilde, raidie d'horreur, est appuyée au mur, la tête enfouie dans ses mains. Laurency, n'entendant plus Aïescha, lève les yeux et se voit seul avec Clotilde. Une sorte de panique honteuse le saisit. Il se relève et sort par la gauche . . .)

(T II, 158-159)

The idea that certain emotions far exceed the scope of their linguistic signals is supported by an exchange in the third Tableau of Mixture. 'Enfin vous n'aimez qu'elle au monde?' the young man has just asked Monique with reference to Poucette:

MONIQUE

Aimer? Oui. Ce n'est pas un mot assez fort.

LE JEUNE HOMME

Aimer, pas assez fort?

MONIQUE

On peut très bien oublier, trahir, détester ce qu'on aime. On peut vivre sans ce qu'on aime. Tandis qu'elle... . . . Si c'est de l'amour, c'est un amour qu'on ne m'a jamais donné. Et puis, je n'aime pas beaucoup prononcer ce mot-là en pensant à elle. Surtout maintenant. L'amour, pour vous autres...

(T VII, 36-37)

The theme recurs in La Folle du Ciel, when the hunter tells the seagull that he adores her 'bien plus que les mots ne peuvent le lui faire comprendre':

LA MOUETTE

Les mots des hommes ne peuvent donc pas tout dire?

LE CHASSEUR

Non. Et moins encore, peut-être, que le simple cri de la mouette amoureuse.

LA MOUETTE

Ne rêve plus à ces cris barbares. Cherche les mots de ton amour.

LE CHASSEUR

Flamme, - vin, - soleil... Et non, la flamme s'éteint, l'ivresse passe, le soleil disparaît. Il n'y a pas de mots. Ou bien, si pauvres que tu en rirais.

(T IX, 171-172)

5. General factors contributing to poor communication

It was noted above how, according to the evidence of Bernard's theatre, certain general factors either contribute to faulty and abortive communication or fail noticeably to help.³⁸⁸ Lenormand's drama neither challenges nor greatly substantiates the conclusions Bernard's plays suggest can be drawn in this respect, although it supports and complements a number of them.

The impossibility in this life of lasting harmony between perfectly matched male and female soulmates, which is conveyed in Bernard's L'Ame en peine, also finds expression in Lenormand's symbolic fantasy La Folle du Ciel.

388. See pp. 198-211.

The principal personality distinction shown to aggravate communication difficulties in Bernard's theatre, namely that between the pragmatic realists on the one hand and the imaginative visionaries on the other,³⁸⁹ is in evidence in the relationship between de Mezzana and the Princess in Asie. It is also touched on in La Maison des Remparts, where it is overcome in one particular case with the help of a special bond of affection. Just as Michel of Bernard's Nationale 6 can understand Francine's imaginative discourse whilst Elisa cannot, Julie is the only inmate of the 'maison des remparts' who can tune into Lolita's colourful images, fantastic symbols and dream-infused language:

LOLITA

est une brune de vingt-cinq ans, dont le type, l'accent, les manières, révèlent l'origine sud-américaine. Son langage et sa personne dégagent une poésie inconsciente que ses compagnes perçoivent dans la mesure où elles sont accessibles à la vie du rêve. Car Lolita rêve sa vie et l'image qu'elle en trace, dans son français incorrect, semé de mots espagnols, donne parfois à Cora, à Paulette, à Maggie, l'impression qu'elle est folle. La mère Bunel l'aime, sans chercher à la comprendre. Seule, Julie, qui la défend toujours contre les moqueries de ses camarades et lui a voué une profonde tendresse, presque maternelle, la comprend à demi-mot.

(T X, 72-73)

Reference has already been made to the conflicting religious outlooks which separate Le Cormier and Soeur

389. See p. 205.

Marguerite of Terre de Satan.³⁹⁰ However, this and the other socio-economic and cultural differences which are shown to aggravate communication difficulties in Bernard's plays are relatively minor compared with the racial ones which are highlighted exclusively in Lenormand's more international theatre. Lenormand stresses - even to a somewhat exaggerated degree - the problems that can arise between interlocutors from two different races, problems which are not related to any incompetence in the speaking of the relevant foreign language. Lenormand would seem to be at pains to argue that marriages between East and West are unlikely to succeed and that the offspring of such mixed unions tend to be erratic and unbalanced. Although both Lolita and Lady (Fearon) Sullivan have European and Indian blood in their veins (La Maison des Remparts and Terre de Satan, T X, 90, 92 and 246), the outstanding example is the explosive Aïescha of Le Simoun, 'une métisse d'Arabe et d'Espagnol' (T II, 41). As for Julien and Vincent de Mezzana in Asie, even in their short lives they would seem to suffer more from the disadvantages of having hybrid parentage than from any potential advantages. In spite of Lenormand's tendency to labour certain arguments the international aspect of his drama is one of the most original and interesting ways in which it complements Bernard's work. A major point, for example, which is made in Lenormand's plays and not in Bernard's is the fact that any meaning words may

390. See pp. 334-337.

have in a given context can be impaired not only over time but also over space. Préfailles complains to Rougé about the fact that certain words 'perdent leur pouvoir... avec la distance', to use the Princess's words in Asie (T IX, 60):

A quoi voulez-vous croire, après quinze ans d'Afrique et au sortir de cette étuve? (Il désigne la forêt.) Civilisation? Humanité? Lutte contre la barbarie? Ce sont des mots tellement plus jeunes que l'air où ils résonnent! Là-bas, autour d'un tapis vert, dans les conseils d'administration, ils voulaient dire quelque chose. Ici, devant ces antiques charniers végétaux, ils deviennent aussi obscurs, aussi mystérieux que le cri d'appel de l'aranran . . . (A l'Ombre du Mal, T IV, 167)

Of course, it is not essentially the distance between the two continents which has eroded the meaning of particular words for Préfailles; the distortion is due rather to the physical effect of Africa's geographical landscape and torrid climate on his own personality and that of his fellow-Europeans. He goes on to say that he and other colonialists ought to be living for words such as 'civilization' and 'humanity' but can no longer do so:

. . . Il faudrait pourtant vivre pour ces mots-là... Je conviens qu'il le faudrait. Seulement, nous n'en sommes plus capables. Ce pays efface tout. Afrique: ça veut dire la Noire, l'Obscurcissante. Le progrès, la bonté, la justice même, pour beaucoup d'entre nous, ce sont de beaux souvenirs, des souvenirs d'Europe. (T IV, 167)

6. Paralinguistic, non-verbal and indirect communication signals: their advantages and limitations

Although the role of paralinguistic and non-verbal signals in the communication process is brought into greater relief in Bernard's drama, Lenormand's theatre demonstrates how some

accurate penetration of innocently or maliciously erected façades of 'dialogue entendu' is possible through sensitive and careful interpretation of the unspoken expressed.

Madame Le Cormier of A l'Ombre du Mal does not expect Rougé's words to enlighten her about him directly and realizes that they may be positively misleading. She lets the man communicate himself to her in less obvious ways. In the following exchange she explains her conclusions to her sceptical husband:

MADAME LE CORMIER, *cherchant sa pensée*

Ses duretés sont comme une réponse... une réponse volontairement excessive à quelque injure secrète. Il était sûrement - il est encore parfois - capable de bonté.

LE CORMIER

Lui?

MADAME LE CORMIER

L'autre jour, il revenait des plantations, épuisé, fiévreux, jurant après les noirs. Quand il a vu que je lui préparais des boissons fraîches, une espèce d'émotion subite s'est emparée de lui. Il pleurait presque, en me remerciant.

LE CORMIER

Oui. Les plus rudes s'émeuvent aisément sur eux-mêmes.

MADAME LE CORMIER

Je sais que sa rudesse n'est qu'une défense, une cuirasse qui a son point faible. Je sais qu'on peut l'atteindre.

LE CORMIER

Je ne partage pas tes illusions.

(T IV, 135)

With hindsight one can argue that Le Cormier is right in his judgement and Madame Le Cormier wrong. However, although Le Cormier's caution proves wise, his wife has a good understanding of Rougé gleaned from what he 'says' paralinguistically and non-verbally. Her lethal mistake is not a communication error; she simply fails to take into account that while she is trying to reach the sensitive Rougé, 'ses duretés' continue to wreak havoc.

In the following instance, it is not Lui's words which really help Elle and the reader/spectator to understand him:

LUI

Il n'y a pas un bonheur humain qui ne soit bâti sur le dos d'une bête au visage répugnant.

ELLE

On dirait que tu prends plaisir à te calomnier, à t'abaisser.

LUI

Bah! qui donc aurait surmonté toute espèce de souffrance et d'orgueil, sinon une crapule comme moi!

ELLE

Tu dis cela, mais tu pleures!

(Les Ratés, T I, 92)

The seagull in La Folle du Ciel detects any lies the hunter might tell her by paying careful attention to his eyes:

LA MOUETTE

. . . Tu me hais autant que le vieillard, la jeune fille qu'il désire sans pouvoir la posséder.

LE CHASSEUR

Tu déraisonnes. Près de toi, je retrouve la douceur d'autrefois, la même, celle des soirs de tendresse dans la cabane, pendant la tempête...

LA MOUETTE, l'interrompant

Tu as fermé les yeux pour mentir.

LE CHASSEUR

Moi? J'ai...

(T IX, 219)

At the beginning of his relationship with Laure, l'Homme touches briefly on the possibility of eye contact as an effective means of personal communication:

Quand la phrase du début est revenue pour la deuxième fois, je savais que vous me regardiez. J'ai levé les yeux: j'ai tout de suite rencontré les vôtres... Nous nous parlions déjà. Et au foyer, quand j'ai prié Luc de Bronte de me présenter à vous, il m'a semblé qu'un dialogue, étouffé depuis deux heures, continuait à voix haute entre nous.
(L'Homme et ses Fantômes, T IV, 22)

In L'Amour magicien it is a gesture which betrays the vanity of a male-conscious Béatrice:

FERNANDE

Allez donc vous coucher, Mademoiselle. Je vous observais pendant le dîner. Vous me faisiez de la peine.

BEATRICE, **instinctivement**, touchant son visage

J'étais laide?

(T VI, 33)

In the thirteenth Tableau of Le Simoun, when Aïescha questions Clotilde about the tortoise, the girl's clumsy paralinguistic and non-verbal signals make it clear that she is not a practised liar and confirm her interrogator and the reader/spectator in their conviction that she is a genuinely innocent creature (T II, 154-155).

In L'Homme et ses Fantômes Lenormand touches on the communicative importance of telepathy, with or without the aid of paralinguistic and non-verbal signals. Alberte is clearly a great believer in it, as she explains to l'Homme:

Je ne crois pas aux paroles. On vit avec peu de paroles, chez nous autres. Mais on entend les pensées de ceux qu'on aime. Tout à l'heure, dans le silence, j'ai entendu tes méchantes pensées . . . (T IV, 13)

The limitations of this kind of intuition, however, are illustrated in Tableau IX of Asie. The Princess's statements 'à

double sens' are impenetrable to de Mezzana, even though he senses that his dialogue with her is in some way adulterated:

(. . . On entend le chant des religieuses.)

LA PRINCESSE

Elles sont heureuses... Elles ont une demeure...
Et rien de terrible ne les attend.

. . .

Ne t'occupe pas de mes souffrances. Elles
prendront fin avant les tiennes.

. . .

Je n'ai besoin de personne pour ce qui reste à
faire.

(Un silence. Sans éveiller les soupçons de
Mezzana, les réponses à double sens de la Princesse
ont déterminé en lui une vague inquiétude . . .)

(T IX, 124)

The communicative power of understatement and verbal containment is well conveyed in a number of plays, but it is also shown to be proportionate to the perceptiveness and sensitivity of the interlocutors in question. The informed reader/spectator of the fourth Tableau of Les Ratés cannot fail

to find both meaningful and humorous the uncomplaining resignation with which the hungry and penniless Lui and Elle watch Larnaudy casually eat, as a stage property in a rehearsal, the chocolate which was virtually their only remaining food. Similarly, the silent suffering of Florence, and later Rose, in Les Trois Chambres has its own eloquence. With regard to her husband's nascent liaison with Rose, Florence's coolly delivered statement 'J'aime mieux que tu ne rentres pas ici en sortant de chez elle' (T VIII, 37) may be reserved and matter-of-fact, but volumes lie beneath it. In his review of Les Trois Chambres François Porché comments on this 'sorte de rhétorique du silence, chaque mot étant bourré d'intentions et comme courbé sous le poids des sous-entendus':

L'électricité dont, autrefois, l'on chargeait la tirade, voici maintenant qu'on entreprend de l'accumuler en quelques syllabes. Par exemple, quand madame Corciade,³⁹¹ étirant ses bras nus, soupire: 'Je suis brisée', à nous de saisir, puisque l'auteur n'en dit pas plus long, que toutes les blandices épuisantes³⁹² d'une nuit d'amour sont par là évoquées.

Alfred Mortier's reasons for considering Les Ratés a 'chef d'oeuvre' are also interesting in this context:

391. Renée Corciade, the actress who created the part of Rose.

392. François Porché, 'Le Mouvement dramatique: Les Trois Chambres', La Revue de Paris, 1^{er} avril 1931, p. 691.

Il faut le lire d'ailleurs, car je ne puis analyser ici ce qui n'est pas analysable, c'est-à-dire la senteur de la vie, de la vie intense, frémissante, âcre et profonde, pleine de larmes qui ne coulent pas, marquée aussi de ce grotesque affligeant qui entoure toute douleur humaine et s'y mêle. Et tout cela évoqué en quelques phrases, parfois en quelques mots, suggéré, à peine indiqué quelquefois - et pourtant définitif comme ces dessins, ces esquisses des maîtres où le bref appui du crayon jeté au bon endroit en dit plus qu'un immense tableau prolix et grandiloquent.³⁹³

Le Simoun revolves around the development of a passionate and one-sided incestuous love, but, although Laurency's heart-to-heart conversation with the Vérificateur can be considered a giant circumlocution of the subject (Tableau XII, T II, 134-141), nowhere is it explicitly verbalized. Words, however, are not needed. It is Laurency's facial expressions, gestures, and instinctive reactions - to the Agha's proposition, for example - which sooner or later tell Aïescha, the discerning Vérificateur and the reader/spectator that Laurency is falling in love with the image incarnate of his deceased French wife. Similar signals keep us informed of his psychological journey as he gradually becomes aware that he is in love with his daughter.

Lenormand also knew very well that, although their correct interpretation is anything but straightforward, mistakes and remarks made 'en passant' can sometimes give crucial verbal

393. Alfred Mortier, Quinze ans de théâtre (1917-1932) (Paris, Albert Messein, 1933) p. 95.

clues to a character's subjacent dialogue. A particularly helpful slip of the tongue occurs in Le Simoun the first time Laurency accidentally calls Clotilde Yvonne (T II, 100). In his skilful delineation of his characters in Les Ratés Lenormand demonstrates the importance in the communication process of apparently irrelevant comments. In Tableau VII the duègne, the ingénue, Larnaudy, Elle and Lui tell any attentive interlocutors and the reader/spectator much about themselves in their spontaneous reactions to the cathedral window:

**LA DUEGNE, une vieille cabotine, déteinte, usée et
maternelle**

. . . Tiens, regarde la verrière... C'est du
vrai vieux, ça, ma fille!

L'INGENUE

Je m'en fous, de ta verrière!... . . .

(T I, 73-74)

. . .

LARNAUDY

. . . (Regardant la verrière.) Il est bien, leur
vitrail... Un peu sombre... Si on me donne le local,
je foutrai une projection rouge par derrière... Hein,
ça en aura une gueule?

(T I, 76-77)

. . .

ELLE, avisant la verrière

Oh, regarde la belle verrière!

LUI

Oui. Elle est bien moins obscure que les vitraux du choeur.

ELLE

Il y a un rayon qui la traverse.

LUI

Comme on est pâle, là-dessous...

(T I, 77-78)

Indirectly but surely, this last exchange highlights Elle's optimism and Lui's sombre state of mind.

The way in which the subconscious and unconscious elements of the human psyche inevitably limit the effectiveness of paralinguistic, non-verbal and indirect communication signals is also illustrated in Les Ratés. However sincerely and convincingly Lui may tell Elle that his attitude has not changed on account of her freshly made confession, his reassurances are invalidated to some extent by his involuntary comment in the opening speech of Tableau VI and much more obscurely by his next 'réplique':

Allons, tu as assez pleuré... Si tu continues, tu ne pourras pas t'endormir... Le train part à sept heures; il ne te reste plus que trois heures de sommeil. Couche-toi... (**Elle sanglote.**) Sois raisonnable. Quand tu te rendrais malade, quand tu te donnerais la migraine pour deux jours, est-ce que cela changerait quoi que ce soit? Va, que tu pleures ou que tu dors, rien de ce qui s'est passé ne pourra jamais être effacé. (**Elle sanglote plus fort.**) Non, non; ce n'est pas ce que je voulais dire... Je n'ai pas voulu te chagriner... J'ai dit ça bêtement, pour dire quelque chose!... . . .

. . .

Qu'est-ce que tu voudrais?... Que je t'injurie?
Que je te batte?... Ma pauvre fille...

(T I, 66-67)

Lui clearly considers his own rhetorical questions regarding insulting and beating Elle ridiculous, but in view of the fact that this is precisely what he ends up doing it is obvious that they are much more significant than they initially appear. Such an example reflects the belief that, in the words of Daniel-Rops, 'une phrase quelle qu'elle soit, du moment qu'elle est prononcée par un homme, contient une part de vérité obligatoire, et souvent de vérité plus vraie que ne soupçonne celui qui la prononce. De même un geste accompli'.³⁹⁴ This kind of analysis, however, is only possible in the cool and objective light of hindsight. It is no practical help to the oblivious Lui and Elle at the time.

7. The destructiveness of absolute honesty

Façades of 'dialogue entendu' are less in evidence in Lenormand's theatre than they are in Bernard's. This is largely because a number of Lenormandian protagonists make a point of tearing and keeping such screens down. Although they can do

394. Sur le Théâtre de H.-R. Lenormand, p. 136.

nothing about those they put up unconsciously, they strive to be ruthlessly honest about facts and feelings and often encourage others to be the same.³⁹⁵ When Rose of Les Trois Chambres asks Pierre if he tells his wife, Florence, 'réellement toute la vérité', he categorically replies, 'Toute la vérité dans les faits. Tout ce que je crois être la vérité dans les sentiments' (T VIII, 16-17). That such characters are unusual in respectable circles is illustrated by a remark Fearon makes in response to Monique's honesty in Act III of Mixture:

FEARON

Je dis que du temps où les perles nous intéressaient du point de vue pratique, il n'y avait pas de tristesse, pas de brouillard sur nous. Est-ce vrai?

MONIQUE, **baissant la tête**

C'est vrai.

FEARON

Hurrah! Vous n'êtes pas devenue tout à fait respectable, puisque vous dites encore la vérité.

(T VII, 176)

This observation is reminiscent of Robert Vanier's words to Francine in Bernard's Nationale 6: 'Vous dites ce que vous pensez?... Quel phénomène!' (T V, 71).³⁹⁶ The proponents of the

395. See pp. 272-273.

396. See pp. 124-125.

honesty for honesty's sake theory are nevertheless well represented in Lenormand's theatre, notably by Pierre of Les Trois Chambres and l'Homme of L'Homme et ses Fantômes. Through them Lenormand reveals how unpleasant, if less dishonest, society would be without a veneer of hypocrisy, and demonstrates how an obsessive respect for total explicitness at all times may put pay to certain misunderstandings but prove distancing and destructive of emotional bridges. L'Homme's speech to l'Hystérique in L'Homme et ses Fantômes, just before he has sexual intercourse with her, illustrates both the logic behind his honesty cult and its ugly consequences (T IV, 41-42). Rose reproaches Pierre of Les Trois Chambres for the sadistic way he talks clinically about human beings as if they were unfeeling objects without any emotional dimensions:

Il y a, dans la façon dont vous étalez la vérité, une espèce de plaisir auquel il faut bien que je m'habitue. Vous venez de balayer Jacques de ma vie avec une facilité, avec une légèreté presque joyeuses... Vous étiez content de l'avoir si bien compris. Vous ne pensiez plus à mon chagrin.
(T VIII, 29)

Rose's complaint pinpoints the fact that the obsession some of Lenormand's characters have with absolute sincerity goes hand in hand with a propensity to analyse self and/or others. In certain cases this is shown to have a positive effect on the communication process. However, as in Bernard's theatre, these attempts to sound the depths of the human psyche come up sooner or later against the insuperable obstacle of its essential

impenetrability, which brings this chapter back to its starting point, namely 'the unknown and unknowable self and its ability to undermine communication'...

. . .

The first part of this chapter should have demonstrated how the idea that 'man is often false to man because he cannot above all to his own largely unknowable self be true'³⁹⁷ features in Lenormand's theatre as it does in Bernard's, although the dramatists' methods and emphases differ. Oases of communion of the kind fleetingly enjoyed by Le Cormier and Soeur Marguerite and discussed in section 3 are very few and far between in Lenormand's theatre, but they echo the Bernardian theory that the heart rather than the intellect holds the key to truly effective communication. In Bernard's plays the ineffectiveness of words as vehicles of meaning is shown up through his characters' dialogue and its fruits. It is rarely highlighted explicitly by the interlocutors. The same cannot be said of Lenormand's theatre where the protagonists are generally more analytical and verbose than Bernard's and more intellectually intrigued by such questions. Thus, although mistakes, misunderstandings and misinterpretations are not a major feature of Lenormand's drama as they are of Bernard's, Lenormand nevertheless illustrates either implicitly or explicitly how personal communication is not helped by the

397. Cf. William Shakespeare, Hamlet (Edited by John Dover Wilson, Cambridge at the University Press, 1934) I. 3. 78/80, p. 21.

relative inefficiency of its principal instruments, especially when there is an added complication such as a personality clash or religious divide. Lenormand's theatre also highlights, in support of Bernard's, the comparatively important, if necessarily limited, role paralinguistic and non-verbal signals can play in dialogue. Peculiar to Lenormand's theatre are the warning it paradoxically gives of the dangers for the communication process of absolute honesty - in so far, that is, as it is possible; its demonstration of the sabotage that can be deliberately inflicted by the unscrupulous; and its exposure of the added difficulties experienced by interlocutors of different races and caused by the transmigration of language across continents whose geography and climatic conditions are disparate.

CHAPTER 6

THE POTENTIAL TYRANNY OF WORDS

The same ambivalence registered in Bernard's plays regarding the relative inefficiency of words as instruments of communication, versus their effectiveness in other respects, is evident in Lenormand's, and it is with an examination of this 'effectiveness in other respects' that this final chapter is concerned. First, the creative and destructive aspects of words and their therapeutic potential are discussed. In the next section the focus of attention shifts to words as instruments of mental torment with the power to kill. The following two sections deal with Lenormand's presentation of the psychologically catalytic power of words. In the remaining third of the chapter the need for, and possibility of, resistance are examined, together with the defence systems Lenormand's theatre suggests are available to man in his fight against the potential tyranny of words.

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1. The creative and destructive aspects of words and their therapeutic potential

The idea that the voicing of words can create reality - irrespective of their inability to express it - is a recurring theme in Lenormand's plays. 'L'injustice et la colère prennent des ailes avec les paroles', remarks the Princess in Asie (T IX, 106). Similarly, in Act IV of Terre de Satan, when Soeur Marguerite no longer feels capable of prayer, the Soeur Noire tells her, 'Que les mots traversent la bouche. Bientôt, c'est de l'âme qu'ils viendront' (T X, 312). This comment is shortly endorsed by Soeur Marguerite's increasingly ardent prayer, in

the course of which 'elle est surprise par les larmes, puis elle reprend avec une ferveur plus tranquille' (T X, 316).

It is through the dénouement of L'Amour magique that Lenormand illustrates how something can be true but remain to all intents and purposes non-existent until it is vocalized. Béatrice must know that the mutually reciprocated love relationship with Albert which she has unconsciously tried to achieve through her manipulative hallucinations, comes into being when he realizes that he loves her and in veiled but unmistakable terms insinuates as much. However, she does not actually consider it as existent, taking the view that it is only on the point of realization, because it has not yet been put explicitly into words. No doubt sensing that, until it is uttered, this truth cannot be brought to the foreground of her consciousness sufficiently to arouse a lethally overwhelming mixture of emotions including noxiously acute guilt feelings, she pleads with Albert not to create a reality that will kill her by putting into spoken words the as yet unspoken knowledge they both now have:

BEATRICE

Levez-vous. Riez. Prouvez-moi que cet instant est réel.

ALBERT, souriant

Il vaudrait mieux qu'il ne le fût pas...

BEATRICE

Il ne l'est peut-être pas.

ALBERT

Que voulez-vous dire? Qu'avez-vous?

BEATRICE

Je ne sais... C'est quelque chose de trop fort... de trop immense... Comme si tous les courants du bras de mer me traversaient et m'emportaient... C'est peut-être... ce qu'on appelle le bonheur!

ALBERT, **âprement**

Oui, et toujours, le bonheur est trop fort pour nous! Et toujours, nous sommes faibles devant lui! Quelle misère!

BEATRICE

Non. C'est mieux ainsi... Parce qu'alors, je peux m'y abandonner... J'éprouve une grande douceur à le faire... Mais, si certaines paroles étaient prononcées, si le voile se déchirait... je sens que je ne le supporterai pas.

(T VI, 107-108)

Pierre of Les Trois Chambres insists that it is not just seeing a truth that matters but saying it, as if the spoken words themselves endowed the reality in question with a substance it would not otherwise have. 'C'est intéressant, la vérité. Il ne faut pas tricher. Il faut la regarder en face et dire tout ce qu'on voit', he tells Rose (T VIII, 94). Earlier in the play, when talking with Florence, he is more explicit on the subject:

Eh bien, les actions que je commets, elles ne me paraissent tout à fait réelles qu'à partir du moment où je te les ai racontées... Jusque-là, elles sont en moi comme des rêves . . . (T VIII, 32)

Here Pierre suggests that a fact, however objectively true it may be in itself, is endowed with maximum substance and becomes wholly real only when it is orally communicated to another.

However, Lenormand was no less aware than Bernard that words can be said not only to create or enhance realities but also, paradoxically, to destroy or diminish them. As was demonstrated in Part I, words can be said to be creative in this sense in so far as they give birth to images and sensations,³⁹⁸ and destructive in so far as they douse or curb people's otherwise active and untrammelled imagination.³⁹⁹ Just as Marie-Louise Mailly of Bernard's L'Invitation au Voyage jibs at the use of the word 'béguin' to describe her 'romance' with Philippe Valbeille because it creates an unpoetic reality which diminishes her mental image,⁴⁰⁰ similarly Riemke Van Eyden of Le Temps est un Songe hesitates to talk with pedantic accuracy about her brother:

Romée... J'ai peur de certains mots. Je crains de les appliquer aux êtres que j'aime, parce qu'ils classent, ils dépoétisent. Il faut tout de même les prononcer quelquefois... Nico est malade...
(T I, 203)

Riemke's use of the word 'malade' creates a reality which destroys other - in this instance more attractive - mental images.

398. See pp. 219-234.

399. See pp. 98-99.

400. See p. 220.

The creative and destructive aspects of words are highlighted in the following exchange between l'Ami and l'Homme of L'Homme et ses Fantômes. L'Ami makes the point that their 'aventures' are endowed with greater reality by being vocalized. L'Homme's response implies that spoken words can extirpate unspoken thoughts, the mental images destroyed in this case being unattractive:

L'AMI

. . . Si nous n'étions, l'un pour l'autre, un témoin de nos aventures, elles perdraient leur charme et presque leur réalité. Les femmes, qui nous reprocheraient nos confidences comme des trahisons, ne comprendront jamais qu'en nous racontant leurs faiblesses, nous leur donnons l'existence. Pour ma part, ce que je ne t'ai pas avoué, c'est comme si je ne l'avais pas vécu.

L'HOMME

Moi aussi, j'aime revivre avec toi mes nuits. Les mensonges ne me pèsent guère, ni les ruses, ni les fourberies, ni les cruautés... Et pourtant, j'éprouve à te les confier comme une délivrance. Je ressens parfois, en pensant à celles que je vois souffrir par ma faute, non pas des remords, mais une espèce d'ennui. J'ai beau ignorer la souffrance, je me la représente assez bien. Et si cela ne me retient pas de l'infliger, cela suffit, certains jours, à obscurcir ma joie. C'est comme une contrainte qui ralentit le souffle, une pesanteur qui alourdit le sang. Eh bien, quand j'ai déversé en toi les pleurs, les plaintes, les reproches que me vaut une rupture, je me sens de nouveau libre et léger comme à vingt ans! (T IV, 4-5)

In this cathartic process l'Homme offloads from his imagination the material orally communicated to another. Deprived of this experience nothing can moderate his mind's inclination to analyse, ruminate over, and possibly distort or magnify the

material in question. As this kind of mental activity can be benign or malignant, the cathartic potential of spoken words is evident, and is reflected at various intervals in Lenormand's theatre, as it is, though to a lesser degree, in Bernard's.⁴⁰¹

The idea that meaningful oral communication can contribute generally to an individual's psychological well-being is mooted in Les Trois Chambres, where Pierre and Rose agree that 'les paroles délivrent un peu de l'inquiétude' (T VIII, 15). In Le Temps est un Songe there is a strong implication that, however much of an island the average man may be, in certain individuals psychological insularity and taciturnity can be both a cause and a symptom of mental instability. At the end of Tableau III one is left with the impression that Nico's total withdrawal into himself is having a very negative effect on his psyche:

ROMEE, appuyant une main sur le front de Nico

Ne cherche pas, ne crains pas, ne pense pas.

NICO

Impossible.

ROMEE

Alors, dis-moi chacune de tes pensées, la plus amère, la plus malade. Cela te fera du bien. En ce moment, à quoi penses-tu?

401. See pp. 132-138.

NICO

Nous nous aimons... et pourtant...

ROMEE

Pourtant?...

NICO, péniblement

Nous... cela n'existe pas... Il y a toi... Il y a moi... Je suis seul...

(T I, 199)

An exchange between Romée and Riemke in the following Tableau is also relevant in this context:

ROMEE

. . . L'autre jour, à ce thé, chez les Verloren, il y avait une vingtaine d'hommes et de femmes qui discutaient... Nico se taisait et les regardait de côté, les yeux à demi fermés... Il me semblait le seul réel, le seul sage, le seul noble...

RIEMKE

Oui, le silence est noble. Le goût de la mort aussi.

(T I, 202-203)

Riemke apparently senses what Romée is reluctant to admit, namely that Nico is by now so psychologically isolated that he has moved into a mental realm where words do not have their usual raison d'être, and where they may have the opposite effect from that for which they were originally created. It is

not surprising that he should give the reasons he does for his unwillingness to go to the van Velsens:

NICO

. . . Il faudra causer avec leurs invités?

RIEMKE

Pourquoi pas?

NICO

Mais je n'ai rien à leur dire, moi... je n'ai rien à dire à personne.

ROMEE

A personne?

NICO, la regarde, puis baisse les yeux

Il me semble, à présent, que chaque parole m'éloigne un peu plus des gens... même de ceux que j'aime.

RIEMKE, avec tristesse

Nico!

NICO

Je n'y peux rien.

(T I, 220-221)

In less extreme cases than Nico's, the need for verbal communication is shown to intensify in moments of crisis and to find satisfaction as best it can. After Florence's suicide in Les Trois Chambres Pierre feels a desperate need to talk about

it but not just to anyone: 'J'erre d'une pièce dans l'autre avec l'impression que je dois absolument dire à quelqu'un ce qui est arrivé. C'est à elle, que je veux le dire!' he tells Rose (T VIII, 93). In Tableau XII of Le Simoun Laurency seeks out the Vérificateur in order to talk to him for compelling psychological reasons:

Il faut que je parle à quelqu'un... Oh, ça ne changera rien à ce qui est... Mais je suis dans un de ces moments où le pire mécréant va trouver un prêtre et se confesse... uniquement pour ne plus être seul à savoir ce qu'il sait... (T II, 135)

Laurency makes a wise choice of sounding board in the Vérificateur, although the latter, of course, can do nothing to help him. Laure of L'Homme et ses Fantômes is less fortunate. She is drawn to talk at some length to l'Homme about her distressing abortion experience. Afterwards she feels 'bien plus seule qu'avant' and experiences no cathartic relief because her listener is so abnormally unsympathetic (T IV, 28-30). It is not by chance that the next time we see Laure she is in the mental asylum. Although there is no urgency or trauma at issue in the outpourings of l'Homme himself, with which this particular discussion started,⁴⁰² it would seem that he often goes to l'Ami seeking a similar service to that which the Vérificateur gives the tormented Laurency in Le Simoun. In spite of l'Homme's denial that his treatment of the women in his life weighs on his conscience, as the play develops, it

402. See p. 371.

becomes quite clear that it lies heavily on his unconscious,⁴⁰³ and it is this which undoubtedly accounts for his regular use of l'Ami as a kind of confessor.

The commonly held view that honest, soul-searching dialogue can serve a therapeutic purpose is thus recognized in Lenormand's plays along with the value of the principles of psychoanalysis, according to which noxious thoughts can be rendered harmless by being brought up from the unconscious or subconscious parts of the mind, verbally aired, received by a competent listener and constructively acknowledged. Ironically, Michel Sarterre of Une Vie secrète resents the results of this kind of process in his life and reproaches Thérèse for her part in it: 'Et ce secret, tu me l'as arraché, nous l'avons disséqué ensemble. Nous l'avons assassiné de paroles, d'explications et d'aveux' (T III, 271-272). Another example occurs in Mixture, the dénouement of which clearly indicates that the insalubrious 'monstres' which apparently lurk in every human being's unconscious can be successfully exorcized by being brought into his conscious mind with the help of timely and appropriately delivered spoken words. Monique's immediate reaction to such words is predictable:

MONIQUE

Si ce que tu dis est vrai, si j'ai souhaité que mon enfant connaisse la misère, le crime et la prostitution, tout ce que j'ai connu, moi, il vaut certainement mieux que je ne vive pas plus longtemps...

403. See pp. 396-398.

POUCETTE, lui caressant le visage

Maintenant que tu sais... Maintenant que tu
comprends... tout peut être effacé.

(T VII, 159)

Although Monique is initially horrified by the truths which come out during her heart-to-heart talk with Poucette in Tableau VIII, she quickly recovers so that her openness and receptivity can play their crucial part. The overall results are shown to be highly beneficial: the threat to Poucette's immediate future happiness is removed, whilst Monique experiences not only a psychological healing but a physical one as well.

Lenormand has been criticized with regard to his demonstration of the therapeutic potential of dialogue in Mixture on the grounds that the attitudes of both daughter and mother are too good to be true. Pierre Brisson argues that 'le personnage de Monique est un artifice' and describes the Poucette of the last Act as 'douée tout à coup d'une clairvoyance extraordinaire'.⁴⁰⁴ However, although Poucette's lucid understanding of her mother and the sensible and mature way she confronts her with the truth may be exceptional, they are in character, as are her mother's reception and

404. Pierre Brisson, Au Hasard des Soirées (Paris, Gallimard, 1935) pp. 306 and 307.

assimilation of her words.⁴⁰⁵ Moreover, the dénouement of Mixture is not the facile one of a mawkish fairy tale in which the prince and princess finally go off to live happily ever after. Lenormand makes it clear that Poucette has been marked by those negative aspects of her upbringing from which her mother could not or did not protect her, and that her resultant premature seriousness will colour her future life with Marston. The fact remains that but for one salutary conversation the ending of Mixture might well have been positively tragic.

2. Words as instruments of mental torment with the power to kill

The emphasis Lenormand puts on the effectiveness of spoken words as potential instruments of mental torment is noteworthy. When Romée Cremers talks about her forthcoming separation from Riemke Van Eyden, the latter hints that they can keep any related pain at bay by not talking about it:

405. From the beginning of the play we know Monique is the sort of woman who wants to hear the hard facts about herself, however unpleasant they may be. Her insistence that Raymond should be 'absolument, cruellement sincère' with her (T VII, 19) is so illustrative of this particular personality trait that the relative speed with which she comes to terms with the truth in Act III is not unduly surprising. Poucette's psychology is no less plausible. Although the offspring of criminals may follow in their parents' footsteps, they sometimes react against such a destiny, becoming unusually wise and circumspect ahead of their time.

ROMEE, enlaçant Riemke

C'est effrayant, le bonheur... Depuis des années, nous n'avons pas été un seul jour sans nous voir, toi et moi: dans quelques semaines, il y aura quatre mille lieues entre nous... Et je ne suis pas triste... Je ne pleure pas... Je ne souffre pas...

RIEMKE

Je ne pleure pas non plus... Je souffre à peine... Il ne faut pas en parler.

(Le Temps est un Songe, T I, 180)

Similarly, when the Auteur of Crépuscule du Théâtre voices the sadness which the decline and the negative changes in the theatre are arousing in him and asks the Comédienne 'Qu'est-ce qui est en train de mourir autour de nous?', she replies, '**un doigt sur les lèvres**', 'Vous le savez bien. Mais il ne faut pas en parler' (T VIII, 120-121). Again, when the Receveur of Le Simoun voices his homesickness, pining for 'les pays où tout est vert... les bois, les prés, les haies...', the Vérificateur tells him 'Oui, mais il ne faut pas en parler' (T II, 28).

Towards the end of Tableau V of Asie the Princess pleads with de Mezzana not to talk about the children: 'Ne prononce pas leurs noms. Ne me fais pas penser à eux . . . Ne me force pas à dire ce que je ressens. Ne m'oblige pas à le sentir trop clairement' (T IX, 84-85). The adult Poucette of Mixture is terrified of having to hear certain words. She knows vaguely about her mother's former criminal activities - the thefts, at least - but does not want to be told any details because she

realizes the power spoken words have to paint mental pictures, which, in some cases, may not simply cause pain at the time but prove indelible, haunting obsessions. She is in agony when her mother is on the point of talking about the murder she committed. The stage directions which come at the end of the following exchange suggest that even Monique's relatively general words on the subject actually do leave an irremovable mark on Poucette's consciousness:

POUCETTE, l'interrompant

N'en dis pas plus, maman. Je ne veux pas voir... Parce qu'il me semble que je ne pourrais plus cesser de voir.

MONIQUE

Oui, et tu me repousserais avec horreur! Tu ne veux déjà plus me toucher, n'est-ce pas?

POUCETTE

J'aurai toujours pitié de toi. Si je te demande de garder ton secret, c'est pour ne pas en être obsédée. Ne m'entraîne pas là-dedans! Laisse-moi!

MONIQUE

Ne crains rien. Mon secret ne déteint pas.

POUCETTE, cachant son visage dans ses mains

Il me semble que j'ai du sang sur la peau.

MONIQUE

La boue et le sang, c'est pour moi seule. Mais ne les méprise pas trop, car tu leur dois d'avoir vécu.

(Poucette s'étire, en gémissant, comme pour échapper à l'étreinte sensible d'une fatalité . . .)

(T VII, 149-150)

Using spoken words as her instruments, Aïescha of Le Simoun takes sadistic pleasure in evoking and reinforcing images and sensations in Laurency with regard to his forbidden and unquenchable sexual passion for a creature who, from a physical point of view, is nevertheless only too tauntingly available. The reader/spectator is left to imagine the emotional frustration and agony thus provoked:

AIESCHA, amèrement

. . . Alfred, as-tu remarqué comme ta fille embellit?

LAURENCY, sans lever les yeux

Oui, oui.

AIESCHA

Les chaleurs la pâlisent et le soleil la dore.
Quelle beauté!

(T II, 84)

. . .

AIESCHA

. . . C'est une enfant délicieuse, et douce, et jolie! Dios! Quelle beauté! Je ne peux pas croire qu'elle t'ait déçu!

. . .

. . . Tiens, la voici, la querida. Tâche d'être un peu moins sombre avec elle, ou elle pensera que tu ne l'aimes pas!... Pourquoi dissimuler ta tendresse? Cela doit être si bon, d'avoir une fille à chérir! . . .

(T II, 89)

Confirming a point made implicitly in Bernard's drama, the verbal torture that Clotilde inflicts is all the more poignant for being unconsciously and innocently dispensed.⁴⁰⁶

CLOTILDE

Oh, j'ai mes secrets, comme toutes les jeunes filles.

LAURENCY

Ils doivent être bien innocents!

CLOTILDE, **avec une volubilité enjouée**

Je suis sûre que les tiens ne sont pas très coupables non plus... Tu es si bon!... . . . Tu me promets que tu ne m'aimeras jamais par devoir, par sentiment familial? Mais seulement parce que je te plais?

LAURENCY

Je te le promets.

CLOTILDE

Il faut m'aimer comme si tu m'avais choisie!

(T II, 99-100)

406. See p. 226.

. . .

CLOTILDE, avec exaltation, se serrant contre lui

Mon pauvre, mon cher papa! Il faut que je répare le mal qu'elle t'a fait.

. . .

. . . L'amour qu'elle t'a volé, il faut que je te le rende!... Ne dis pas que c'est impossible! Car cet amour dont elle nous a privés tous les deux, il est en moi, tout neuf, prêt à être donné! Tu dis que je lui ressemble, à elle qui n'a jamais aimé?... Non! Non! Je te dis, moi, que je me sens lourde de tendresse!... lourde à pleurer! Il n'y a pas un être au monde que je ne puisse aimer!

(T II, 102)

Fully exploiting his minor and major characters, Lenormand never loses an opportunity to stress that verbally inflicted mental pain can kill and that people ignore or underestimate this fact at their peril. Even without intending to be malicious, Pélagie of La Maison des Remparts indirectly but no less certainly kills the emotionally sensitive and physically vulnerable Micheline with words:⁴⁰⁷

LA MERE BUNEL

Elle prétend qu'on l'a renvoyée sans raison.
Qu'est-ce qu'elle avait fait?

407. Of course, Pélagie can also be said to trigger off the entire tragedy of La Maison des Remparts by informing René that André also frequents the brothel (T X, 66-67). She is, however, less culpable than Cora, who, by telling René about his son's planned elopement with Julie, arguably becomes an accomplice to murder.

ANDRE

Parlé... Tout raconté aux enfants.

PAULETTE

Aux enfants? Ça, c'est trop méchant.

ANDRE

Elle n'est pas méchante. Elle aimait ces deux petits. Mais il a toujours fallu qu'elle salisse, qu'elle détruise. Quand Micheline a su que j'avais voulu partir, elle est venue à moi et m'a jeté un regard que je n'oublierai pas... un regard si mûr, si désespéré... un regard de femme trahie. Le soir, la méningite s'est déclarée. Elle est morte d'avoir appris que son père avait failli l'abandonner!

PAULETTE

Les paroles, tout de même! Ce qui peut sortir d'une parole! . . .

(T X, 175-176)

Just after learning that Florence has committed suicide Pierre of Les Trois Chambres tells Rose, 'Nous avons tué un petit enfant' (T VIII, 88). However, without extolling deception, it is more accurate to say that Pierre's affair with Rose does not kill Florence, his telling her that he loves Rose is the mortal thrust. At the end of the long speech Pierre makes when he tells Florence that he loves Rose and does not simply desire her sexually, he says proof of an infidelity on Rose's part would drive him to kill, adding 'Tuer! Moi qui n'ai jamais pu voir saigner un poulet'. He is so totally wrapped up in himself that he almost certainly fails to register the full significance of his wife's unique response: 'J'ai toujours su

que tu étais capable de tuer' (T VIII, 80). As the Curtain falls, the reader/spectator senses no less than Florence that Pierre is capable of killing, and the next Tableau immediately confirms that he has actually just dealt her a lethal verbal blow, even if a few days later a revolver is officially designated as the instrument of death. In the course of time Pierre admits this to the girl in Act III:

. . . Le drame que je vous ai raconté hier, quelques mensonges, un peu de silence auraient pu l'éviter . . . Et, le plus effrayant, c'est que cette soi-disant vérité, dont la révélation a tué ma première femme, n'était probablement pas la vérité . . . (T VIII, 104)

3. The potentially lethal power of words as psychological catalysts

By far the most important way in which words are shown to create harmful realities in Lenormand's plays is by their power as psychological catalysts along the lines exemplified in Bernard's theatre, that is by planting, triggering off and/or nourishing thoughts. The potentially endless chain reaction of thoughts, triggering off words, triggering off thoughts, triggering off further words, etc. - not to mention any actions inspired on route - in a network of any number of interlocutors, is exemplified simply but effectively in La Maison des Remparts in an exchange between Julie and Floret, who is discussing the sin of lechery in which he says he has been living since the age of thirteen:

FLORET

Quand j'étais pensionnaire à Saint-Nicolas, les frères nous en parlaient comme du plus grand péché que l'enfant puisse commettre... Ils en parlaient trop.

JULIE

Pourquoi vous parlaient-ils comme ça?

FLORET

Parce qu'ils y pensaient. Alors, nous, on y pensait aussi . . .

(T X, 81)

In nearly all the examples Lenormand gives illustrating the power of spoken words as psychological catalysts the effect is a negative one. Thérèse Sarterre's awakening of her husband's conscience might seem to be an exception, but Michel himself considers even this influence to be destructive (Une Vie secrète, T III, 267-274). Sometimes the speaker's motives are unconsciously nefarious, although occasionally the mechanism at work in this kind of process is deliberately exploited by ruthless characters who know precisely how powerful word power can be. Usually, however, a relatively innocent, naive or unwitting speaker has little idea of what his words initiate, encourage or exacerbate. He may never realize the power they have exerted, or he may do so only when it is too late to rectify the damage done. An incident in L'Amour magicien illustrates this effectively. When his sister impresses on Albert the fact that Béatrice's words are

responsible for his growing conviction that Berthe was the victim of a death wish and was driven to commit suicide by deep unhappiness, he points out to a disconcerted Fernande that some of her own words planted the idea in Béatrice in the first place:

ALBERT

En parcourant les réponses de sa mère, on pressent une plaie secrète, un mal inguérissable dont elle a dû chercher le soulagement dans la mort.

FERNANDE

Ce sont les inventions de Béatrice qui t'ont mis cette idée-là en tête!

ALBERT

Oui, mais qui l'a soufflée à Béatrice, cette idée-là?

FERNANDE, saisie

Qui?

ALBERT

C'est toi. Elle ne te paraissait donc pas aussi absurde qu'aujourd'hui.

FERNANDE, après un silence

C'était une impression passagère. Je n'y ai jamais repensé depuis.

ALBERT

J'y ai repensé, moi.

(T VI, 75)

Through such exchanges Lenormand's theatre discreetly drives home the same point as Bernard's, namely that all spoken words, however lightly or inadvertently they may be delivered, should be generally considered as potentially dangerous because they can act independently, causing psychological reactions in their hearer of which their speaker is quite ignorant.

The power spoken words can exert as psychological catalysts is reflected, to varying degrees, in most of Lenormand's dramas. In some it plays a relatively minor but crucial role, in others it is central to the plot. Le Mangeur de Rêves is a case in point.

As was pointed out in Chapters 2 and 3, it is through well-meaning amateurs such as Maurice Gardier of Le Printemps des Autres and Robert Darmon of Le Jardinier d'Ispahan that Bernard highlights how in the field of psychology a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing.⁴⁰⁸ It is in Le Mangeur de Rêves that Lenormand highlights the risks run by psychoanalysts whose very tools are words - their own and their patients'. Luc de Bronte proves at the tragic expense of Jeannine Felse how lethal these tools can be. Only in the light of the play's dénouement can the second-time reader/spectator fully appreciate the cruel irony with which the following exchange is latently ringing:

JEANNINE

. . . Vous n'êtes pas médecin?

408. See pp. 195-197 and 231.

LUC

Oh, à peine.

JEANNINE

Enfin, vous ne soignez pas les gens?

LUC

Non, mais je les guéris quelquefois.

JEANNINE, **riant**

Sans remèdes, j'espère.

LUC

Avec le remède le moins coûteux et le plus dangereux qui soit... avec des paroles.

(T II, 189)

In Le Mangeur de Rêves Lenormand implicitly makes the point that, however potentially beneficial the talking of damaging elements out of the psychological system may be, a very careful choice of confidant or adviser has to be made, especially when mentally disturbed or hypersensitive individuals are concerned. In Scene III Jeannine tells Luc, 'Mes misères sont celles de beaucoup de femmes . . . Mais il me semble que si je vous les dévoilais, au lieu de les alléger, vous les aggraveriez... en y attachant trop d'importance' (T II, 220). The reader/spectator can understand her misgivings as he becomes more and more convinced in the course of the play that Luc is not the sort of psychologist one can trust or respect. Apart from his unprofessional indulgence in sexual relations with his clients,

his divulging to others of confidential information regarding them and his blinkered concentration on one particular theory, Luc does not simply fail to neutralize Jeannine's noxious obsession, he actually consolidates it with the words he speaks and elicits.⁴⁰⁹

In the majority of cases in Lenormand's drama spoken words are shown planting thoughts in people regarding future eventualities as opposed to past or present events. Sometimes there is a long time-lag between the moment the fateful words are spoken and the materialization of their consequences, but a sum of dramatic evidence suggests that even the hundreds and thousands of spoken words which never get to work as psychological catalysts are actually only dormant in the individual's subconscious or unconscious mind, where they wait indefinitely for further words, thoughts or events to fertilize them. It is not by chance that we learn about some of the spoken words which are digested by Béatrice Clomber in her childhood, and then only have to bide their time until the day her repressed love for Albert employs them indirectly but effectively in its interest: 'Dans mon enfance, chez mes cousines, on ne parlait que de sorciers et d'envoûtements' she tells Anna (L'Amour magicien, T VI, 20). When Pierre Tairraz of La Dent Rouge turns against Claire, having hitherto sided with her, he finds he can call on a mental stock of verbal ammunition in the form of accusations made against her by his

409. For further comments on the mishandling of Jeannine's case see pp. 423-424.

family and her father over the preceding months (T III, 117-119).

Lenormand repeatedly shows how a hastily uttered or casual remark can, in the course of time, play a psychologically catalytic role which would surprise its speaker if he ever became aware of it. It is no coincidence that Monique Léoncel kills Grégoire with a scalpel, when shortly before doing so he draws her attention back to the instrument she has already spotted and commented on (Mixture, T VII, 48), telling her, with reference to his friend's fate in his previous night's dream, 'Quelqu'un, - je ne sais pas qui, - venait de lui traverser la poitrine avec un bistouri' (T VII, 58). The implication is that when Grégoire says these words a thought is inevitably sown or confirmed in Monique's psyche at some level of consciousness or unconsciousness and lies ready to be turned into action should circumstances so dictate. One can infer from the evidence in La Maison des Remparts that René plants or fertilizes within himself the seed of an idea which eventually materializes. In his reply to Julie's taunting 'Eh bien, refais l'amour, si tu peux' the mental ground is prepared for a crime which its perpetrator has probably not yet consciously conceived: 'J'ai plus envie de te battre que de te prendre. Oui, quelques bons coups de canne ferrée, la canne de mon herbager, ça me ferait du bien' (T X, 96). Although the first-time reader/spectator can only appreciate the process retrospectively, René's own words could be said to play a

crucial role in engendering or reinforcing a thought which proves father to the deed.

Superstition and sorcery, which can be said to function on the power of words to give rise to thoughts, subsequently visualized and actualized, play a prominent role in Lenormand's theatre. Apart from the instances where characters - the Princess in Asie, for example - act on the words of the spirit they believe possesses them, a number of plays revolve round the art of prophesying the future. In so far as any conclusion on this subject can be drawn from the plays, it would seem to hinge on two main principles. Firstly, if the future is prophesied accurately, knowing the prophecy in advance of its materialization is pointless. As Nico tells Romée in Le Temps est un Songe, 'les voyants n'ont jamais rien empêché. On ne change pas l'avenir, même le connaissant' (T I, 187-188). Secondly, if there is the remotest possibility - and there inevitably is - that any pronouncement(s) made could be factitious, mistaken or even slightly inaccurate, fortune-telling or the soliciting of forecasts from the dead are shown to be highly dangerous because of the very potency of the psychological mechanism triggered off. In his article 'Le Temps est un Songe et La Nouvelle Héloïse',⁴¹⁰ Adolphe-Jacques Dickman draws attention to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's neat summary of the risk incurred when a prediction

410. Adolphe-Jacques Dickman, 'Le Temps est un Songe et La Nouvelle Héloïse', Philological Quarterly, vol. X, no. 2, April 1931, p. 220.

is made along the lines of Romée Cremers': 'L'événement n'est pas prédit parce qu'il arrivera; mais il arrive parce qu'il a été prédit'.⁴¹¹

Although the self-fulfilling prophecy is illustrated in Bernard's theatre,⁴¹² it looms larger in Lenormand's where there are numerous and varied examples of the phenomenon at work. In such instances, irrespective of the context, the hearer consciously, subconsciously and/or unconsciously develops mental images of the voiced event or fact to such a consistent degree that he eventually predisposes himself and the people around him to its actualization. They then start to mould and react to the circumstances of their lives in such a way that in the end the event or fact in question actually does materialize. With reference to Muotta, a specialist in tuberculosis, Madame Ystad of Le Lâche tells the Demoiselle, 'Il vous suggérera que vous avez une rechute et vos températures s'élèveront. Vous recommencerez à tousser' (T V, 10). Ironically, Fearon highlights the role this kind of psychological mechanism plays when effective faith-inspired prayers are formulated. 'Quand on traverse les rues en suppliant le bon Dieu qu'il vous fasse rouler sous un taxi, on finit par passer dessous' she points out to Monique (Mixture, T VII, 107).

411. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Footnote 25, Lettre XI, Sixième Partie, La Nouvelle Héloïse, Oeuvres complètes, vol. V (Paris, Garnery, 1823) p. 365.

412. See p. 241.

Assuming one dismisses the idea that Béatrice Clomber of L'Amour magicien really is a medium, one can argue that through her trances, manipulated insidiously by her unconscious will, she literally talks herself into a belief which kills her. Similarly, from a careful survey of Le Lâche one can conclude that Jacques talks and acts himself in and out of sickness. It would appear that by verbally, paralinguistically and non-verbally telling everyone except his wife, who knows the truth, that he is tuberculous, Jacques goes a long way to convincing his own unconscious of the lie; and/or his fear of everything, combined with his guilt which is clamouring for a punitive fate, in spite of his conscious longing to live, play their part in undermining his immune system so that temporarily at least he actually becomes what he initially pretends to be. Although there is more to Le Lâche than Jacques's health fluctuations, it is a significant work as far as the dramatic exposition of the auto-suggestive role of the spoken and the unspoken word is concerned, because the subject initiates the process and is hoist with his own petard. In most of Lenormand's other plays the crucial self-fulfilling prophecy is triggered off by the words of another person or other people.

4. The power of spoken versus unspoken words as psychological catalysts

There is of course no suggestion that all thought processes and psychological reactions are triggered off or fostered in this way. Clearly a large number of thoughts, ideas and beliefs are begotten by circumstances or events. The

fundamental obsession of Jeannine Felse in Le Mangeur de Rêves, for example, has its origin in an early childhood experience. Nevertheless Lenormand's insistence on the potential catalytic power of spoken words as illustrated in his drama can hardly be overemphasized. The possibility that a person's unspoken words can affect the lives of others as well as his spoken ones is also mooted.

Committing what Sartre was to designate the sin of 'mauvaise foi', Jacques of Le Lâche blames Thérèse for his cowardice in the following terms:

. . . Tu as fait de moi ce que je n'étais pas:
un lâche. Depuis deux ans, c'est ton instinct
rebelle, c'est ta volonté négatrice qui dicte mes
actes. Chacune de tes paroles, chacune de tes pensées
pèse sur moi d'un poids affreusement lourd . . .
(T V, 142)

Again like a number of Sartrian protagonists, Michel Sarterre of Une Vie secrète is afraid not only of the spoken words of others but also of their 'regard' and their thoughts:

**SARTERRE, passant devant elle, fuyant son regard avec
inquiétude**

C'est que je n'aime pas beaucoup...

THERESE

Quoi donc?

SARTERRE

Regarder en moi-même... Ni surtout... que les
autres y regardent...

(T III, 234)

In the final instance, however, Lenormand's theatre leaves the reader/spectator with the impression that it is the vocalized expression of thoughts that counts most. Even Sarterre is convinced that it is above all by voicing her disapproval and by drawing him into a debate that Thérèse has done what he considers to be her worst. 'En intervenant dans ma vie, en la jugeant, en en parlant devant moi, tu as violé le secret de ma nature. Tu as empoisonné ma source', he maintains when he accuses her of having destroyed him as an artist (T III, 269). At one point he states categorically that 'les mots seuls sont dangereux':

THERESE

Ah, je t'aurais aussi bien détruit sans paroles.

SARTERRE

Peut-être pas. Tant que nous nous taisions, tu m'étais inoffensive. Ce sont les mots, les syllabes, ces petits signes néfastes et menteurs de la pensée, qui m'ont abattu comme une grêle de plomb abat une perdrix au vol . . .

(T III, 272-273)

This essential conviction on the part of Sarterre is reflected in the plots and action of a number of the plays. Whatever telepathic energy may reinforce them, it would seem that other people's spoken words are more dangerous than their unspoken ones.

Even if one opts to give credence to the more rational of the two possible explanations for the events which take place

in L'Homme et ses Fantômes in and after Tableau XV,⁴¹³ it might seem that they can be put down to the power of the unspoken rather than the spoken word. Assuming that l'Homme is literally haunted to death by the mental images he unconsciously manufactures as a result of his deep-rooted and unacknowledged guilt and dread of retribution, the role played by the spoken word may not be immediately obvious. It is worth noting, therefore, that these fearful thoughts and imaginings have already been sown in him by spoken words. In Act I Alberte drives home in no uncertain terms a spoken message which, in spite of being consciously dismissed by l'Homme, remains logged in the depths of his unconscious until the séance gives it its opportunity to surface:

ALBERTE

. . . Ne me laisse pas! Si tu pars, emmène-moi!
Si tu ne m'emmènes pas, je te suivrai . . . J'irai à
Paris et, si tu me repousses, prends garde, je
m'attacherai à toi jusqu'à ta mort et bien au delà!

. . .

Tu le sauras, quand tu sentiras, dans cette vie
et dans l'autre, que tu n'es plus seul, qu'il y a une
chose avec toi, un amour repoussé qui s'est mêlé à
toi pour ton tourment.

L'HOMME

Laisse là ces folies, Alberte.

. . .

413. See pp. 278 and 280-281.

ALBERTE, avec violence

Je jure par mon amour que les âmes outragées ont pouvoir de vengeance, quand elles ont sacrifié leur vie et leur salut! (Il ricane.) Tu ne riras plus, quand tu me sentiras accrochée à toi, sans poids, sans forme et sans visage, mais bien plus solidement, bien plus lourdement qu'avec ces fortes mains.

(T IV, 13-15)

Laure's final words to l'Homme when he visits her in the asylum are equally chilling. 'Allez-vous-en! J'ai envie de vous étrangler', she says menacingly, then chases him away with 'Courez! Courez! Vous n'irez pas loin, c'est moi qui vous le dis. Vous serez saigné par les vampires!' (T IV, 52). In the space of time separating the delivery of these speeches and the séance, l'Homme has grown psychologically weaker and correspondingly more vulnerable. The 'table's words' - 'M.O.R.T.E. P.A.R. L.U.I.', 'A.L.B.E.R.T.E.' and 'P.I.T.I.E.', for example (T IV, 86-87) - voiced by the secretary at the séance, consequently fall back on receptive mental soil and rapidly fuel what proves to be a highly destructive process.

In Le Temps est un Songe Riemke fears that Romée has transmitted her hallucination to Nico by being obsessed with it herself:

RIEMKE

Eh bien, je pense que quand tu as vu cette face dans l'étang, aucun danger ne menaçait mon frère. Ce n'était pas une révélation du passé ou de l'avenir... Ce n'était qu'une hallucination... Mais depuis... je me demande si ce délire de ton esprit ne se transforme pas en réalité.

ROMEE, réfléchissant

Est-ce qu'une pensée... une chimère, peut devenir une réalité?

RIEMKE

Quelquefois... C'est contagieux, la pensée... Ce que tu as rêvé, Nico a pu le rêver à son tour.

ROMEE

Comment?

RIEMKE

Tu lui auras, sans le savoir, communiqué ta vision... . . .

(T I, 205-206)

The fact remains, however, that Romée sows the crucial seed verbally when Nico tells her that he once attempted suicide but without mentioning how. Influenced by her hallucination she jumps to the wrong conclusion and promptly puts into Nico's head the idea of drowning himself in the pond. As is often the case in instances of this kind in the theatre of both Lenormand and Bernard, only the second-time reader/spectator can fully appreciate what is happening in the following conversation, although it marks the beginning of a psychological process which will terminate in a man's death and is triggered off by two very natural questions asked in all innocence. In the significant pause at the end of the exchange, the initiated reader/spectator is tempted to believe he can metaphorically

'hear' the catalytic reaction taking place in the disturbed
man's psyche:⁴¹⁴

ROMEE

Et tu as vraiment essayé de...

NICO

Oui.

ROMEE

Quand cela?

NICO

Il y a juste dix ans...

ROMEE

Où était-ce?

NICO

Ici.

ROMEE

Ah?

NICO

Personne ne l'a su.

ROMEE

Pourtant, quelqu'un t'a sauvé?

414. See similar examples in Part I, pp. 245-252.

NICO

Non.

ROMEE

Tu as regagné la rive tout seul?

NICO, étonné

Quelle rive?

ROMEE

C'était là, n'est-ce pas, dans l'étang?

NICO

Non... Je me suis pendu dans le grenier, près de la lucarne du milieu... Le clou existe encore... Au bout de quelques secondes, la corde a cassé. Je me suis évanoui. Je n'ai pas recommencé.

(Un silence.)

(T I, 196-197)

To make sure the first-time reader/spectator does not forget this crucial dialogue, Lenormand draws attention to it later when he allows the more objective Riemke to make the same assumption as Romée:

ROMEE

J'ai commis une imprudence terrible. Il y a quelques jours, il me parlait de sa maladie... Il me disait qu'il avait voulu se tuer, autrefois...

RIEMKE

Je ne savais pas.

ROMEE

Personne ne l'a su, mais il a essayé.

RIEMKE

Il s'est jeté à l'eau?

ROMEE

Ce fut ma première pensée, à moi aussi... Que ne l'ai-je cachée!... Que ne me suis-je tue!... J'étais si troublée par cet aveu, et en même temps si sûre d'avoir tout compris, que je lui ai parlé de l'étang... Je lui ai demandé comment on l'avait secouru...

RIEMKE

Eh bien?

ROMEE

Il m'a regardée, surpris: il ne s'était pas jeté à l'eau. Il s'était pendu dans le grenier. (**Elle sanglote.**) Tu avais raison... C'est moi qui lui ai donné cette idée... C'est moi qui le perdrai!...

(T I, 208-209)

That Romée cannot be held legally or morally responsible for Nico's death does not alter the fact that her words play a part in his seeking release from his torment at the bottom of the pond. This is yet another play where Lenormand makes the point that, however indirectly, words can kill.

In conversation with the curé in Act IV Scene II of La Dent Rouge Claire confesses to having entertained murderous thoughts:

. . . Une nuit, tenez, celle où Pierre m'a battue, j'étais si furieuse et humiliée que quelque chose en moi souhaitait sa mort. Une autre pensait par ma tête. Moitié rageant, moitié rêvant, je voulais qu'il retourne à la montagne... "Vas-y... vas-y donc!... et qu'un malheur t'arrive!... Vas-y." C'était comme une voix que je ne pouvais pas faire taire. Je le voyais glisser sur l'arête et tomber jusqu'à la glace verte qui est près des grands séracs . . . (T III, 130)

After Pierre's fatal accident Claire rapidly convinces herself that by saying words silently in her head, in anger, she triggered off a psychological reaction in her husband thereby sending him to his death (T III, 147). Whatever could or could not have been transmitted between Claire and Pierre telepathically, it is unlikely that the latter failed to register his wife's verbal, paralinguistic and non-verbal signals of bewildered despondency and resentment in their climactic discussion at the end of Act III. Moreover, just after he has locked the door and just before he beats her, a cornered, indignant Claire, panic-stricken at the thought of being imprisoned in a house with a corpse on its roof, ceases to talk rationally and calmly and starts making understandable but none the less wild threats:

CLAIRE

Dans ce tombeau? Sous ce cadavre?

. . .

Eh bien, méfie-toi! Méfiez-vous tous! On ne sait pas de quoi je suis capable.

PIERRE

Je ne le sais que trop!

CLAIRE

Je mettrai le feu à votre tanière!

PIERRE, **traversant à gauche**

A nous deux, malfaisante! J'ai pas peur... C'est pas la première fois qu'une embarneuse est venue dans cette maison!

(T III, 120)

This exchange, in which, as even the objective reader/spectator has to admit, Claire speaks like the witch she is accused of being, undoubtedly leaves Pierre more convinced than before that he is married to a sorceress capable of putting a jinx on him, and it is with this thought filed in his mind that he tackles the Dent Rouge.

This is an appropriate juncture at which to make the point that Lenormand's theatre implicitly confirms the idea expressed covertly in Bernard's plays, namely that, however powerful spoken words may prove to be as psychological catalysts, in practice they only have as much influence as the conscious, subconscious or unconscious mental soil on which they are dropped gives them. The insinuations of his family trigger off a psychological process in Pierre's mind and Claire's own angry words reinforce it, but if any thought contributes to his climbing accident it is his not Claire's.

Such an assertion can be made with relative confidence since it would be endorsed by Fearon of Le Mangeur de Rêves, a Lenormandian expert on the power of words. Indirectly but indubitably, Fearon verbally murders Jeannine with what would

be accepted in a court of law as the truth. She has Belkaçem say certain words and she says others, in such a way and at such a moment in time that she triggers off an unstoppable death wish in her victim.⁴¹⁵ Indeed, she makes the latter's suicide so predictable that we feel Jeannine would almost certainly have done the deed somehow, even if Fearon had not slipped a revolver into her hands. As soon as Jeannine has run off into the darkness, Fearon, who knows she only has to wait for a gunshot for the loose ends of her crime to be tied up, says 'C'est une question de savoir s'il est meilleur de tuer avec des paroles ou avec un couteau' and asks Belkaçem's opinion:

BELKACEM

Chacun tire son plaisir de l'instrument dont il joue le mieux. Mais le fusil est plus sûr que tout. Les paroles sont comme le couteau: bonnes pour achever.

FEARON

Bonnes aussi pour commencer... Si un homme, avec des mots, n'avait pas rouvert dans cette âme une profonde blessure, ceux que tu viens de prononcer n'auraient pas élargi la plaie . . .

(T II, 286-287)

The man referred to here is the psychologist Luc de Bronte, with whom Fearon has a related discussion earlier in the play. At that time she makes the crucial point that 'on ne détruit

415. See pp. 423-424.

vraiment que par la pensée' (T II, 215). This statement considered in conjunction with the comments to Belkaçem quoted above implies that in Fearon's opinion, in instances of indirect murder using the power of words, it is the victim's own conscious, subconscious and/or unconscious thought processes which kill him, although spoken words are the weapons with which the 'murderer' activates these and makes them fatally destructive.

5. The need for and possibility of defensive resistance

Exactly how a thought is born, planted, triggered off or fed in the psyche is of course unknown. However, the conscious, subconscious and/or unconscious receptivity of the hearer, on which the potential psychologically catalytic power of words would seem to be dependent, is shown in Lenormand's theatre, and to a lesser extent in Bernard's, to vary in its turn, not simply with the particular personal circumstances of the individual, but also with hereditary and environmental factors. Regarding the latter, geographical surroundings and climatic conditions play a crucial role, and Lenormand's insistence on their power to condition the human psyche generally and consistently is one of the central features of his work. In Tableau VI of L'Homme et ses Fantômes the prostitute tells Alberte how much the fog affects her clients:

. . . Une brume pareille, c'est pas mauvais. Les hommes sont plus faciles à faire que par un beau clair de lune.

. . .

. . . Le brouillard doit leur mettre du vague dans les cervelles. Ils y voient des choses qui leur chauffent les reins. Ils courent d'une femme à l'autre. Ils sont inquiets comme des rats, dans ce coton-là.

(T IV, 33)

It is for psychological reasons that Luc de Bronte recommends Jeannine leave her Savoy guesthouse before too long:

Nous subissons l'influence de ce lieu encaissé, de ces forêts qui tombent dans la vallée, de toutes ces lignes descendantes. Ici, notre âme roule au bas de sa pente... et elle finit par s'y trouver bien. Elle n'essaye plus de remonter.

(Le Mangeur de Rêves, T II, 185)

In the following comments made in the second Tableau of Le Temps est un Songe Nico hints that this tendency of the psyche to be governed significantly by the weather and one's physical surroundings may be inherited in greater or smaller doses:

. . . Ces vapeurs grises qui passent, qui passent pendant des semaines... Cette pluie qui est encore de la brume... cette brume qui est déjà de la pluie... cela me désagrège...

. . .

Ce n'est ni très fort, ni très intelligent d'être ainsi dépendant d'une plus ou moins grande générosité de la lumière, je le sais, mais qu'y faire? Dans la famille, nous sommes extrêmement sensibles à ces influences.

(T I, 174)

It goes without saying that 'ces influences' inevitably have a bearing on any consideration of Lenormand's presentation of

man's vulnerability to the psychologically catalytic power of spoken words. The implication is that the simoon in the play of that name does not only fan Laurency's incestuous passion directly, it also increases his susceptibility to the verbal provocation to which he is subjected from various quarters.⁴¹⁶

Whether or not its strength is limited by the extent of the hearer's conscious, subconscious or unconscious receptivity - increased or diminished by hereditary and environmental factors, whether or not the speaker is fully or even partially aware that it is being exercised, whether or not it takes effect immediately or after a delayed reaction, the power of spoken words to initiate or affect psychological processes and thereby determine the course of events is presented as a formidable reality in Lenormand's drama. Even a cursory examination of the mortality of his characters yields sobering results in this respect:

PLAY	DEATHS	POWER OF WORDS IMPLICATED ?
<u>Les Ratés</u>	Elle - manslaughter Lui - suicide	Tenuously Tenuously
<u>Le Temps est un Songe</u>	Nico - suicide	Yes
<u>Le Simoun</u>	Clotilde - murder	No
<u>Le Mangeur de Rêves</u>	Jeannine - suicide	Yes

416. See pp. 381-383.

PLAY	DEATHS	POWER OF WORDS IMPLICATED ?
<u>La Dent Rouge</u>	Grandfather - exertion Pierre - accident	No Possibly
<u>Une Vie secrète</u>	Vera - suicide	No
<u>L'Homme et ses Fantômes</u>	L'Homme - ? Miscellaneous women - ?	Yes No
<u>A l'Ombre du Mal</u>	Madame Le Cormier - murder	Yes
<u>Le Lâche</u>	Madame Ystad - illness Jacques - execution	No No
<u>L'Amour magicien</u>	Berthe - drowned ? Béatrice - ?	No Yes
<u>L'Innocente</u>	None	-
<u>Mixture</u>	Grégoire - murder	Tenuously
<u>Les Trois Chambres</u>	Florence - suicide	Yes
<u>Crépuscule du Théâtre</u>	None	-
<u>Asie</u>	Julien - murder Vincent - murder Princess - suicide	Yes Yes Tenuously
<u>La Folle du Ciel</u>	Hunter - 'natural' cause Seagull - 'natural' cause	No No
<u>La Maison des Remparts</u>	Micheline - illness Julie - murder	Yes Yes
<u>Terre de Satan</u>	Soeur Marguerite - suicide + Miscellaneous	No No

Given the fact that approximately half of these deaths can be put down to the power of words being exercised deliberately, subconsciously or unwittingly, one is certainly led to ask how free the characters are shown to be to offer resistance, and what defence systems, if any, are available to them.

The extent to which people have or do not have control over their lives is a recurring issue in Lenormand's theatre. In April 1928 Lenormand described himself as an 'homme de théâtre qui s'est donné pour mission de ranimer le tragique sur la scène', adding that his theatre represented 'une tentative de résurrection de la tragédie, ou plutôt un essai de réintégration des éléments tragiques de l'antiquité dans le drame moderne' ('Mon Théâtre', p. 234). It is only natural that in making this 'tentative' the dramatist should have concentrated on depicting individuals whose destiny is as arbitrarily determined as that of the original Oedipus. The negative implications of Lenormand's approach have nevertheless been the target of critics. Just as a number of them have been inclined to overlook the fact that Lenormand's insistence on the ambivalence of human nature is actually as optimistic as it is pessimistic,⁴¹⁷ they have also tended to forget that, irrespective of the type of plot and characterization incorporated in his work, Lenormand never implies that the instincts and urges with which he replaced the Fates of the ancient Greek dramatists are necessarily harmful or negative. Although Lenormand's plays leave the reader/spectator with the overall impression that man enjoys a minimum of free will, one has to remember that the average Lenormandian protagonist is automatically at a disadvantage in this respect. As Daniel-Rops

417. See p. 329.

points out, Lenormand used the two 'grands moyens de découverte que possède la psychanalyse':

Ils se réduisent au reste à ceci: tenter de définir l'homme non plus par les gestes que contrôle sa volonté, mais au contraire par ceux qu'il accomplit lorsque cette volonté fléchit . . . Il suffit, pour cela, au dramaturge de mettre son héros dans des circonstances telles que sa volonté soit momentanément abolie.⁴¹⁸

Nico Van Eyden of Le Temps est un Songe is a classic example of such a 'héros'. His will, in fact, is so obliterated that his ultimate suicide can be viewed as inexorably decreed. However, as the victim of an ever-intensifying neurosis which terminates in insanity, Nico can scarcely be considered representative of general humanity. Having said that, even Lenormand's more stable characters are frequently presented as existing at the mercy of the entrenched, determined and astute motivations at work in their unconscious. Initially it might seem that the power of spoken words acting more or less independently of their speaker and frequently in an oblivious hearer, helps to enslave the conscious mind still further, but on closer examination of Lenormand's plays - and Bernard's - it becomes clear that this power itself is frequently the servant and pawn of man's deep-seated, amoral driving forces and is exacerbated by certain external influences, such as hereditary and environmental factors. Given the existence of such pressures, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that the psychologically

418. Sur le Théâtre de H.-R. Lenormand, pp. 136-137.

catalytic potential of words can be exploited more or less consciously and actively in a defensive counter-attack - a point which the plays actually endorse, albeit indirectly or on a secondary and not very obvious plane.

6. Defeatism versus defiance

A reference has already been made to the way both Jacques of Le Lâche and Michel Sarterre of Une Vie secrète anticipate those Sartrian anti-heroes who try to evade responsibility for their choices, pleading the curtailment of their free will by the spoken or unspoken words of others.⁴¹⁹ Even when he is not blaming one particular individual, Michel finds another scapegoat, as the following dialogue reveals:

SARTERRE

Je ne savais pas que tes paroles étaient meurtrières.

THERESE

Et moi qui croyais le sauver, en l'éclairant sur lui-même! Ah que l'amour est bête et méchant!

SARTERRE, *l'apaisant du geste*

Ne t'accuse pas... Je devais pencher secrètement vers ma ruine, aspirer sans le savoir au mal que tu m'as donné. Je porte le poids de mon temps. Je suis né deux mille ans trop tard.

FANERES

Pourquoi?

419. See pp. 395-396.

SARTERRE

Il y a deux mille ans, cet empoisonnement n'eût pas été possible, parce que le poison n'existait pas encore. Elle m'a communiqué le même fléau que le christianisme au monde: la conscience.

(T III, 270)

In the end at least Jacques of Le Lâche is more honest with his spouse who happens to be another Thérèse. 'N'étions-nous pas toujours d'accord? Ne t'ai-je pas laissé libre?' she asks:

JACQUES

Libre? Oui, comme le poisson dans la nasse, avant que le pêcheur ne la relève. Où est l'homme qui a vécu libre auprès d'une femme?

THERESE

Tu es trop oublieux, trop faible et trop injuste, à la fin. Tu dis maintenant que tu te serais battu? Mais, quand tu étais à la caserne, tu voulais te suicider ou désertier . . . Maintenant que la liberté te pèse, tu m'accuses. Tu ne peux rien prendre sur toi, pas une souffrance, pas une déception. Il faut absolument que tu t'en décharges sur d'autres. Tu dis que je t'ai rendu lâche. Ce n'est pas vrai. Tu l'as toujours été. Tu passes ta vie à imaginer des périls. Tu es ici par peur de la mort. La peur est à la base de toutes tes actions.

(Un long silence. Il réfléchit.)

JACQUES, très calme

C'est exact... Je ne peux pas assumer la responsabilité de mes actions ou de mes sentiments... Il faut que je les mette sur le compte de quelqu'un . . . Tu as dit vrai... Et si je te rends responsable de ma lâcheté, c'est que je ne supporte pas la pensée d'être un lâche... . . .

(T V, 142-144)

At no time does Jacques or Michel show any real determination to combat unwelcome verbal influence - from whatever quarter it may come. Michel even asks Fanères to stop seeing his wife in an attempt to divide and weaken the opposition and minimize his special vulnerability to Thérèse's disapproval (Une Vie secrète, T III, 203). To a certain extent Pierre Tairraz of La Dent Rouge can also be said to concede defeat in this kind of struggle before the battle really commences. His rejection of superstitious beliefs at the beginning of the play proves to be both shallow and selective, and one wonders how much he resists the arguments of his fellow-villagers with the power of Claire's enlightened convictions rather than his own. Consequently even his temporary opposition and defiance are only apparent. He oscillates between the two poles until he finally gives up the fight in his family's favour, whereupon the superstitious thoughts, which have been sown during his life so far by words from various sources, and have been accumulating in his subconscious and unconscious mind since he was a child, re-exert themselves with a vengeance.

To offset such malleable protagonists, scattered examples can be found in Lenormand's theatre of minor and major characters who are determined to hold on to the free will and supremacy of their conscious mind. Some of these individuals use their awareness of word power to defend or help rather than

hinder themselves. Although such characters are few in number, Lenormand's plays do not imply that the catalytic power of words can only be exercised destructively, nor do they suggest that the principles which make spoken and unspoken words a formidable psychological force cannot be harnessed consciously and exploited for positive rather than negative ends. Indeed one of the underlying implications of Le Lâche is not only that people can become unhealthy by thinking, speaking and acting as if they were so, but also that they can reverse such a process by thinking, speaking and acting as if they were healthy or becoming healthier.

One Lenormandian character who tries to turn the potential of psychologically catalytic word power to beneficial account is the Vérificateur of Le Simoun who uses it consciously and systematically to strengthen his will. Although he may occasionally give the impression of being eccentric, he is the most stable, sensible and astute character in the play. 'Vous avez le moral solide, vous', remarks Laurency (T II, 18). It is not surprising that Laurency seeks out the Vérificateur rather than the Receveur or the Percepteur when he needs a listening ear. Nor is it coincidental that the twelfth Tableau, in which Laurency makes his quasi-overt confession of his incestuous feelings, begins and ends with our being introduced to the sort of countermeasures taken by the Vérificateur in order to nurture and fortify his psyche through the therapeutic exploitation of word power (T II, 134 and 140-141).

Other more central characters also challenge the tyranny of words. When the Princess of Asie tells de Mezzana that 'les mots sont forts', he replies categorically, 'Les mots sont sans pouvoir sur les sentiments. Ils ne peuvent ni les détruire, ni les raviver' (T IX, 79). This assertion implies that de Mezzana has created his own immunity against any potentially negative word-triggered or word-exacerbated psychological processes within himself by refusing to be receptive to them. He has dramatic cousins in Madame Le Cormier of A l'Ombre du Mal and Romée of Le Temps est un Songe. Madame Le Cormier remains fundamentally impervious to the jaundiced negativism of Rougé's perverse arguments, and at the same time helps to keep her husband's morale resilient. As for Romée, she is as positive and resolute as Nico is negative and purposeless. Whereas her fiancé's psychological vulnerability is clearly aggravated by climatic factors, Romée simply chooses not to be affected in this way. 'Que vous êtes drôles, tous les deux!', she tells Nico with reference to himself and Riemke, 'Toujours en train d'analyser le temps qu'il fait. Toujours à maudire ou à bénir le ciel! Je ne le regarde pas, moi, je n'y pense pas...' (Le Temps est un Songe, T I, 174).

Unfortunately, de Mezzana, Madame Le Cormier and Romée all provide tragic evidence of the limitations of even their positive attitude and strong will. Through them Lenormand drives home the point that, whilst an individual may be able to do much to dictate the processes of his own mind constructively and at will, he has no direct control over anyone else's. With

only a few dozen spoken words de Mezzana unwittingly provokes the Princess to murder their children (Asie, T IX, 109-110). Even if she were aware of it, Madame Le Cormier of A l'Ombre du Mal could not stop the reaction which Rougé's spoken words and supporting behaviour trigger off in Maélik and which is responsible for her death. Romée Cremers insists that her will and freedom can be used to Nico's advantage:

. . . J'ai tellement désiré qu'il vive! J'ai tellement poursuivi le bonheur de mes pensées! Ce n'est pas en vain. Si les passions et les rêves ne pouvaient pas créer des avenir nouveaux, la vie ne serait qu'une duperie insensée. Autant nous enfermer dans une cage de fer garnie de pointes et nous dire: "Dansez, vous êtes libres!"... La vie n'est pas ça!... (Le Temps est un Songe, T I, 204)

Romée's determined optimism is refreshing and undoubtedly benefits her own psyche, but it is insufficiently infectious to help Nico. Riemke's reply to the speech just quoted, 'Tu espères, parce que tu es saine' (T I, 204), is significant. With all the will in the world Romée's hope and sanity cannot compensate for Nico's lack of both and thereby save his life.

The personal psychological strength of de Mezzana, Madame Le Cormier and Romée Cremers is nevertheless undeniable. It is interesting that they should have another trait in common, namely a capacity for self-denial. Extreme egoism is shown to be characteristic of Lenormand's psychologically feeble characters. Pierre of Les Trois Chambres is honest enough to admit, 'Je m'aime d'abord' (T VIII, 18). Michel Sarterre of Une Vie secrète, Jacques of Le Lâche and, to a less obvious extent, Nico Van Eyden of Le Temps est un Songe could also sum

themselves up in the same sentence. To varying degrees they are all cold and insensitive towards those they are supposed to love, as if unaware that 'les coeurs froids ne font pas les hommes forts' to use Fearon's words to Luc de Bronte in Le Mangeur de Rêves (T II, 297).

It was noted in Chapters 4 and 5 that in Lenormand's theatre, as in Bernard's, the heart is shown to play an important role in overcoming, or responding to, the ineffectiveness of words as instruments of communication.⁴²⁰ A heart properly used and directed would also seem to provide a limited form of defence against negative processes potentially triggered off or nourished in an individual's own psyche by the catalytic effect of spoken words. This is the implicit message of L'Innocente. The emotions of the Toca are cruelly hurt by spoken words, but she does not succumb to their catalytic power, although she would appear to be Lenormand's most vulnerable protagonist in this respect: she is mentally subnormal and we are told that in her ingenuousness 'elle croit tout ce qu'on lui raconte' (T VI, 122). Marcel Ray, theatre critic of L'Europe nouvelle, explains her victory in spite of these disadvantages in the following terms:

L'un après l'autre, l'homme et la femme frustrés de leur héritage déploient une affreuse diplomatie; ils suggèrent plutôt qu'ils ne disent les mots décisifs; ils jouent avec l'Innocente, éveillent sa naïve convoitise d'une belle robe de soie, guident son imagination fruste et crédule vers une sorte de conte de fées, découvrent enfin qu'elle se croit aimée d'un

420. See pp. 320-322 and 334-336.

beau gaillard qui a plaisanté avec elle; mais ce qu'ils font mûrir et fleurir dans la pauvre âme obscure, ce n'est pas l'idée du crime, c'est la conscience et la tendresse normales naissant avec l'amour. Ils réveillent la somnambule, et elle tombe du bon côté.⁴²¹

Monique Léoncel, fortified by her 'maternal love, is another much needed beacon of encouragement as far as Lenormand's major characters are concerned, for, although she is trammelled by inherited genes, she can claim to be successful in exercising her will. At the end of Mixture, referring to their common 'métier' in the past, Fearon tells Monique, 'Vous aimiez et vous détestiez. C'est pour cela que vous étiez si maladroite. Ah, si l'homme pouvait vouloir une seule chose, il serait le maître du monde!' (T VII, 178). It is ironic that Fearon should address this comment to one of the few Lenormandian protagonists who show considerable single-mindedness. Even if she is clumsy at her 'work', and even if she unconsciously jeopardizes her own efforts until she is on the brink of totally undermining them, Monique defies all obstacles 'pour assurer à sa petite fille une vie douce et innocente' (T VII, 31). She simply refuses to allow the negative catalytic power of anyone's spoken words prevent her from achieving her cherished goal of bringing Poucette up to be a respectable young woman. She is spared no pressure in this

421. Quoted by Robert de Beauplan, 'L'Innocente au théâtre Antoine', La Petite Illustration, Théâtre no. 215, 13 octobre 1928, page not numbered.

regard, however. When she starts out it is with Raymond Valante's ominous words ringing in her ears:

RAYMOND

Eh bien, tu auras du mal à redresser la pente qui est en train de s'accentuer sous tes pas.

MONIQUE

Pourquoi?

RAYMOND

Parce qu'elle s'est creusée depuis trop longtemps, depuis plus longtemps que tu ne le sais. Elle existait avant que tu ne vinsses au monde.

(T VII, 19)

Raymond's prophecy proves true as far as Monique herself is concerned. One can certainly argue that she fails to resist the downward spiral dogging her own life. However, this is not her prime concern. The force of her will goes to saving not herself but her daughter, and by dint of making Poucette respectable she finally stabilizes her own existence, albeit a little reluctantly. The vehemence of Monique's resolve is expressed in the closing lines of the opening Tableau where she takes up the challenge to defy any inherited weaknesses liable to harm Poucette, in terms which set the tone for the rest of the play:

Si elle devait devenir aussi maladroite et déraisonnable que sa mère, aussi chimérique et incohérente que son père, il vaudrait mieux qu'elle ne vécût pas. Il faut qu'elle soit saine, malgré nous. Et elle le sera. Parce que sa mère le veut.

(T VII, 20)

Later, others try to drive home the 'like mother, like daughter' message and tempt Monique to take the line of least resistance, but to no avail. Fearon, whose greatest pleasure in life is to 'séduire, corrompre une conscience pure' (Le Mangeur de Rêves, T II, 214), is as dogmatic as ever on the subject:

MONIQUE

Vous ne connaissez pas ma Poucette!

FEARON

Et vous, vous ne savez pas ce que c'est, le sang. Croyez-vous que vous seriez de la profession, si quelque chose dans votre père, ou dans votre mère, n'était pas incliné vers la profession? Et croyez-vous que dans votre fille, quelque chose n'est pas incliné vers la profession, à cause de vous, ou de son père? That's blood!

(Mixture, T VII, 72)

In view of the material difficulties with which she is beset, Monique's refusal to let such words weaken her determination is an achievement in itself.

7. Knowledge of self and others: its importance, dangers and limitations

There can be no denying that Monique's steadfastness and indefatigable efforts to achieve her goal with regard to Poucette, in defiance of the counter-arguments she hears, would have been nullified, if she had been left in ignorance of herself and had continued to behave towards her grown-up daughter according to the dictates of her repressed resentment and jealousy. Consequently, Poucette's constructive use of her

superior knowledge of Monique, together with the latter's openness to it, can be said to be the saving grace of mother and daughter.⁴²² In other instances, where ruthless, evil characters have a greater knowledge of an individual than he has himself, the latter is shown to be dangerously vulnerable to destructive verbal influences. The way Aïescha of Le Simoun exacerbates Laurency's latent incestuous feelings some time before he himself is aware of them is a case in point. As for Clotilde in the same play, her utter innocence makes her little more than a defenceless pawn whom Aïescha manoeuvres at will in a game of psychological chess. Similarly, Jeannine Felse appears to be so totally unaware of how maliciously manipulative people of Fearon's ilk can be that she is like a lamb to the slaughter at the end of Le Mangeur de Rêves.

This is not to say that acquired self-knowledge does not carry within it its own potential dangers. The first of these, the impossibility of total knowledge of anyone, self or others, is summed up by Jeannine in Le Mangeur de Rêves, when she explains her lack of faith in Luc's attempts to cure her:

. . . La pleine lumière, oui, ce serait peut-être la guérison... La demi-lumière est plus dangereuse que l'obscurité... Elle réveille les furies qui dormaient... Et tu ne pourras jamais faire dans les êtres qu'une demi-lumière. L'homme le plus intelligent ne comprend qu'à moitié. (T II, 251)

422. See pp. 376-378.

The second problem regarding the acquisition of self-knowledge is the considerable care that is required in the removing of the bands of self-deception. Reference has already been made to the dénouement of L'Amour magicien where Albert ends up verbally precipitating Béatrice's death.⁴²³ He does so because he fails to realize that an obsession brought up from the unconscious mind into the full light of awareness without the most careful handling can prove fatal. As a layman, Albert has an excuse. As a specialist in psychoanalysis, Luc de Bronte of Le Mangeur de Rêves has none - none, that is, which adequately offsets the responsibility he shares with Fearon for Jeannine's suicide. More than the content of Belkaçem's disclosure, it is Luc's preparatory blunders⁴²⁴ and the sudden, cruel manner in which Fearon arranges for Jeannine to be enlightened which can be said to kill her.⁴²⁵ After the Arab has recounted the facts as he recalls them, Fearon scathingly asks Jeannine whether 'une enfant de six ans est responsable de ses actes', but she destroys any comfort this question might contain by the brutal manner in which she puts it, '**lui cinglant les reins d'un coup de cravache**' (T II, 285). Moreover, this speech is delivered to a woman who is temporarily unable to register its significance, for Jeannine's shock is such that she has been momentarily

423. See pp. 368-369.

424. See pp. 388-390.

425. See pp. 404-406.

transported back to her mental state at the time of the tragedy.

Le Mangeur de Rêves cannot fairly be considered a warning against the acquisition of self-knowledge or psychoanalysis as such but rather an indictment of them when practised badly. The truth might have set Jeannine free of her neurosis instead of lethally confirming it, if she had not been preconditioned by Luc to judge herself instantaneously guilty of matricide, and if a sensitive counsellor had gently explained to her that, when she waved her scarf to the bandits years previously, her intentions were probably no more malicious than those of the four year old boy suffering from an unconscious jealousy of his father who ran excitedly up to the latter to say goodbye, accidentally exclaiming 'Daddy, let me kill you!' instead of 'Daddy, let me kiss you!'.⁴²⁶ Having said all this, it is also possible that a sufficiently competent, wise and humble psychiatrist might have decided that, in the case of Jeannine's complex neurosis, deep analysis would be dangerous and should not be attempted in the first place. This might mean leaving her mentally uncomfortable for the rest of her life, but at least she would remain alive.

Even if newly acquired self-knowledge does not drive the individual concerned to suicide, it could beget a counter-productive form of self-deprecation. As has already been mentioned, the warning which Raymond Valante gives Monique

426. Christopher Badcock, Essential Freud (Oxford, Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988) pp. 63-64.

about herself and the risks she will run in bringing up Poucette - a warning she literally asks for - does not have negative consequences, on the contrary it apparently adds fuel to her resolution.⁴²⁷ One wonders, however, whether Raymond's frankness might not have triggered off a classic example of the self-fulfilling prophecy in someone with less confidence or determination.

Lastly, the effectiveness of self-knowledge as an important aid in safeguarding the individual's free will is shown to be heavily dependent on timing, for once words have triggered off a strong psychological reaction, such an unhealthy state of mind may set in that even the most lucid determination will be radically debilitated. Thus, no less than Bernard, Lenormand makes the point that in such cases 'il ne suffit pas de voir son mal pour le guérir' (Les Ratés, T I, 117).

The phenomenon of the 'idée fixe' illustrated in Bernard's drama figures prominently in Lenormand's, where the term itself is used on no less than three occasions (Mixture, T VII, 149; Le Temps est un Songe, T I, 203; Le Mangeur de Rêves, T II, 268). Whilst there is no implication in Lenormand's theatre that all 'idées fixes' are engendered by the catalytic power of spoken words, the overall evidence of the plays indirectly suggests that it is responsible for planting, triggering off or

427. See pp. 419-420.

nourishing large numbers of them and that, however they enter the psyche, they can become extremely tenacious. Once her family and other villagers have made up their minds that she is a witch, Claire Tairraz realizes that nothing will dislodge their collective 'idée fixe':

LE CURE

Il n'y a donc pas moyen de leur faire sortir ces idées de la tête?

CLAIRE, **soupirant**

Leurs têtes seront pleines de terre avant qu'elles en sortent.

(La Dent Rouge, T III, 126)

In Act I of Le Lâche Jacques uses arrestingly vivid images when describing the gestation process of more personal 'idées fixes':

JACQUES

Il y a des idées qui vous traversent: d'abord, on les trouve absurdes; et puis, un matin, sans qu'on sache comment, elles sont là, installées en vous, collées à votre âme comme des sangsues . . .

. . .

THERESE, **inquiète, le prenant dans ses bras**

Je n'aime pas à te voir te tourmenter ainsi... Je voudrais qu'il n'y eût, pour toi, que de la lumière et des formes.

JACQUES

La pensée creuse son trou là où elle veut. Ce n'est pas ma faute.

(T V, 52 and 53)

André Mérin of Bernard's Le Feu qui reprend mal, who suffers this kind of loss of free will particularly acutely, has a number of Lenormandian relatives. Without necessarily being feckless by nature, such characters find they are unable to respond as they would consciously wish, to verbal antidotes meant to neutralize the power of certain words that have already taken catalytic effect. Albert Carolles of L'Amour magicien is a case in point. Once Béatrice's unconsciously feigned trances have planted the idea in his head that communion with Berthe is possible, he finds it extremely difficult to eradicate, as the following exchange with his sister illustrates:

FERNANDE, avec pitié, le regardant

. . . Il y a des gens qui ont perdu la raison, pour n'avoir pas su chasser leurs fantômes. Tâche de renvoyer le tien.

ALBERT, bas, se relevant

C'est à moitié fait.

FERNANDE

Comment?

ALBERT

Oui. Il m'est chaque jour plus difficile d'admettre qu'elle ait revécu en Béatrice.

FERNANDE, désignant les lettres

Pourquoi donc agis-tu comme si tu l'admettais?

ALBERT

Parce que je suis enfermé dans un dilemme absurde. Je me débats contre une ombre à laquelle j'ai cessé de croire.

(T VI, 78-79)

Similarly, once Béatrice has hinted that Berthe was unfaithful to him with Edouard, Albert starts to become unconsciously obsessed with suspicions which he accepts are irrational and denies having:

FERNANDE

. . . L'existence est devenue impossible ici, depuis que tu t'enfonces dans ce rêve d'outre-tombe. Edouard souffre.

ALBERT

De quoi?

FERNANDE

De ta réserve. De ta méfiance.

ALBERT, vivement

Il se trompe.

FERNANDE

Quelque chose, en toi, le soupçonne, malgré toi.

(T VI, 79)

Such examples make it clear that Lenormand's theatre confirms the evidence of Bernard's: whilst people are only as susceptible to the influence of others' words as they consciously, subconsciously or unconsciously choose and allow themselves to be, the operative and all-important words in this conclusion are 'subconsciously or unconsciously'. Lenormand's protagonists are influenced by words unconsciously, or they are conscious of being influenced by them but are unable to resist because the conflicting impulses, instinctive drives and other mysterious forces at work in their subconscious or unconscious mind are too strong. Albert Carolles of L'Amour magicien illustrates both processes. His freedom of will is eroded, although he is not particularly weak from a physical, moral or mental point of view. Accordingly, those of Lenormand's characters who are psychologically unbalanced, disturbed or hypersensitive are shown to be even more vulnerable and to have still less chance of safeguarding their free will from attack by the catalytic power of spoken words. In a case as serious as Jeannine Felse's in Le Mangeur de Rêves, for example, it would be unreasonable to suggest that she should put pay to her 'idée fixe' by the sort of act of will a de Mezzana of Asie or a Romée Cremers of Le Temps est un Songe might recommend. Jeannine clearly needs competent psychiatric help, and the

tragedy of Le Mangeur de Rêves is precisely the fact that instead of getting this, Luc de Bronte's words trigger off further reactions which hinder her recovery. By the time Fearon has made up her mind to kill her with words Jeannine's free will is so minimized that it is non-existent and she is utterly defenceless.

The ambivalence of Lenormand's presentation of the extent to which human beings can exercise their free will in defiance of the power of words goes hand in hand with the ambivalence of his presentation of a potentially existent but as yet unknown, and therefore inexpressible, metaphysical factor.⁴²⁸

As was pointed out above, with the exception of La Folle du Ciel and the possible exception of Le Temps est un Songe, a rational and psychologically plausible explanation can be given for all the seemingly occult and parapsychic phenomena that take place in Lenormand's plays, but nowhere is the supernatural explanation indubitably disproved.⁴²⁹ The end result is that the reader/spectator of such dramas is never left for long with a facile, comforting certainty that he has his feet firmly on the ground of a world where everything is predictably and reassuringly in its place. This point is subtly reinforced through secondary developments in the action or minor incidents: witness the way *'les cris des danseurs, la pénombre dans laquelle ils s'agitent furieusement, la hideur*

428. See Chapter 4.

429. See pp. 54-56 and 276-282.

difforme des deux vieilles femmes, les bonds désordonnés, la mimique démente du Bienheureux' give the climax of the paroxysmal dance in Act III of La Dent Rouge 'le caractère inquiétant d'une hallucination' so that 'sans cesser d'appartenir à la vie réelle, les personnages prennent pour un moment un aspect fantastique et semblent concourir à réaliser un cauchemar' (T III, 104-105). Thanks to the stage directions at the very end of Asie, the reader is left in no doubt as to the Princess's earthly fate, but the spectator unfamiliar with the text is left surmising:

(Et cinglant du fouet les croupes qu'elle voit,
elle s'élançe dans le vide. L'ayah la cherche des
yeux, non pas sur le sol où elle vient de s'écraser,
mais dans l'espace, parmi les nuages du couchant,
qu'elle doit survoler, dans son attelage de feu.)
(T IX, 147)

An example of a different kind is provided by two seemingly unimportant exchanges in Act II Tableau III of L'Amour magique where, interestingly, it is not the apparently more credulous Albert Carolles but the level-headed Edouard Felletin who mistakes 'une barque de pêche à l'ancre dans le chenal' for 'un navire de guerre' (T VI, 56 and 52).

It has to be remembered that it is in this sort of realistic but intermittently shifting or uncertain setting that Lenormand's theatre presents its overwhelming evidence of the considerable power that words can exert, especially as psychological catalysts. Given such a backcloth, it would scarcely be surprising if even the most rational of readers/spectators did not occasionally wonder whether spoken words might not have

some kind of supernatural and correspondingly irresistible power, no less mysterious than the numerous magical spells which are cast throughout this drama by various characters in different contexts. Or perhaps he might feel fleetingly disturbed by the indisputable logic of the conclusion even the educated Claire Tairraz reaches in La Dent Rouge:

On ne peut nier que j'ai fait le mal ici... Pas celui qu'ils me reprochent, évidemment, mais un autre mal que je ne comprends guère moi-même... Ils ne mentent pas tout à fait, quand ils disent que j'ai la puissance. (T III, 129)

Indeed, the reader/spectator might well go on to speculate that Claire's mistake probably lies in thinking that she is unusual, for one of the implicit messages of Lenormand's theatre would certainly seem to be that every human being is capable of practising her variety of magic and wielding, wittingly or unwittingly, 'la puissance des mots'.⁴³⁰

. . .

Lenormand explores the harm that spoken words can inflict very much more than he illustrates any of their possible positive consequences. Indeed, the dynamic power of words demonstrated in Lenormand's plays is shown, as it is in Bernard's, to be potentially dangerous to a degree which is out of all proportion to the average human being's expectations of what are, objectively speaking, harmless verbal symbols. The evidence given in this chapter in support of such a conclusion

430. Title of René Bruyez's play La Puissance des Mots (Paris, Les Editions du "Journal du Peuple", 1929).

complements, echoes, reinforces and supplements that of Bernard's drama with variations and shifts of emphasis. The power of rhetoric, for example, is less a feature of Lenormand's theatre than it is of Bernard's, whilst the cathartic and concomitantly therapeutic qualities of talking are reflected in Lenormand's with greater definition than they are in Bernard's. The threatening potential of words is exacerbated in Lenormand's drama by the influence of natural forces such as water and altitude, and climatic factors such as heat and fog. In comparison, environment plays a minor role in Bernard's work. Both dramatists touch on the individual's freedom, or lack of it, to defend himself against verbal triggers and catalysts, but the issue looms larger in Lenormand's plays because, in their context, more is at stake.

CONCLUSION

In order to highlight clearly the paradox at the centre of this thesis, the findings of Chapters 1, 2, 4 and 5, which relate to the illustration by Bernard and Lenormand of the relative ineffectiveness of words as instruments of communication, are summarized and commented upon separately from those of Chapters 3 and 6, which are concerned with the playwrights' demonstration of the power of words as vehicles of influence. The final paragraphs of this Conclusion draw together the implications of both résumés.

Bernard's plays illustrate how people exchanging views in apparently meaningful conversations can actually be quite isolated and divorced from one another. Words are constantly being spoken, but mutually satisfying and maximally efficient communication is relatively rare. Bernard's drama suggests that this is largely because people have a natural tendency to keep their inner selves to themselves and their unspoken and sometimes subconscious thoughts interfere with the communication process or do little to help it. At the same time, words are presented as generally inefficient communication tools in themselves, incapable of being infallibly trustworthy vehicles of information and either too feeble or too clumsy for the work they are asked to do.

Although Bernard does not overlook the fact that the communication process can be radically impaired or ulcerated by lies, the vast majority of his characters are not consciously motivated by a desire to deceive their fellows. This makes his plays particularly good material for a study into the

effectiveness of words as instruments of communication, since there are so few incidents where characters consciously manipulate words with a view to making them artificially unhelpful or misleading. In spite of these auspicious conditions, a number of Bernard's principal plays could be called dramas of misinterpretation. The characters speak the same language, none is abnormally deficient from the linguistic point of view but misunderstandings nevertheless occur. The main reason for this is implicitly shown to be the impossibility of establishing a truly common code of communication. The fact that the genetic make-up of a person, his physical state and psychological history⁴³¹ are peculiar to that person, is thrown into relief by Bernard's theatre. As a result of this uniqueness the words an individual hears/speaks inevitably have a meaning which differs - however infinitesimally - from that understood by another interlocutor hearing/speaking the same words at a given moment in time.

Words, insists Bernard, are potential carriers of a variety of mutable meanings and as such can sabotage the very communication process they were invented to facilitate. 'Les mots peuvent nous trahir: ils ne veulent jamais dire tout à fait ce qu'ils disent', he writes in 'Réflexions sur le théâtre' (p. 48). It is consequently an oversimplification to

431. Here the term 'psychological history' includes not only the cognitive and emotional developments of which the individual is, or believes himself to be, aware, but also his unknown and unknowable subconscious and unconscious processes.

speak of Bernard's demonstration of the confusion sown in the communication process by the co-existence of a 'dialogue entendu' and a 'dialogue sous-jacent'.⁴³² The truth highlighted in Bernard's work is still more complex. Dialogue has not a twofold but a threefold nature of which the component parts are the unspoken, the spoken and the meaning of the spoken. Accordingly, in Mon Père Tristan Bernard we find Bernard referring to 'ce triple langage' composed of 'les paroles prononcées, ce qu'elles veulent dire et ce qui ne se dit pas' (p. 54).

As a consequence of this verbal lubricity Bernard's drama suggests that it is between people who share an empathic way of hearing, a common 'sixth' sense, that words can be exchanged most effectively. It is the irony of ironies that it is precisely between such people that words cease to be necessary and silence becomes replete. Although it is possible to argue, as Michel does in Nationale 6, that it is 'justement quand on se comprend que c'est agréable de s'expliquer', Francine's logic is equally irrefutable: 'Pourquoi s'expliquer quand on se comprend?' (T V, 9).

The conclusions of the first two chapters of Part II either confirm or supplement those drawn in Chapters 1 and 2 with regard to Bernard's drama but they do so from a Lenormandian perspective. When their evidence is considered, it becomes clear that what is central to Bernard's theatre is

432. See pp. 124-125 and 139-143.

also of considerable importance in Lenormand's. That the apparently simple practice of conversation, the primary aim of which is the meaningful sharing of information, is in fact complicated, intrinsically inefficient and prone to sabotage from a variety of sources, can be regarded as a significant focus of interest in Lenormand's plays. If it is considered in combination with the theme discussed in Chapter 4, namely the fundamental failure of human language to supply the one item of vocabulary that really counts, the general impotence of words and the weakness of the communication process can be said to feature almost as largely in Lenormand's drama as they do in Bernard's. Moreover, Lenormand's plays complement Bernard's in this respect in a number of noteworthy ways.

The point was made above that almost all Bernard's characters are fundamentally well-intentioned, and instances of consciously deliberate deception are rare.⁴³³ The same cannot be said with regard to his colleague's protagonists, and certain sections of Lenormand's dialogue reveal particularly well how words can have very different meanings depending on whether they are being heard/spoken by someone whose conscious motivations are benevolent or evil. As for the question of unconscious motivations, Lenormand's insistent depiction of the mixed, split nature of the psyche, using frequently unbalanced personalities, clearly complements Bernard's subtler, more implicit treatment of the same issue through the medium of

433. See pp. 435-436.

relatively stable characters. Although the unconscious mind of man can be said to be one of the principal agents in the drama of both playwrights, in Bernard's theatre it is shown to be a very mischievous poltergeist and a potential sower of havoc and distress, whilst in Lenormand's it is presented more emphatically as a potential camping ground of evil.

The complementarity of the two playwrights' central preoccupations is especially striking. Whereas the main vehicle of dramatic interest in Bernard's theatre can be said to be the writer's presentation of how words fail in their earthly capacity, the equivalent in Lenormand's drama lies in the consequences of their failing metaphysically. The failure of language to provide a verbal symbol for a much sought after absolute Truth which is a major preoccupation of Lenormand's characters is eschewed, ignored or circumvented in Bernard's Inter-War drama. In this sense it can be considered Lenormand's special contribution, offsetting those aspects of the 'théâtre de l'inexprimé' which Bernard explores in greater depth.

As far as we know, almost all Bernard's characters live at peace with their religious faith or lack of it, and, unlike a number of Lenormand's principal protagonists, are not plagued by ontological questions. One wonders whether the Bernard of the Inter-War years deliberately avoided making much of mankind's metaphysical anguish because he believed, like a number of Lenormand's female characters, that the experience of genuine human love is mysteriously connected to the longed-for 'inexpressible'. Perhaps he told himself, to use Pierre

Garbin's words with reference to the quasi-sacred value of love, 'C'est trop grand; c'est trop précieux... En parler, ça me gênerait...' (La Louise, T III, 239) and consequently chose to remain as silent as possible on the core of the subject. In taking this line, Bernard could never be accused of failing to respect the inexpressibility of the 'inexpressible' - nor, ironically, could Lenormand. Although he tackled man's metaphysical anguish head-on, Lenormand could not be charged, any more than Bernard, with violating the verbally 'insaisissable' by attempting to affirm or negate its existence verbally through a consensus of his characters' views.

Deirdre Bair tells us that at one time, when asked repeatedly about the Godot for whom Vladimir and Estragon are waiting, Samuel Beckett 'would snap "If I knew who Godot was, I would have said so in the play," or, "If Godot were God, I would have called him that"'.⁴³⁴ Lenormand might well have given the same sort of answer to anyone asking a similar question with regard to the inexpressible 'quelque chose' his characters are seeking. In 1968 Robert Posen makes the point that Lenormand's 'refusal to commit himself to any of the alternative hypotheses that he presents when considering the supernatural . . . is, after all, a justifiable response to the problem'.⁴³⁵ Can one not argue that, strictly speaking, it is

434. Deirdre Bair, Samuel Beckett: A Biography (London, Jonathan Cape, 1978) pp. 382-383.

435. 'Aspects, Part II', p. 38.

the only justifiable response to the problem from the believer's or non-believer's perspective? The neutrality with which Lenormand presents the inexpressibility of a potentially existent but as yet inexpressible 'him/her/it' is perhaps one of the principal but least appreciated qualities of his work. When the collected plays are considered as a whole, the dramatist's treatment of belief and believers on the one hand and unbelief and non-believers on the other is extraordinarily impartial and constantly ambivalent. All one can establish is that those who have the conviction of the 'inexpressible' denied most of Lenormand's protagonists, grasp it emotionally not intellectually. That these fortunate few are female might explain why certain of the male characters in Lenormand's theatre believe woman holds the answer to their questions. It is ironic that the secret which some women would appear to carry within them, and which these men seek so cognitively, should be their greater intuitive awareness that 'la connaissance vraie est . . . un sentiment de vérité plus encore qu'une connaissance de la vérité, et elle est même, comme tout sentiment, en partie intraduisible dans le langage de l'intelligence'.⁴³⁶

These conclusions confirm that the heart, intuitively as well as affectively speaking, plays as crucial a role in Lenormand's theatre as it does in Bernard's. Bernard is largely concerned with the suggestion of the 'ineffable in the human

436. Mornet, Histoire, p. 108.

heart',⁴³⁷ whilst Lenormand's prime preoccupation is with a potential Ineffable which only the human heart can grasp. In spite of these differences of emphasis, judging by the combined works of Bernard and Lenormand, it would seem that a viable response to, and medium for, the earthly or the metaphysically inexpressible has to be emotional or intuitive and cannot be cerebral or linguistic.

Before proceeding to a review of the findings discussed in Chapters 3 and 6, it should be noted that those summarized above confirm the viability of a Maeterlinck-Bernard/Lenormand-Beckett chain as far as some important aspects of the unspoken and the inexpressible are concerned.⁴³⁸

The 'lack of communication and understanding between beings', which is 'a major theme in all of Lenormand's works',⁴³⁹ is also of central importance in the theatre of Maeterlinck, Bernard and Beckett. Maeterlinck's observation that words break down totally when people, held in the grip of great emotions, have truly important things to say is reflected in the work of Bernard and Lenormand, as is his belief in silence as a medium of communication. The latter point is not applicable to Beckett, but silence is nonetheless a privileged constituent of his dramatic world. Screens of dialogue to hide what fundamentally matters and talking for the sake of it to

437. Rhodes, The Contemporary French Theater, p. 247.

438. See pp. 61-69.

439. Jones, H.-R. Lenormand, p. 118.

ward off what would otherwise be a threatening silence are to be found in Maeterlinck, Bernard and Beckett. The idea that essential truths have to be apprehended intuitively or emotionally rather than intellectually, and that women would seem to have a spiritual advantage over men in this respect, is not a feature of Beckett's theatre but is common in varying degrees to Maeterlinck, Bernard and Lenormand. On the other hand, the metaphysical does not figure prominently in Bernard's Inter-War theatre as it does in the drama of the other three. From this perspective it is possible to see Maeterlinck's characters as uncomprehending playthings of a vaguely threatening 'unknown', Lenormand's as frustrated but relentless seekers of this inexpressible "Godot" and Beckett's as their successors waiting vainly for 'him/her/it'.

The findings of Chapters 3 and 6 have still to be reviewed. 'Le mot en soi n'est qu'un faible instrument pour tout ce que nous voudrions exprimer. Il n'a pas plus de valeur qu'une corde de violon au repos', observes Bernard in the Bulletin de la Chimère of May 1922, 'Mais quelles résonances possibles!...' (Témoignages, p. 26). Whilst this statement has positive as well as negative implications, Bernard's plays certainly show how words can be powerfully treacherous for reasons which may or may not be related to their failure as instruments of communication. At first it may seem that there is nothing remotely novel about this. After all, since the birth of theatre dramatic intrigues have had their origin in the effect of spoken words. What is much more original about

Bernard is the fact that in his drama feelings are hurt and lives are disrupted through the power of words spoken in all innocence. In very few cases does the speaker of the words in question intend any harm. Only rarely, moreover, does the speaker ever know the effect his words have had.

Whilst pinpointing and bringing into relief the general unreliability of words as instruments of communication, not to mention their supreme deficiency in failing to supply the one 'mot' that would make sense of all the rest and life itself, Lenormand highlights no less than Bernard the considerable psychological influence that both spoken and unspoken words are capable of exercising. Bernard brings into relief the potential of spoken words to influence self and others negatively, to cause various types of psychological imbalance and to jeopardize relationships. Lenormand does this and more: he demonstrates in no uncertain terms the power that spoken words have to do fatal damage in a variety of ways. Straightforward acts of verbal treachery are represented. The scheming couple of L'Innocente, Aïescha of Le Simoun and the Princess of Asie, for example, exploit lies to the maximum to achieve their unpleasant objectives. However, it is the more subtle, but none the less potentially lethal, psychological power that spoken words are shown to have which is one of the most striking features of the dramatist's work.

The possibility of breaking the stranglehold of tenacious verbally triggered reactions features in Bernard's theatre but it has greater significance in Lenormand's where it is

frequently presented as a life-and-death issue. The acquisition of self-knowledge and the capacity for selfless love are indirectly suggested as possible remedies or antidotes. Their efficacy, however, would seem to be limited, for although Lenormand's plays concur with Bernard's in their implication that spoken words can exert only as much power as their hearer permits them to have, this 'permission' can be granted subconsciously or unconsciously so that defence is highly problematic and in some cases impossible, leaving language with what might appear to be a quasi-magic potential.

If one takes into consideration the findings of all six chapters of this thesis, it is evident that Bernard and Lenormand were aware of both the inefficiency of verbal communication and the harm that can be perpetrated through the power of the spoken word. In this they can be said to have special links with Ionesco and Sartre.

Ionesco went very much further than Bernard and Lenormand in destroying any faith his readers/spectators might have in the effectiveness of words as instruments of communication. His response to the impoverishment of language as a vehicle of meaning was radical in the extreme. At the same time, however, he was aware of the controlling potential of words and knew they could be dangerous masters. 'Il est entendu que les mots ne disent rien', he states in Journal en miettes, going on with ironic verbosity to echo Maeterlinck wittingly or unwittingly: 'L'expérience profonde n'a pas de mots'. Within the paragraph of eighteen lines he takes to convey this essential message

Ionesco also makes the point that 'un mot venu on ne sait d'où' can have inexpressible consequences, pushing whomever it wills 'dans l'expérience indicible'.⁴⁴⁰ Marie-Louise Mailly of Bernard's L'Invitation au Voyage is a classic example of such a victim. In Le Mangeur de Rêves Lenormand's Fearon commits verbal murder; in La Leçon, too, a word kills.⁴⁴¹

With regard to Sartre, alongside his conception of man as an island whose solitude remains essentially unaffected by any verbal bridges of communication, we find within the metaphor of Huis Clos,⁴⁴² for example, the spoken expressed and the unspoken expressed being 'literally' instruments of torture, the philosopher-playwright exploiting to maximum advantage the capacity of words for inflicting mental torment dramatized earlier in very different contexts by Bernard and Lenormand.⁴⁴³

As was noted above,⁴⁴⁴ Bernard and Lenormand did not set out to prove anything specific in their theatre. It is nevertheless undeniable that a large number of their plays demonstrate implicitly or explicitly their belief in the

440. Eugène Ionesco, Journal en miettes (Paris, Mercure de France, 1967) p. 120.

441. Eugène Ionesco, Théâtre I (Includes La Cantatrice chauve - La Leçon - Les Chaises) (Paris, Gallimard, 1954).

442. Jean-Paul Sartre, Théâtre (Les Mouches - Huis Clos - Morts sans sépulture - La Putain respectueuse) (Paris, Gallimard, 1947).

443. See pp. 219-234 and 378-385.

444. See pp. 69-70.

efficacy of the spoken word. This statement made with reference to Lenormand could surprise, but is unlikely to appear contentious; made in respect of Bernard it becomes controversial.

May Daniels claims that the philosophy of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, in whose work 'we may detect the germ of certain ideas characteristic of the Théâtre de l'Inexprimé', is nevertheless 'opposed to the ideas of the dramatists of the Unexpressed'⁴⁴⁵ to the extent that in Axël one finds the lines 'Tout verbe, dans le cercle de son action, crée ce qu'il exprime. Mesure donc ce que tu accordes de volonté aux fictions de ton esprit'.⁴⁴⁶ This thesis constitutes a challenge to Daniels' line of argument here.⁴⁴⁷ First it must be noted that the statement 'A word creates what it expresses' does not, however paradoxical it may seem, contradict the statement 'A word is incapable of communicating what its speaker at any given time means by it'. Secondly, if Villiers de l'Isle-Adam does not qualify as a dramatist of the unspoken because he attaches importance 'to the intrinsic creative power of the Word', then Bernard was not one either, for as Chapter 3 of this thesis demonstrates, Bernard's 'théâtre de l'inexprimé' provides ample evidence that although 'words distort the purity

445. Drama of the Unspoken, pp. 34 and 40.

446. Auguste de Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Oeuvres complètes II (Includes Axël and L'Evasion) (Paris, Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1986) p. 576.

447. The disqualification of Villiers on other grounds as a dramatist of the unspoken is not at issue.

of truth, whose real element is silence',⁴⁴⁸ they invariably have an effect of some kind, creating, if not literally creatures or things, at least thoughts and feelings with their sometimes endless chain of tangible consequences.

That this verbal creativity should be shown to be exercised very frequently between unwitting speakers and oblivious hearers makes Bernard's dramatic exposition of the creative power of words as magical as 'la puissance des mots' itself.⁴⁴⁹ This magic is rendered all the more bewitching by the fact that Bernard's theatre - like Lenormand's - demonstrates it in tandem with the relative powerlessness of words as instruments of communication. As Lenormand's Michel Sarterre points out to Thérèse, with reference to the potent influence spoken words have exerted on him, 'le plus étrange, c'est que ces mots, assez forts pour paralyser un artiste, sont incapables d'exprimer une réalité' (Une Vie secrète, T III, 273).

In view of the interest writers and philosophers have taken throughout this century in 'the working of language - both its power and impotence',⁴⁵⁰ the linguistic, psychological and metaphysical findings of this thesis have

448. Drama of the Unspoken, pp. 39 and 40.

449. Bruyez, La Puissance des Mots.

450. Andrew K. Kennedy, Six dramatists in search of a language (London, Cambridge University Press, 1975) p. 31.

value in their own right. In their weight and certain details they command greater attention, especially when one considers that very similar and mutually complementary conclusions are drawn from the work of two playwrights who in many ways could scarcely be more different. This study's conclusion that Bernard and Lenormand were not only core and fringe members respectively of the drama of the unspoken movement of the 1920s-1930s, but also very much dramatists 'of the spoken' is of particular significance. Bernard and Lenormand had no illusions about the inadequacy of language as a medium of communication but illustrated this alongside their awareness that speech is potent and that words exert their 'mysterious power most often without control of the mind', 'like a magic charm'⁴⁵¹ - sometimes unbeknown to speaker or listener. This dual dimension of the drama of Bernard and Lenormand means that, notwithstanding - or possibly thanks to - their primary commitment to 'the . . . difficult art of writing the straightforward, plain language spoken in real life',⁴⁵² their experiments can be said to have pioneered or foreshadowed the work of later French playwrights whether these have believed in the powerlessness and impoverishment of words, or in the potency and importance of words, or in both.

451. Melcher, 'The Use of Words', pp. 473 and 475. Melcher uses these two expressions in discussing Claudel and Giraudoux respectively.

452. Henrik Ibsen in his letter to Lucie Wolf of 25 May 1883. Ibsen: Letters and Speeches, Evert Sprinchorn (ed.) (Clinton, Massachusetts, MacGibbon & Kee, 1965) p. 218.

APPENDIXES

Appendix A Detailed analysis of the misunderstanding in
Act I of Le Printemps des Autres

Without drawing any hasty conclusions, Clarisse gradually comes to suspect from various things Maurice says, and from the hesitant way he says them, that he could be attracted to her but feels rather embarrassed taking an interest in an older woman and does not quite know how to make his approach. Her suspicions appear to be confirmed more and more as the dialogue progresses, not only by Maurice's words but also by his paralinguistic and non-verbal signals. He says, for example, that he is going to spend his few days' leave at the hotel, adding after a slight pause 'enfin si vous n'y voyez pas d'inconvénient' (T I, 190). Maurice is clearly thinking that she might like to be alone with her daughter for a while longer, but as he does not say so explicitly, explaining his friendship with Gilberte, Clarisse quite understandably finds his attitude rather bizarre. Her reaction prompts another unnaturally solicitous response from Maurice: 'Je me suis mal expliqué... Je m'en voudrais de troubler votre désir de solitude' (T I, 190). She notes the fact that he only comments on having seen her name in the hotel register. With hindsight we know that this is because Maurice is still too nervous to bring Gilberte into the conversation even tentatively. Clarisse is left to interpret it as an indication that Maurice is interested in Madame Brieules specifically. When she asks him whether he is married, he answers noticeably quickly. Later he insists with the same energy that a 'peine de coeur' did not bring him to Stresa and that he is not waiting for a 'petite

amie' (T I, 203). He is anxious that Clarisse should not entertain any wrong ideas about him, because he wants to marry her daughter. She naturally assumes that he does not want there to be any misunderstanding solely on her account. She comments on the detail with which he recalls seeing her from the circle of the Français, one Thursday, when she was sitting in the tenth row of the stalls with her daughter. We learn later that this was the night he first met Gilberte, but Clarisse probably believes that she is the cause of this feat of memory. When she begins to praise his qualities as a trustworthy confidant, Maurice, encouraged by the favour he is clearly winning, says 'Je suis heureux que vous me parliez ainsi, oh! plus heureux que vous ne sauriez croire...' (T I, 196), totally oblivious to the overtones that this acknowledgement has for Clarisse. 'Pourquoi m'écoutez-vous avec cette bonne volonté?' she goes on to ask, no doubt hoping and secretly believing that she knows the answer (T I, 196). Maurice continues to lend a listening ear with charm and sensitivity, not to make a conquest but partly out of natural sympathy and partly to please the woman who he hopes will be his future mother-in-law. One wonders how Clarisse could possibly not misinterpret his responses just after she has bared her soul to the point of weeping in front of a relative stranger (T I, 201). Each of them positively compounds the embryonic misunderstanding rapidly taking shape in her head. Eventually, having attempted several times to make Maurice confide in her but with no success, she gives up trying, adding that should he ever want a confidant in the

future she will honour her debt to him in this respect. He is so relieved, especially by the way she concludes, offering to shake his hand and saying 'Allons! nous sommes amis' (T I, 205), that he reacts overenthusiastically. It would seem that the warmth of his response dispels any remaining reservations Clarisse may have and confirms all she has hitherto been tempted, yet scarcely dared, to believe.

It is unfortunate that throughout this conversation Maurice concentrates too much on his choice of words and on the verbal content of Clarisse's responses to question whether his own verbal, paralinguistic and non-verbal signals could be misinterpreted or to register the tell-tale signs of a woman who is on the brink of falling in love. Should he ever learn the truth after the Curtain falls at the end of the play, he might look back on his initial encounter with Clarisse and remember exchanges like the following made just a few moments before Gilberte enters:

CLARISSE, après un silence

Le soir vient... Oh! mon écharpe est tombée. Voulez-vous... (Il ramasse l'écharpe. Elle la met sur ses épaules.) A cette heure, il faut toujours faire attention...

(Machinalement, elle prend un éventail qui traîne sur la table et s'évente.)

MAURICE

Vous vous éventez?

CLARISSE

Ah! oui, tiens! Qu'est-ce que je fais?... . . .

(T I, 205)

Reflecting in due course on this incident, an enlightened Maurice could well be somewhat surprised that, having noticed Clarisse's inconsistency, he did not mentally process it and go on to question whether the replacement of the fallen scarf might not have been a classic dropped handkerchief manoeuvre unconsciously designed in her confusion to draw his attention to her shoulders, since she was clearly not feeling the cold.

Appendix B Detailed analysis of the misunderstanding in
Act III of Nationale 6

Francine tells her father that Robert said he was happy and adds 'Il m'a parlé de conte de fées...' (T V, 84). In fact, although Robert is undoubtedly cheerful, he does not say he is happy. Moreover, when he says 'Vous savez qu'on ne s'ennuie pas chez vous...', it is 'en travaillant' (T V, 72), and it is clear from what he goes on to say that he has a work context in mind. As for the 'conte de fées', Robert actually says that Francine's imagining a young artist coming one day into their house, asking her to pose and painting a masterpiece with her as model is a 'conte de fées' (T V, 72). Francine tells her father that Robert said 'qu'il était bien mieux ici qu'aux Indes...' (T V, 86). His actual words are 'aux Indes, nous n'aurions pas trouvé mieux...' (T V, 74). This shift from the plural, meaning Robert and his father, to the singular, referring to Robert in particular, and from a work context to a more general one, means that the indirect statement Francine uses is far removed from Robert's original linguistic intention. Francine has difficulty following one part of Robert's conversation but retains isolated words such as 'madones', 'Raphaël' and the second syllable of 'trompe-l'oeil' (T V, 75), which is no doubt why she later recalls his talking to her about her eyes, although he never mentions them. Francine reports that Robert said there were a lot of things he would tell her later and talked of friendship, whereupon Michel adding two and two together gets still closer to a result of five. To the objective reader/spectator the context of Robert's

statements 'Un jour, je vous en dirai plus...' and 'Il faut laisser à l'amitié le temps de s'établir' (T V, 80) makes it clear that, superficial flirting apart, Robert sees in the innocent Francine a potential friend in whom to confide his love life rather than a prospective partner. Whether or not Francine registers the emphasis Robert puts on her naivety, she certainly fails to report it to her father, whilst she remembers to tell him that Robert said she was 'une jolie fille' (T V, 86). Here, Francine considerably underplays Robert's comments. In fact he is effusive in his praise of her beauty. He says he could not do justice to her prettiness in a portrait even if he worked on it for ten years (T V, 70). At one point he says 'Enfant chérie, naïve petite perle, vous êtes exquisite...' (T V, 75). Later, he waxes lyrical but goes on to make fun of himself for doing so:

. . . Je reviens à la figure... Ah! quel domaine immense, quelle source de joies infinies! Je suis sûr que chaque jour on en tirerait des mélodies nouvelles, car c'est un violon, votre figure... Ce n'est pas mal, ce que je vous dis là, hein! Si papa m'entendait, il serait un peu épaté . . . (T V, 76)

Again it is obvious that Robert's words cannot be taken at their face value. The modest Francine realizes this too. She is fully aware that Robert is flattering her, which is no doubt one of the reasons why she simply tells her father that he said she was pretty. However, by omitting the terms in which she is praised she deprives Michel of a vital clue which might have led him to suspect the shallow light-heartedness of Robert's flirtation. Francine tells her father that Robert said they

were made to get on well together (T V, 86). Again she charges Robert's words with a meaning and emotional energy their speaker never intended. For Robert, who is primarily interested in the position of Francine's head at the time, they amount to a banal platitude. Furthermore, they conclude an exchange which is much more significant, since it informs Francine that nothing said by Robert in the course of the current conversation should be taken seriously: Robert tells Francine explicitly not to take any notice of what he is saying because when he is working he is always rather absorbed and indulges in mindless chatter to facilitate his painting (T V, 73). Ironically, Francine, who is actually hanging on Robert's every word, gives the impression that she has taken his point, which prompts his 'Tiens! Nous sommes faits pour nous comprendre...' (T V, 74).

Appendix C Exchange of correspondence between Bernard and Lenormand at the end of the Second World War

This study makes a point of treating almost exclusively of the playwrights' dramatic texts as opposed to their private lives,⁴⁵³ a principle which is overridden in this final Appendix because the Second World War made such an impact on the personal lives of both men that it radically affected their creative work in exceptional ways. The events which took place between 1939 and 1945 and his response to them resulted in the enforced post-War curtailment of Lenormand's career as a writer of 'plays for players to play'.⁴⁵⁴ This was not the case for Bernard after the defeat of Germany in 1945, but, for very different reasons, he could never again be the playwright he was on the eve of France's fall in 1940. Even if one ignores the effect on Bernard's writing of his becoming a Catholic,⁴⁵⁵ the works he wrote during and after the War years understandably reflect shifts in subject matter, tone and ethos. Moreover, it would be difficult to make no mention whatsoever of the effect of the Second World War on the two particular playwrights studied in tandem in this thesis without laying oneself open to the accusation of insensitivity in the case of Bernard and evasiveness in the case of Lenormand.

The life journeys of Bernard and Lenormand took very different paths during the Occupation. Although he was offered

453. See pp. 73-76.

454. See p. 10.

455. See pp. 68-69, including Footnote 248.

asylum in New York, Bernard refused on principle to leave Paris, where his activities were ruthlessly circumscribed by the Nazis' persecution of Jews. It is significant that at the end of the War, when asked to account for his 'activité et . . . attitude pendant la période de l'occupation ennemie',⁴⁵⁶ Lenormand turned for help and advice to Bernard. A letter written by Bernard in response to one of Lenormand's requests for support is reproduced below,⁴⁵⁷ because it bears witness to the striking personal qualities of its author whilst shedding light on the 'vérité des faits' and the 'vérité des coeurs',⁴⁵⁸ of Lenormand's position during the War:

Paris, le 6 juin 1945

Mon cher Ami,

Je vous ai toujours parlé avec la plus grande franchise. Je ne vous ai jamais caché, pendant la douloureuse période de l'occupation, ce que je pensais de certaines erreurs de jugement de votre part; et cette liberté de langage, en dépit de la situation dangereuse où je me trouvais, vous prouverait déjà ma confiance et ma sympathie, sans parler de l'admiration que j'ai constamment gardée à l'homme de théâtre que vous êtes.

456. Terms quoted from an official source in an undated, handwritten letter which Lenormand sent to Bernard from Sainte-Maxime and a photocopy of which was kindly donated by Monsieur Nicolas Bernard, Jean-Jacques Bernard's son and heir.

457. With the permission of Monsieur Nicolas Bernard to whom special thanks are extended for the donation of photocopies of this and related documents.

458. See p. 50.

Je suis donc tout à fait à l'aise pour vous apporter aujourd'hui mon témoignage. Je n'ai pas oublié qu'en septembre 1940 vous m'avez soumis ce scrupule de conscience: 'On me demande des articles; croyez-vous que je puisse en donner?'. Je vous ai répondu alors: 'Si vous vous contentez de parler théâtre, cela ne me paraît pas grave'. Il est bien certain que, quelques semaines plus tard, je vous eusse donné un conseil différent. D'une façon générale, l'abstention totale eût été préférable. Mais enfin il faut se rappeler qu'en septembre 1940 on pouvait nourrir l'illusion qu'une certaine forme de résistance était possible dans la presse. Cette illusion n'a pas duré longtemps.

Je tenais à rappeler ce scrupule de votre part. Vous vous interrogiez. Comme beaucoup trop de gens, vous avez été trompé par les coupables mirages qu'on entretenait dans notre pays. Mais je sais que votre souci était de manifester en présence de l'occupant la persistance d'une pensée française et que vous aviez l'espoir de pouvoir défendre par la plume certains écrivains français. Je ne pense pas qu'on puisse vous faire grief de telles illusions, quand bien des écrivains, que nul ne songe aujourd'hui à inquiéter, n'ont pas hésité à collaborer aux pires journaux.

Mais surtout je n'oublie pas qu'au cours de l'hiver 1940-41 vous avez eu le courage de faire une conférence au théâtre de l'Oeuvre, sur le théâtre contemporain, où vous avez longuement parlé de mes ouvrages et de ceux d'Edmond Fleg. Vous aviez même songé à faire dire des scènes de L'Ame en peine. On vous en a dissuadé pour éviter des incidents. Vous avez néanmoins lu vous-même quelques passages de cette pièce que vous avez toujours particulièrement aimée et à laquelle vous restiez fidèle, alors que son auteur était interdit. Cette manifestation publique requérait à cette époque une véritable audace, on l'oublie peut-être un peu maintenant. Vous n'aviez d'ailleurs pu faire cette conférence qu'en prenant le risque de ne pas la soumettre à la censure allemande.

Plus tard vous avez publié votre ouvrage sur les Pitoëff. Vous y parliez encore de moi à plusieurs reprises; vous y parliez également d'Edmond Fleg. On sait que cet ouvrage a été interdit.

Par ailleurs, vous avez eu quatre pièces interdites, deux par la censure de Vichy, deux par la censure allemande, si bien qu'en fin de compte, moins favorisé que d'autres, vous n'avez jamais pu, pendant

l'occupation, exercer votre métier d'auteur dramatique. Il est douloureux de vous voir toujours condamné au silence. Je crois que vous êtes aujourd'hui suffisamment puni des erreurs de jugement dont vous vous êtes rendu compte bien avant la fin de l'occupation. Il serait extrêmement pénible que, par surcroît, un homme comme vous fût frappé d'une peine disproportionnée à de telles erreurs, alors que des gens réellement coupables, dans tous les ordres de l'activité nationale, restent encore impunis.

En vous frappant, on frapperait une des plus hautes valeurs de l'art dramatique français, un homme qui, depuis un quart de siècle, a servi honnêtement le renom de la France à l'étranger et dont nous pouvons avec juste raison nous enorgueillir.

Je veux espérer que cette douleur nous sera épargnée et je vous prie de croire, mon cher Ami, à mes sentiments les plus fidèlement affectueux.

Signé : Jean-Jacques Bernard

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NOTE

The following Select Bibliography, which gives the major dramatic and non-dramatic works of Bernard and Lenormand, would have been rendered impracticably lengthy by the inclusion of exhaustive lists of the numerous journal and newspaper articles written by the two dramatists. Consequently, only a representative cross-section of such articles is given (sections I.F and III.G, pp. 466 and 476).

A survey of published and unpublished bibliographies of Bernard and Lenormand was the starting point for the reading of critical material in the preparation of this study. In the case of Bernard, about whom comparatively little has been written, this process proved constructive and raised few difficulties. However, as the bibliographies relating to Lenormand were amalgamated, discrepancies were noted in them, indicating errors made at some stage by the various compilers. Entries common to two or three bibliographies were occasionally found to be identically inaccurate, making all the information given questionable.

The drawing up of up-to-date and maximally comprehensive bibliographies, including primary and secondary material, for both Bernard and Lenormand is beyond the scope of this study. A decision was consequently taken to limit the entries below to works which I have personally consulted and which have been of particular use and interest in the writing of this thesis.

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