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THE ALIENATED HERO IN FOUR CONTEMPORARY SPANISH AMERICAN NOVELS

by

Bert Bono Carrillo

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is twofold: first, to determine in a class of contemporary Spanish American novels on alienation, the over-all artistic end of each work. From the comparison of significant aspects of each novel a hypothesis emerges as to their common denominator; this hypothesis is confirmed if it illuminates the majority of elements found in the novel just as a ray of light, played at the right angle, is refracted from every facet of a diamond.

Secondly, to determine the specific type of alienation manifested by each alienated hero. While the unique type of alienation emerges from the unique structure of the novel itself, a more specific definition is attempted by applying the method used by Kenneth Keniston in distinguishing one type of alienation from another. According to Keniston, each type of alienation should be subjected to at least the four following queries: first, Focus: alienated from what? second, Replacement: what replaces, if anything, the old relationship? thirdly, Mode: how is the alienation manifested? and, finally, Agent: what is the agent of the alienation?

The study is divided into six chapters. The introductory chapter gives both the explicit type of alienation implicit in the work itself, as manifested by each alienated hero, and the more specific
definition of each alienation by using Keniston's method. The following four chapters present the hypothesis of the over-all artistic end of each novel with the analysis of the text and a summary at the conclusion of each chapter. Chapter 2 takes up Carlos Solórzano's Los falsos demonios; Chapter 3 Juan Carlos Onetti's El astillero; Chapter 4 Mario Vargas Llosa's La ciudad y los perros and Chapter 5 José Agustín's La tumba.

In the concluding chapter of the study, interesting discoveries are noted. The lack of complete names characteristic of all four alienated heroes reveals them to be literary brothers of Kafka's heroes who had mere ciphers for names. And under the gaze of society, all four experienced themselves as objects just as the alienated heroes of Kafka and Doestoevsky felt themselves to be insects under the gaze of others. But with the exception of Solórzano's alienated hero--whose alienation can best be understood through Freudian psychology--the other three alienated heroes are closer to Jean-Paul Sartre's literary characters than to Kafka's or Doestoevsky's. Existential concepts made popular by Sartre such as "the Look of the Other" (le regard), "forlornment," "anguish," "authentic existence," "engagement," and "bad faith" play an important role in all three novels.

The emphasis, however, has been on the uniqueness of each work. The type of literary criticism found on the four novels treated has either concentrated on only one aspect of the work or has been
inadequately criticized. In the summary of Chapter 4 and in the conclusions, an attempt is made to correct some of the misinterpretations previously made by other critics.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Although the type of alienation in each one of the novels to be discussed emerges from the unique structure of the novel itself, the specific type of alienation requires a more explicit definition of the meaning implicit in the works.

In his book on alienation, Kenneth Keniston suggests a method which will distinguish one type of alienation from another and which has proven fruitful in this study. According to Keniston, the type of alienation under consideration should be subjected to at least the four following questions: first, alienated from what? Although in ordinary speech, "Although in ordinary speech," says Keniston, "we often speak of someone simply as 'alienated,' in fact we always imply he is alienated from something or someone. Husbands become alienated from their wives, peasants from their land, workers from their labor, men from their gods, societies from their traditional virtues."  


2. Ibid., p. 453.
Secondly, what relationship, if any, has replaced the lost one? In Mario Vargas Llosa's *La ciudad y los perros*,³ for example, the alienated hero, the Jaguar, replaces the alienation that comes from the unauthentic values of society with the authentic values of the individual. Thirdly, how is the alienation manifested? Gabriel Guía, of José Agustín's *La tumba*,⁴ manifests his alienation mostly through rebellion against the hypocritical values of an adult bourgeois society while José Canastuj of Carlos Solórzano's *Los falsos demonios*,⁵ in contrast, manifests his alienation in a psychotic manner.

Finally, what is the agent of the alienation? Some alienations are imposed while others are chosen. While Agustín's Gabriel freely chooses to become alienated from the adult society in Mexico City, Juan Carlos Onetti's Larsen in *El astillero*⁶ finds alienation imposed on him as part of the human condition.

In brief, then, while the concept of alienation in every variation suggests the loss or absence of a previous or desirable relationship, it requires further specification in at least four respects: (1) Focus:

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alienated from what? (2) Replacement: what replaces the old relationship? (3) Mode: how is the alienation manifest? and (4) Agent: what is the agent of alienation?

The type of alienation found in Carlos Solórzano's _Los falsos demonios_ is of the kind we can all understand and be moved by since we have all experienced it to some degree. Each of us grows, develops, matures. As we grow, develop, mature, we are compelled to break our emotional ties to the womb, to our mothers, to the conditions of infant security. But what usually prevail, psychologically, are the forces of forward movement. In the case of Solórzano's alienated hero, however, an unresolved Oedipus conflict compounded by several traumatic experiences in early childhood inhibit this psychological growth.

We can say then, that Solórzano's alienated hero is alienated from (focus) the status quo security first experienced in his mother's womb and later, to a lesser degree, in the bosom of his family. There is, of course, no replacement of the old relationship. The alienation is manifested (mode) by an irrational desire for the status quo, best explained by Freud's theory of the pleasure principle, and a corresponding avoidance of _devenir_, the reality principle of Freud. The agent is imposed on José due to the strict determinism of Freudian

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psychology. That is to say, the early patterns of behavior established in early childhood determined the behavior relationships in later adulthood.

In contrast to Solórzano's alienated hero, the alienated hero of Juan Carlos Onetti, Larsen, is fully rational but lives in an irrational, meaningless world. Central to this outlook is a sense of existential outcastness, or estrangement from God, probably best expressed in twentieth century existentialism, with its denial that the world has essential meaning. Human life is, in this context, "absurd," lacking inherent purpose. Onetti's alienated hero, then, is alienated (focus) from a rational, meaningful world that has an essence (God). The lack of essence, or God, is replaced by the artificial "meaning" manufactured by men in the process of existence. The alienation is manifested (mode) by a continual desire of the hero to anchor his being into some stable essence best explained by Jean-Paul Sartre's theory of the Being-for-itself (desire) and the Being-in-itself (essence). The impossibility of fusing the two modes of being results in forlornness. The agent is within the consciousness of Larsen himself since consciousness is both a being-in-itself and a being-for-itself.

Existential alienation also plays an important role in Mario Vargas Llosa's La ciudad y los perros. The alienated hero, Jaguar, 8.

finds himself "thrown" into a situation or Dasein. Composed of sein (being) plus da (there), Dasein indicates that man is the being who is there and implies also that he has a "there" in the sense that he can know he is there and can take a stand with reference to that fact. The "there" is, moreover, not just any place, but the particular "there" that is his. Man is, therefore, the being, who can be conscious of, and responsible for his existence. The alienated hero, Jaguar, is alienated from his "authentic Dasein" when others, including himself, refuse to acknowledge his "authentic self" vis-à-vis his Dasein. The alienated hero replaces this type of alienation by rejecting the values of the "crowd" and acting on his own freely chosen values as an "individual." The alienation is manifested (mode) by feelings of being looked upon as a "self-for-others" (object), best explained by the theory of the Sartrean Look (le regard) that freezes the totality of a person (I-It).

José Agustín's alienated hero, Gabriel Guía, is unique in that he freely chooses alienation (agent) in rejecting the hypocritical values of an adult bourgeois society but yet, ironically, replaces these unauthentic values with the equally unauthentic values of his peer group. His alienation is manifested in two ways: by rebelling against the "unauthentic they" values of the adult bourgeois society, and by the sense of ego fragmentation and loss of self-identity he experiences.

when he unwittingly accepts the "unauthentic values" of his conformist peer group. The alienation that comes from the "unauthentic they" at the expense of the "authentic self" is best explained by the two opposing concepts of Martin Heidegger: the "unauthentic they" (crowd) and the "authentic self" (individual). The agent, then, is Gabriel himself since, in fleeing from the unauthentic values of the adults, he embraced the equally alienating values of his own peer group.

CHAPTER 2

CARLOS SOLÓRZANO'S LOS FALSOS DEMONIOS

Carlos Solórzano's _Los falsos demonios_ is a novel of psychological alienation. The central protagonist, José Canastuj, psychologically fails to sever the umbilical cord of status quo security he first experienced in his mother's womb, and later to a lesser degree, in the warm bosom of his family. Unable to cross over from the poetic age of childhood to the prosaic age of adulthood, José recedes further and further from reality until he ends up on his deathbed in a foreign country, totally alienated.

**Hypothesis**

According to Freud, the child becomes an adult only through a fundamental transformation of his nature, affecting not only the instinctual aims but also the instinctual "values"—that is, the principles that govern the attainment of the aims. The change in the governing value system may be defined as follows: from immediate satisfaction to delayed satisfaction; from pleasure to restraint of pleasure; from

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play to work; from receptiveness to productiveness and from absence of repression to security.

Freud described this change as the transformation of the pleasure principle into the reality principle. Calvin S. Hall gives the following explanation of the two principles:

The id cannot tolerate increases of energy which are experienced as uncomfortable states of tension. Consequently, when the tension level of the organism is raised, either as a result of external stimulation or of internally produced excitations, the id functions in such a manner as to discharge the tension immediately and return the organism to a comfortably constant and low energy level. This principle of tension reduction by which the id operates is called the pleasure principle... The ego is said to obey the reality principle... The aim of the reality principle is to prevent the discharge of tension until an object which is appropriate for the satisfaction of the need has been discovered. The reality principle suspends the pleasure principle temporarily because the pleasure is eventually served when the needed object is found and the tension is thereby reduced. The reality principle asks in effect whether an experience is true or false, that is, whether it has external existence or not, while the pleasure principle is only interested in whether the experience is painful or pleasurable.

We shall see how Solórzano's hero, José Canastuj, was condemned from early childhood to a life of extreme alienation. An unresolved Oedipus conflict compounded by early traumatic experiences


associated with his father compelled José to seek out the status quo (pleasure principle) associated with his mother and to avoid the devenir (reality principle) associated with his father. Thus, the rude expulsion from the bosom of his family leads to a whole series of developmental alienations in later life and culminates in the expulsion from his native country of Guatemala. The activities chosen by José are those that come closest to fitting his mental makeup—that is, activities that are passive rather than active, introverted rather than extroverted. Furthermore, José is not able to enjoy full relationships with others since they are shrunken to mere shadows as they are filtered through his warped mind.

The title of the novel is revealing: the "falsos demonios" refers to the psychological projection (falsos) that sees everything through the pleasure principle (status quo) at the expense of the reality principle, and the alienating (demonic) consequences of his psychological orientation.

**Analysis of Text**

In the opening pages of the novel we find the main character at the end of his tether. He is a political refugee from Guatemala and lies dying in a general hospital in Mexico City. Aware of his approaching death, José feels the need to "explain" his behavior to his only son in Guatemala by writing a series of long confessional letters. These
introspective letters take the form of flash-backs with occasional commentary by José and make an effective mode of narration for his subjective conflict with reality.

The first letter quickly establishes the conflict between the pleasure principle and the reality principle. His quiescent condition in the hospital appeals to the first principle, yet the gaze of his fellow patient next to him disturbs his otherwise secure feeling:

Sufro la enfermedad de los solitarios, de los que queremos y no podemos respirar, porque la atmósfera que nos rodea no ha sido hecha para nosotros. Sin embargo, después de tanto tiempo en que no pude trabajar, tengo la seguridad de esta cama. Sé que voy a quedarme aquí y que podré escribirte. Dormiré y comeré tranquilamente. ¡Si no fuera por la mirada insiste nte de otro enfermo que está en la cama de la derecha, junto a la mía, y que no ha dejado de observarme desde que llegué aquí...!  

José's son is a no-nonsense, career military officer—-that is, the antithesis of his father. It is ironical, then, that José should warn his tough-minded son not to be blinded by "fantasies" in judging his father: "... debo hacer que no me confundas con los fantasmas que llevas dentro. Sé que es difícil, pues yo mismo me sorprendo a veces preguntándome si algo me aconteció aquí en esta tierra extraña, o allá, cuando vivía rodeado de ustedes."  

The "something" that

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happened to José, as we shall see, is the unfortunate combination of a sheltered childhood followed by shattering traumatic experiences.

Alfred Adler felt that the earliest memory a person could report was an important key to understanding his basic style of life. The earliest memories of José are the warm, sheltered golden-age days of childhood. José, as is true with all children, believes he is the center of the whole universe. It is the egotistical vision of the child to believe that the world, including the parents, exists only for his own pleasure:

... al salir al patio, bajo el azul encendido del cielo apresado dentro de los límites de nuestra casa, sentía que algo se abría dentro de mí de par en par. ... Así, lleno de bienestar, corría a ver a mi madre, para pasar con ella el resto del día. ... Me asía a su delantal, pues a veces tenía la impresión de perderla en medio de la vastedad de la casa. Atado voluntariamente iba tras de ella a la cocina, a la despensa y, finalmente, a su habitación. 6

Later in his hurly-burly days of adulthood, José looks back with nostalgia at the routine-filled days associated with his mother:

Todos los días hacía lo mismo. Y todos los días era esto como un preámbulo para llegar al momento en que, desde la puerta de esa habitación, me lanzaba corriendo sobre su cama, y ahí me quedaba inmóvil, extasiado, con la cabeza entre las piernas recogidas, oyendo mi propia respiración y sintiendo su olor en la cama. Con la cara escondida, me las arreglaba para observarla: Sonreía. Venía a sentarse junto a mí, a acariciarme

la cabeza. Sentía una felicidad punzante, agujoneándome en todo el cuerpo.  

Love for the status quo, characteristic of the pleasure principle, manifests itself early in life with a corresponding intense dislike for any devenir, characteristic of the reality principle: "¿Por qué quiero que sean diferentes las casas si me gusta que se parezcan? La comprobación de esa identidad me aseguraba que nuestra vida era estable, que obedecía a reglas muy antiguas y que nada podía amenazarla."  

In particular, José was adverse to going to sleep in one place only to awaken in strange surroundings: 

Casi siempre me adormecía al pie de un naranjo que desplegaba su follaje en medio del patio. Al caer la noche me llevaban dormido a nuestra casa y al día siguiente me parecía insólito despertar dentro de mi cama, sin saber cómo había llegado ahí. 

The illusion of seeming to be the center of the universe is noted in the following citation: "Me gustaba asegurarme de que los adultos cuidaban de mí, que yo no tenía ni siquiera que expresar un deseo para que éste se viera cumplido. Me sentía, así, muy pequeño y a la vez muy fuerte. Con un intenso bienestar de ser querido." There seemed to be nothing that was capable of upsetting José's idyllic early childhood: 

8. Ibid., p. 15.  
9. Ibid.  
10. Ibid.
"Nada parecía ser capaz de alterar la calma de nuestra casa. Con dos o tres palabras severas, pero cariñosas, todo hallaba de nuevo su curso normal. Comprobaba pues, diariamente, la seguridad de aquel cariño aun cuando me portaba mal."\textsuperscript{11}

Reality, however, soon rears its ugly head. The Father had become disenchanted with the government of the dictator Estrada Cabrera. As the ingenuous child he is, José does not understand why his father should become upset after dinner and pace the floor. All José remembers is that the idyllic status quo of their existence is upset:

Transcurrieron de este modo muchos años. Tantos que hoy no podría recordar cuántos fueron, pero sin que pudiera precisarlo comenzé a advertir un leve cambio. Algo indescriptible, pero también inequivoco: Mi papá al terminar de comer, ya no se quedaba sentado, como siempre lo había hecho, para hablar de los trabajos de la finca de café, o para comentar algún incidente familiar o de la vida de San Marcos. Ahora se ponía de pie sin decir nada y comenzaba a pasearse a lo largo de los corredores de la casa.\textsuperscript{12}

José suffers the first of several traumatic experiences when his father, in a fit of anger, lashes out at José for following too closely at his heels:

No me gustaba ese cambio, pues era al terminar las comidas cuando me acercaba a él para pedirle algo y cuando me concedía todo lo que pidiera.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 18. \textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
Estaba acostumbrado a verlo estático, firme en un solo lugar. Por eso, cuando comenzó a adquirir la costumbre de pasearse por los corredores sentí un poco de inquietud. Y para evitar eso quise pasearme, yo también, detrás de él, pero irritado se volvió y dijo colérico:--¡Quédate quieto! ¡Me pones nervioso así, pisándome los talones! Nunca había sufrido un rechazo semejante.  

Before his disenchantment with the dictator, the Father's admiration toward him bordered on adulation. For years a photograph of Cabrera with his old cronies occupied the place of honor in the living room. José, thinking that his father still cherished the photograph, took it down and hid it in revenge for the scolding he received. The disappearance of the photograph, however, was not even noticed by the parents. This upset José more than anything else. He had associated the photograph with the paradisiacal days of childhood: "Los días pasaron y mi inquietud aumentaba al ver que mis padres no mostraban ninguna preocupación por la ausencia de algo que me parecía tan "importante."  

To José's innocent way of thinking, the simple replacement of the photograph in its place of honor would bring back the status quo days of the pleasure principle. The Father, however, is filled with hatred at the very mention of the dictator's name. Finally, one day José decides to ask his father point-blank if he did not agree with him that the President was good and worthy of being loved. The

13. Ibid., pp. 18-19.
Father, apparently under a great strain, strikes José for the first time:

--Usted lo quiere mucho, ¿verdad papáito? Por eso tiene su retrato en la sala. El se puso de pie y me hizo rodar por el suelo. Al ver lo que había hecho se acercó para ayudarme. Le vi la cara, a la altura de mis ojos. Los suyos brillaban de una manera diferente. Sí, creo que él tenía miedo. Puedo decir que la primera imagen de peligro la vi ese día en sus ojos.15

If the parents had taken José in hand to explain how things change and how, what is white today can be black tomorrow, José might have made the transformation to the reality principle. As it was, the parents kept "reality" away from José:

Yo presentía algo extraño. Nunca en mi vida había visto que un objeto cambiara de lugar dentro de nuestra casa y menos aún el retrato del Presidente. ¿Qué era lo que pasaba, entonces? Le pregunté angustiado a mi mamá qué era lo que había cambiado, pero ella, en vez de tranquilizarme, me dijo severamente: --Tenés que aprender a preguntar menos. No podrías comprender lo que pasa.16

The Father's disillusionment with the dictator, and his subsequent underground activities against him, turns José's once idyllic home into an unfamiliar insecure place:

Y poco a poco, insensiblemente, todo se fue volviendo distinto, como si comenzáramos a vivir en otro lugar diferente: Mi madre ya no me permitía asirme a su delantal, ni venía a despedirme por las noches. Mi

15. Ibid., p. 20.
padre parecía a veces estar tranquilo, pero una frase, cualquier alusión de ella, que yo no comprendía, lo ponían inquieto y se daba otra vez a caminar por los corredores.  

Perhaps at this point José could still have made the psychological transformation from the pleasure principle to the reality principle, but the following traumatic experience discouraged him from doing so. José was surprised eavesdropping on his parents while they were discussing his father's revolutionary activities: "Me cogió con fuerza de una oreja y dándome tirones me llevaba casi colgando, mientras con la otra mano me golpeaba. Me dejó en la puerta de mi cuarto y se fue diciendo palabras incoherentes . . . . ¡Era como si mi vida entera se derrumbara!"  

This incident marked the turning point for José. The severe rebuff he received at the hands of his father causes José to withdraw into himself— that is, away from the reality principle and into the pleasure principle:

Y tomé la resolución de alejarme de ellos, de jugar solo, sin que nadie me viera. Así les haría sentir, sin dañarme yo mismo, lo que significaba mi ausencia. Me pareció cómodo poner mi silla de juegos detrás de una puerta: Hablaba consigo mismo y me decía palabras cariñosas, que imaginaba eran de mis papás.  

17. Ibid., p. 21.  
18. Ibid., p. 22.  
19. Ibid.
The death of the Father in a skirmish against the dictator causes ambivalent feelings in José. Before the Father's death, José shows an Oedipus complex. He loves his father yet the thought of sharing his mother's love with him causes feelings of hatred toward his father:

Venia a sentarse junto a mí, a acariciarme la cabeza. Sentía una felicidad punzante, aguijoneándome en todo el cuerpo. Otras veces me decía:—Anda a arreglarte, ya va a regresar tu papá—No hable ahora de él—le respondía.—¿Por qué? No sabía contestar .... ¿Por qué lo odio a veces de este modo?20

And again at the funeral:

No pude llorar. No comprendía nada pero me tranquilizaba al ver esos ojos cerrados y no brillantes y afiebrados como en los últimos días. ¿Cómo era posible que, después de tanto miedo de que él no volviera, ahora que le veía muerto no me era posible llorar? Me sentía culpable por eso y con mucho esfuerzo, exprimiéndome los ojos, logré llorar unas lágrimas.21

Hopefully, the shock of his father's death should force José to mature quickly. The die, however, had been cast. Instead of transforming his normal childhood Oedipus complex into a harmless tender relationship with his mother, José remains stuck in the Oedipus complex:

"Cuando trataba de abrazarme a mi mamá, como siempre lo había hecho, ella me apartaba con firmeza."22 Unable to adjust to a new

21. Ibid., p. 28.
22. Ibid., p. 23.
vital relationship with her, he prefers to withdraw from her completely: "Como yo le rogara que quería estar solo, respondió fastidiada: ¿No querías dormir siempre conmigo, pues? Era verdad. No lo había pensado, pero lo que ella decía era cierto. Sin embargo ahora tenía miedo de dormir los dos juntos, en el mismo cuarto."^{23}

The Mother--attuned to the reality principle--knows she has to start a new life for herself. Shortly after the funeral, she decides to rearrange the furniture in the house. José, on the other hand--attuned to the pleasure principle--feels extremely disorientated by the change in furniture arrangement:

Me pareció extraño que pensara en la limpieza apenas unos días después de su muerte. Pero ella continuaba moviendo los muebles, cubriéndolos con fundas blancas, poniendo los objetos en los lugares más insólitos. Siempre me había gustado el orden de nuestra casa. Aun después de muerto mi padre, al ver que todo volvía a estar en su puesto, había sentido un gran consuelo. ... Por eso, ahora que veía la casa entera en desorden, comenzé a sentir como si el terreno que pisaba se moviera.\textsuperscript{24}

Even more disconcerting for José is his mother's decision to move to the capital. Before leaving, José attempts to capture a fixed image of his home town. The "static" quality of the town meant security to José in contrast to the "devenir" quality of the world outside the town which is equated to danger:

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., p. 34.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., pp. 29-30.
Subía furtivamente a la azotea a contemplar el valle y luego, queriendo conservar esa imagen viva, me metía dentro de la cama. Ahí cerca estaba el Cristo que mi mamá me había regalado en mi cumpleaños. Al verlo, pensaba que era por deseo de ese crucificado que mi papá había muerto, dejándome solo en un mundo lleno de peligros.  

The act of separating himself from his hometown is like severing the umbilical cord of security: "Por fin, cuando el automóvil partió, observé que nuestra casa se hacía muy pequeña en el extremo de la calle ... vi que mi meseta se perdía de vista y comprendí que mi seguridad quedaba definitivamente rota en ese instante."  

And upon arriving in the capital, José's worst fears are confirmed: "Desde que el automóvil comenzó a rodar por las calles de la capital sentí un descontento impreciso, que aumentó al llegar a la casa que mi mamá había alquilado valiéndose de un abogado."

The unhappy, withdrawn child of the small town becomes the maladjusted, insecure adolescent of the big city. José begins to haunt lonely places such as the roof of his house and to spend long hours locked up in his room: "Comencé a experimentar el gusto por el encierro. Me daba, desde entonces, una impresión de seguridad. No tuve, como otros niños, el deseo de correr aventuras. Me gustaban

25. Ibid., p. 31.

26. Ibid., p. 32.

27. Ibid., p. 33.
The expressed desire of José to be like the saints under a showcase where even the flies cannot disturb him, is a striking image of his psychological need for the status quo:

--- ¡Qué bien han de sentirse los santos dentro de sus escaparates llenos de flores! ¡No los rozan ni las moscas! Y ella con voz dura agregó: ---Pero la vida no es así. ¿O qué quisieras tú, estar metido también dentro de un escaparate? ... Se fue y sus palabras golpeaban todavía en mis oídos. Sus palabras brutales que decían con burla uno de mis más íntimos deseos: Sí, yo quería estar dentro de un escaparate.29

School for José is simply another struggle to keep himself hermetically sealed from devenir. During the recreation period, for example, José prefers to stay indoors: "La maestra intentaba persuadirme de que debía salir, yo también, a jugar, pero siempre le dije que prefería quedarme adentro para estudiar."30 José becomes an introvert in his studies in that high grades for him are not a means to a practical end but only to make him feel—as he puts it—the warm security of a cocoon: "Veía satisfecho aquel diploma antes de dor-mirme y me llenaba de orgullo. Cerría las sábanas a los lados del cuerpo, para sentirme bien ajustado en mi envoltura."31 His sense

28. Ibid., p. 38.
29. Ibid., p. 37.
30. Ibid., p. 39.
31. Ibid.
of satisfaction, however, is short-lived. Again reality reared its ugly head; this time in the form of a well-aimed spit of saliva that one of his school-mates unceremoniously bestowed on him for being "different":

"Había llegado un poco después que los demás. ... Pasé presuroso entre las dos filas que formábamos al entrar a clase. Caminaba ansioso, por la falta que suponía el hecho de haber llegado tarde. De pronto, sin que pudiera saber de dónde venía, recibí un escupitajo violento en la cara. ... Volví a ver, para indagar quién me había insultado de esa manera, pero sólo vi las caras de todos que contenían la explosión de la risa. Después preferí no haberlo sabido porque entonces, ¿qué habría hecho yo?"32

Faced with a new challenge in his environment, José stays true to the pleasure principle life style by retreating from his unruly classmates into the cloistered life of a seminary. In giving his reasons for wanting to enter the seminary, such words used as protection, peace and tranquillity, all point to his psychological need for the status quo:

"Cuando salí de la iglesia me preguntaba qué era lo que me atraía tanto en él. Me gustó más que nada, el sonido de su voz, un poco sorda, pero también la manera quieta, indolente, con que hacía descansar sus manos entre las rodillas, sostenidas por el paño tenso de la sotana. También me atrajo mucho el crujido de las telas cuando caminaba y ese aire reverente, como de algo que nadie se atrevería jamás a maltratar. Me parecía que la sotana era algo que protegía, que defendía."

32. Ibid., p. 46.
... y que el Padre José había descubierto con sabiduría, la única manera de vivir en paz. 33

But even the sanctuary of the seminary proves open to devenir. José's girlish ways appeal to a homosexual seminary student. José is not certain what the strangely smiling student is after, but he knows his status quo is seriously threatened:

--¿Qué tienes? ¿Por qué sufres así? Volví a ver a quien me hablaba, que al mismo tiempo me oprimía la espalda con una fuerte presión: Era uno de los seminaristas. Aquel que me vio impasible cuando yo le sonreía, el día de mi ingreso. Ahora era él quien sonreía, mientras con sus dos manos fuertes me asía de los brazos. ... Pareces un niño. Mejor dicho, una niña. --Y mientras decía eso me pellizcaba una oreja. Aquel gesto me dio un miedo terrible. No sabía qué decir, pero me sentía, más que nunca, amenazado. ... --¿No quieres venir conmigo? Tengo en mi celda, unos dulces. --Tengo que irme. Tengo que irme. ... Avergonzado entré y me desplome llorando en la cama, con la certidumbre de que ni aún en el propio Seminario podría escapar a todas las amenazas que pesaban sobre mí. 34

Disillusioned with the seminary, José takes advantage of the downfall of the dictator to ask his mother to take him out of the seminary. The Mother adjusts to the change in the political atmosphere. She stops wearing black, cultivates new acquaintances and encourages José to take up a career of some sort. The new sense of freedom that sweeps the city, however, is disturbing for José. This behavior might

33. Ibid., p. 42.
34. Ibid., pp. 53-54.
seem puzzling until it is seen in the light of the two Freudian principles. A strong dictatorship, however repressive it might be, insures the status quo activities of the country. Indeed, its very survival depends on its ability to maintain the status quo. A liberal government, on the other hand, in giving its citizens more freedom, also burdens them with the responsibility of using that freedom in their own individual way. It is the openness, the contingency of this freedom that dismays José:

Los tiempos han cambiado, volví a decirme, y ahora podía hacer lo que quisiera. El problema era saber lo que yo quería realmente. Estaba acostumbrado a conocer muy bien lo que no debía hacer, pero ahora todas las posibilidades estaban abiertas y esa situación también me hacía sufrir: No podía acostumbrarme a la idea de que la seguridad estaba ahora en las calles, en los parques, en el alma de todos. 35

Public streets by their very nature are examples par excellence of *devenir*. For this reason, José refuses to venture out in them with his friends:

Alguna vez, estando así, pasaban los jóvenes vecinos y me invitaban a salir. Pero prefería quedarme ahí, aunque tuviera que soportar sus risas. ... Los tiempos han cambiado, gritaban, pero al verme tan decidido se iban silbando y corriendo. Los veía irse con tristeza. Hubiera querido ir con ellos, vivir de la misma manera, pero no podía hacerlo. Algo me retenia ahí, detrás de esos barrotes. ¡Los tiempos habían cambiado! Pero yo, ¿habría cambiado? ¿Era posible que cambiara algún día? 36

35. Ibid., p. 64.

36. Ibid., pp. 63-64.
José does not change. Even in manhood, his maladjustment continues. The slightest unforeseen accident is traumatic for him. At a party, José slips on the dance floor and afterwards regrets he ever left the seminary for "a liberty that is like death":

Con la cara contra el suelo pensaba: Eso es lo que yo gano por meterme a hacer cosas que no se han hecho para mí. . . . ¿No ves que antes estabas mejor, puesto que no tenías más que un solo camino que seguir? ¿Cómo vas a decidir ahora lo que harás? ¿No comprendes que esta libertad es como la muerte? 37

José equates liberty with death since both involve the unknown: "Me senté alarmado en la cama para preguntarme en voz alta: ¿La libertad es como la muerte? Y la respuesta acudió implacable: Sí, porque detrás de ambas no sabes qué es lo que está escondido." 38

The Mother knew that if José were ever to marry, she herself would have to hand-pick the girl for him. And being realistic, she picked a girl who was as strong as José was weak. In the beginning, the marriage seemed a practical one. His new spouse would simply fill in as a Mother surrogate. But after a period of time, José's mother realized she had made a mistake. The hand-picked wife turned out to harbor ambitions and intended to use José's career in civil law to launch these ambitions. José, however, did not choose civil law to go forward in society but to remain secure in one place:

37. Ibid., pp. 65-66.
38. Ibid., p. 66.
... mi carrera no necesitaba un gran valor. La había elegido porque era conveniente a mi carácter. Y era en mi prudencia, en mi instinto de conservación tenaz en los que había de apoyarme para vivir y quizás alcanzar algún éxito. No quería nada desmesurado. ... Lo necesario para poder sentarme tranquilo en mi casa y sentir que el tiempo transcurría, con su secreta circulación de días iguales, calmos, monótonos. ... ¡Esa era la felicidad! 39

In short, happiness for José is the pleasure principle. And if happiness is equated with the pleasure principle, unhappiness is equated with the reality principle. The birth of José's son provides us with a graphic example of the two principles and José's orientation towards them:

En los últimos días del embarazo, las dos parecían preocupadas por todos los pormenores del alumbramiento. Yo veía el enorme vientre que te encerraba y sentía una satisfacción que, en cierto modo, iba a desvanecerse en el momento en que nacieras. Lo veía y pensaba que tú, ahí dentro, estabas plegado sobre ti mismo, resguardado de toda contaminación, como aquellos santos de mi infancia estaban dentro de sus vitrinas. Y a medida que los dolores fueron aumentando, mi ansiedad de retenerete dentro encerrado, se recrudecía. La tormenta implacable de aquel vientre te lanzó sobre las sábanas de la cama y yo te vi manifestando ya, desde ese momento, tu primer desacuerdo con el mundo ... 40

As the son grows, so does José's anxiety over the change:

Me reprochaba a mí mismo el miedo con que te veía crecer, pues sentía que, sigilosamente, detrás de esos días iguales, en los que ibas cambiando, venían

39. Ibid., pp. 72-73.
40. Ibid., p. 74.
disimulados otros cambios mayores, a cuyo final estaban eslabonados mi muerte, la tuya y la de todos a quienes yo quería.  

The coming to power of the absolute government of Jorge Ubico sets off a new conflict between José and his wife. His wife sees the change in government as an opportunity for advancement since a law colleague of José has won the dictator's favor. José, however, enjoys the status quo government as an excuse to limit his life: "--Parece como si lo único que te gustara es vivir en una tiranía--me dijo." In contrast to José, his law colleague is loyal to reality. Unlike José, he knew that in a dictatorship, such as existed in Guatemala, what counted was not dedication to law studies, but the ability to curry the favor of those in power:

Yo llevaba un grueso libro de Derecho Romano debajo del brazo y él lo advirtió y no queriendo que aquel hecho lo hiriera me dijo con sorna: --¿Para qué estudas tanto? Vivimos en un lugar en donde la justicia está hecha. El Presidente siempre tiene la razón. Es fácil ser Magistrado.

The new Magistrate is unaware that--because of his mental make-up--José too is happy with the arbitrary justice of the land: "Tranquilo, después de comprobar mi pequeña, volvía a dormirme consolándome con las palabras de mi amigo: ¡La justicia está hecha! Y entre el sueño y la vigilia me prometía respetarla y acatarla siempre."

41. Ibid., p. 75.
42. Ibid., p. 77.
43. Ibid., p. 80.
44. Ibid., p. 81.
Unknown to José, his wife pays a visit to the new Magistrate and manages to finagle for him a small post in the new government. In the beginning, José is happy with his new job. Especially comforting is the routine of traveling to the office by the same route day after day:

*Iba y volvía puntualmente a mi nuevo trabajo, caminando a pie por las mismas calles. Al pasar frente a dos iglesias que había en mi camino hacia la señal de la cruz sobre mi frente. Me complacía también en pasar por la misma esquina, a la misma hora, y comprobar que el policía era siempre el mismo.*

While other Guatemalans became nervous under the vigilance of the police state, José derived security in the knowledge that his love for the status quo was being watched: "¿Cómo podré explicar que me iba sintiendo poco a poco más seguro y que esa seguridad me venía de sentirme vigilado, observado, cumpliendo con mi deber y con las órdenes del Presidente?"

It is ironical that José's reputation for clinging to the status quo got him into trouble with the Ubico government. The small political plum given to him by the Magistrate turns out to have a small string attached. The Magistrate and his clique are plotting to overthrow the Ubico regime, and he needs an insignificant nobody to hold a letter of


instructions to be given to his wife in case anything happened to him. This insignificant nobody, of course, is José Canastuj. It is also ironical that his fear of devenir brings about the very thing he dreaded--exile from Guatemala. The plot against the régime is uncovered, and the police have jailed most of the conspirators. Although the police are not even aware of José's existence, excessive fear causes José to panic and seek political asylum in the Mexican embassy. It soon becomes apparent to all concerned that José is a harmless misfit. Everyone wants to wash his hands of him; the real political refugees because he is a coward, and the Guatemalan authorities because they do not want to lose face in admitting they might have made a mistake in considering him a dangerous adversary. Even his family has no use for him. In their eyes he is a nonentity certainly not worth shedding tears over.

The upheaval in his life, however, does not bring José to his senses. Indeed, the latest turbulence makes him yearn even more for the status quo. As quickly as possible, he establishes a routine in the embassy and even feels a sense of satisfaction in the security the embassy offers:

Nadie me hablaba y entonces me sentía más cómodo: Comía solo y estaba despierto durante la noche, mientras todos descansaban. Dormía todo el día y me levantaba a hacer acopio de comida que guardaba para comerla solo, por la noche. Se habían establecido así dos ciclos de vida; el de ellos y el mío.
... Todo me era dado y me confortaba la seguridad de saber que la Embajada era invulnerable, que nadie se atrevería a atacarla. 47

José finds life in the embassy similar to the life he led in the seminary; both offered him the security of a group with a minimum amount of reaction from him. Next to being back in his mother's womb, his static situation in the embassy, where most of his vital needs are met with a minimum of effort on his part, comes closest to satisfying the pleasure principle:

Viviendo así, ponía en práctica lo que tanto deseaba en el Seminario: estar con los demás, sin que ellos intervinieran en mi vida, sin tener que hablarles de mí, oyendo por las noches su respiración, que me aseguraba que no estaba solo totalmente, pero que no debía rendir cuentas a nadie de mis propios actos. 48

But just as gestation comes to an abrupt end, so does José's stay in the sanctuary of the embassy. The Mexican ambassador had just obtained safe-conduct for all political refugees. As might be expected, José does not want to budge from the embassy. The ambassador is forced to treat him as a recalcitrant child:

Venciendo la parálisis que me dominaba casi por completo acerté a preguntarle a la mujer: --¿A dónde vamos? El Embajador entraba en ese momento y me dijo, con amabilidad: --¿A dónde habría de ser? A mi país. --¿Y qué vamos a hacer ahí? --dije. El me vio severo, como quien se dirige a un niño:

47. Ibid., p. 132.

48. Ibid.
--Pues ahí encontrará usted la libertad. Quise explicarle que no quería eso. 49

Although José is forced physically to board the plane for Mexico, his psychological "world" remains in Guatemala. Thus, the "something" he says he left behind is his "pleasure principle world" which rejects any thought of taking up new roots in Mexico: "Aún me estremece el recuerdo de aquel día en que descendí del avión, pues no descendí totalmente. Algo mío se quedó, no sé dónde, antes de ser admitido en este país." 50 This explains his puerile request to remain between the airplane and the gates of admission:

José makes one last pathetic attempt to stop the inevitable. He regresses back to a childhood trick of deliberately botching up the admission papers in hopes he may be sent back to Guatemala, just as a child he was sent home from school: "Deliberadamente hice mal todo lo que debía hacer: Manché los papeles, anoté equivocadamente mi

49. Ibid., pp. 133-134.
50. Ibid., p. 137.
51. Ibid.
nombre donde no era necesario hacerlo. Recordaba que ése era un 
buen sistema en la escuela para hacer que nos regresaran a nuestras 
casas. Y me sentía de nuevo como un niño. "52

José takes a room in a cheap hotel. While there, he hears that 
the daughter of the Magistrate had sacrificed her virginity for her 
mother's safety. José is astounded at her lack of temerity and writes 
er her a letter of admiration. The daughter replies in a matter of fact 
way that it was the "realistic" thing to do, with no heroics involved. 
The girl's ability to stay loyal to reality enabled her to weather the 
crisis, in contrast to José's present situation brought about by his 
blindness to see things as they are. José wonders at the difference 
between the two: "¿Qué es lo que me hacía tan diferente de esa joven 
nacida en el mismo país que yo?"53 In a flash of insight, José recog­
nizes that some of the difference is due to the sheltered childhood he 
had: "Y pensé también que si mi madre no me hubiera encerrado, 
desde tan niño, dentro de aquella casa, en las afueras de la ciudad, y 
después en el Seminario . . . "54

Any contact--however unorthodox--between José and Guatemala 
is desperately sought after by José. The past, characteristic of the

52. Ibid., p. 138.
53. Ibid., p. 144.
54. Ibid.
pleasure principle is paramount, while the present (devenir) is rejected. The long letters written to his son are returned unopened, yet José derives pleasure from the mere act of receiving them: "Todos los días enviaba una carta que tú devolvías. Establecido el ciclo, yo también recibía diariamente una constancia de tu recuerdo." José begins to haunt the Guatemalan consulate. Just hearing the speech patterns of his countrymen gives him satisfaction:

Pensaba que, gracias a mis visitas al Consulado, me era posible escuchar a mis compatriotas desconocidos. Me gustaba oírles hablar, sobre todo a las mujeres, con esa entonación que hace agudos los finales de las frases. No, yo no podía renunciar a esas visitas que habían enriquecido mi vida durante esos últimos días.

In contrast to the clerk in the consulate who would like to sever all contact with Guatemala to start life anew in Mexico, José knows his psychic make-up would never allow him to do so:

--Creo que debe pensar en establecerse aquí definitivamente. ... ¿Hacer aquí mi vida? ... ¡Hacer algo que ya está hecho de un modo y que no podría deshacer porque sería deshacerme a mí mismo!--No, yo debo volver. No quiero vivir siempre fuera de mi país. ¿Podría usted hacerlo? Me explicó que había tratado de hacerlo pero que tenía una familia muy numerosa y que ahí ganaba lo necesario para vivir. --Debo continuar atado--, dijo --, atado a un yugo que aborrezco. Usted está solo --agregó--, y puede rehacer la vida.

55. Ibid., p. 148.
56. Ibid., p. 153.
57. Ibid., p. 154.
Rejected by the clerk of the Guatemalan consulate, José pays a visit to a church in an attempt to capture the illusion that he is back in Guatemala:

Me acerqué a un confesionario, queriendo revivir aquel temblor interno que antes me agitaba. El olor del incienso y la gloria grotesca de un crucificado sangrante, crearon dentro de mí algo de aquel éxtasis que me daba la felicidad cuando era niño.58

Back in his hotel, José contrasts the hard bed in his hotel with the soft bed in Guatemala that conserved the imprint of his body, the bed he never dared move out for fear of disturbing the sleep he valued so much: "¡Qué lejana aquella otra, en la que mi cuerpo había dejado impreso todo su contorno! Nunca quise que la movieran de su lugar, por temor de que eso fuera a alterar mi sueño."59

There is another political refugee, a woman, living in the same hotel as José. Although both are exiles from their country, the similarity ends there. While every action of José reflects the pleasure principle, the woman is a sort of lusty Zorba the Greek with both feet planted on the reality principle. Unlike José, she had been exiled for fighting tooth and nail in the streets, and still burns with a desire to free her country: "Me dijo que había combatido en las calles, que había expuesto su vida. Hablaba de libertad, de romper las cadenas

58. Ibid., p. 157.

59. Ibid., p. 164.
The woman is no longer young, and advancing age has taken its toll: "Padecía de un artritismo cruel que debía disimular para caminar erguida a mi lado. Era quizás una figura lastimosa, con la cara pintada, las caderas informes." Nonetheless, she is a torrent of energy. In one of the few comic scenes in the novel, she sexually assaults José in his hotel room:

Batallamos más de una hora. Nunca he sentido mayor violencia. Por fin, cuando llegamos al momento que ella esperaba, me llamó, llorando, "su pequeño desterrado." Me dijo que esa cama sería "la tierra de los dos." Me abrazaba como si quisiera llegar más adentro de la desnudez de mi cuerpo. La obedecí en todo. Cuando por fin se vistió me dijo que vendría a visitarme todos los días.

After the initial encounter, the frankly maternal love of the old woman gives José the illusion he is back in his mother's bosom:

Después de sus arrebatos irrefrenables tenía momentos de ternura. Lloraba y me llamaba "su niño." Ponía mi cabeza entre sus rodillas y me acariciaba el pelo. Era el único momento verdaderamente agradable: Pensaba en mi infancia y creo que, en esos momentos, era feliz, de una manera fugaz, casi imprecisable.

Even the sexual satisfaction José managed to achieve with the woman came through the pleasure principle rather than the reality principle.

60. Ibid.
61. Ibid., p. 174.
62. Ibid., p. 166.
63. Ibid., p. 172.
This was done by substituting in his mind's eye the old woman for his wife during the sexual act:

¡La pobre! Si lo único que hacía era sustituir a la imagen de tu madre. ... Sin que ella lo advirtiera, el entusiasmo que yo ponía últimamente en nuestra unión estaba dedicado a tu madre. Y hubo momentos en que la sustitución fue tan perfecta que debía hacer esfuerzos para no pronunciar su nombre.64

Their opposite ways of looking at the world finally caused a rupture.

The old woman, loyal to devenir, wanted to take up new roots in Mexico:

Durante varios días ella me comunicó su deseo de hacer "una nueva vida": --Tienes treinta y ocho años--me dijo--. Es increíble que no trates de recomenzar, de ensayar a ser otro distinto. ... ¡La recuerdo tanto durante esos días! La carne flácida, en torno de la boca, le vibraba al tratar de convencerme. Hablaba de esperanzas, de proyectos, de futuro. ... veía siempre hacia el porvenir y yo era la última esperanza para asirlo.65

José, however, remains adamant:

Ella trataba de halagarme descubriéndome un futuro lleno de promesas y un día llegó con un papel en la mano, los ojos encendidos de júbilo: Era su constancia de nacionalización. --A ver si así te decides tú--me dijo. La rechacé con rudeza y le manifesté que no quería recomenzar nada.66

After breaking off with the old woman and the temptation to start life anew, José redoubles his efforts to remain in the pleasure

64. Ibid., p. 185.
65. Ibid., p. 174.
66. Ibid., p. 177.
principle. He writes his son of the difficulty in remaining true to the past but that is the only battle he has ever won:

... había huido de ella para poder permanecer fiel a mi lucha. Porque, aunque tú sonrías al leer esta palabra, no podrás saber nunca qué fuerza se necesita para impedir que los rostros se borren dentro de nosotros, así como el color del cielo que nos vio nacer, y para que la imagen de los caminos que recorrimos tantos años no se desvanezca en medio de todas las cosas extrañas que no nos tocan, pero que están allí en torno nuestro, aplastando todo eso que llevamos dentro, sin lograr llenar el hueco que dejaron. Sí, aquéllá fue mi lucha. La única que he librado en toda mi vida. 67

Part of this battle includes duplicating as much as possible the furniture in his hotel room; and, later, in the boarding house he plasters the walls of his room with Guatemalan tourist posters:

Si durante mi estancia en el hotel Francia había procurado que mi habitación se pareciera lo más posible a la de Guatemala, ahora, que me había instalado en una casa de huéspedes para estudiantes, hacía esfuerzos desesperados para que mis recuerdos no se alteraran. ... En algunas agencias de turismo me habían regalado varios carteles con las imágenes de los lugares más visitados de Guatemala. ... Iba pegando todos estos carteles, cuidadosamente, en el techo de mi habitación ... 68

At the boarding house, José is fascinated by the lively discussions of the students. During one heated session, José awkwardly interjects an extraneous subject into the discussion causing an abrupt halt to all activity. In trying to enter a spontaneous dialogue governed by the

67. Ibid., pp. 189-190.

68. Ibid., p. 190.
reality principle, José's attempt to introduce a personal monologue was doomed to failure:

Un día, en medio de una discusión acalorada, me puse de pie y les dije haciendo un gran esfuerzo: --¿Saben ustedes? Yo tengo un hijo... yo... yo... Me vieron atónitos y luego se echaron a reír. --Bueno, ¿y eso qué tiene que ver con lo que estamos hablando? Sin poder contestarles salí apresuradamente de la habitación, pues comprendía que mi afirmación, tan llena de sentido para mí, tan tensa y angustiosa, a ellos no les decía nada. 69

José's struggle to hold onto his past at times proves costly. By typing letters for illiterates, José manages to earn a modest income. The daily contact with others, however, begins to erase his Guatemalan speech patterns. In order to conserve his "true self" as much as possible, José quits his job even though he can hardly afford it: "Por las noches, viendo los carteles del techo con mis imágenes queridas, pensaba que mi trabajo era sólo parte de un disfraz, que a mi verdadero ser sólo yo lo conocía. Pero el tiempo pasaba y el disfraz iba invadiendo algo más íntimo. Me estaba transformando sin que pudiera evitarlo. Al percatarme de eso quise dejar el trabajo." 70

A telegram informing José of the death of his wife precipitates a nervous breakdown. He is taken to the general hospital where he writes the letters that form the narrative of the novel. Although

69. Ibid., p. 195.
70. Ibid., pp. 196-197.
addressed to his estranged son in Guatemala, the letters have been
ddictated to a fellow patient who, upon José's death, has the letters
published. If the author was fond of contrasting several characters in
the novel with José, the fellow patient at the general hospital turns out
to be the antithesis of José. Indeed, it is the "neighbor"—as José
always refers to him—who uses the title of the novel, Los falsos
demonios, to diagnose José's psychological problem. The "false
demons" refer to the psychological projection of a child who sees
things that are not really there. According to the "neighbor," José
has never stopped projecting a false image on reality:

Eres, a tus años, como yo cuando era niño. Me
habían dicho que en la noche, fuera de mi cuarto,
rondaban los demonios. Tenía miedo. Pero una
vez, haciendo un esfuerzo, me levanté de la cama
y llegué a la ventana. Y, ¿sabes? No había demonios,
eran falsos. Eso te pasa a ti. Mientras no lo com-
prendas no dejarás de ser como eres.\(^{71}\)

The pathology of their respective illnesses are indicative of their
antithetical psychological make-up. José's sickness is psychosomatic
and proves fatal: "He buscado disculpas. Mi enfermedad fue, primero,
un pretexto, y luego, una realidad que venía a justificarme."\(^{72}\) His
neighbor's sickness, on the other hand, is a severe physical one, yet
his positive outlook enables him to overcome it: "Unos aseguran que


\(^{72}\) Ibid., p. 217.
usted está grave, que morirá en breve tiempo, pero la enfermera le dijo que pronto saldrá del hospital, que su vitalidad le ha defendido increíblemente.

Whereas his neighbor is always ready to develop new friendships, José finds such opportunities "a heavy burden": "¿Por qué quiere este hombre que está tendido a mi lado imponerme el peso de un conocimiento que ha de durar tan poco?" The traditional ritual of the Catholic church gives comfort to José. But to his neighbor the Catholic ritual serves no purpose: "--Son tonterías. Todo eso no sirve para nada." Unlike José who finds it impossible to forget his native land, his neighbor forges a new life for himself in whatever place he happens to be: "--El lugar en el que uno nace no importa. Lo importante es dónde se hace la vida." In contrast to José's constant yearning for the cloistered life, his neighbor revels in adventures of all sorts: "Ha hecho todo: fogonero de ferrocarril, obrero. ... Sí, es uno de esos hombres que parecen decirnos siempre: 'Yo tomo todo lo que quiero en este mundo.'" José always looks backwards and

73. Ibid., p. 102.
74. Ibid., p. 32.
75. Ibid., p. 41.
76. Ibid., p. 82.
77. Ibid., p. 101.
pines for what is not; his neighbor abhors looking back into the past:

"¡Recuerdos! No sirven para nada. Pero si te empeñas, sigue con tus recuerdos." The neighbor relishes the moment to gobble up all the food available. Watching him eat, José wonders from what source he gets his energy: "¿Por qué se obstina en comer así? Toma de su bandeja y de la de todos los que rechazan la comida. ¿Está muy enfermo entonces? Está solo, ciertamente, como yo, pero no se siente derrotado. ¿Qué es lo que lo sostiene? Hay en él algo que me dice que va a curarse mientras yo me muero."

The same blindness that distorts reality for José also distorts his relationships to people. In spite of all the suffering caused by the two dictators, Ubico and Cabrera, José holds no animosity towards either one. Rather than hold Cabrera as directly responsible for the death of his father, he interprets it as a natural calamity to be accepted as one accepts any "act of God": "Sabía que las voluntades del Presidente y de Dios, unidas, me lo habían quitado y que era necesario aceptarlas." Even Ubico's unfair persecution for José's inconsequential part in the plot does not cause any change in feeling:

"¿Enemigo? No. Nunca he tenido enemigos." When José takes

78. Ibid., p. 102.
79. Ibid., p. 157.
80. Ibid., p. 31.
81. Ibid., p. 197.
refuge in the Mexican embassy, only his mother comes to his aid. José, however, is disappointed to see her, expecting the visitor to be his wife: "¡Era mi madre! Quise alejarme y rechazarla." His mother tries in vain to make him see his wife cares nothing for him: "Quise hablar con tu mujer y ella se negó a hacerlo. ¿Qué es lo que ha pasado entre vos y ella? Ya te decía que esa mujer no era buena." In contrast to José, his neighbor is able to adjust to relationships as they change. When his wife fell in love with another man in his native land, the neighbor accepted the situation and acted accordingly: "Ayer me dijo que nació en una provincia lejana y que dejó allí una familia, porque su mujer se enamoró de otro hombre y él no quiso estorbar su libertad."

The neighbor at the hospital tried again and again to win José's confidence but to no avail. The simple gesture of holding his hands arouses José's paranoid suspicions as to ulterior motives:

¿Por qué le llamo mi amigo después de lo que he visto? ¡Ha sido tan terrible! No puedo confiar más en él. Desperté, hace tres días, con mi mano entre las suyas y advertí que jugaba con ella, exponiéndola a la luz. ... ¿Ha sido por eso? ¿Es por el anillo que toma mi mano con la suya?

82. Ibid., p. 125.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid., p. 110.
85. Ibid., pp. 184-185.
Whatever tack the neighbor takes to overcome José's inaccessibility is defeated:

Él se puso de pie, rodeó mi cama caminando y se encaró conmigo: --¿Por qué desconfías? Me veía con severidad, pero no quise dejar que se impusiera a mí. --No desconfío--le dije--. Simplemente no me importas tú. No me importa nadie. Y él insistió: --Eres un caso perdido. 86

José does care, however; when the end comes, he wants to die holding his neighbor's hand: "En la azotea tuve un acceso de tos. Estaba ya oscuro y la fatiga de la marcha me hizo, casi, perder el conocimiento. Me asaltó el temor de morir allí, solo, sin que nadie me viera. No ... mi amigo me dará la mano pensé." 87 Unfortunately, the friend is not there, and José dies as he lived--alone and filled with uncertainty. Is his friend a true friend or does he only seem to be a friend? What is real and what is not?

Mi amigo se ha ido, esta vez no sé a dónde, pero me han dicho que volverá dentro de un momento. ¿Tengo motivos realmente para desconfiar de él? Debo esperarle. Esperaré a mi amigo. Nos explicaremos. Moriré con mi mano entre las suyas. Es necesario no morir solo, por si acaso ... después ... 88

86. Ibid., p. 209.
87. Ibid., p. 217.
88. Ibid.
Summary

The expulsion of the child from the Mother's womb is the example par excellence of the expulsion from a "place" where one's vital needs are satisfied instantly and completely. This idyllic time of gestation, followed as it is by the inevitable expulsion into an alien world, can serve as a paradigm for the series of expulsions Solórzano's alienated hero experiences. Thus, the rude expulsion from the warm bosom of his family which led to his psychological alienation--best exemplified by Freud's theory of the pleasure principle (status quo) versus the reality principle (devenir)--begins the paradigm and is followed by: expulsion from his familiar home town to the strange city; from the secure comfort of the school and seminary into the streets; from his wife and son into the foreign embassy; from the embassy into the airplane and, finally, the expulsion--as traumatic as the one that drove him from the bosom of his family--from his native country of Guatemala to his place of exile, Mexico. The psychological need of the protagonist to recreate "places" in Mexico that reminded him of Guatemala, such as plastering his room with tourist posters of Guatemala, indicates--to employ the original comparison--a desire to return to the womb.

Not as obvious as the above, are the more subtle references to "enclosed places" symbolizing the security of the womb: the favorite sleeping "place" next to his mother; the expressed envy of the
glass-enclosed religious figures where not even the flies can bother them; the wrapping of his bed sheets around his body in the form of a cocoon, etc. It should be noted too, that the final fatal attack is precipitated by an imprudent exit of the protagonist from the hospital room (womb) out into the open air (alien world).

The type of activities chosen by the protagonist all share one common feature: they are introverted as contrasted to introversion. That is to say, while both terms mean a turning inward, introversion is a turning inward for ultimately outward directed purposes, e.g., a medical student who spends long years studying in order to be able, afterward, to give medical aid to his patients. Introverted activities, on the other hand, are performed with no other purpose than to satisfy autistic needs. The introverted activities of the protagonist began as a child playing his solitary fantasy games. Later, he studied long hours for high marks simply for the secure feeling of doing what is expected of him. Similarly, he chooses the career of civil law, not to protect the rights of others, but, again, for the security of a profession that provides a ready-made answer to any contingency. Even his decision to marry is not motivated by the desire to share a life with a unique person but to provide him with a Mother surrogate.

The characters in the novel serve to highlight the protagonist's orientation toward the pleasure principle and away from the reality principle. Thus, his father loses his life in struggling against the
repressive government of the dictator while the hero secretly supports the "status quo" policy of a dictatorship. The Mother gently, yet firmly, tries to transform the Oedipus complex into a normal one of harmless affection, but the protagonist alienates the relationship by rejecting both as too "disturbing." His civil law colleague, who never cracks a law book, reaches a high position in the government because he knows how to gain the favor of those in power. His wife is full of worldly ambitions and is enough of an extrovert to use her sexual attractions to gain political favors for her husband. His son is a no-nonsense professional military officer who constantly sneers at his father's introverted ways. Even the lesser characters play a similar role. The clerk for the Guatemalan consulate in Mexico, for example, would happily give up his Guatemalan citizenship in order to take up roots in Mexico if he did not have to support his family. José, on the other hand, would gladly give up the citizenship offered by Mexico in order to go back to the family that does not want him. The onanistic sexual life of José is contrasted with the lusty aggressiveness of a woman almost twice his age. And in the boarding house where he lives, José's attempt to enter a spontaneous discussion with young college students, ends in an embarrassing withdrawal when the students question the connection between what they were discussing and his monologue of past events in Guatemala.
The greatest contrast, however, is reserved for his "neighbor" -- as he is simply referred to -- who shares the same hospital room with our alienated hero. Indeed, the antithetical nature of the neighbor is a tour de force for the author who obviously wanted to represent the character as an example par excellence of the reality principle.

The narrative mode lends itself to the theme of the novel. Instead of conserving his energy at the hospital for future plans, José, in the act of writing the letters to his son in Guatemala -- which form the narrative -- is living the present (reality principle) in the past (pleasure principle). The absence of given names or surnames in favor of relationships to the protagonist, e.g., his mother, his colleague, points to the inability of José to see each person as a unique Protean personality. In José's static way of looking at people, a wife and son can only act like a wife and son regardless of unwifelike and unsonlike behavior. Because of José's static way of looking at people, the change (devenir) of his wife's attitude from one of tolerance to one of hatred is not acknowledged by José's warped mind. Similarly, the natural love of his son for José changes to outright contempt and is also blinked away by José. On the other hand, the friendly maternal gestures of his mother are distrusted by José who had never resolved his Oedipus conflict. And the friendly overtures of his neighbor at the hospital are looked upon with great suspicion since José is away from "home" in the "land of strangers." In contrast, his neighbor said:
"El lugar en el que uno nace no importa. Lo importante es dónde se hace la vida." 89 José is not able to find a "home" anywhere. For the "mother-home" he is looking for exists only in his mind (pleasure principle) and not in the world (reality principle).

89. Ibid., p. 82.
CHAPTER 3

JUAN CARLOS ONETTI'S EL ASTILLERO

In Carlos Solórzano's novel, an unhappy childhood brings about the psychological alienation of an individual, José Canastuj; in Juan Carlos Onetti's El astillero, alienation comes to the central figure, Larsen, as part of the existential condition of man. Canastuj is a sick individual living in a sane world while Larsen is a rational person living in an irrational world.

Hypothesis

Larsen's existential alienation is decidedly the kind that has been popularized by the philosophical and literary works of Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre's anti-hero, Antoine Roquentin of Nausea, for example, is of the same stripe as Onetti's Scandanavian outsider, Larsen. Both grope their way through a gratuitous world in search of a way to ground Being in existence. The gratuitous world, or the things-in-themselves, is called by Sartre the Being-of-itself (L'en-soi) and the attempt to


consciously transcend the gratuitous world, the Being-for-itself (Pour-soi). For our purposes here, William Barrett's definition of the Sartrean terms will suffice:

Being, says Sartre, is divided into two fundamental kinds: (1) Being-in-itself and (2) Being-for-itself. Being-in-itself (Sartre's en-soi) is the self-contained being of a thing. A stone is a stone; it is what it is; and in being just what it is, no more no less, the being of the thing always coincides with itself. Being-for-itself (Pour-soi) is coextensive with the realm of consciousness, and the nature of consciousness is that it is perpetually beyond itself. ... The For-itself struggles to become the In-itself, to attain the rock-like and unshakable solidity of a thing. But this it can never do so long as it is conscious and alive. Man is doomed to the radical insecurity and contingency of his being. ³

Roquentin and other Sartrean characters never lose hope in reconciling the ideal synthesis of the Being-for-itself with the Being-in-itself. In the words of Sherman H. Eoff, "Sartre does not close the door completely on a solution, for he refuses to renounce his reliance on self-conscious intelligence." ⁴ Onetti's Larsen, on the other hand, not only gives up reliance on self-conscious intelligence but also decides to throw in his lot with those who pretend there is essence in existence (Sartre's salauds). It can be said that Larsen is an Antoine Roquentin grown old and jaded; ready to embrace any existence --however false and absurd it may be--rather than to continue to


flounder in a gratuitous world. Larsen's new orientation toward an absurd world seems to coincide with the one foreseen by Claude-Edmonde Magny:

Madness then appears, after magic and scientific technology, as the third stage in the evolution of thought. Or rather: man faced with Nausea has these alternatives: philosophy or "metaphysics" (in Heidegger's sense of the word)--that is, lucid recognition of the absurdity of existence--or madness, the desperate effort to return to the world of magic and deny absurdity in the name of a superior universe constructed by dint of arbitrariness and cheating.  

Although Larsen and the other characters in the novel have come in from the existential cold, they can not blink away the fact that they still live in a Sartrean world of the Being-in-itself and the Being-for-itself. They are all lucidly aware of their cheating; yet they all tacitly agree that something is better than nothing, or, --to use the existential term--the alternative is: Nothingness. For this reason the characters of the novel use the For-itself of the conscious mind not to reject duplicity, as Sartre's characters do, but to embrace it.

The For-itself can be conveniently divided in four general areas as indicated by the chapter headings in the novel: The Shipyard, Santa María, The Summerhouse and The Shack.

Analysis of Text

When Larsen gets off the ferryboat in Santa María, we see that his past years have been dead ones (a nothingness?): "El rumor de la lluvia ... proclamaba la necesidad de que un hecho final diera sentido a los años muertos." Larsen has a presentiment that Santa María is the place where he will succumb to absurdity; it is here he will let himself be trapped into pretending that essence precedes existence:

... había presentido el hueco voraz de una trampa indefinible. Ahora estaba en la trampa y era incapaz de nombrarla, incapaz de conocer que había viajado, había hecho planes, sonrisas, actos de astucia y paciencia sólo para meterse en ella, para quietarse en un refugio final desesperanzado y absurdo.

In considering taking the job as general manager of the shipyard in Santa María, Larsen could not have chosen a more absurd refuge from nothingness. The shipyard is a carcass of a shipyard and has been for years; it functions only on paper and is run by a couple of Kafkan-like employees. While Larsen is resisting the irrational offer, Gálvez, the accountant, talks to Larsen about his future salary as though they both actually believed he would receive one:

Debería decirle cuánto cobraron los anteriores. -- No me importa, gracias--dijo Larsen--. Lo estuve pensando. Por menos de cinco mil no me quedo. Cinco mil cada mes y una comisión sobre lo que pase más adelante--Mientras alzaba el pocillo del

6. Onetti, p. 20.
7. Ibid., p. 36.
café para chupar el azúcar, se sintió descolocado y en ridículo; pero no pudo contenerse, no pudo dar un paso atrás para salir de la trampa-. 8

The reason Larsen feels unable to resist taking the job and falling into the trap, as he calls it, is because he is aware of the Sartrean idea that other people are indispensable to his existence. In the absence of an essence (self), Larsen cannot be anything, unless others recognize him as such. 9

Larsen lets himself be talked into taking the job even though on each pay day he would be reminded of the absurdity of his condition: "Cada día 25 volvía a descubrir, a comprender el absurdo regular y permanente en que estaba sumergido." 10

Nevertheless, Larsen found he could accept a Kafkaian world as long as it was shared with others: "Entonces con lentitud y prudencia, Larsen comenzó a aceptar que era posible compartir la ilusoria gerencia de Petrus, Sociedad Anónima, con otras ilusiones, con otras formas de mentira que se había propuesto no volver a frecuentar." 11

Moreover, for Larsen, the shipyard represented the last chance to deceive himself: "Pero esta era su última oportunidad de

8. Ibid., p. 38.


10. Onetti, p. 45.

11. Ibid., pp. 56-57.
Although no one believes in the charade they are playing, everyone goes through the motions since they feel the game is preferable to a gratuitous world:

Y tan farsantes como yo. Se burlan del viejo, de mí, de los treinta millones; no creen siquiera que esto sea o haya sido un astillero. ... No creen, me doy cuenta, ni siquiera en lo que tocan y hacen, en los números de peso y tamaño. Pero trepan cada día la escalera de hierro y vienen a jugar a las siete horas de trabajo y sienten que el juego es más verdadero que las arañas, las goteras, las ratas, la esponja de las maderas podridas.  

In the absence of essence, Larsen, with lucid insight, recognizes the need of an absurd existence or madness that, if shared by others, becomes real for them: "Y si ellos están locos, es forzoso que yo esté loco. Porque yo podía jugar a mi juego porque lo estaba haciendo en soledad; pero si ellos, otros, me acompañan, el juego es serio, se transforma en lo real. Aceptarlo así--yo, que lo jugaba porque era juego--es aceptar la locura."  

Just as Cervantes's Don Quixote used his imagination to turn the windmills into giants, Larsen and the two employees, Gálvez and Kunz, used their imagination to turn the shipyard into a bustling organization buzzing with personnel:

12. Ibid., p. 57.
13. Ibid., pp. 61-62.
Las bisagras y las letras en la puerta, los cartones en las ventanas, los remiendos del linóleo, el orden alfabetico en el archivo, la desnudez desempolvada del escritorio, los infalibles timbres para llamar al personal. Y, aparte de lo visible y demostrable, aunque no menos necesarias, las horas de trabajo y ávida meditación que había pasado en la oficina, su mantenida voluntad de suponer un centenar fantasma de obreros y empleados.¹⁵

The empty office of Larsen had to be visualized as a vital center of action: "Con las manos en la nuca y el sombrero negro caído sobre un ojo, enumeraba las pequeñas tareas que había cumplido durante aquel invierno, como para convencer a un indiferente testigo, de que la desguarnecida habitación podía confundirse con el despacho de un Gerente General de una empresa millonaria y viva."¹⁶ Titles and rituals were created for their role-playing: "Todas las mentiras, los disparates, las irritadas burlas que iba inventando el otro, uno de los dos, al otro lado del escritorio-con una oportuna profusión de sonrisas, de cabezadas, de mal calculados 'señor Gerente General' calentaban el corazón de Larsen."¹⁷ When not going through the motions of reviewing old inventories and moth-eaten documents of forgotten shipwrecks, Larsen would call into his office the two employees as if he were making momentous decisions: "Cuando oyó que llegaban,

15. Ibid., p. 140.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., p. 47.
a las nueve, en la fría mañana de buen tiempo, se quitó el sombrero y el sobretodo, esperó a que hicieran ruidos y se sosegaran, y los llamó con los timbrazos inconfundibles. Primero a nadie y después a nadie; primero al Gerente Técnico y después al Gerente Administrativo."\textsuperscript{18}

Santa María has no more essence than the shipyard. The small town is as run-down and dilapidated as the shipyard. And just as Don Quixote turned shabby, wayside inns into airy castles so the inhabitants of Santa María used their will power to transform their dwellings. The lodging which Larsen uses is called a "modern hotel" by Petrus, the owner of the shipyard, and a "dirty cave" by Larsen: "Y cuando llegamos, también nosotros fuimos a vivir al Belgrano, esa cueva sucia que era un 'hotel moderno donde viven muchos de los altos empleados de mi astillero.'\textsuperscript{19} The local bar in Santa María is called El Chamamé, but there is no connection between the name as an essence and the place as an existence:

En el tiempo de los reseros, El Chamamé, todavía sin nombre y no necesitándolo, se componía de dos faroles, uno colgado sobre la puerta de entrada, que era la única y se cerraba con una cortina de un mostrador hecho de tablones cóncavos soportados por caballetes. ... Eso era todo y alcanzaba. Cuando tuvo nombre--El Chamamé, y el subtítulo: Grandes mejoras por cambio de dueño--. ... no hubo que agregarle mucho: Algunas mesas, sillas y botellas,

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 143.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 153.
Larsen puts his finger on it when he says that El Chamamé is brought each night with the clients; that is, the only existence it has is the one the clients give it through their being-for-itself: "No hubo que agregar más, porque el resto—es decir, El Chamamé mismo—lo traían cada noche los clientes. Iban llegando para armar El Chamamé, cargando, siendo cada uno, varón o hembra, una pieza del rompecabezas; hasta sus accidentales ausencias contribuían a formarlo; y hasta pagaban por el derecho de hacerlo." 21 One of the employees of the shipyard lives in a "quasi-home": "Encendió otro cigarillo y descubrió una oficina abandonada, sin puertas, con paredes de tabla; había un catre, un cajón con un libro, una palanga con el esmalte estrellado; ésa era la casa de Kunz." 22

The summerhouse has the same lack of substance that characterizes the shipyard and Santa María. It is supposed to reflect the high social position that its owner, Petrus, has achieved in the world; a position that sets him and his family apart from everyone else in Santa María. In reality, however, old Petrus is a bankrupt, old tycoon who pretends to be maneuvering in the summits of bureaucracy

20. Ibid., p. 158.
21. Ibid., p. 159.
22. Ibid., p. 77.
to get the shipyard back on its feet. Nevertheless, he has a role to play, as do the others. His posturing is so consistent that he seems to resemble a cut-out paper figure: "un niño hubiera podido recortar la figura del viejo Petrus y pegarla en un cuaderno."23 On the death of his wife, Petrus sent a telegram to the governor to inform him of his loss: "Hubo, además, un telegrama enviado al gobernador, tres líneas tan imperiosas que merecían ser firmadas 'Yo Petrus;' y que no obtuvo más respuesta que una carta de pésame."24 The burial ceremony follows the same "absolute status" the wife enjoyed while alive: "Después de un juramento pronunciado en alemán que excluía, en la hora de la prueba, a los escasos indígenas que engrosaban el cortejo de enlutados y embarrados: 'Prometo ante Dios que tu Cuerpo descansará en la Patria.'"25 Petrus's vocabulary had to fit his elevated social position: "Jeremías Petrus paraba en el hotel. Era una palabra vieja. ... Ya casi todos dicen alojarse o encontrarse; y algunos de la colonia, hombres hechos, que tal vez no hayan nacido aquí, estar de paso. Este decía parar."26

Just as Larsen accepts the shipyard as a going concern, he accepts old Petrus and his daughter, Angélica Inés, as genteel people

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23. Ibid., p. 135.
24. Ibid., p. 129.
25. Ibid.
who enjoy an absolute social status in Santa María. Indeed, Larsen welcomes the opportunity to court Angélica Inés as another role to play in a gratuitous world. The courtship is, of course, absurd. Larsen is supposedly courting her for her father's nonexistent business. Moreover, Angélica Inés is truly mad and has been since her childhood: "Está loca pero es muy posible que llegue nunca a estar más loca que ahora."27 Nonetheless, Larsen and Angélica Inés go through the social ritual of courting in the summerhouse. The smile, of course, is the *sine qua non* of the social mask: "Murmuró una palabra sucia y sonrió mientras se levantaba para recibir a las dos mujeres. Estaba seguro de que era adecuada una expresión leve de sorpresa y supo aprovecharla después, en el principio de la conversación."28 Larsen's age makes him adept at the game and avoids gaucheries:

"Casi se impuso luego para servir el té; pero comprendió, ya separadas las nalgas de la silla, que en el mundo difícil de la glorieta, la cortesía podía expresarse pasivamente."29 Larsen has also learned how to mouth the platitudes of lovers:

No sabía qué hacer de mi vida, créame; me tomé una lancha y me bajé donde me gustó. Empezó a llover y me metí allí. Así eran las cosas cuando usted aparece. Desde aquel momento tuve la

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necesidad de verla y hablarle. Para nada; y yo no soy de aquí. Pero no quería irme sin verla y hablarle. Ahora sí, ahora respiro; mirarla y decirle cualquier cosa. No sé lo que me tiene reservado la vida; pero este encuentro ya me compensa. La veo y la miro. 30

Seduction is part of the game, and Larsen wonders what old technique he can pull out of his bag of tricks that will work best on Angélica Inés: "Es posible que Larsen alargara su prudencia y esperara el momento inevitable en que descubriría en qué tipo de mujer encajaba la hija de Petrus, con qué olvidada María o Gladys coincidía, qué técnica de seducción podía usarse sin provocar el espanto, la histeria, el final prematuro." 31

Another favorite device of Larsen to keep the game going was the monologue. At first, he followed a logical order: "Al principio contaba respetuoso del orden, aceptando las reglas evidentes de la lógica y la comunicación. Comenzó por los amigos, los dieciocho años, alguna mujer, una tediosa estampa con esquina, billar, madreselvas y algunos toques genealógicos distribuidos con destreza." 32 After a while, however, it was not necessary to follow a logical order since Angélica's madness could not appreciate it:

30. Ibid., p. 29.
31. Ibid., p. 49.
32. Ibid., p. 165.
Y como ella era nadie, como sólo podía dar en respuesta un sonido ronco y la boca entreabierta, embellecida por el resplandor de la saliva, Larsen prescindió pronto del auditorio y se fue contando, tarde tras tarde, recuerdos que aún lograban interesarle. Se recitó con vehemencia episodios indudables y que conservaban una inmortal frescura porque ni siquiera ahora le era posible comprender-los del todo, ni siquiera ahora podía descubrir el móvil que le obligó a entreverarse en ellos. 33

Exhausting his supply of anecdotes, Larsen then began to use themes touched upon by Angélica as points of departure for further monologues:

"En los últimos tiempos los sueños de Angélica Inés, las síntesis, las frases que ella murmuraba de improviso con su voz blanda y deslumbrada, eran recogidas por Larsen como desafíos, como temas impuestos." 34

The desperate flight from nothingness drives Larsen to seek yet another refuge; the shack where Gálvez and his wife live: "El hambre no era ganas de comer sino la tristeza de estar solo y hambriento, la nostalgia de un mantel lavado, blanco y liso, con diminutos zurcidos, con manchas recientes; crujidos del pan, platos, la alegre grosería de los camaradas." 35 The shack, however, leads again to another absurd world. Although Gálvez' wife is pregnant (no name is given to her), they simply exist together in the same shack;

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., p. 166.

35. Ibid., p. 53.
there is no permanent bond to hold them together, that is, their relationship has no essence. Larsen and Kunz visit with them after work to talk about the nonexistent business at the shipyard; each one keeps the vacuous talk going, even though they know the content of the conversation is absurd. The only thing that makes life worth living for Gálvez, as his wife told Larsen, is the thought of exposing a fraudulent bond that Petrus had perpetrated in better days: "Lo estuvo viendo no querer otra cosa en el mundo. Una cartulina verde. Estoy segura de que no hubiera podido seguir viviendo sin ella."36 Gálvez knows, of course, that Petrus is bankrupt. His motivation lies not in the money, but in the role he can play as the exposer of the fraudulent bond. Anything to push back the engulfing void is welcomed by everyone in the novel. Larsen, too, sees other roles open up for him. He can play the part of the loyal employee by trying to prevent Gálvez from exposing Petrus; and, by enlisting Gálvez' wife on his side, he can facilitate both goals by trying to seduce her. No one, of course, took his own actions seriously. It was simply another absurd game to be played out in an absurd world:

Era necesario que el título no llegara al juzgado de Santa María y todo medio sería bueno y recompensado. Había vuelto a cerrar los ojos y era evidente que lo estaba echando y que no le importaba de veras que el título falso llegara o no al juzgado. Se divertía ahora de esta manera y continuaría divirtiéndose de la otra.

36. Ibid., p. 171.
Desde muchos años atrás había dejado de creer en las ganancias del juego; creería, hasta la muerte, violento y jubiloso, en el juego, en la mentira acordada, en el olvido. 37

When Gálvez finally decides to play out his role as an informer and take the bond to the authorities, the concern of the others is not what will happen to Petrus, the shipyard or their jobs; but, instead, they worry about the change it will make on their roles. Whereas Larsen and Petrus rose to the occasion to take on new roles vis-à-vis Gálvez, the wife of Gálvez could only show astonishment at her husband's action: "Me dijo que se iba a Santa María para entregar el título al juzgado, creo, y hacer la denuncia. Me lo dijo como si a mí me importara mucho, como si lo hiciera por mí, como si aquéllas fueran las frases más hermosas que pudiera decirme y yo estuviera deseando oírlas. Después se fue de veras y yo continué tendiendo la ropa sin mirarlo caminar esta vez. ... No tenía ganas de llorar, no estaba furiosa ni triste; sólo sentía asombro." 38 Both Larsen and Gálvez's wife realize that her husband's defection from his role in Santa María will necessitate that they terminate their own roles as lovers and conspirators:

--Es así, entonces--dijo Larsen--. Bueno, tengo que decírle que lo que hizo Gálvez significa el fin para todos nosotros. Y se le ocurre hacer esta locura cuando todo está a punto de arreglarse. Una verdadera lástima para todos, señora. 39

37. Ibid., p. 116.

38. Ibid., p. 172.

39. Ibid., p. 173.
The **Being-in-itself** (L'en-soi) can be divided into three areas: the excessive, exuberant vegetation of Santa María; the incomprehensible existence of the shipyard as a thing-in-itself; and the sticky viscosity of feminine things.

In the famous episode in *Nausea* where the hero, Roquentin, discovers existence in the experience of disgust, he is looking at a chestnut tree in a provincial park: the roots are tangled and excessive; the tree itself is *de trop*, too much, excessive. Since it has no ultimate reason for existing, Being-in-itself is absurd; its existence is a kind of superfetation. A common image in *El astillero* is the entanglement of rampant, excessive vegetation. In the opening pages of the novel, Larsen notices the exuberant plants growing everywhere: "Continuó andando entre casas pobres, entre cercos de alambre con tallos de enredaderas." The marble statues that Petrus has in his summerhouse are being entangled by run-away branches: "En todas partes, manchadas y semicubiertas por el ramaje, blanqueaban mujeres de mármol desnudas." Excessive vegetation is also threatening to engulf the shipyard. Pointed weeds entwine themselves in the bars of a window: "los yuyos punzantes que crecían enredados en los hierros del ventanal."

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40. Barrett, p. 254.
41. Onetti, p. 17.
42. Ibid., p. 26.
43. Ibid., p. 32.
Inspecting a hangar, Larsen notices how "spiteful" nettles have intertwined themselves through the eyesockets of the tools: "los ojos de las herramientas atravesados por los tallos rencorosos de las ortigas." Cobwebs are seen entangling the machinery of the shipyard: "máquinas estropeadas, hacia bocas de casilleros tapados con telarañas." Díaz Grey, the doctor of Santa María, sees the whole shipyard as a huge cobweb in which Larsen has become entangled: "Y justamente este hombre, que debía estar hasta su muerte por lo menos cien kilómetros de aquí, tuvo que volver para enredarse las patas endurecidas en lo que queda de la telaraña del viejo Petrus." When not entangling, we see vegetation as something personified—existing in its own right—willfully growing in all places. Grass, for example, is "capricious": "El pasto había crecido a su capricho durante todo el año." The pathways to the summerhouse are being "conquered" by brambles: "Caminaba sin pensar... hacia el jardín con las manchas de tiza de las estatuas, los senderos conquistados por la maleza, los canteros con estacas y troncos secos." The grass

44. Ibid., p. 41.
45. Ibid., p. 43.
46. Ibid., p. 102.
47. Ibid., p. 25.
48. Ibid., p. 212
that Larsen walks on has a "tenacious" quality: 
"La presión de los tacos sobre la tierra húmeda, sobre los pastos tenaces."  
Branches "seek out" to catch Larsen's face: 
"trató de hacer sonar los tacos en la grava de la senda sinuosa, esquivando las ramas que le buscaban la cara."  

It is important to note that for Sartre, as well as for Onetti, mud or slime "is the revenge of the in-itself for the appropriative act attempted by the for-itself and asserts its mesmeric, poisonous dominion even while yielding."  
Roquentin lives in a town called Mudtown (Bouville) and Santa María, where Larsen lives, is continually being flooded by the ocean leaving the town a sea of mud. Larsen's reaction while walking through Santa María is a nauseous one: 
"--Poblacho verdaderamente inmundo--escupió Larsen;"  
Along with excessive vegetation both Roquentin and Larsen also find that objects can have a nauseous quality since they can be almost anything. Roquentin found this out by staying up late at night to see certain aspects of Paris that do not exist for the salauds who never know but the reassuring aspects: the stores, the lighted windows, the dense crowds of passersby but not the solitude, the inhumanity.  

49. Ibid., p. 43.  
50. Ibid., p. 213.  
52. Onetti, p. 17.  
53. Alexander, p. 106.
The same can be said about Onetti's shipyard. In normal times, the shipyard had hard clean contours since the machinery was serviced continually and kept in good shape. The routine of its personnel gave the shipyard a familiarity, and proper lighting showed up its features in a stable manner. The shipyard that Larsen sees, however, is one that most people never see. Time and the elements have changed the shipyard and its machinery into incomprehensible things—gratuitous, contingent, absurd. In other words, "the light crust of the meanings we attribute to things sometimes melts, revealing the raw material of reality which has no meaning."54 The first look at the shipyard by Larsen defies classification: "el incomprensible edificio de cemento."55 There is a lack of hard contours in the abandoned tools: "un abandono que ocupaban formas de hierro herrumbroso."56 Larsen reveals his nausea by spitting: "Pasó un camión con las ruedas hundidas; quedaban algunas piezas carcomidas en el motor descubierto. Escupió hacia el vehículo y a favor del viento."57 The mixture of odds and ends of the shipyard with the elements of rain and mud adding to the confusion is a typical scene:


55. Onetti, p. 17.

56. Ibid., p. 103.

57. Ibid., p. 32.
casi cualquier cosa era preferible al techo de chapas agujereadas, a los escritorios polvorientos y cojos, a las montañas de carpetas y biblioratos alzadas contra las paredes. ... a la exasperante, histérica comedia de trabajo, de empresa, de prosperidad que decoraaban los muebles (derrotados por el uso y la polilla, apresurándose a exhibir su calidad de leña), los documentos, sucios de lluvia, sol y pisotones, mezclados en el piso de cemento, los rollos de planos blanquiazules reunidos en pirámide o desplegados y rotos en las paredes.\textsuperscript{58}

Some tools have become so deformed that they have lost their names: "esquivó hierros de formas y nombres perdidos."\textsuperscript{59} To show objects existing in their own right, Onetti has personified them just as he did with vegetation. Machines, for example, are paralyzed and take on the form of cadavers: "Las filas de máquinas rojizas, paralizadas tal vez para siempre, a la monótona geometría de los casilleros colmados de cadáveres de herramientas. ..."\textsuperscript{60} The neglected machinery lie in their tombs and mausoleums like so many dead people: "Las piezas de metal en sus tumbas, a las corpulentas máquinas en sus mausoleos."\textsuperscript{61} In a contingent world where anything is possible, Larsen imagines the rats of the shipyard eating up the nuts and bolts:

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., p. 76.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., p. 43.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
"Imaginó sonriendo un ruido de ratas que devoraban bulones, tuercas y llaves en los casilleros."\(^{62}\)

The woman, like the vegetation, is excessive, fruitful, and blooming. The soft flabbiness of a woman is like a fat lady in the circus; there is too much of her. \(^{63}\) Time and again Onetti focuses on the protruding, swollen belly of Galvez' pregnant wife. When reference is made to her, her belly, like an epithet, is generally included: "Uno y otro, y la mujer con su barriga y los perros."\(^ {64}\) Whenever Larsen had a mental image of her, it included that part of her anatomy: "pensó en los perros saltando hacia la barriga de la mujer con abrigo de hombre."\(^ {65}\) The swelling of the belly, at times, seemed to reach bursting proportions: "la mujer de Gálvez ... con su barriga que amenazaba reventar en el aire tenso y azul."\(^ {66}\) In Sartre's novel, The Age of Reason, the hero, Mathieu, thinks of the early stage of his unborn child as "a little vitreous tide within her, slowly swelling into the semblance of an eye ... opening out among all the muck inside her belly, acquiring life, yet with such a tenuous hold upon existence that a pinprick could convert it into an opaque, dry membrane."\(^ {67}\) Larsen

\(^{62}\) Ibid., p. 76.

\(^{63}\) Barrett, p. 254.

\(^{64}\) Onetti, p. 84.

\(^{65}\) Ibid., p. 110.

\(^{66}\) Ibid., p. 143.

seems to share similar thoughts as Mathieu towards the fetus inside of the belly: "Esta lista, quemada y seca como un campo después de un incendio de verano, más muerta que mi abuela y es imposible, apuesto, que no esté muerto también lo que lleva en la barriga." 68

Larsen can see no ultimate reason for her fecund state or for her own being itself which seems to exist only to produce more offspring as capriciously as nature blooms forth weeds. As with all Being-in-itself, she simply existed: "Estaba allí, simplemente, sin un pasado, con un feto avanzando contra las piernas que ya no podía cruzar. Hablaba poco, y era raro que contestara con algo más que una mueca, con algo más que un corto movimiento de la cabeza que quitaba sentido a las preguntas. --Me parieron y aquí estoy." 69 "I was born and here I am." In other words, existence precedes essence. The belly of a woman is not the only part of her anatomy that Onetti concentrated on.

Angélica Inés, who is a mad spinster, has been gratuitously endowed by nature with the hugest bosom ever: "Angélica ... corriendo por el costado en una oficina ... metiendo en el aire el más estupendo par de pechos que hubo nunca." 70 Indeed, sometimes the viscosity of the woman will center on those things that are associated with the

68. Onetti, p. 155.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid., p. 147.
woman, such as babies and what they do: "un hembraje indiferenciado ... con batas manchadas por vómitos y orina de bebés."\textsuperscript{71} The smells associated with a woman: "el olor la mezcla que nunca podría ser desalojada, de encierro, mujer, frituras, polvos y perfumes."\textsuperscript{72}

Although the woman represents fatness and viscosity par excellence, the men in the novel suffer from the same excess of fatness. Larsen is not only fat of belly but fat of bottom too: "iba mostrando que sus grandes nalgas redondas habían elegido para siempre aquel sitio."\textsuperscript{73} Before Larsen's arrival in Santa María, Petrus had always been looking for a man who could get fat on disillusion and hunger: "la esperanza de encontrar algún día ... alguno que hasta engorde con el desencanto y el hambre."\textsuperscript{74} The descendants of yesteryear's heroes are described as fat, soft and degenerate: "los descendientes del héroe, gordos, blandos, degenerados."\textsuperscript{75} In the descriptions given above, it may be said that Onetti, like Sartre, is simply portraying the nausea caused by the awareness of existence, of an existence that has no meaning. On the psychic level, it can also suggest the loss of

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., p. 160.  
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., p. 216.  
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., p. 150.  
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., p. 102.  
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., p. 130.
consciousness in things or the degradation of consciousness to the level of things, either of which can easily be regarded as an absurdity.

The defection of Gálvez from the shipyard causes a chain reaction that highlights the conflict between the Being-for-itself and the Being-in-itself and brings the novel to a close. In the make-believe world of the shipyard, Gálvez decides to give himself a dramatic exit from the charade by denouncing Petrus. In so doing, of course, he terminates his role at the shipyard as accountant, a role that had given some meaning—however absurd—to his life. On the way back to Santa María on a ferryboat, Gálvez jumps overboard and is drowned. Larsen goes to make the identification of the body at the city morgue and notes in Gálvez' face what he had always suspected: that the social masks of hypocrisy (the for-itself) were false layers of play-acting to cover up the man himself (the in-itself):

Lo que siempre dije; ahora está sin sonrisa, él tuvo siempre esta cara debajo de la otra, todo el tiempo, mientras intentaba hacernos creer que vivía, mientras se moría aburrido entre una ya perdida mujer deshecha, dos perros de hocico en punta, yo y Kunz, el barro infinito, la sombra del astillero y la grosería de la esperanza. Ahora sí que tiene una seriedad de hombre verdadero, una dureza un resplandor que no se hubiera atrevido a mostrarle a la vida. 

The defection of Gálvez, on the other hand, means something quite different to Petrus. The denunciation has landed Petrus in jail.

76. Ibid., p. 204.
Larsen goes to visit his employer thinking his extreme situation will force him to confront reality. For Petrus, however, Gálvez' act is not the final one in the novel but simply another episode: "para mí nada ha cambiado; hasta podría decir, sin cometer infidencia, que las cosas han mejorado desde nuestra última entrevista. En realidad, estoy aislado transitoriamente por un tiempo." When Larsen loyally volunteers to kill Gálvez, Petrus replies that simply by putting Gálvez out of his mind he is more dead than if Larsen were to shoot him:

"Ese mismo individuo, Gálvez que ayer y anteayer vino no sé cuántas veces a pedirme una entrevista. No quise verlo, no tengo nada que hablar con él. Está más muerto que si usted hubiera usado el revólver." The line of reasoning that Petrus is using is the Sartrean one that in a contingent world we can neither choose nor explain our situation in the world since its only existence is that which our consciousness (the for-itself) gives it.  

As the symbol par excellence of the in-itself, Gálvez' wife has no new commitment to make vis-à-vis her husband's absence. The fetus in her belly is oblivious to the games the men play and continues to grow just as vegetation in the world continues to grow oblivious to

77. Ibid., p. 190.
78. Ibid., p. 194.
79. Knight, p. 291.
the efforts of man to control or diminish it. Attracted by inhuman cries, Larsen locates where they are coming from and sees Gálvez' wife in the gory throes of childbirth: "Vio a la mujer en la cama, semidesnuda, sangrante, forcejeando, con los dedos clavados en la cabeza que movía con furia y a compás. Vio la rotunda barriga asombrosa, distinguió los rápidos brillos de los ojos de vidrio y de los dientes apretados." This scene of Onetti is particularly effective since we have the woman as a symbol of in-itself producing involuntarily a new born baby who still shares the mother's mucky insides as a thing (the in-itself) and, yet, is about to emerge into the world as an individual, thinking consciousness (the for-itself).

The defection of Gálvez brings Larsen around full circle. Once again he finds himself in a contingent, absurd world without meaning. By dint of cheating, he and the others had carved out a small world of meaning which they had projected on the world, and which was bearable as long as everyone acted as though it were not an absurd world. Gálvez played out his last act and was dead; Petrus in jail needs only his conscious mind to keep his game going. Larsen is alone and without a game to keep him going or even a desire to replace it with another: "Estaba solo, definitivamente y sin drama; tranquilaba, lento, sin voluntad y sin apuro, sin posibilidad ni deseo de elección, por un

80. Onetti, p. 218.
territorio cuyo mapa se iba encogiendo hora tras hora."81 Larsen could have elected to take Gálvez' role as the pregnant woman's husband, but as he mentioned earlier, the shipyard game was his last chance. For Larsen, Gálvez' wife is just another trap; another meaningless role he could choose to play to avoid the contingency of life, but he refuses to do so: "Sólo al rato comprendió y pudo imaginar la trampa. Temblando de miedo y asco se apartó de la ventana y se puso en marcha hacia la costa."82 Larsen knows that his own body is ready to succumb to the in-itself of old age. The thickening of the veins on his arm is a good gauge of the general deterioration of the whole body: "Cuando pudo verse miró las manos; contemplaba la formación de las arrugas, la rapidez con que se iban hinchando las venas."83 Larsen catches the first ferry boat out of Santa María. While the boat is pulling away, he turns around to look at the shipyard slowly and silently crumbling: "Hizo un esfuerzo para torcer la cabeza y estuvo mirando -- ... la ruina veloz del astillero, el silencioso derrumbe de las paredes."84 Listening carefully, Larsen can hear the moss (the in-itself), and the rust slowly devour the shipyard: "su colgante oreja

81. Ibid., p. 207.
82. Ibid., p. 218.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid.
pudo discernir aún el susurro del musgo creciendo en los montones de ladrillos y el del orín devorando el hierro."85 The bad treatment of an alien world in the form of three ferryboat men and the disregard for his own welfare brings about Larsen's death a few weeks later. The record at the hospital lists the cause as pneumonia and gives his true name. If we can draw any conclusions from the novel, however, it is obvious that Larsen simply lost his will to live in an absurd, gratuitous world. The term used to indicate the cause of his death is just another hypocritical way of giving meaning to a meaningless world.

**Summary**

In death, according to Sartre, a person becomes a being-for-others. For a person to exist in any way in this world, someone must be conscious of him. The last lines of the novel narrate in an impersonal tone the nature of Larsen's death, and how his complete true name is recorded. But what is given is actually nothing. If Nothingness dogged Larsen throughout his life, then the author implies that upon his death, absolute Nothingness finally engulfs him in this world.

Nowhere in the novel is the term nothingness used as such. Instead, Nothingness drifts through the novel as the ambiance in which Onetti's characters live and have their being. His characters remind us of the elongated and attenuated figures of the sculptor Giacometti,

85. Ibid.
figures that seem to be invaded by the surrounding void. It is probably no accident, then, that the novel is full of indirect alusions to Nothingness. There are feelings of emptiness: "Estaba vacío, separado de su memoria." There is staring into emptiness: "... mirando el brasero, las cabezas de los perros o el vacío." There are vacant smiles: "La sonrisa inmóvil, vacía y dolorosa." Characters inhabit or move through empty space: "Larsen pasó de la nada a la soledad que ya no podía ser disminuida por los hombres ni por los hechos." Medina estaba sentado en una oficina vacía." The night and sky are inhabited by nothingness: "No había nada en la noche." "La forma vacía de un cielo ambicionado." And darkness is inhabited by hollowness: "... sobre el alto hueco de la oscuridad." Holes of varying kinds are noted by the characters: "Por las tardes, los cielos

86. Ibid., p. 67.
87. Ibid., p. 153.
88. Ibid., p. 169.
89. Ibid., p. 179.
90. Ibid., p. 201.
91. Ibid., p. 77.
92. Ibid., p. 208.
93. Ibid., p. 27.
94. Ibid.
de invierno, cargados o desoladamente limpios, que entraban por la ventana rota. ..." 95 "Se empinó hasta alcanzar el agujero serruchado ..." 96 "Un hembraje indiferenciado, un conjunto movedizo de colores, perfumes y agujeros ..." 97 "Larsen takes long frequent walks through hole-potted streets: "fue esquivando a pasito las depresiones fangosas del baldío."

... 98 A street is characterized as full of vacancies: "Una calle de parques y caserones y ausencias ..." 99

The above allusions to nothingness are in keeping with the overall artistic end of the novel, that is, the alienation that comes from the rational Being-for-itself in conflict with the irrational Being-in-itself. It is important to recall that Sartre says of man that he is "the being by whom nothingness comes into the world." 100 The "nothingness" to which he is referring is the one that slips in between the For-itself and the In-itself. In Sartre's words, "... man is always separated from what he is (For-itself) by all the breadth of the being (In-itself) which

95. Ibid., p. 176.
96. Ibid., p. 218.
97. Ibid., p. 160.
98. Ibid., p. 167.
99. Ibid., p. 198.
he is not... Man is a being of distances." 101 And further down, he adds, "Nothingness can be nihilated only on the foundation of being; if nothingness can be given, it is neither before nor after being, nor in a general way outside of being. Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of being--like a worm." 102

There is, of course, a close relationship between Sartre's Being-for-itself and the Being-in-itself with that other famous pair, Being and Nothingness. *El astillero* may be considered a fictional treatment of an individual's vain efforts to attain self-completion in a synthesis of the stable In-itself and the fluid For-itself. For the two kinds of beings are inexplicable givens that exist side by side, impossible one without the other, yet never able to become unified into a single reality without the sacrifice of one of them.

Sartre has, of course, written many novels on the same theme but with this difference: whereas all Sartrean characters refuse to sacrifice the For-itself for the In-itself, all the characters in Onetti's novel are willing to make the sacrifice in order to come out of the existential cold. All of the characters in the novel are derelicts of one sort or another who have come to the end of their rope in their struggle to find meaning in an absurd world. Thus, the shipyard--as

101. Ibid., p. 17.

102. Ibid., p. 21.
the title indicates-- is an abandoned, neglected, worthless derelict symbolizing the existential condition of the characters in their vain search to anchor their being.

The absurd world of the shipyard is the end of the line for all of them. They grimly realize that if they are to have a modicum of meaning in their last days, they will have to return to the world of magic (play acting) and deny absurdity by dint of arbitrariness and cheating.

But just as the unremitting floods threaten to engulf the town in a sea of mud, so the absurd continually threatens to nullify the For-itself of the mind. First, there is the shipyard itself, "el incomprendible edificio de cemento." As a "thing-in-itself" (In-itself), it has no meaning other than the one given to it by the For-itself of Larsen's conscious mind. In scene after scene, the useless paraphernalia of the shipyard threatens to sweep over Larsen's consciousness (For-itself) in one huge wave of nausea. Everywhere, growing out of nowhere, is the luxuriant, proliferate, riotous vegetation growing gratuitously, excessively, entangling everyone and everything. Finally, there is the overwhelming presence of things associated with women--the example par excellence of In-itself for Sartre and Onetti. For women share the same excessive, gratuitous fecundity of

103. Onetti, p. 17.
vegetation. Their plump yielding flesh exercises a mesmeric hold on consciousness. In watching Gálvez' wife in the gory throes of childbirth, Larsen flees from the nausea of a human mind emerging from a viscous mass.

Faced with the absurdity that hangs over Santa María like the perennial fog that drifts over the town, the characters of the novel huddle together to present a common front against absurdity. Larsen speaks for all of them when he says: "... si ellos están locos, es forzoso que yo esté loco. Porque yo podía jugar a mi juego porque lo estaba haciendo en soledad; pero si ellos, otros, me acompañan, el juego es lo serio, se transforma en lo real."104 Thus, Larsen and the others go through the charade of running a shipyard. Larsen shuffles through meaningless papers and presses meaningless buttons. The two Kafka-like employees play their supporting roles as called for by the script. Jeremías Petrus (rock), the owner of the shipyard, pretends to possess an inherent superior essence by using elevated prestigious language, by putting up imposing signs and by keeping the "proper" distance between him and his employees. Larsen, however, is allowed to court Petrus' daughter Angélica, an old, half-mad spinster, in the dilapidated summerhouse.

104. Ibid., p. 62.
It is clear that, unlike the Sartrean characters who disdain any compromise with the For-itself, the Onettian characters are willing to sacrifice the integrity of the For-itself in order to deny their Nothingness. But it is all done with a sardonic smile. Larsen knew at the beginning that the shipyard was just another absurd trap: "Ahora está en la trampa y era incapaz de nombrarla, incapaz de conocer que había viajado, había hecho planes, sonrisas, actos de astucia y paciencia sólo para meterse en ella, para quietarse en un refugio desesperanzado y absurdo." In the closing pages of the novel, Onetti juxtaposes the In-itself character of the shipyard with the In-itself nature of Larsen's body. The alienated hero can hear the moss slowly growing on the shipyard, bringing about a slow but sure death. Then, Larsen looks at his arteries and notices how they are hardening and growing more pronounced, another slow but sure sign of the approaching death of the body. And when the body (In-itself) dies, the absurdity of life is that the ever-rising, ever-transcending mind (For-itself) must inevitably accompany the body.

105. Ibid., p. 36.
CHAPTER 4

MARIO VARGAS LLOSA'S LA CIUDAD Y LOS PERROS

In Juan Carlos Onetti's novel, we saw reason foundering before the absurd situations of the Shipyard, Santa Maria, the Shack and the Summerhouse. The emphasis, however, was on the negation of the self caught between the Sartrean Being-For-Itself and the Being-In-Itself. In Mario Vargas Llosa's La ciudad y los perros, the foundering of reason is due to situations in themselves, and to the human struggle and conflict found in these situations.

Hypothesis

Although the alienating aspects of situations is common to all existentialists, the German philosopher Karl Jaspers has written extensively on the subject. According to Jaspers, the human person is always in a situation, striving to fulfill his tendencies amidst a nexus of surrounding persons and forces which is at least confusedly revealed to him by mood and feeling. He may devise clever schemes for meeting a given situation, but no sooner is he out of one than he finds himself in another. Like all other ultimate limits, this situationality of

1. Mario Vargas Llosa, La ciudad y los perros (Barcelona: Seix Barral, S. A., 1965).
human existence reveals the finiteness and fragility of human nature, surrounded as it is by alien and disruptive forces.  

Among the various situations discussed by Jaspers, the situation of human struggle and conflict is particularly suited to our study. Jaspers agrees with Sartre that whenever two or more individuals come together, there is always some measure of forceful domination. Jaspers has struggled with this problem, but his rejection of universal concepts and judgments makes his study impractical to use. Sartre, on the other hand, has analyzed this conflict with brutal clarity. According to Sartre, a person can never communicate with another as subject-with-subject; and although the person may seek to reach him in his subjectivity, he can never grasp more than his object-self, his self-for-me. Hazel Barnes describes the Sartrean "battle to the death of consciousness" in more detail:

... each life-world is a private world, ordered by the unique subject who lives in it. Within my life-world everything points to my consciousness as a center of reference. If the Other appears on the horizon and is aware of me, if he assumes a point of view upon me, then--as Sartre puts it--he effects a hemorrhage of my world; it "bleeds in the direction


of the Other." I am suddenly aware that the world and I myself possess—for someone else—a dimension which does not exist for me, one which I can neither grasp nor control. I realize that I possess an object-side. 5

In the novel, _La ciudad y los perros_, the alienation that comes from a Being-For-Others strikes every one of the main characters. For the sake of simplicity—instead of using the complex, paradoxical Sartrean terms for describing a Being-For-Others—we will use Martin Buber's term: I-it. 6 And since Sartre does not believe that a subject can know another, we will use Buber's diametrical term for the I-it: the I-Thou. Maurice Friedman, a well-known explicator of Martin Buber describes the differences between the two terms:

... the I-Thou relationship is direct, mutual, and present, and the I-it, or subject-object, relation in which one relates to the other only indirectly and nonmutually, knowing and using him. The I-Thou relationship is the only one in which I know the other in his uniqueness, for it is the only one in which I may perceive him in his wholeness and as of value in himself. 7

Our study, then, will focus on Jasperian situations and the I-It conflict of the characters within these situations. Although the


narration uses flashbacks and shifting points of view, each of the various main characters will be taken up from start to finish.

**Analysis of Text**

Ricardo Arana's first I-It situation came, as it does to all of us, when we first become aware, as children, of the gulf that separates the self (ego) from the Others. But while most of us adjust somehow to a world that is wide and alien, Ricardo does not or cannot. The abrupt intrusion of his father, who had been estranged from his mother, disrupts the intimate I-Thou relationship he had hitherto enjoyed. Ricardo and his mother have just arrived in Lima where she is to effect a reconciliation with her husband: "Ya llegamos, Richi, despierta. Estaba en las faldas de su madre, tenía la cabeza apoyada en su hombro, sentía frío. Unos labios familiares rozaron su boca y él tuvo la impresión de que, en el sueño, se había convertido en un gatito." Shortly afterward, the Father appears on the scene with the following reaction from Ricardo:

Al fin, el coche se inmovilizó después de muchas vueltas. Mantuvo cerrados los ojos, se encogió junto al cuerpo que lo sostenía. De pronto, el cuerpo de su madre se endureció. "Beatriz," dijo una voz. Alguien abrió la puerta. Se sintió alzado en peso, depositado en el suelo, sin apoyo, abrió los ojos: el hombre y su madre se besaban en la boca, abrazados. ...

8. Vargas Llosa, p. 15.
Nuevamente lo alzaron dos brazos masculinos y desconocidos; un rostro adulto se juntaba al suyo, una voz murmuraba su nombre, unos labios secos aplastaban su mejilla. El estaba rígido.  

In that moment, the I-It world entered his life. Alienation sets in that night as he tries to sleep: "Ha olvidado también el resto de aquella noche, la frialdad de las sábanas de ese lecho hostil, la soledad que trataba de disipar."  

Although the Mother continues to offer him an I-Thou relationship, Ricardo feels betrayed and rejects her:

Hablaban en voz baja y sólo llegaba a él un incomprehensible rumor. Luego oyó risas, movimientos. Más tarde sintió abrirse la puerta, pasos, una presencia, unas manos conocidas que le subían las sábanas hasta el cuello, un aliento cálido en las mejillas. Abrió los ojos; su madre sonreía. "Buenos días," dijo ella, tiernamente; "¿No besas a tu madre?" "No, dijo él."  

Ricardo soon enters into an extreme I-It situation with his father:


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9. Ibid., p. 16.  
10. Ibid.  
11. Ibid.  
12. Ibid., 71-72.
In the eyes of Ricardo, his father is an intruder, an unwanted person; in the eyes of the Father, Ricardo is an effeminate boy who has to be "straightened out":

Ricardo no abandonaba el lecho hasta sentir que su padre cerraba tras él la puerta de la calle ... . Una noche los oyó hablar de él en la pieza vecina. "Tiene apenas ocho años, decía su madre; ya se acostumbrará." "Ha tenido tiempo de sobra," respondía su padre y la voz era distinta: seca y cortante. No te había visto antes, insistía la madre; es cuestión de tiempo." "Lo has educado mal, decía él; tú tienes la culpa de que sea así. Parece una mujer."13

"Not everybody," says Jaspers, "only a very few live in limit-situations. Before he can even become desperate, he finds a hold."14 Ricardo can be said to be in a Jasperian limit-situation:


Ricardo's feeling of alienation extends outside the home. While other school children enjoy what Sartre calls "an authentic sense of transcendence toward a common aim, a team spirit by doing with others,"16

13. Ibid., p. 72.
Ricardo is limited to an I-It relationship to his peer group:

La vida era monótona, sin alicientes, una pesada carga. En las clases, sus compañeros hacían bromas apenas les daba la espalda el profesor: cambiaban morisquetas, bolitas de papel, sonrisas. El los observaba, muy serio y desconcertado: porque no podía ser como ellos, vivir sin preocupaciones, tener amigos, parientes solicitos?  

It is interesting to note that Ricardo speaks of a "heavy load" pressing down upon him, since it is characteristic of a limit-situation to have a hemmed-in pressure.  

Another characteristic of situationality is that we may succeed in escaping one situation only to fall into another. This is what happens to Ricardo. The Father decides to intern Ricardo in a military school, the Leoncio Prado, to "temper his body and spirit." The cure turns out to be worse than the disease. "Institutions," says Buber, "know only the specimen... institutions are 'outside,' where all sorts of aims are pursued,..." The aim pursued by the Leoncio Prado school is to make men out of effeminate boys like Ricardo and to discipline delinquents: "--A la mitad los mandan sus padres para que no sean unos bandoleros--dijo Gamboa--. Y a la otra mitad, para que no sean maricas." The only specimen recognized by the Leoncio Prado

17. Ibid., p. 184.
19. Ibid.
school is the "super He-Man" or macho. Since the name of the game is to be macho, the best way to show your virility is to impose it at the expense of someone else. In this dog-eat-dog situation, the students and officers are necessarily restricted to an I-It relationship.

In keeping with their I-It relationships, the cadets call each other by nicknames:

Nunca se sabe de dónde salen los apodos. Cuando empezaron a decírmee Boa me reía y después me calenté y a todos les preguntaba quién inventó eso y todos decían Fulano y ahora ni cómo sacarme de encima ese apodo, hasta en mi barrio me dicen así. Se me ocurre que fue Vallano. El me decía siempre: "haznos una demostración, orina por encima de la correa," "muéstrame esa paloma que te llega a la rodilla." 23

Ricardo was given his nickname in an encounter he had with the most macho cadet of the school, the Jaguar:

Estaban todavía en las escaleras, amontonados, y de pronto hubo una confusión y dos cayeron dando traspies sobre la hierba. Los caídos se incorporaban; treinta pares de ojos los contemplaban desde un tendido. No alcanzaron a intervenir, ni siquiera a comprender de inmediato lo ocurrido, porque el Jaguar se revolvió como un felino atacado y golpeó al otro, directamente al rostro, en la espalda; los cadetes observaban esos dos puños constantes y ni siquiera escuchaban los gritos del otro, "perdón, Jaguar, fue de casualidad que te empujé, juro que fue casual." Lo que no debió hacer


fue arrodillarse, eso no. Y además, juntar las manos, parecía mi madre en las novenas, un chico en la iglesia recibiendo la primera comunión, parecía que el Jaguar era el obispo y él estuviera confesando.... El Jaguar estaba de pie, miraba con desprecio al muchacho arrodillado y todavía tenía el puño en alto como si fuera a dejarlo caer de nuevo sobre ese rostro livido. Los demás no se movían. "Me das asco--dijo el Jaguar. --No tienes dignidad ni nada. Eres un esclavo."24

"The presence of the Other," says Sartre, "invests me with a feeling which I could not acquire in solitude.... This arises through the glance of the Other. I become subject to his appreciations, to his value-judgment, to his freedom. I am his slave."25 In short, the nicknames, the constant reference to "macho" terms, and the repetition of animal traits--too numerous to list here--are all within the I-It situation of the cadets.

Also characteristic of the Jasperian situation is that human existence is always at the mercy of chance eruptions and coincidences. No one is ever safe. It was such a coincidence that led Ricardo to the "stark-confrontation" of a limit-situation.26 By chance, Ricardo was one of the guards on duty the night the final examination questions were stolen from the administration office. In order to ferret out the culprit

24. Ibid., p. 54.


the officials of the school confined to quarters all the guards on duty that night until the guilty cadet stepped forward. Ricardo's "stark-confrontation" is described by one of the cadets:

Lo odiaban porque no le gustaban las bromas ni las peleas. Lo volvían loco, lo batían todo el tiempo. ... Todos se ponían siempre en contra de Arana, lo hacían consignar, no lo dejaban en paz ni un instante. ... Se pasó tres años del colegio solo, sin hablar con nadie. Todos lo fregaban. Y él quería salir para ver esa chica. Usted no puede saber cómo lo batían todo el tiempo. Le robaban sus cosas, le quitaban los cigarrillos. ... Lo orinaban cuando dormía, le corrían el uniforme para que lo consignaran, escupían en su comida, lo obligaban a ponerse entre los últimos aunque llegaba primero a la fila.²⁷

The confinement meted out for having been on guard duty pushes Ricardo to the end of his rope: "Todo fue por la consigna, mi teniente. Para él fue horrible, peor que para cualquiera. Hacía quince días que no salía; primero le robaron su pijama. Y a la semana siguiente lo consignó usted por soplarme en el examen de Química. Estaba desesperado, tenía que salir."²⁸ The colloquial saying "ready to climb walls" fits Ricardo's predicament. The only way out for Ricardo was to turn informer. The cadet, a member of the Circle, was expelled from the school. During war games out in the field, the leader of the Circle, the Jaguar, wreaks retribution on Ricardo by putting a bullet


²⁸. Ibid., p. 244.
through his head. After a superficial investigation, the school declares his death an accident.

Even in death, however, Ricardo continues to exist as a Being-For-Others. "As soon as I die," says Sartre, "I disappear into the In-itself: I become some sort of solidified being, a past, which belongs to the other living human beings." Prior to his death, Ricardo existed to the school only as a name to be read off at muster calls; after his death—anxious to console his parents—the school sees him with different eyes:

Un cadete brillante, estimado de oficiales y suboficiales, un compañero modelo, un alumno aplicado y distinguido por sus profesores; todos deploran su desaparición; el vacío y la pesadumbre que reina en las cuadras; llegaba entre los primeros a la fila; era disciplinado, marcial, tenía porte, etc. 30

The Father refuses to accept any guilt for his son's death. But he is forced to find a new scapegoat to explain his I-It relationship with his son: "la vieja loca de Adelina ... Le regalaba muñecas y le hacía rizos ... Lo vestían con faldas y le hacían rulos, a mi propio hijo, ¿comprende usted? Se aprovecharon de que yo estaba lejos. ¿Quién me puede culpar por haber querido hacer de él un hombre?" 31 The Jaguar, of course, continued to think of him only as a "stool pigeon."

29. Desan, p. 119.

30. Vargas Llosa, p. 223.

31. Ibid., p. 207.
"Bien hecho que esté muerto. Todos los soplones deberían morirse." 32 Only one person came close to having an I-Thou relationship with Ricardo--his fellow cadet, Alberto Fernández, alias the poet. It was only in death, however, that Alberto acknowledged Ricardo's uniqueness as a human being. Alberto confesses to one of the officers of the school that Ricardo was the only one who did not break the rules: "Todos éramos todo--dijo Alberto--. Sólo Arana era diferente. Por eso nadie se juntaba con él." 33 In Alberto's eyes, Ricardo was even better than the Jaguar: "--Era mucho mejor que tú--dijo Alberto .... Tú eres un matón, tú sí que eres un pobre diablo. El Esclavo era un buen muchacho, tú no sabes lo que es eso. El era buena gente, no se metía con nadie. Lo fregabas todo el tiempo, día y noche. Cuando entró era un tipo normal y de tanto batirlo tú y los otros lo volvieron un cojudo." 34

As in the case of Ricardo, Alberto has an I-It situation at home. His mother is estranged from her playboy husband and uses Alberto as a sort of audience for her self-chosen role as a martyred woman:

--No te veo nunca--dijo ella--. Cuando sales, pasas el día en la calle. ¿No compadeces a tu madre? .... Se había sentado a la mesa con hambre y ahora la comida le parecía interminable e insípida. Soñaba toda la

32. Ibid., p. 306.
33. Ibid., p. 255.
34. Ibid., p. 292.
semana con la salida, pero apenas entraba a su casa se sentía irritado: la abrumadora obsequiosidad de su madre era tan mortificante como el encierro ... . Antes ella lo enviaba a la calle con cualquier pretexto, para disfrutar a sus anchas con las amigas innumerables que venían a jugar canasta todas las tardes. Ahora en cambio, se aferraba a él, exigía que Alberto le dedicara todo su tiempo libre y la escuchara lamentarse horas enteras de su destino trágico.  

In contrast to an I-Thou dialogue where each of the participants have in mind the other or others in their present and particular being, there is only monologue disguised as dialogue.

It is probably no accident that both Alberto and Ricardo experience their I-It situation at home as a feeling of enclosure and burdensome weight characteristic of the Jasperian situation. Unlike Ricardo, however, Alberto can relate to his peer group in a "We" relationship. "The person who is the object of my mere solicitude," says Buber, "is not a Thou but a He or a She. The nameless, faceless crowd in which I am entangled is not a We but the 'one.' But as there is a Thou so there is a We . . . . The We includes the Thou potentially . . . . A man is truly saved from the 'one' not by separation but only by being bound up in genuine communion."  

Alberto's family had moved into a new neighborhood. One morning he observed the kids of the block

35. Ibid., pp. 76-77.
36. Friedman, To Deny Our Nothingness, p. 227.
playing a street game of soccer. In the following citation we will see Alberto's ability to achieve a "We" relationship:

Al principio Alberto los miraba con frialdad y ellos aparentaban no verlo. Poco a poco, aquél fue demostrando un interés estrictamente deportivo; Luego, comenzó a prestar atención a las bromas de los dos muchachos; adecuaba su expresión a la de ellos y los jugadores daban señales de reconocer su presencia por momentos: volvían la cabeza hacia él, como poniéndolo de árbitro. Pronto se estableció una estrecha complicidad de miradas, sonrisas y movimientos de cabeza. De pronto, Pluto rechazó un disparo de Tico con el pie y la pelota salió despedida a lo lejos. Tico corrió tras ella. Pluto alzó la vista hacia Alberto. --Hola--dijo. --Hola--dijo Alberto.

Ricardo's failure to relate to others in a We relationship, on the other hand, is contrasted with Alberto's in the Leoncio Prado school. Alberto and the others are able to enjoy a sort of "friendly combat" camaraderie while Ricardo is unable to do so:

--Poeta--gritó Vallano.-- ¿Tú has estado en el colegio "La Salle"? --Sí--dijo Alberto.-- ¿Por qué? --El Rulos dice que todos los de "La Salle" son maricas. ¿Es cierto? --No--dijo Alberto.-- En "La Salle" no había negros. El Rulos se rio. --Estás fregado--le dijo a Vallano.-- El poeta te come. --Negro, pero más hombre que cualquiera-- afirmó Vallano.-- Y él que quiera hacer la prueba, que venga. --Uy, qué miedo--dijo alguien.-- Uy, mamita. "Ay, ay, ay," cantó el Rulos... El Esclavo pensó: "en el fondo, todos ellos son amigos, Se insultan y se pelean de la boca para afuera, pero en el fondo se divierten juntos. Sólo a mí me miran como a un extraño."37

38. Ibid., p. 124.
Moreover, unlike Ricardo, who was unable to join his peer group outside the military school in fun and frolic, Alberto is able to do so. The novel gives us several examples, but only one will suffice. One of Alberto's favorite games is to lead his gang over the precarious paths of a ravine. It was here in particular that Alberto felt a special "We" in-doing-with-others: "Descendían muy despacio, sumidos en una fraternidad total, que se traslucía en las miradas, en las sonrisas, en las palabras de aliento que cambiaban." 39

"The external situation," says Jaspers, "--changing as it is and as unequally as it hits different people--is double-edged to all, furthering and hindering." 40 Ricardo, unaware of this phenomenon, wonders how Alberto can adjust himself to being confined to quarters --a situation unbearable to him:

--Estás pálido. Anda a la enfermería, seguro que te internan. --No tengo nada. --No importa--dijo Alberto--. Ojalá pudiera ponerme así de pálido. En la enfermería se come bien y se descansa. --¿Cómo podría hablar Alberto con esa indiferencia de la consigna, cómo podía acostumbrarse a la idea de no salir? 41

"Persevering in an unbroken I-Thou relationship is impossible," 42 and Alberto is like most of us in that he continually

39. Ibid., p. 64.
41. Vargas Llosa, p. 123.
42. Friedman, To Deny Our Nothingness, p. 291.
alternates between the I-It and the I-Thou. A "natural" I-It relationship, for example, is the one found between boys and girls just before the age of puberty. As far as Alberto and his friends were concerned, the girls were lumped together as "the enemy" and vice versa:

Las muchachas del barrio ... formaban también un grupo compacto . . . . Entre ambos había una lucha perpetua. Cuando ellos estaban reunidos y veían a una de las muchachas, se le acercaban corriendo y le jalaban los cabellos hasta hacerla llorar y se burlaban del hermano que protestaba: ahora le cuenta a mi papá y me va a castigar por no haberla defendido. 43

The I-It relationship vis-à-vis the girls is common enough in the puberty age too. Suddenly aware of the girls as desirable things, the girls are seen through Don Juan eyes as objects for conquest. Dancing, for example, is learned as a technique to manipulate the girl:

Son trucos como cambiar paso y hacer figuras . . . . Plántale la mano encima, fuerte, con raza ... le aprietas la mano con la izquierda y a medio baile, si notas que te da entrada, le vas cruzando los dedos y la acercas poquito, empujándola por la espalda, pero despacio, suavecito . . . . Dale a apretar y a acercarla. Para eso mucha vuelta, siempre por el mismo lado. El que gira a la derecha no se marea, aguanta cincuenta vueltas al hilo, pero como ella da vueltas a la izquierda se marea prontito. Ya verás que apenas le dé vueltas la cabeza se te pega solita, para sentirse más segura. Entonces puedes bajar la mano hasta su cintura y cruzarle los dedos sin miedo y hasta juntarle un poco la cara. ¿Has entendido? 44

43. Vargas Llosa, p. 65.

44. Ibid., p. 143.
An I-Thou dialogue, according to Jaspers, cannot be planned or controlled, but must spring up, so to speak, on the spur of the moment.  

Alberto and his friends, in contrast, memorize lines to impress the girl: "Trata de impresionarla. ¿Ya sabes lo que vas a decirle? --Más o menos--dijo Alberto. Tengo una idea. --Eso es lo principal--afirmó el Bebe--. Hay que tener preparadas todas las palabras ... . Tienes que llevar todo en la cabeza--dijo el Bebé--. Y si puedes, ensáyate una vez ante el espejo."  

Although Alberto maintained an I-It relationship with Ricardo in the beginning, like everyone else he managed, on occasion, to share an I-Thou relationship with him. "A genuine I-Thou meeting," says Buber, can only take place in a "common situation" with the other, and that one has to expose himself vitally to his share in the situation as really his share. Alberto is moved to see Ricardo crying. Someone had stolen his military jacket, and Alberto volunteers to help him steal someone else's jacket. Ricardo is very grateful, but Alberto pretends he did it just to amuse himself: "--Gracias --dice el Esclavo. Ha puesto otra vez su mano en el brazo de Alberto y lo mira a los ojos con su cara tímida y rastrera iluminada por una


46. Vargas Llosa, pp. 146-147.

sonrisa. --Lo hago para divertirme--dice Alberto."48 While the upperclassmen continually hazed the lowerclassmen, Alberto on occasion would change an I-It relationship to an I-Thou relationship vis-à-vis a lowerclassmen:


It was, however, only Ricardo's death--as mentioned earlier--that jolted Alberto into full awareness of the genuine I-Thou relationship he had with Ricardo. It was not until Alberto broke ranks at the funeral in order to look into his open casket that the full impact of Ricardo's death hit him:

"¿Qué hace ahí ese pelotudo? dijo el oficial: sáquelo en el acto." Alberto no se movió cuando Arróspide lo tomó del brazo. . . . Arróspide sacudió a Alberto. "Todos están formados, le dijo, y el teniente te espera en la puerta. ¿Quieres que te consignen?" Alberto no respondió; siguió a Arróspide como un sonámbulo. En la pista de desfile, se les acercó el teniente Pitaluga. "So cabrón, dijo a Alberto, ¿le


49. Ibid., p. 106.
Alberto’s decision to accuse the Jaguar of killing Ricardo touches off a crisis for the following people: Lieutenant Gamboa to whom Alberto makes the accusation, the commanding officer of the school, the Jaguar and Alberto himself.

Lieutenant Gamboa was a dedicated, model officer who loved the army: "El amaba la vida militar precisamente por lo que otros la odiaban: la disciplina, la jerarquía, las campañas."\(^{51}\) Gamboa prided himself in always going by the military code and derived a great sense of purpose in doing so: "Había sido destacado a Ayacucho y pronto ganó fama de severo. Los oficiales le decían "el Fiscal" y la tropa "el Malote." Se burlaban de su estrictez, pero él sabía que en el fondo lo respetaban con cierta admiración. Imponer la disciplina había sido hasta ahora para Gamboa, tan fácil como obedecerla. El había creído que en el Colegio Militar sería lo mismo."\(^{52}\) Gamboa, as a good officer following regulations, tried to open up an investigation of

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50. Ibid., p. 226.
51. Ibid., p. 154.
52. Ibid., p. 313.
Ricardo's death. Attempting to dialogue with the major, he met only with an I-It "power monologue": "--su opinión no me interesa--dijo el mayor, con desprecio--. Le estoy dando una orden. Guárdese esas fábulas para usted y obedezca. ¿O quiere que lo lleve ante el consejo? Las órdenes no se discuten, teniente."53 Capitán Garrido, Lieutenant Gamboa's immediate superior, joins the major in destroying any illusion that the army takes note of the individual in an I-Thou dialogue. For a superior, ranking officer, a lower ranking officer or enlisted man is an object to be ordered to do whatever is convenient for the superior. Gamboa has just been transferred to a remote area in the Peruvian mountains: "lo siento mucho por usted --dijo el capitán-- ... . Recuerde que se lo advertí ... no olvide en el futuro que en el Ejército se dan lecciones de reglamento a los subordinados, no a los superiores."54 While Gamboa was cleaning out his desk preparing to leave the school, the Jaguar unexpectedly hands him a written letter of confession to Ricardo's murder. Lt. Gamboa now has in his hand conclusive proof that he was right in trying to open up an investigation. The reader is not told what is going on in his head. All the reader is told is that, earlier in the day, he had received a telegram notifying him of the birth of his son. Gamboa tells the Jaguar to forget all about it and tears up the confession:

53. Ibid., p. 277.
54. Ibid., p. 322.
Rasgó el papel que tenía en la mano y lo arrojó al suelo. -- Váyase--añadió--. El Jaguar se quedó mirándolo un momento. Luego recogió los papeles que estaban a sus pies. Gamboa los había rasgado por la mitad. Uniéndolos, se podían leer fácilmente. Se sorprendió al ver que había escrito: "Teniente Gamboa; yo maté al Esclavo. Puede pasar un parte y llevarme donde el coronel." Las otras dos mitades eran un telegrama: "Hace dos horas nació niña. Rosa está muy bien. Felicidades."\(^5\)

The juxtaposition of the papers, along with his decision to tear up the confession, points to his rejection of the I-It politics of army life in favor of the I-Thou family.

The commanding officer of the school speaks in meaningless, platitudes of the "anonymous they." His monologues can be characterized as gobbledygook or officialese. He is one of the "salauds" or "Serious People" of Sartre who think they hold the keys to absolute Right and Wrong. Attempting to establish a dialogue of what he knows of Ricardo's murder, Alberto met with the same sort of "power monologue" that Lieutenant Gamboa met with the mayor:

Déme usted esas pruebas. Bajó los ojos de Alberto, el pie golpeando el suelo, se levantaba y volvía, a caer, implacable. --mi coronel--dijo--yo, solamente.

... --Sí, Sí, --dijo el coronel--. --Usted es un hombre, un cadete del quinto año del Colegio Militar Leoncio Prado. Sabe lo que hace. Vengan esas pruebas. --Yo ya dije todo lo que sabía, mi coronel. El Jaguar quería vengarse de Arana, porque éste acusó ...

--Después hablaremos de eso--lo interrumpió el coronel... . Las anécdotas son muy interesantes. Las hipótesis nos demuestran que usted tiene un

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Instead of trying to ferret out facts or information, the colonel continues with his ad hominems: "¿Quiere usted hacerme creer que no tiene pruebas concretas y fehacientes? un poco más seriedad, cadete, éste no es un momento oportuno para hacer bromas. Está en el Ejército, cadete. No puede reírse de las Fuerzas Armadas, así no más."57 Because Alberto had written erotic short stories for profit while at the school, the coronel used this as another ad hominem:

"Alberto oía fragmentos de títulos que apenas recordaba, Lula, la Chuchumeca incorregible, La mujer loca y el burro, La jijuna y el jijuno. ¿Sabe usted lo que debo hacer con estos papeles? dijo el coronel... Echarlo a la calle inmediato, por degenerado. Y llamar a su padre para que lo lleve a una clínica; tal vez los psiquiatras. ..."58 Turning the accuser into the accused, the colonel is not above blackmail:

Estoy cometiendo una falta, mi deber me obliga a echarlo a la calle en el acto. Pero no por usted, sino por la institución que es sagrada, por esta gran familia que formamos los leonciopradinos, voy a darle una última oportunidad. Si sus superiores me dicen a fin de año, que usted ha respondido a mi confianza... quemaré estos papeles y olvidaré esta escandalosa historia. ¿Me comprende? Le aplicaré

56. Ibid., p. 283.
57. Ibid., p. 284.
58. Ibid., p. 286.
el reglamento, sin piedad. ¿Entendido?—Sí, mi coronel. —Alberto bajó los ojos y añadió:—Gracias, mi coronel. "59

The Jaguar, the leader of the "Circle" and killer of Ricardo, leads two separate lives: there is the fearsome Jaguar of the Leoncio Prado Military School as revealed to us through the narrative of other characters; and there is the unidentified Jaguar of the city of Lima who narrates his own experience in the first person singular. The author withholds from us the information that the two are one and the same until the very end of the novel. It is a lack of good faith, of course, to accuse the author of willful "obfuscating" as one critic did recently. 60 The critic should assume the author had some artistic reason for doing it.

The jolt is realizing the identity serves to emphasize the Jasperian being-in-a-situation. According to Jaspers, what a being is capable of doing is specified by the particular field of action (Dasein) available to him and also by the mutual actions of other agents sharing this field. 61 William Barrett gives a good concrete example of Dasein, as a field:

59. Ibid., p. 287.


It checks with our everyday observation in the case of the child who has just learned to respond to his own name; but if asked to point out the person to whom the name belongs, he is just as likely to point to Mommy or Daddy as to himself—to the frustration of both eager parents. Some months later, asked the same question, the child will point to himself. But before he has reached that stage, he has heard his name as naming a field or region of Being with which he is concerned, and to which he responds, whether the call is to come to food, to mother, or whatever.\(^{62}\)

The identified Jaguar, as revealed to us by others, moves within an I-It field or situation; the field of the unidentified Jaguar, who narrates his own point of view—on the other hand—includes the I-Thou mode of being as well as the I-It mode.

In the dog-eat-dog world of Leoncio Prado, the Jaguar knows—as everyone else does—that if he does not impose his will on others through sheer violence, the alternative is to have others do it to him, as in the case of Ricardo: "Yo no era el único que fregaba al Esclavo. Todos se metían con él ... tú también poeta. En el colegio todos se friegan a todos, él que se deja se arruina. No es mi culpa. Si a mí no me joden es porque soy más hombre. No es mi culpa."\(^{63}\)

As with Ricardo and Alberto, the unidentified Jaguar moves in an I-It home situation. The Jaguar and his widowed mother barely manage to live on a government pension. The Mother sees her son as


\(^{63}\) Vargas Llosa, p. 293.
an economic burden: "Mi madre nunca me daba plata y siempre se quejaba de la pensión que le dejó mi padre al morirse." As the boy grew older, so did the alienation between them: "una vez en el colegio nos pidieron comprar un libro y se lo dije a mi madre. Se puso furiosa, gritó que hacía milagros para que pudiéramos comer y que al año siguiente no volvería al colegio, porque ya tendría trece años y debía ponerme a trabajar." The Jaguar's relationship to his mother is no better than that of a boarder: "Allá tú con lo que haces, no quiero saber nada. Pero si no traes plata, a trabajar." The lack of feeling toward her son, however, turns later into a feeling of hate: "Me volví y le dije: ¿qué te pasa, por qué me miras tanto? Y entonces me dijo: 'estás perdido. Ojalá te murieras.'

Forced to leave home, Jaguar joins an older gang of thieves who break into homes. In contrast to the Jaguar of the military school, the unidentified Jaguar is usually at the receiving end of physical violence: "El cachaco me dió un puñete en la boca .... Yo comencé a patearlo y a darle manazos a la loca .... En la comisaría, un

64. Ibid., p. 58.
65. Ibid., p. 218.
66. Ibid., p. 250.
67. Ibid., p. 272.
teniente le ordenó al cachaco: "fájemelo bien y lárguelo. Pronto lo tendremos de nuevo por algo grande. Tiene toda la cara para ir al Sepa." 68

The I-Thou relationships of the unidentified Jaguar are with an older friend called Higueras, and a young girl, Teresa. Although Higueras is much older than Jaguar, his friend treats him as an equal: "Higueras era mayor que yo, me hacía un favor tratándome como a uno de su edad." 69 Needing transportation fare to visit his girl friend, Higueras generously gives it to him: "si hombre, me respondió, claro, para eso son los amigos." Le prometió devolverselo en mi cumpleaños y él se rió y dijo: "Por supuesto me pagarás cuando puedas. Toma." 70 The request for even larger loans did not find Higueras ungenerous:

Me daba vergüenza pedirle dinero al flaco Higueras, ni siquiera le había devuelto su sol ... . Ya éramos más amigos, aunque sólo nos viéramos a ratos, en la chingana de siempre. Me contaba chistes, me preguntaba por el colegio, me invitaba a cigarrillos, me enseñaba a hacer argollas, a retener el humo y echarlo por la nariz. Un día me animé y le dije que me prestara cuatro cincuenta. "Claro hombre, me dijo, lo que quieras" y me los dio sin preguntarme para qué eran. 71

68. Ibid., p. 274.
69. Ibid., p. 57.
70. Ibid., p. 101.
71. Ibid., p. 141.
In saving Jaguar's brother from police arrest at the risk of his own, the capacity of Higueras to be truly concerned for the welfare of another is demonstrated:

Y el flaco me contó una vez casi los agarran a los dos, por Jesús María. Los pescaron saliendo de una casa y un cachaco comenzó a tocar silbato y ellos corrían por los techos. Al fin se tiraron a un jardín y mi hermano se torció el pie y le gritó: "córrete que a mí ya me fundieron." Pero el flaco no quiso escaparse solo y lo fue arrastrando hasta uno de los buzones de las esquinas. Se metieron ahí y estuvieron apretados, casi sin respirar, no sé cuántas horas y después tomaron un taxi y se vinieron a Callao.  

Higueras shows the same willingness to go out on a limb for Jaguar as he did for his brother:

El salón grande estaba más lleno que el de la entrada, con el humo casi no se podía ver, y había mujeres sentadas en las mesas ... . Una de ellas me agarró la cara y me dijo:"¿qué haces aquí, renacuajo?" y yo le dije: "calla puta." Y ella se rió pero el borracho que la tenía abrazada me dijo: "te voy a dar un cuete por insultar a la señora." En eso apareció el flaco. Cogió al borracho de un brazo y lo calmó diciéndole: "es mi primo y el que quiera hacerme algo se las ve conmigo." 

"The basic movement of the life of dialogue," says Buber, "is the turning towards the other..."  

72. Ibid., p. 218.  
73. Ibid., p. 219.  
Higueras, we see the Buberian "turning towards the other": "Yo nunca había hablado de Tere, pero esa vez tenía necesidad de confiarme a alguien. Le conté al flaco todo, desde que conocí a Teresa, cuatro años atrás, cuando vino a vivir al lado de mi casa. El flaco me escuchó muy serio, no se rió ni una vez. Sólo me decía, a ratos: "vaya hombre," "caramba" "qué tal!". In looking out for the best interests of Jaguar, Higueras tries to dissuade him from following in his footsteps:

"Si quieres un consejo, vuelve donde tu madre y estudia para doctor. Ya debes tener ahorrada buena platita." Yo no tenía ni un sólo centavo y se lo dije. "¿Sabes lo que eres?" me contestó; "un putañero, lo que se llama un putañero. ¿Te has gastado toda la plata en los bulines?" Yo le dije que sí. "Todavía tienes mucho que aprender, me dijo; no vale la pena jugarse el pellejo por las polillas. Has debido guardar un poco."  

In contrast to the sodomy the Jaguar of the military school participated in, the unidentified Jaguar cultivates an I-Thou relationship with Teresa that goes beyond physical attraction:

A mí lo que más me gustaba de ella era su cara. Tenía piernas delgadas y todavía no se le notaban los senos, o quizás sí, pero creo que nunca pensé en sus piernas ni en sus senos, sólo en su cara. En las noches, si me estaba frotando en la cama y de repente me acordaba de ella, me daba vergüenza y me iba a hacer pis. Pero en cambio sí pensaba todo el tiempo en besarla.  

75. Vargas Llosa, p. 256.

76. Ibid., p. 289.

77. Ibid., p. 58.
The little money Jaguar managed to borrow from Higueras went for buying Teresa some much needed shoe polish: "una vez pensé: si tuviera muchas tizas, tendría los zapatos limpios todo el tiempo." 78

Happiness for the Jaguar is to buy sweets for Teresa:

Una vez el flaco Higueras me regaló un sol cincuenta. "Para que te compres cigarrillos, me dijo, o te emborraches." Al día siguiente íbamos caminando por la avenida Arica ... y de casualidad nos paramos frente a la vitrina de una panadería. Había unos pasteles de chocolate y ella dijo: "¿qué ricos!" Me acordé de la plata que tenía en el bolsillo, pocas veces he sentido tanta felicidad. 79

Although a secondary character, Boa, a cadet in the military school and a member of the Circle, personifies the I-It world in various ways. First, there is the narrative mode of Boa. Besides being in the first person singular, it is distinguished by what Northrop Frye calls "the associative squirrel-chatter" that one hears on streets and colleges, jerking along using slang for emphasis and punctuation. Boa is the "voice of the ego" since the ego has no interest in communication, but only in expression. What it says is always a monologue. And since it seeks only expression, the ego has nothing distinctive to express. It can express only the generic: food, sex, possessions, gossip, aggressiveness and resentments. 80

78. Ibid., p. 178.

79. Ibid.

Here is Boa narrating sex:

Cava nos dijo: detrás del galpón de los soldados hay gallinas. Mientes, serrano, no es verdad. Juro que las he visto. Así que fuimos después de la comida, dando un rodeo para no pasar por las cuadras y rampando como en campana. ¿Ves? ¿Ven? decía el muy maldito, un corral blanco con gallinas de colores, ¿qué más quieren, quieren más? ¿Nos tiramos la negra o la amarilla? La amarilla está más gorda. ¿Qué esperas, huevas? Yo la cojo y me como las alas .... Se le están saliendo las plumas y me parece que se está muriendo. Ya o no. Cuenta. ¿Siempre te vas tan rápido o sólo con las gallinas? Miren esa polilla, creo que el serrano la mató. ¿Yo? La falta de respiración, todos los huecos tapados. Si está que se mueve, juro que se está haciendo la muerta. Ustedes creen que los animales sienten.81

"The object of sadism," says Sartre, "is immediate appropriation.... It wants the non-reciprocity of sexual relations.... By the very fact that I now attempt to seize the Other's body, to pull it toward me, to grab hold of it, to bite it, my body ceases to be flesh and becomes again the synthetic instrument which I am. 82 Boa gives us an illustration of this I-It form of Sartrean sadism in a scene with a degenerate who runs a small store in the vicinity of the school: "Cuando escuchó el grito del Boa, no se movió: ... Luego volvió a la realidad: el Boa tenía a Paulino contra el suelo y lo abofeteaba, gritando, "me mordiste, cholo maldito, serrano, voy a matarte." 83

81. Vargas Llosa, pp. 31

82. Sartre, p. 395.

83. Vargas Llosa, p. 111.
Boa describes the food:

En el desayuno sólo resuena la voz de los cadetes, un interminable caos. "Digo que las cosas cambian, porque si no, mi cadete, ¿se va a comer ese bistec enterito? Déjenos siquiera una finza, un nervio, mi cadete. Oiga Fernández, por qué me sirve tan poco arroz, tan poca carne, tan poca gelatina, oiga no escupa en la comida, oiga ha visto usted la jeta de maldito que tengo, perro, no se juegue conmigo. Digo que si mis perros babearan en la sopa, Arróspide y yo les hacíamos la marcha del pato, calatos, hasta botar los bofes ... yo mi cadete, quién me invita una Inca Cola en _La Perlita_, yo mi cadete, quién se come mis babas, digo, quién."84

Already mentioned earlier is the scene of violence Boa narrates between Jaguar and Ricardo. A great deal of space is given to Boa's possession, a pet dog called, "la Malpapeada." There are more scenes of perversion and sadism involving the dog ad nauseam which we need not cite. It is interesting to note, however, the emphasis the author gives to the situation of the two animals to be found in the school, Malpapeada and a vicuña. The dog had wandered into the school one day and had chosen Boa's section as his home:

No me acuerdo cuando vino al colegio. Seguro no la trajo nadie, pasaba y le dio ganas de meterse a ver, y le gustó y se quedó. ... Era una enanita, yo me fijé en ella, andaba metiéndose en la sección todo el tiempo ... parecía sentirse en su casa, cada vez que entraba uno de cuarto se le lanzaba a los pies y le ladraba y quería morderlo.85

84. _Ibid._, pp. 40-41.

The cadets of the section, especially Boa, commit atrocities against the dog, yet she always goes back to her "situation" in spite of the maltreatment. The vicuña shares the same treatment as the dog--yet the exotic appearance of the animal highlights the incongruence between her natural habitat of the Peruvian mountains and the Leoncio Prado Military School:

Un movimiento próximo e inesperado devolvió a su cuerpo, como un puñetazo, ... Dudó un segundo: a un metro de distancia, brillantes como luciérnagas, dulces, tímidos, lo contemplaban los ojos de la vicuña. "¡Fuera!" exclamó, encolerizado. El animal permaneció indiferente ... Dos años atrás, al venir a Lima para terminar sus estudios, lo asombró encontrar caminando impávidamente entre los muros grises y devorados por la humedad del Colegio Militar, Leoncio Prado, a ese animal exclusivo de la sierra. ¿Quién había traído la vicuña al colegio, de qué lugar de los Andes? Los cadetes hacían apuestas de tiro al blanco: la vicuña apenas se inquietaba con el impacto de las piedras.  

In the closing pages of the novel, the author presents us with another incongruous situation. Because of a mix-up in orders, Alberto and Jaguar are put in the same cell. Alberto's family background is a privileged one of wealth and social standing; yet his father forces him to intern himself for his delinquent ways. Jaguar's background is just the opposite, as we have already seen. Having to shift for himself, Jaguar considered himself very fortunate to be in the school at all. Since Alberto had no experience in the underworld life of his cell-mate,

86. Ibid., pp. 173-174.
being a murderer is about as low as you can get regardless of the circumstances: "Tú no eres más hombre que nadie ... dijo Alberto--. Eres un asesino."

In Jaguar's eyes, as might be expected, there is nothing worse than to be a "stool pigeon": "Eres un soplón--dijo el Jaguar ... lo más asqueroso que puede ser un hombre. No hay nada más bajo y repugnante."\(^87\)

The reader at this point—not knowing there are two Jaguars—probably sympathizes more with Alberto than with Jaguar. In the closing pages of the novel, however, several disclosures are made to change this situation. For the first time we are inside the thoughts of the Leoncio Prado Jaguar. And as we listen to both Alberto and Jaguar, the stock of the latter goes up while that of the former goes down. The cadets of the school, not knowing who had told the officers of their illegal activities, had mistakenly taken Jaguar as the informer since he was arrested before anyone else. Jaguar, deeply hurt that the members of the Circle had assumed he had turned informer, refused to tell them the truth. Alberto's image, already sullied by his lack of integrity in facing up to the school authorities, is further discredited by cowardly abetting the falsehood to protect himself:

--¡Soplón! --gritó Arróspide--. ¡Soplón! ¡Soplón!
--A ver--dijo el Jaguar--. Me enferman lo cobardes

\(^{87}\) Ibid., p. 293.

\(^{88}\) Ibid., p. 302.
que son ... Alberto estaba fascinado por ese espectáculo y súbitamente desapareció el temor de que su nombre estallara en el aire de la cuadra y todo el odio que los cadetes vertían en esos instantes hacia el Jaguar se volviera hacia él. Su propia boca, detrás de los vendajes cómplices, comenzó a murmurar, bajito, "soplón, soplón."\textsuperscript{89}

As the Jaguar confides to Lieutenant Gamboa why he killed Ricardo and why he does not reveal Alberto as the "stool pigeon," he becomes less an I-It character to us and more an I-Thou character:

- Basta de cuentos--dijo Gamboa--. Sea franco.
- ¿Por qué ha escrito este papel? --Creén que soy un soplón--dijo el Jaguar--. Ni siquiera trataron de averiguar la verdad, nada ... . Y yo lo hice por ellos, eso es lo peor. ¿Qué podría ganar yo? A ver digame, mi teniente. Nada, ¿no es cierto? Todo lo hice por la sección. ... Eran como mi familia, por eso será que ahora me dan más asco todavía. ¿Por qué no les dijo que fue el cadete Fernández el que los denunció? Todo el cuerpo del Jaguar pareció replegarse, como sorprendido por una instantánea punzada en las entrañas. --Pero el caso de él es distinto--dijo, ... Los otros me traicionaron de pura cobardía. El quería vengar al Esclavo.\textsuperscript{90}

Then, in so many words, Jaguar admits killing Ricardo because he was not aware of him as a Thou:

- No puedo dormir--balbuceó el Jaguar--. Yo no sabía lo que era vivir aplastado.--. ¿Por qué mató a ese muchacho? --Porque estaba equivocado sobre los otros, mi teniente; yo quería librarlos de un tipo así ... . Hizo expulsar a Cava sólo para poder salir a la calle unas horas, no le importó arruinar a un compañero por conseguir un permiso ... ahora

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., p. 311.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., p. 324.
The parallel between Camus' Meursault of *The Stranger* and Jaguar should be noted. Both blame the situation for a seemingly senseless murder. Camus, however, emphasizes the foundering of reason in a meaningless world that causes Meursault to pull the trigger; Vargas Llosa, on the other hand, emphasizes the I-It conflict situation.

The last chapter devoted to Alberto has something in common to the last chapter given to Jaguar. The author has used their relationship to Teresa as an I-Thou--I-It point of departure for each one. Alberto leaves Leoncio Prado still under the sway of the "they" or Das Man of Heidegger. Alberto is more concerned about what others think than about what he himself genuinely feels. We already saw how he joined the other cadets in doing things simply to be one of the boys. And backing down before the commanding officer is another salient example. The last we see of Alberto, he is courting a gossipy girl named Marcela who has seen Alberto and Teresa together:

91. Ibid., pp. 324-325.
"¿Daba vergüenza? --dijo Marcela. --¿Qué?
--Pasearte con ella en la calle. Sintió que la
sangre afluyó a su rostro. ¿Cómo explicarle que
no sólo no le daba vergüenza, sino que se sentía
orgulloso de mostrarse ante todo el mundo con
Teresa? ¿Cómo explicarle que, precisamente,
lo único que lo avergonzaba en ese tiempo era no
ser como Teresa..." 92

Jaguar, on the other hand, seems to have undergone a trans-
formation: "El Jaguar ha cambiado mucho, ..." 93 The experience
at the Leoncio Prado has taught him the unauthenticity of being-for-
others. The last we see of him, he is with his I-Thou people, Higueras
and Teresa. The last five pages of the novel--too long to cite here--
are almost continuous I-Thou dialogues among the three. Jaguar and
Teresa marry, with Higueras as best man. The novel ends with Jaguar
saying goodbye to his friend:

Algún día te iré a buscar a la agencia donde trabajas
para que nos tomemos unas copas. A mí me encanta
conversar con los amigos. Pero no podremos vernos
con frecuencia; tú te has vuelto un hombre serio y yo
no me junto con hombres serios. --¿Vas a seguir en
lo mismo? --dijo el Jaguar. --¿Quieres decir robando?
... Supongo que sí. ... --Yo soy tu amigo--dijo el
Jaguar. --Avisaame si puedo ayudarte en algo. --Si
puedes--dijo el flaco--. Págame estas copas. No
tengo ni un cobre. 94

By rejecting the Being-for-others of the Leoncio Prado perros and
the thieves of the ciudad, Jaguar becomes the individual Kierkegaard

92. Ibid., p. 333.
93. Ibid., p. 240.
94. Ibid., p. 343.
speaks about: "The crowd, in fact, is composed of individuals; it must therefore be in every man's power to become what he is, an individual. From becoming an individual no one, no one at all, is excluded, except he who excludes himself by becoming a crowd." 95

For it is only as an individual, that a person can relate to another in a genuine I-Thou relation.

Summary

La ciudad y los perros is basically a novel of the negativity of relationships. The failure or inability of a subject (consciousness) to treat another as a subject instead of an object is perhaps best explicated by the Sartrean Look (le regard). For Jean-Paul Sartre, the subject (for-itself) can never know the Other as a subject but only as an object. Thus the revelation of the Other is the Look. I experience him as a subject when he looks at me and as object when I look at him. Upon this unstable shifting of subject and object, Mario Vargas Llosa has erected his edifice of love, hate, sadism, masochism and indifference. In a surprise ending, however, the author reveals one main character who is able to prevent a human relationship from breaking down into the Sartrean subject-object dichotomy. Since Sartre believes that all attempts of the subject to know the Other as subject end in failure, we

have to abandon Sartrean terminology and substitute the terms associated with Martin Buber: the I-Thou (subject-subject) and the I-It (subject-object).

Complementing and compounding the alienation of the Sartrean Look is the alienation inherent in the existential situation or Dasein. Composed of sein (being) plus da (there), Dasein indicates that man is a being who is "there" and implies also that he has a "there" that is not just any place but the particular "there" that is his. And since others are outside his "there," they can never fully understand him vis-à-vis his existential situation.

Among the main characters, Ricardo Arana (the slave) best illustrates the alienation of Dasein and the Sartrean Look. The Father, in achieving a reconciliation with his estranged wife, disrupted the classic I-Thou relationship: the one between a boy and his mother. Ricardo sees his father as an "intruder" while the Father sees his son as a "mama's boy." Neither can appreciate the Dasein of the other. And since the Mother shares the same bedroom as the "intruder," Ricardo sees her as joining forces with the Father against him. When the Father interns Ricardo in the dog-eat-dog world of the Leoncio Prado Military School, three alienating aspects of Sartrean philosophy and psychology come into play. First is the existential teaching that one is always in situation and that leaving one for another simply exchanges the alienating aspects of one for the other. Secondly, since
existence precedes essence, there is no hard kernel (essence) of personality. The constant hammering into his head that he is a "mama's boy" has determined to some extent Ricardo's personality. Hence, the feeling of Ricardo that he is "different" from the other cadets.

Thirdly, the Sartrean Look can be plural; that is, a whole group can act as a subject and look at a person as an object. Thus, all the cadets thought of Ricardo as "the slave," and he was fair game for all sorts of humiliating acts culminating in his death for being "different."

As in the case of Ricardo, Alberto Fernández (the poet) has a self-for-others too. But it is of the opposite sort. Unlike Ricardo who was made to feel "different," the author shows in scene after scene how Alberto is looked upon by his peer group as "one of the boys." Thus, when Alberto's father sends him to the military school for his delinquent ways, Alberto arrives with a self that can relate to the rough give-and-take camaraderie of his fellow cadets. Indeed, in the beginning, Alberto joins the others in maltreating Ricardo. After Ricardo's murder, however, Alberto sees him in a new light. The passive, non-violent ways of Ricardo now take on a positive value instead of a negative one. Furthermore, a visit from Ricardo's father to the school gives Alberto a new insight into Ricardo's feeling of being "different." In short, the I-It relationship changes to an I-Thou relationship. In an authentic individual act, Alberto rejects the values of the group (perros) and denounces the Jaguar as the murderer.
When the commanding officer of the school threatened to expose him as a sexual pervert (falsely), however, Alberto succumbed to the pressure of the group. At the close of the novel, we see Alberto going back to the unauthentic values of the group. That is, he once again becomes a self-for-others.

The officer in charge of Alberto's group, Lieutenant Gamboa, also falls victim to the pressures of the group. In passage after passage we see an officer completely dedicated to the military way of life. For Gamboa, the justice embodied in the military code represented the last hope in a country hopelessly backward in social and political justice. Gamboa's choice of being, i.e., his self authentically chosen, revolved around those things that most officers hated: early rising, field maneuvers, strict discipline, etc. Thus, when Alberto came to him with ample evidence that foul play had indeed been committed, Gamboa felt that simply by doing his duty per the military code, justice would prevail. But Gamboa suffers a rude awakening. His immediate superior, the commanding officer of the school, and the major all tell him the way it is: the military code exists for the use or the benefit of the highest ranking officer. In the end, we see Gamboa tearing up the signed confession to Ricardo's murder which the Jaguar had willingly given to him. The implication is that, since the Lieutenant's wife had just had a baby, Gamboa could not jeopardize the security of his family. Gamboa, therefore, gave up his authentic
choice of being (authentic self) for the values of the group (the corrupt Peruvian military establishment).

The character that best reveals the over-all artistic end of the novel is the Jaguar--as he is simply referred to. There are, however, two Jaguars--and in more ways than one. There is the unidentified Jaguar of the city who narrates in the first person singular, and there is the Jaguar of the school who is seen only through the eyes of other narrators. As in the case of Ricardo, the Jaguar of the city suffers from a self-for-others. The widowed Mother sees her son as an economic burden who has to be forced out of home as soon as possible. Therefore their I-It relationship is characterized by her hammering away at him that he is "no good" and that he would end up a criminal like his brother. At this point, it should be recalled that upon volunteering his confession to Lieutenant Gamboa, the Jaguar said: "Creo que lo mejor es que me metan a la cárcel. Todos decían que iba a terminar así, mi madre, usted también. Ya puede darse gusto, mi teniente." The Jaguar's situation in the city, however, is the antithesis of Ricardo's situation. While Ricardo's privileged home situation enhanced his non-violent, passive concept of himself, the Jaguar's underprivileged home situation enhanced his violent, criminal concept of himself. Therefore, when the Jaguar manages to

96. Vargas Llosa, p. 325.
enroll in the military school, by trickery, the survival-of-the-fittest atmosphere of the school—which proved fatal to Ricardo—is ideally suited to the Jaguar's background and concept of himself. But later we see that the Jaguar undergoes a metamorphosis similar to Alberto's. That is to say, in volunteering his signed confession to the murder of Ricardo, the Jaguar rejected the values of the perros for those of the authentic individual in his chosen being. The catalyst for the Jaguar, however, proves to be the lack of concern for the truth of his peer group. On the flimsiest of evidence, the members of his own clique jump to the conclusion that it was he who turned "stool pigeon" on the vices of the whole group in order to save his own skin. In realizing the unauthenticity of the group, the Jaguar then sees Ricardo in a new light and genuinely repents in following the dictates of the group to do away with Ricardo. The Jaguar, however, is not able to confess for reasons mentioned earlier. Who then is to blame for the murder? The Father who himself was seen as an object by his son? The Jaguar who pulled the trigger as much for the dictates of the group and the Dasein situation of his home as for the survival-of-the fittest situation of the school? Who is to be blamed for justice not being meted out to the murderer? It must be remembered that Alberto did not actually see the murder committed. To have opened up an investigation would have certainly damaged the reputation of some good officers of the school such as Lieutenant Gamboa. In pointing the
finger at Gamboa, it should be remembered that even if he had sacrificed the security of his family in pressing for an investigation, the authorities could still suppress the information. Alberto? It is hard to condemn an adolescent from being intimidated by a board of high-ranking officers. Vargas Llosa is fully aware of the ambiguity of such questions. Indeed, by revealing the Dasein of each character, the author is demonstrating the relativity of truth as well as of guilt.

The holding back of the Jaguar's identity until the closing pages of the novel has either been criticized as a flaw in the novel or inadequately explained. Manuel Pedro González, for example, sees the withholding of information as part of Vargas Llosa's inept attempt to imitate Faulkner's narrative mode. Luis Harss feels "cheated" since there were no clues to put him on the right scent. George Mac Murray—who apparently put more effort into understanding the novel—sees the holding back of information as part of the narrative technique of the "new novel": "Like the French novelists, but to a lesser degree, Vargas Llosa deliberately introduces elements of ambiguity in order to stimulate the reader's imagination and require his active participation in interpreting the novels."


Mac Murray, however, does not tie in the technique with the overall artistic end of the novel. By allowing us to see the Jaguar of the school mostly through the hostile eyes of Ricardo and Alberto, Vargas Llosa encouraged the reader to identify with Ricardo and Alberto. That is to say, to see Ricardo and Alberto from an I-Thou point of view while limiting the focus on the Jaguar to an I-It point of view. It is ironical, then, that in suddenly revealing the true identity of both Jaguars, the reader realizes with a jolt that he was guilty of the same sin the characters in the novel commit—namely, seeing the Jaguar of the school as a "bad guy" (I-It) while seeing Alberto and Ricardo as the "good guys" (I-Thou). This gestalt revelation—if the reader is alert—effectively brings about the actual participation of the reader into the over-all artistic end of the novel. Instead of "obfuscating" as Harss states, the technique brings about a more intense awareness of (1) the Sartrean Look that "freezes" the totality of the person (I-It); (2) the fact that a person—including the reader—is always "in situation" (Dasein); (3) the ability of a person to choose a new being (authentic self) and (4) the relativity of truth.

100. Harss and Dohmann, p. 355.
CHAPTER 5

JOSE AGUSTÍN'S LA TUMBA

In Mario Vargas Llosa's novel, the I-It world of Ricardo Arana and the I-They world of el Jaguar of the military school are called unauthentic modes of being by existentialist writers. Unauthentic for Ricardo because of the ontological confusion of a human being with an essence (slave) and unauthentic for el Jaguar who lived the values of the crowd (perros) instead of living his own. In José Agustín's La tumba,¹ the alienation that comes from living the values of a crowd instead of one's own is given primary importance.

Hypothesis

Gabriel Guía, an adolescent trying to grow up in Mexico City, rebels against the existing hypocritical, bourgeois society. Unwittingly, however, Gabriel loses his sense of identity by conforming to the negative culture of his peer group. This type of alienation has already been noted by several writers. Hazel E. Barnes's description of the "suffocation" of society with the resulting "confining" values of

rebellious youth fits Gabriel's feeling he is in a tomb, as the title of the novel indicates:

The first hostile withdrawal from society results from the individual's sense that his personal life was being suffocated, that the discrepancy between what society professed and what it practiced was too great to be endured. For a time the rebels limited themselves to a reversal of values, to living against rather than for. Or else they retreated into new games of role-playing, just as artificial and confining as those against which they revolted.  

When Paul Goodman wrote *Growing Up Absurd* in the middle 1950's, he claimed that the majority of youth perceived only two alternative ways of life, represented respectively by the man in the gray flannel suit and by the beatnik whose negative and delinquent revolt was uppermost, and that there was no clear third position which called for positive action.  

In the same vein, A. K. Cohen states that the content of the delinquent sub-culture has classically been a direct counteraction to the middle-class culture, and that both groups are conformist, one-upping and cynical.  

Martin Heidegger contrasts two modes of being which can be helpful in understanding Gabriel's alienation: There is the authentic

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self, that is, the ideas, feelings, and strivings that are recognized, interpreted, and valued by the individual as his own; and there is the unauthentic they or das man who is lost in the anonymity of what others think.

Gabriel and his peer group see all of adult society as belonging to the "man in the gray flannel suit" category Paul Goodman spoke about and which corresponds to Heidegger's "unauthentic they." And since Sartre's "serious world" concept corresponds to Heidegger's "unauthentic they," we will sometimes resort to Sartre's term when appropriate. Hazel E. Barnes gives us a definition of the French philosopher's term:

One of the most ubiquitous forms of bad faith on the personal level is the cluster of devices to escape responsibility for what one has done and has made of himself. This involves among other things the fiction that the standards and values of what Sartre calls "the serious world" are absolute, supported by some impersonal guarantee. Such a lie is profoundly reassuring to the majority, who would rather believe almost anything rather than that it is up to them as individuals to choose and to be responsible for the value system by which they live. On the social level we find a parallel in the attitude that a given social structure is not to be questioned.


7. Ibid., p. 86.
Analysis of Text

All the adults in the novel, including Gabriel's parents, are looked upon as practicing "bad faith" by belonging to the "serious world." Gabriel and his friends rarely miss an opportunity to show their disdain for these "squares." The business associates of his father are particularly offensive to Gabriel: "Estaba hundido en un sillón, en la biblioteca de mi casa, viendo a mi padre platicar con el señor Obesodioso, que aparte de mordiscar su puro, hablaba de política (mal). Mi padre me miraba, enérgico, exigiendo mi silencio, y como es natural, no le hice caso. Tuvo que soportar mis silbidos combinados con la insulsa plática de don Obesomartirizante." A favorite amusement of Gabriel and his peer group is to bait the adults of the "serious world":

Uno de ellos, el señor Noimportasunombre, estaba muy acalorado y hasta podía decirse que intimidaba a los demás. Otro señor ídem, calvo y esqueletico, lo reprobaba. ... ¿Qué escribes? -- Cuentos, novelas; en resumen, estupideces. -- ¿Qué tratan tus novelas? --Lo que se puede señor. -- ¿Abordas problemas sexuales? --Cuando es necesario, señor. -- Eso es muy interesante. -- No, no lo es señor, nunca me ha interesado el morbo ni escribir para morbosos. La cara se le encendió cuando mi padre me lanzaba una mirada severa. Sonréi. Merecido lo tienes, por cochino.

9. Ibid., pp. 33-34.
Clothes are important to the "serious world" since it proclaims their essence, e.g., "the beautiful people": At a party given by a senator, Gabriel and his sometime girlfriend, Laura, ridicule the adults by wearing beatnik attire:

A las ocho cuarenta salimos de la Arena México y fuimos al Pedregal. Fiesta en casa del senador Robatealgo. Nos miraron escandalizados porque éramos los primeros en llegar y no vestíamos adecuadamente: Laura pantalones; yo, levis y chamarra de gamuza. 10

Actors of stage, screen and television who always project a "personality" as an essence are notoriously guilty of "bad faith": . . . "bajé al jol para ver TV. Una arcaica película de Galán-apuesto-traje-pipa-gabardina (Notable Actor, por supuesto)."11 Certain surnames sound more pompous than others as though the name itself could assure an inequivocal essence to its owner: "--Dicen que es muy bonita. --¿Quién?--Nuestra tía: Berta de Ruthermore. --¿Así tiene el descaro de llamarse? --¿Berta?--No, Ruthermore. --Es su marido quien se llama así. --Lo cual no impide que el apellido deje de ser un cañonazo al timpano. --No seas exagerado. --No es exageración."12 For Gabriel, the form of respectful address, "señor," is another example of adult society to hypocritically project an essence:

10. Ibid., pp. 54-55.
11. Ibid., p. 84.
12. Ibid., p. 38.
"--Hasta la vista señor. Siempre me carcajeo cuando me dicen señor y por eso manejé muy mal, pero logramos llegar a la Arena México."\textsuperscript{13}

Gabriel and Laura can be equally critical of youths their own age who are motivated by the unauthentic \textit{das man} of Heidegger. The skaters at the Arena México, for example, wear a sort of fashionable uniform to show they belong to the "smart set": "Una multitud de muchachitos idiotas (con suéteres de grecas y toda la cosa) se lucían patinando como si estuvieran en Cortina d'Ampezzo,"\textsuperscript{14} A pretentious restaurant can easily acquire a reputation for being "chic" and will be frequented by the "unauthentic they" who want to belong to the "chic group": "Quedé con la comisión de pasearla y ella aceptó de buena gana cenar en un restaurante de seudo-categoría. Fuimos a Focolare, uno de los llamados restaurantes très chic."\textsuperscript{15}

A way of baiting the adults is to project facetiously an "essence" to them while laughing at them behind their backs. While Gabriel stands by to watch, Laura uses this method on a traffic officer who is about to take their car plates for a parking violation:

\begin{quote}
--Como es, ¡ándele, no se lleve la plaquita, para qué le sirve ... --insistía Laura, con su sonrisa sexy, moviendo los hombros.-- ... ¿Le han dicho que se parece a Pedro Infante? --agregó con cinica
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[13.] Ibid., p. 54.
\item[14.] Ibid., pp. 54-55.
\item[15.] Ibid., p. 40.
\end{footnotes}
coquetería. El agente se ruborizó. --Palabra, no vio usted ATM y ¿Qué Te Ha Dado Esa Mujer? Con el uniforme de tránsito era igualito a usted/ --Pero/ --y acuérdense qué buena persona era Pedrito cuando salía de agente. ¡Dios mío! se parecen horrores. Coloradísimo, el agente nos dejó la placa .... El agente se fue, feliz, tarareando Amorcito Corazón. 16

Another way of baiting the adults is to engage them in double-talk, that is, carry on a facetious conversation. At the senator's party, Gabriel and Laura button-hole the senator:

--¿Cómo anda el senado, senador?--preguntó Laura bebiendo a pico --Bien, bien ... --¿Se divierte, senador?--¿Usted cree que yo pueda llegar a senadora, senador? --¿Usted no es el líder del senado?--pues no/ --¿Porqué no? ¿Le cenaron el mandado, senador? --¿Es difícil la grilla del senado, senador?--¿Perteneces usted a alguna comisión? --Sí, a la/ --¿Cuánto le pagan senador? --¿Le costó cara su casita? --Echese un trago con nosotros, senador. --Ándele, brinde por la juventud, no sea ranchero. El senador nos miró glacialmente. --Sí, senador, ya nos íbamos. --Muchas gracias por sus consejos, señor senador, los tomaremos muchísimo en cuenta; y gracias por narrarnos tan gongorínamente sus vicisitudes como senador. Acuérdese que ya quedó en ayudarme a ser senador, senador. --Antes de irnos, ¿por qué no baila con mi prima, senador? Ficha barato. Tostón la pieza. --No sea malito, senador, baile conmigo. Gratis por ser para usted. Un rock y ya. 17

The negative rebels of Agustín's novel are similar to the negative rebels of Kerouac's On the Road 18 with its description of car-dragging, stealing for sport and senseless destruction. Along with

16. Ibid., p. 53.
17. Ibid., pp. 55-56.
the thrill, it involves too the intent, more fully developed by Jean
Genet, of undermining all that is necessary to keep a corrupt society
going. Although Gabriel and his companions do not come from
marginal groups, as is the case with the anti-heroes of the above, they
are nonetheless alienated from society. Mario Savio, a spokesman
for alienated youth, explains why youths of affluent parents are es-
tranged from their society:

There are a lot of people who have enough to eat but
who are incredibly resentful because their lives are
meaningless. They're psychologically dispossessed.
There's a feeling that they have nothing to do; the
bureaucracy runs itself. Why are we so alienated?
I would say for three reasons: depersonalization,
hypocrisy, and the unearned privilege that comes
with great wealth. 19

One of Gabriel's "unearned privileges" is an expensive car
that is available for car-dragging, drinking and sexual promiscuity.
On the way to a friend's party Gabriel cannot resist the challenge of a
car race:

Un coche esport me retaba a correr. Hundí el
acelerador y el esport también lo hizo, pasándome.
Sentí una furia repentina al ver la mancha roja del
auto frente de mí. El chofer traía una gorrita a
cuadros. Está sonriendo el maldito. Furioso,
prosegui la carrera con ardor. Había pasado la casa
de Martín, pero insistí en alcanzar al esport.
Llegamos a la curva. El rival se mantenía adelante
al dar la vuelta. Yo, temiendo darla tan rápido,
disminuí la velocidad. El esport no lo hizo y la dio

19. Mario Savio, "Letter from Berkeley," The New Yorker
a todo vapor. Un estruendo resonó en mis oídos, mientras la llamarada surgía como oración maléfica. Frené al momento para ir, a pie, hasta la curva. El esport se había estrellado con un camión que transitaba en sentido contrario.  

Although Gabriel can have almost anything he wants by simply asking his parents for it, he prefers to steal for sport. On an impulse, Gabriel and his girlfriend of the moment decide they want to eat in an expensive restaurant. In order to finance their gourmet adventure they decide to steal an emerald brooch from Gabriel's mother: 

"Riendo, le comuniqué mi falta de dinero. Tras un buen rato de meditación, subimos a la recámara de mi mamá para birlar un broche de esmeraldas. Nos estacionamos frente al Monte de Piedad, donde dieron tres mil pesos por el broche." Senseless destruction is a sine qua non of negative rebels. At the senator's party, just before leaving, Gabriel and Laura vandalize his home: "En el jardín, abrimos las jaulas de los pájaros para dejarlos escapar. También echamos tierra en la alberca. Rompimos dos floreros. En el baño tiramos la pasta de dientes en la tina, mojamos todos los jabones, limpiamos nuestros zapatos con las toallas y yo oriné en el lavabo, tapándolo previamente." 


21. Ibid., p. 52  

22. Ibid., p. 56.
The "unauthentic they" or "bad faith" of the adult world extends into Gabriel's school life. Gabriel's class has been asked by the teacher of literature to write a short story to be handed in. Gabriel puts himself wholly into the task feeling a deep sense of accomplishment from doing a job well done: "Al salir, alcancé a ver semioculto, el manojo de papeles donde estaba escrito el cuento pedido por el profesor de literatura. Me acerqué para hojearlo, buscando algún error, que a mi juicio no encontré. Sentí verdadera satisfacción." 23

Just before the class, however, a classmate—out of sheer maliciousness—accuses Gabriel of having plagiarized his short story from Chekhov. The teacher in "bad faith" takes at face value the girl's fib without doing a close study of Gabriel's paper:

El maestro llegó con su característico aire de Gran Dragón Bisco del Ku-Klux-Klan, pidiendo el cuento que había encargado ... . A media clase, el maestro me dijo:--Mira, Gabriel, cuando no se tiene talento artístico, en especial para escribir, es preferible no intentarlo. --De acuerdo, maestro, pero eso, ¿en qué me concierne?--Es penoso decirlo ante tus compañeros, mas tendré que hacerlo. --Después de meditar profundamente, llegué a la conclusión de que no escribiste el cuento que has entregado. --Ah, y cómo llegó a esa sapientísima conclusión, mi muy estimado maestro?--Pues al analizar tu trabajo, me di cuenta. 24

When Gabriel offered to bring the complete works of Chekhov to the teacher in order to prove the paper was not plagiarized, the teacher

23. Ibid., p. 11.

took refuge in the "serious world" refusing to admit the possibility he might have been wrong:

Tendré muchísimo gusto en traer las obras completas de Chéjov. —Ojalá lo hagas. Salí furioso de la escuela para ir, en el coche, hasta las afueras de la ciudad ... . En la siguiente clase, me presenté con las obras completas de Chéjov. Pero, como era natural, el maestro no quiso dar su brazo a torcer y afirmó que debía haberlo plagiado (ahora sí, plagiado) de otro escritor: no me consideraba capaz de escribir un cuento así. ²⁵

Since the curriculum of school work is geared for the "unauthentic One" and not for the particular person, Gabriel finds it hard to become interested. Paul Goodman, a leading spokesman for alienated youth, writes of the difficulty of youth to relate to the type of courses taught in high schools and colleges:

Most of the academic curriculum, whether in high school or college, is abstract in a bad sense. It must be so. A structure of ideas is abstracted from the on-going professions, a civic and business activities, social institutions; and these ideas are again thinned out and processed to be imported into the classrooms and taught as curriculum. To be sure, this ancient procedure often makes sense. It makes sense for the aspiring professionals who know what they are after and want a briefing; and it makes sense for the scholarly who have a philosophical interest in essences and their relationship and want to chart the whole field. But for most, the abstractness of the curricular subjects, especially if the teaching is pedantic, can be utterly barren. The lessons are only exercises, with no relation to the real world. They are never for keeps. ²⁶

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²⁶. Goodman, p. 45.
Gabriel finds it hard to relate his life to the necessity of learning about hydrocarbons: "Recordé que debía hacer un trabajo de química, pero no lo hice. ¿Qué me pueden importar los hidrocarburos." The unauthenticity of school work encourages negative behavior: "Ya me las ingenié para burlar al químico y seguí bocabajo." The girls too talk about ways of beating the system: "—Mira, lo de la reprobátum es ya sentencia: el cochino Colbert dijo que me aprobaría si aceptara ir a la cama con él." It is not surprising then, that Gabriel finds it difficult to get to class on time or that he prefers truancy even though he has nothing planned to fill up the day:

Como de costumbre era tarde, y sólo haciendo un considerable esfuerzo quise apurarme para llegar a tiempo, pero no lo logré. (Rien c'est la chose que vient.) Al estacionar el coche frente a la escuela, tenía ya media hora de retardo. Sentado, con la mirada fija en el volante, fingía reflexionar y llegué a la inexorable resolución de no entrar a clases. Lentamente encendí el motor para salir sin dirección fija, avanzando muy despacio.

The frustration and lack of relevancy leads to facetious role-playing in the school situation. Gabriel, for example, pretends he is a neophyte in the French class when in reality he is already quite proficient in it:

27. Agustín, p. 23.
28. _Ibid._
29. _Ibid._, p. 31.
Por suerte llegué a tiempo para la clase de francés. Me divertía haciendo creer a la maestra que yo era un gran estudioso del idioma, cuando en realidad lo hablaba desde antes. En clase, tras felicitar mis adelantos, me exhortó a seguir esa línea progresiva [sic], pero un amigo mío, nuevo en la escuela, protestó:--¡Qué gracia! --¿Por qué? --preguntó la maestra--, no es nada fácil aprender francés. --Pero él ya lo habla. --¿Es verdad eso, Gabriel?--Sí, maestra. Gran revuelo, la maestra no lo podía creer, casi lloraba, balbuceando tan sólo:--¡Regardez l'enfant, quelle moquerie! 31

Gabriel's belly-laugh in response to his class-mate's show of concern over the incident underlines his complete detachment from the system:

"Mi amigo se acercó, confuso, preguntando si había dicho alguna idiotez, mas para su sorpresa la única respuesta que obtuvo fue una sonora carcajada. Al fin y al cabo, poco me importaba echar abajo mi farsa con la francesita." 32

Gabriel's parents are examples par excellence of the hypocritical, bourgeois society that form part of the Sartrean "serious world." Both maintain an outward show of conventional morality but clandestinely they cheat on one other:

En casa me esperaban para comer. Mamá, de pésimo humor, se decía muy mala de salud. Como antítesis, mi padre estaba muy contento y nos dedicamos a bromear con mamis. Pero se enfadó y empezaron los insultos maternos. Papá, aún bromeando, dijo: --¿Qué te pasa mujer?--ella lo miró encolerizada--, alégrate, no hay ningún funeral.

31. Ibid., pp. 11-12.

32. Ibid., p. 12.
Como resorte aceitado, mi madre se levantó.--No lo hay, pero lo habrá, el tuyo y el de tu amante si me sigues molestando, imbécil. Mi padre empalideció y de su sonrisa sólo quedó una mueca de rabia...
Yo me quedé ahí, con el plato de carne a medio terminar. Acabarán divorciándose, todo el mundo conoce sus sendas aventuras...

The "everyone" Gabriel refers to includes members of his own peer group who openly acknowledge to each other the "bad faith" of their parents: "¿Y tu madre?--Debe haber salido con alguno de sus maquereaux, y comprendí que mi madre andaba en las mismas."33

Yet when Gabriel and his girlfriend spend all night together doing openly what his parents do on the sly, the Mother and Father are scandalized:

Papito estaba encolerizado. La cocinera le contó que Elsa había pasado la noche conmigo. Furioso, me soltaba las de siempre:--¡Eres un desvergonzado! El que fuera tu cumpleaños no te daba derecho de convertir la casa en un prostíbulo. ¿Quién te crees ser?, no mereces lo que hacemos por ti; tu madre y yo no nos hemos divorciado sólo por ti. Yo pensaba frases como qué penoso, don't say, divorciense, tarareando la Danza del sable."35

Gabriel knows that the Father is more concerned with upholding his bourgeois reputation than with his son's welfare. The fact that the Father does not take time to find out what his son would like for his

33. Ibid., p. 69.
34. Ibid., p. 84.
35. Ibid., p. 83.
birthday indicates the "bad faith" relationship he maintains vis-à-vis his son. As a person who is living the das man unauthentic mode of being, the Father goes through the convention of hiring a band to play the traditional "mañanitas" for his son. If he had known his son better (authentically) the Father would have known his son hates the "unauthentic they" convention of playing "mañanitas" on his birthday: "Me despertaron Las Mañanitas a las seis . . . odié Las Mañanitas y sobre todo, a quien las puso. Fue mi padre, quien se presentó para felicitarme (oh, padre comprensivo)."36 And not really knowing what his son would like for his birthday, the Father eases his conscience by writing out a generous check. Gabriel, however, is fully aware that the check as a birthday gift is no more an authentic paternal expression than if he were to have received it from the post office as a tax refund:

--Mira, hijo realmente no sé qué regalarte, creo que tú eres el único que puede comprar algo de tu gusto--sic--, así es que toma este cheque y a ver qué encuentras. Gruñí, asintiendo, y volví al sueño. Desperté de nuevo, a las diez para ver el cheque: tres mil pesos, mexican currency. Me dio rabia. Hubiera preferido cualquier cosa, zapatos, un frijol o cualquier chuchería, menos dinero.37

As members of the "serious world," Gabriel's parents cannot understand why their son resents them. The unauthenticity of their ways is not apparent to them as it is to Gabriel. According to Hazel E. Barnes,

36. Ibid., p. 79

37. Ibid.
it is the unauthenticity or "bad faith" of the adult world that has caused such a widespread rebellion among the youth:

I believe that disgust with the injustice, hypocrisy, and cruelty which are everyday displayed as regular ingredients of our way of life plays a large part in motivating the rebellious refusal to cooperate with society ... the Beat and Hipster, brushing aside the veneer of conventional morality, live openly and to excess the surreptitious conduct of their elders. In place of petty chiseling, they steal; extramarital 'playing around' becomes openly acknowledged sexual liaison and shared promiscuity. Violence and unjust treatment of other people is excused on the plea that this rotten world and the people in it deserve no better. 38

When Gabriel's father scolds him for staying out late at night and invokes the unauthentic platitudes of "sacrificing for him," Gabriel exposes his hypocrisy:

- ¿Quién te crees que eres? Tan sólo tienes diecisiete años y te das el lujo de faltar a casa cada vez que se te antoja; tu madre y yo no nos hemos divorciado sólo por ti, por ti, que no conoces los peligros de la noche; ¡y no pido, exijo que no te vayas sin avisar! ... ¿Qué te importa dónde estuve? Sólo piensas que estuve con una prostituta para escandalizarte como buen Abogado Decente que eres; pues bien, si eso quieres, te complazco, ¡fui a un burdel y pienso casarme con una ramera desdentada, igual a la bruja que tienes por amante. 39

We have seen the alienation of Gabriel from the "unauthentic they" or "serious world" of his middle or upper class environment

38. Barnes, p. 158-159.

39. Agustín, p. 98.
and the resultant withdrawing from its values. Unfortunately, Gabriel and his peer group do not grow into other worthwhile values. Instead of seeking the values of an "authentic self" they conform to the unauthentic negative values of their own group (das man). Unable to anchor their being in the adult world, they are afraid to open themselves to authentic emotions among themselves; and, thus, they compound the alienation already existing vis-à-vis the adult world. The bourgeois role-playing is replaced by their own kind of role-playing. The negative rebel, for example, must "play it cool" and remain totally detached in whatever he does. Kenneth Keniston explains why alienated youth choose disengagement:

> Essentially, they recognize that adulthood is a relatively cold, demanding, specialized, and abstracted world where "meaningful" work is so scarce they do not even ask for it. Thus the majority stay "cool" when it comes to the "real world"; and "coolness" means above all detachment, lack of emotion, absence of deep commitment ... 40

Thus, the behavior of Gabriel and his peer group among themselves is characterized by "playing it cool," as described by Keniston, and by cynicism and one-upping as described earlier by Cohen.

The relationship between Gabriel and his schoolmate Dora, for example, resembles the play by Sartre, No Exit, in that each makes an object of the other in a continuous circle. Dora first started the

one-upping by telling the teacher of literature the fib about the plagiarism of Chekhov. For days afterward Gabriel smoldered with the thought of avenging himself on her: "Esa Dora me las pagará. Tenía deseos de verla colgada en cualquiera de los árboles por ahí ... Odié a Dora, con deseos de despellejarla en vida." In their first encounter at a party, however, Gabriel suppresses his animosity in order to "play it cool":

--¿Por qué le armaste ese cuento al de literatura?
--Esa clase es muy monótona, mi estimado Chejovin, necesitaba un poco de emoción. --Además, tú me dijiste niña estúpida. --Pero eso no está tan apartado de la realidad. --Ahora soy yo la del vaya. --Lo cual me agrada. --¿Entonces, amigos? --¿Qué hemos dejado de serlo? --No sé, pero de cualquier manera, es bueno ratificarlo. --Sea.

Martín, a mutual friend of both, expecting to see fireworks, is at first surprised to hear of their friendship, but then realizes that the "friendship" is simply their way of playing it "cool" while they find other ways to one-up the other: "Martín se acercó preguntando si había consumado mi venganza. Le contesté que habíamos ratificado nuestra amistad. --¡Caramba! --rio--. ¡Ésa sí es venganza!"

In their game of oneupmanship, Dora wins the next round. As a negative rebel, she rejects the passive role a middle class girl

41. Agustín, p. 15.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., p. 17.
plays in sexual relations. By playing the role of the emancipated woman, Dora uses Gabriel as a sex object:

Yo tomé mi vaso, decidido a encerrarme en un completo mutismo, pero no lo logré: Dora vino hacia mí, riendo.--¿No propones nada? --¿Eh? --¿Que si no propones nada, Chejovito. --¿Yo? no, no sé. --Cómo eres bruto. Tomó un hectólitro de whisky y vamos al jardín... Nos sentamos tras unos arbustos, y bebiendo con rapidez pentatlónica, inquirió: --¿Así vamos a estar? --¿Eh? --¿Qué demonios esperas para besarme? Sintiéndome humillado, respiré profundamente antes de rozar sus labios con suavidad, con timidez. De nuevo soltó su carcajada y me besó con ardor. 44

In defying middle class conventions, Dora is following the values of the "unauthentic they." Instead of making love for themselves as authentic selves would do, they made love against the equally unauthentic values of middle class society. But in so doing, they alienate themselves by using each other as objects to prove a point. Paul Goodman is of the opinion that most of the sexual behavior of rebellious youth is unauthentic:

There is fantastic excessive expectation, and pretty inevitable disappointment or even disgust. That is, much of the sexual behavior is not sexual at all, but conformity to gang behavior because one has no identity; or proving because one has no other proofs; or looking for apocalyptic experience to pierce the dull feeling of powerlessness. 45

44. Ibid., pp. 17-18.

45. Goodman, p. 120.
Although we cannot enter Dora’s mind to see what she is feeling, there is no doubt that Gabriel feels alienated from his experience with her:

El match duró poco. Yo sentía miedo. Algo inexplicable se apoderó de mí. Aunque ése no era mi estreno, me sentía extraño a todo, sin percibir nada y comportándome como idiota ... y al llegar a la ciudad, dijo que la llevara directamente a su casa, lo que tampoco me indignó, pero me hizo sentir humillado. Me dijo adiós con sus carcajadas, y tambaleándose, entró en su casa. Su risa estuvo en mi cabeza toda la noche. 46

The following morning the sensations of disorientation continued:

Desperté con los ojos anegados de lágrimas. No comprendí la razón, pero las gotitas saladas escurrian. Estaba pesado y sin flexibilidad. Nuevamente, mi brumosa mirada vio primero el techo. El color azul permanecía ... . El azul se adueñaba de todo formando círculos a mi alrededor. Debo estar mareado, pensé al levantárme; pero no lo estaba. 47

Frederick A. Weiss lists the symptoms of heaviness and dizziness as characteristic of negative rebels who are suffering self-alienation:

Compulsive non-conformism which, while it contains constructive strivings for freedom, distorts its meaning and perpetuates self-alienation as much as does compulsive conformism. The beatnik often is as alienated from himself as is ‘the man in the gray flannel suit.’ ... physical symptoms such as tiredness, dizziness, a general or localized numbness ... he is dissociated from the active, spontaneous core of himself and his feelings. 48

46. Agustín, pp. 18-19.
47. Ibid., p. 19.
Unwittingly, Gabriel continues his negative role-playing with Dora. Both decide to play truant from school and go to a drive-in movie. Once there, another wave of dissociation invades his being:

"En el tugurio para automóviles me invadió la sensación de vaciedad, desconocida hasta entonces, forzándome a permanecer en completo silencio." 49 The lack of an "authentic self" causes Gabriel to become disconcerted before the gaze of Dora and a localized feeling of numbness in his fingers:

Sin ver a Dora, sentía sus ojos clavados en mí, incomodándome. Y cuando el mesero vino, ella no despegó su mirada. Mecánicamente mi mano extrajó un cigarro. Al sacar el cerillo, advertí que mi mano temblaba y que me era casi imposible encenderlo. Traté de concentrarme, pero sentí los ojos de Dora desmenuzándome. Mi mano temblaba, temblaban mis dedos. Creí que esos largos dedos de pianista que sostenían el cerillo no eran míos. Temblaba, temblaban. Todo se volvió círculos: mi mano, el cerillo, los dedos, su mirada; todo. 50

The drive-in movie is followed by drinking and another bout of lovemaking. Again, however, it is a pseudo-relationship based on role-playing: "Nos detuvimos en un paraje solitario. Tras destapar la botella nos dedicamos a turnarnosla. Ya bastante mareados--Y sin comprender bien lo que sucedía--adoptamos el papel de amantes." 51

49. Agustín, p. 20.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid., p. 21.
Mistakenly thinking he has made a love conquest, Gabriel attempts to impose his will on Dora: "En aquellos momentos me sentía satisfecho y hasta contento de mí mismo. Dora fue mía. Yo no vi las circunstancias sino el acto, que me produjo un considerable placer."\(^52\)

"Cuando íbamos de regreso, me sentí con el derecho de pedir que dijera la verdad al maestro de literatura."\(^53\) For Dora, however, this was simply another opportunity to one-up Gabriel again: "Ella se negó con risas salvajes de triunfo. Entonces me supe derrotado, comprendí que ni siquiera la había seducido: todo se hizo por su iniciativa. Sentí una gran humillación que gradualmente se transformó en ira."\(^54\) This latest blow against his sense of self brings on another attack of dissociation:

> En casa me sentía perplejo. Pasé sin saludar a nadie, y en mi habitación la ira me encendió de nuevo. Ira loca, incontenible. Tenía verdaderos deseos de ir por ella para estrangularla. Lloraba. Vi mi cara húmeda, mis ojos vidriosos reflejados en el espejo. Vino el vértigo, volvieron los círculos y furioso lancé un golpe que rompió el espejo, dejándome la mano ensangrentada.\(^55\)

Because of failing school grades, Dora's father decides to send her to live with her aunt in Austria. Unhappy to leave Mexico City,

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52. Ibid.
53. Ibid., pp. 21-22.
54. Ibid., p. 22.
55. Ibid.
Dora wants Gabriel to share her misery. For Gabriel, however, this is an opportunity to one-up her and play it "cool" at the same time:

... Repito, queda la hermosa ciudad de los valses, eh? El Danubio, tra la la la la . . . . --Ayúdame, Gabriel, no seas así. --¿Y qué quieres que haga? --No sé, debe haber alguna salida. --La hay, en efecto, y es aquélla, por la cual saldré, pues tengo un asunto pendiente. --Te, te vas ya? --Sí, preciosía, no olvides mandarme una postal y un vals del muchacho Strauss . . . . Sali, con inmensas ganas de reír a carcajadas. Hasta entonces no se me había presentado la oportunidad de vengarme de la Castillo. Realmente, el incidente fue graciosísimo. Recordaba mi cuento chejoviano, su opinión sobre mí. (Es un chico muy naíf.)^{56}

After Dora's departure, Gabriel is determined not to be "naive" any longer. Following the rules of behavior of the "unauthentic they," he becomes cynical in his relations with girls. While his father entertains a business associate, Gabriel is obliged to invite the daughter out for a soda-pop. Gabriel treats her to a highball instead of a soda-pop and afterwards unceremoniously parks the car in a dark street to make love to her:

Di algunas vueltas absurdas y luego me interné en una calle oscura (Delectatio). Parpadeaba con una velocidad increíble al decir: --¿Tan rápido? Y mirándome con húmeda manera, tiró el cigarro por la ventanilla. Contesté simplemente --¿Qué esperamos? Besaba muy raro, con una especie de refinamiento para mí desconocido. Al preguntarle el origen de su kissin' way, sólo dijo: --Es mi estilo.^{57}

^{56} Ibid., pp. 31-32.

^{57} Ibid., p. 37.
If Gabriel found Dora's aggressiveness disconcerting and the business man's daughter strange to kiss, his following love affair with his aunt Berta de Ruthermore proves to be traumatic. On the one hand, Gabriel is attracted to the still desirable young aunt, but on the other hand, there are all the taboos of society: incest, age and the use of the family home as the place of seduction. Gabriel's pseudo-beatnik ethics are not up to brushing aside these taboos, but the vacationing aunt can and does declare a moral holiday. At a party thrown in her honor, the aunt--drinking heavily--discards her bourgeois inhibitions:

He bebido, bebido, y seguiré haciéndolo, mi querido Gabriélito, y tú lo harás conmigo; bebo porque hace mucho que no bebo y porque aquí hay licor, y bailo porque no está el imbécil de mi marido y porque tengo con quién hacerlo. Me gusta tu mejilla, por eso oprimo la mía a la tuya. Estoy muy contenta, Gabriel, hacía mucho tiempo sin sentirme contenta.  

Although he can scarcely believe it, Gabriel lets himself be seduced by his Aunt Ruthermore: "Mi tía, Berta de Ruthermore, era quien decía eso y en inglés. En otras circunstancias no lo hubiera creído, pero en aquellos momentos estaba muy embriagada y sólo decía en su oído: --Okay, okay, okay." It is ironical that the aunt can deviate--if only for a night--from her bourgeois ethics without suffering from a fragmented psyche while the mental equilibrium of Gabriel--who is

58. Ibid., p. 44.
59. Ibid.
supposedly a free thinker—is disturbed by the conflicting norms of behavior. For the aunt, the seduction of her nephew was only a "night of madness" as the note she left for Gabriel read: "Forget that night of madness, excuse my heavy drinking and thanks for the memory." Gabriel, however, cannot integrate the experience into a viable sense of self and is invaded by vertigo: "Hemos caído en la cama. Ya están aquí: vueltas, vueltas, vueltas. El vértigo. círculos. Mi tía me besa. Ondas, giros, órbitas. Besándome. ¡El vértigo! Las vueltas, vueltas, círculos ... " The sense of shame Gabriel experiences the morning after belies the mask of cool detachment he shows the world: "Sentía que la vergüenza se desbocaba por mis sienes. En la mañana, muy en la mañana, al despertar viendo la espalda desnuda de mi tía, me odié terriblemente y salí de ese cuarto."  

After his aunt's departure, Gabriel plays the field with several girls. There is inordinate drinking with Germaine:

Salimos de su casa para anegarnos de licor en un bar. Whiskey, whiskey, Castillo. Pensé que mi cerebro se volvería charco. Pasado un momento, los efectos del alcohol empezaron a dejarse sentir: las luces se empeñaban en bailar en cursí pizzicato. Germaine, mirándome divertida. Luego, para mi pesar, irrumpió

60. Ibid., p. 46.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid., p. 45.
el show. Cosas vulgares, y gazonamente pornográficas se sucedieron. 63

As with sex, drinking for Gabriel is indulged in as part of the "unauthentic they" ritual of his peer group. It is considered the "in" thing to do even though the act of drinking itself is not enjoyed: "Pasamos a la biblioteca, donde se había divertido tanto para iniciar la ronda de costumbre que tanto me hastiaba ya. Beber whisky." 64

There is the frequenting of pseudo-beatnik places: "... fuimos a un lugarejo seudo-beaknik llamado La Nausea Embriagante." 65 In places like this, Gabriel and his friends listen to meaningless lyrics on the jukeboxes: "De un tocadiscos salía una gruesa voz cantando: There is a tavern in the town/ & there my true love sits down/ & drinks her wine as happy as can be/ & never never thinks of me." 66 After leaving such places, Gabriel experiences what psychologists call perseveration of music. That is, the tendency of organismic activity to recur without apparent associative stimulus: "Después, pareció que me habían inyectado la tonada: no podía despegarla de mis labios." 67

63. Ibid., p. 58.
64. Ibid., p. 59.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid.
Like Heidegger, Jaspers notes the emphasis on words and language as such, as an unmistakable sign of the unauthentic flight from being:

The mass-diffusion of knowledge and of its expression leads to a wearing out of words and phrases. In the cultural chaos that now exists, anything can be said, but only in such a way that it signifies nothing. When language is used without true significance, it loses its real purpose as a means of communication, and becomes an end in itself. Today no attempt is made to use language as a means of contemplating being, language being substituted for being. The upshot is that today the manifestation of culture is either imperfectly understood and watered-down chatter in which any words you like are used; or else it is verbosity in place of reality.  

Gabriel is aware of "watered-down, meaningless culture" even though he participates in it himself, unauthentically. There is a literary circle he belongs to that "waters down" the meaning of culture. Among the literary giants who are thus treated is Kafka:

José Zorrilla's Don Juan Tenorio is studied by one of the members:


años, donde citaba en griego, latín y esperanto. Jacques me miró con angustia. --¿Qué te pareció, Gabriel? ... --Indubitablemente, tu modesta tentativa es la prueba irrefutable de que tu obra parafrasea con éxito la totalidad de la sandez humana.70

One of Gabriel's girlfriends feels that, by listening to Gabriel recite a poem by Rimbaud, she can then consider herself as "knowing"

Rimbaud: "Aclare que el poema pertenece a los Delírios, lo que no pareció importarle. Sólo dijo: --Ahora puedo decir que conozco a Rimbaud. Y ante tal imbecilidad, saqué a flote mi más sarcástica risa."71

The gap between what is said and what is meant is exemplified by the seducing of Germaine by Gabriel. Germaine plays the "unauthentic they" word game with Gabriel but is shocked when the meaningless words become a reality:

En efecto, ya con varios tragos encima y nada de non plus ultra, enfatice: --¿Sabes qué necesito? --¿Qué? --Acostarme contigo. --¿Para qué? --Sais pas. --Tú bien sabes que no soy una vagina andante, lárgate a un burdel. --Tú no quieres eso. --Pues tampoco estoy dispuesta a entregarme así cómo así. --Entonces, ¿Cómo le hago? --Sedúcame, despliega tus dotes donjuanescas. --¿Es un reto? --Mais oui. --Acepto. --Parfait, puedes darte por frustrado. --Y tú, por seducida. Seguimos con el whiskey, mientras trataba de excitarla, pero ella eludía mi erotismo con frialdad. Redoblé mis ataques y nada. El poseerla se había convertido en obsesión, era ya por orgullo. ... Pasada

70. Ibid., p. 46.

71. Ibid., p. 43.
Gabriel's inability to anchor his being makes him feel like a "puppet with torn strings" which is a good metaphor for the "unauthentic they" he is living: "Los regaños de mi padre, las carcajadas de Dora y yo en el centro de todo, como un títere con los hilos rotos." 73 And the alienation resulting from a lack of "authentic self" is seen in the following: "No sentía deseos de nada: me odiaba casi en serio. Nada, era imposible. No tenía ganas de levantarme ni de permanecer en la cama. Me sentía extraño, confuso, débil y el dolor ubicado en mis sienes permanecía con terquedad." 74 The first thoughts of suicide entered his mind: "Sentí deseos de pegarme un tiro. Sería sencillo y divertido, acomodar el cañón de la pistola en mi boca." 75 The thought of his death as a being-for-others of the "serious world," however, made him decide against suicide for the moment: "Pero no podría ver la cara de los asistentes al velorio, ni de los amigos incrédulos, ni la nota en los periódicos, ni mi sepelio ... En el seno

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72. Ibid., pp. 59-60.
73. Ibid., p. 29.
74. Ibid., pp. 49-50.
75. Ibid., p. 50.
As it turns out, Gabriel is able to see how the bourgeois world views the death of one of his peer group members. After an all night spree with Gabriel, Laura decides to go for a quick spin in her car to clear her head. Declining Gabriel's offer to accompany her, she loses control of the car and overturns, killing herself. At Laura's funeral we can observe Laura's being-for-others through Gabriel's eyes. For some adults, her death verifies their platitudes on wayward youth: "Vomité cada vez que oí sandeces acerca de la falta de precaución de los jóvenes." As was the case with Ricardo Arana in La ciudad y los perros, Laura is more highly thought of dead than she was when alive: "Alabanzas a Laura de quienes antes la criticaban (mis padres entre ellos)." An aunt who hardly knew her welcomed the opportunity to play her role as the deeply bereaved one: "una tía que apenas conoció a Laura, hizo su escena ante la tumba."

Up to this point, the love affairs of Gabriel have been either "unauthentic they" youth conformity or merely a search for experiences.

76. Ibid.
77. Ibid., p. 57.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid.
They were all I-It relationships. Dora used him as part of her rebel image of herself as a non-conformist to bourgeois ethics; his aunt Berta de Ruthermore used him as part of her holiday fling, away from her bourgeois husband, and Germaine was only playing at rebel non-conformity. It is ironic, then, that when the only girl that Gabriel really cares for comes along, he is unable to respond to her in an authentic spontaneous way. Although Gabriel has truly fallen in love with Elsa, he does not dare to tear off his "cool" mask of rebellious youth. Shunning any show of emotion, their declaration of love is a parody on bourgeois sentimentality:

--Sabes, Elsa-Elsa, bien sé que sólo nos hemos visto dos conmovedoras veces, mas esas dos veces han sido suficientes para comprender que eres algo que ha penetrado en mí; ha sido tu sonrisa un aliciente, y tus ojos ... los que imperan en mi mente desde que te conozco, los que me harían luchar contra todo si supiera que no los miraría jamás. Estás en mí, Elsa, eres parte mía. No puedes abandonarme ahora que siento desesperadamente la necesidad de tu cariño. A ti me une algo más que amistad voluble y pasajera, es afecto, amor, adoración; esto es, Elsa-Elsa, que quisiera que fueses mi novia, ¿comprendes? ¿Qué me dices?80

Elsa, following Gabriel's lead, remains "cool" by continuing the parody:

--Casi perfecto, Gabriel. Destilaste un poco más de la necesaria miel, pero estuvo okay. Bueno, con respecto a la pregunta de que si acepto ser tu chamaca, bien sabes, y sabías, que te daría el yes. Espera,

80. Ibid., pp. 71-72.
sólo me falta responderte con la misma moneda:
querrido y ya futuramente entrañable Gabriel-
Gabriel, tu amor es altamente correspondido, tu
figura varil, digo viril, tu gallardía, tu maravillosa
personalidad han hecho que tu imagen no se aparte
de mis sueños. Te amo locamente, Gabriel, eres
carne mía que no me dejaré amputar. Te amo, sí,
ete amo, ¡ámame tú también!81

Although Gabriel is afraid Elsa would laugh at any show of
sticky sentimentality, alone in his room he longs to express his love
for her:

Casi mordí la almohada. Tenía enterrado el rostro.
Ya estaba húmeda, mis lágrimas la habían mojado.
Trataba de contener el llanto y no era posible.
Sentía el cuerpo vacío y las lágrimas corrían sin
detenerse. Era triste realmente. Yo, que menospre-
iciaba los problemas sentimentaloides, sufría, y mi
llanto era la mejor prueba. Primero intenté aguantarme,
mordí mis labios, entumecí el cuerpo, mascullé
majaderías sordamente, pero luego erupté: empecé a
llorar con escándalo, sin discreción. Entonces me
arrojé en la cama para llorar más a gusto. ¿La causa?
Ríanse: Elsa Galván. Elsa Gavilán. Su zarpazo fue
demoledor.82

When an old love affair of Elsa with a teacher of philosophy
causes possessive pangs of jealousy in Gabriel, he is confused as to
whether he should obey his "authentic self" feelings of jealousy or
succumb to the admonitions of Elsa that such feelings are unworthy of
non-bourgeois youth such as they:

81. Ibid., p. 72.

82. Ibid., p. 73.
Cometí la estupidez de enamorarme de ella, y al saber que había tenido un amante, profesor de filosofía, el dolor fue más grande. Chistoso, ¿no? Mi alma era un círculo de dudas, dolor y rabia; pero aún fue más cuando Elsa lo admitió con sonrisas candorosas. Hombre, muchachito, ¿qué te pasa? Normal, era normal. ¿No conoces los facts of life? ¿No sabías cómo te procrearon tus papitos? ¿Acaso tenía yo esa clase de convencionalismos burgueses? En realidad, me jactaba de no tenerlos. Pero, comprendan, con ella era distinto. 83

The more levity Elsa showed, the more jealous Gabriel became:

--Yaaa. ¿A poco no sabías?--Bueno, sí, Gabriélito/
--Señorita Galván, procedamos con la lección.--claro, me acosté con él/--Veremos la metafísica de los cuerpos, como nunca la pudo entender Kant, es decir, sobre un fondo mullido, acolchado, bamboleante.
--Era un relajo, Gabriel, en clase siempre le veía las piernas/ --¿No quiere tomar un café conmigo, señorita Galván? --no, hace poco en realidad, pero, ¿de veras no sabías? --Bésame, Elsa, esta noche te deseo más que nunca. --¿Pero en qué país vives? 84

Torn between the "unauthentic they" and the "authentic self" mode of being, Gabriel starts to succumb to the unauthentic one:

... sino por mi imbecilidad de considerarla pura.
Por eso lloré, yo, que la respetaba, por haberme equivocado. Yo, que empezaba a amarla, porque se había adueñado de mi ser. --Mire, Elsa, el amor burgués es una cosa y nuestras relaciones, otra. El tipo mediocre necesita una mujer virgen, sumisa, que se ruborice al desnudarse en la oscuridad. Pero no, no caeré en el mismo error. Ahora mismo iré por ella y será mía. No merece el tratamiento que le estaba dando. Ya aprenderá. 85

83. Ibid.
84. Ibid., pp. 73-74.
85. Ibid., p. 74.
Failing to convince Elsa that his feelings for her have nothing to do with bourgeois sentimentality, Gabriel decides to exaggerate the "negative rebel" role. Since the bourgeois plan their evenings ahead of time and know exactly what they will be doing, Gabriel demands to see Elsa on the spur of the moment and, then, gives no reason for the arbitrary act:

--Quisiera ver si tienes tiempo libre para ir a un café--claro que no dije eso. Secamente, ordené: --Te espero en el Viena a las seis, no quiero que faltes. Y colgué, dejándola, lo más probable, sorprendidísima ... . Decidí llegar tarde, pero no teniendo nada que hacer, me senté tranquilmamente ... . --¿Cuál es el problema? --¿Cuál problema? --¿Para qué diablos me hiciste venir? --Porque tenía ganas de verte, es lógico. --¿Nada más? --Claro, ¿debí morirse alguien? 86

If the bourgeoisie like to go to pretentious movie houses in order to be seen by society, Gabriel prefers to take Elsa to a cheap theater that shows re-runs:

--Bueno, y aparte de beber café, ¿qué haremos? --Ir al cine, ¿qué te parece? --¿Al cine? --Yep, veremos un programa doble. --¿Vamos a ir a un cine de barriada? --Claro, No me salgas con convencionalismos burgueses, Elsa-Elsa. Además, el programa ya está hecho. Pasan dos films: uno lo quiero ver; el otro, no. Por lo tanto, primero me divertiré con la película, y después contigo. --¿Qué te pasa, estás loco? --Nada de eso, Galván, primero nos divertiremos con la película, y luego, con nosotros mismos. ¿Te gusta esa versión? ¿La pescas? 87

86. Ibid., p. 74-75.

87. Ibid., pp. 75-76.
And if the bourgeoisie get home at a decent hour, Gabriel is determined to keep Elsa out all night by taking a room in a cheap hotel:

(--¿A dónde vamos? La miré con una sonrisilla sardónica al responder: --Pues a un hotel, ¿a dónde si no? ... Con toda premeditación no la dejé en paz hasta ya avanzada la noche, y entonces, no insistió en ir a su casa. Por el contrario, cayó dormida con pesadez. Yo, viendo logrado lo que buscaba, dormí también."

The next day, after dropping off Elsa at her home, Gabriel recalls the discrepancy between Elsa's professed bohemian ways and her actual behavior at the hotel: "Al comer, recordaba las caras y gestos de Elsa, la noche anterior, cuando temerosa de embarazarse, me pedía toda clase de precauciones que por supuesto no tuve (--Wear a safe ... --La ingenua. La apenaba decirlo en español.)"

Gabriel's new strategy towards Elsa, however, is double-edged. On the one hand, he avenges himself; but, on the other hand, he destroys any genuine feelings he had toward her. Gabriel became aware of this fact at a party he gave on his birthday. Although he invited innumerable "friends" to the party, including Elsa, Gabriel is as much a stranger to his own party as any one of the great many who came uninvited: "Como era natural había mucho paracaidista y puesto que era poca la gente que conocía, jalé a Elsa, dedicándome a bailar

88. Ibid., p. 76.
89. Ibid., p. 77.
y beber como un invitado más, olvidando mis sagrados deberes de anfitrión." By now, Gabriel has forgotten all attempts to find an authentic relationship with Elsa. Fatalistically, he goes back to "unauthentic they" diversions: "La fiesta fue, como la gente dice, de mucho relajo. Todos se divirtieron al encontrar lo indispensable: ganado hembruno, música y licor. (Yo también encontré las tres evasiones para mi seudodiversión.)" The party ends up with Gabriel and Elsa going to bed together. The next morning Gabriel feels the same disgust and alienation he felt with his aunt Berta de Ruthermore:

La segunda mañana consecutiva viendo la espalda de Elsa me dio la impresión de algo sucio y triste. Un raro sentimiento se empezó a formar en mí, mientras veía los rubios vellitos de su espalda. Mi cabeza era un caos, dolía terriblemente. La sed devorando el interior de mi cuerpo febril. Veía la piel: blanca, tersa, y luego, la azulez del techo, y mi cuarto, y los muebles, y la ventana, y el tocadiscos, y mi mano, y yo. El vértigo, los círculos, vueltas ininterrumpidas abrasando a mis ojos cerrados.

The utter meaninglessness of his life --the inability to anchor his being in authenticity--sweeps over Gabriel, who emits a cry of anguish:

De mi boca escapó un grito de angustia. Elsa despertó alarma, por segunda vez también. --Estás muy pálido ¿qué te pasa, Gabriel? --su vocecilla un tono más agudo de lo usual. --Nada--respondí, dándole la espalda. Como quiso cerciorarse, hice lo posible por aparentar

90. Ibid., p. 81.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid., pp. 81-82.
serenidad, mientras que en mi cerebro los círculos se desvanecían, quedando sólo la sed y el martilleo.  

Paul Tillich in his book, *The Courage to Be*, aptly describes the anxiety of meaningfulness Gabriel is experiencing:

The anxiety of meaningfulness is anxiety about the loss of an ultimate concern, of a meaning which gives meaning to all meanings. This anxiety is aroused by the loss of a spiritual center, of an answer, however symbolic and indirect, to the question of the meaning of existence .... One is cut off from creative participation in a sphere of culture, one feels frustrated about something which one had passionately affirmed, one is driven from devotion to one object to devotion to another and again on to another, because the meaning of each of them vanishes and the creative eros is transformed into indifference or aversion. Everything is tried and nothing satisfies.  

Gabriel's pseudo-beatnik role is now devoid of all meaning for him.

The most simple gestures now become distasteful for him:

---¿Qué horas son? Manoteé, tratando de tomar el reloj del buró. ---Doce y cuarto. ---¿Doce en un cuarto? ---No, doce y quince. ---Veintisiete. La dejé por imposible. Ella hizo un cómico gesto de resignación al mascullar: ---Otra regañada. Quise reír y lo único reflejado en mi rostro fue una mueca de hastío ...  

In contrast to Gabriel's uncommitted, empty life, Dora comes back from Europe a dedicated Marxist. When Dora declined to drink

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95. Agustín, p. 82.
a cocktail, Gabriel knew that something had changed: "Nos detuvimos en un bar drive-in, como en los viejos tiempos. Sorpresa, no bebió. Realmente está distinta."96 Gabriel redoubles his efforts to persuade Dora to take up the hic et nunc life they had before she left; but, instead, Dora tries to convince Gabriel of the futility of his way of life:


The important thing, according to Dora, is for Gabriel to commit himself totally and actively to some cause:

Lucha, rompe tu lindo hocico. Siempre pelea por algo, cuate; tarde o temprano sabrás por qué. Pero debes abandonar la vida que llevas. Tienes que buscar para entablar la batalla, ¿oyes? esto es muy serio, Gabriel, buscar. Detesto parecer moralista, pero, ¿qué caso tiene que me beses y que vayamos a la cama y que todo sea igual que antes? Debemos avanzar, no quedarnos estancados, seguir adelante hasta rompernos la cara. Yo sé qué busco, pero tú debes buscar aún. Maldita sea, escúchame, Gabriel, hay que hacerlo. Entiende, por lo que más quieras, hay que buscar.98

96. Ibid., p. 85.
97. Ibid., p. 86.
98. Ibid.
Although Gabriel would like to take Dora's advice, he feels he is past redemption: "Al oírla me sentí completamente hueco y frustrado. Supe que había algo equivoco en mí .... Quería que las palabras de Dora me llenaran, pero no fue así. Sólo pensé: Es imposible, ya estoy muerto, morido, fallecido; necesito una tumba, con pastito y lápida limpia, qué mierda soy/".99

Gabriel now begins to hear a continual click in his head. It is like a dripping faucet that reminds him of the never ending succession of "nows" in unauthentic time. "Un ruido sin fin. Sentía la cabeza próxima a estallar. Soñaba. Me volví hacia todas partes, tratando de encontrar el origen del sonido. Nada, sólo en mi cabeza. ¡Maldito ruido, nunca acaba!"100 The incessant clicking becomes more unbearable: ¿De dónde sale este ruido? De mi cabeza, es mío, pero me está hastiando ya, no lo soporto."101 Soon the clicking begins to dominate all thoughts. For Gabriel there remains only the empty, meaningless "nows" of unauthentic time. At the end of his tether, Gabriel decides that suicide is preferable to the empty life he is leading. The real duration of the interior monologue of the last two pages of the novel emphasizes the intolerable clicking of meaningless "nows":

99. Ibid., p. 87.
100. Ibid., p. 90.
101. Ibid., p. 95.
In his search for freedom from the "unauthentic they," bourgeois world, Gabriel tried to break out of this "tomb" by identifying himself with the negative values of his peer group. Unwittingly, however, he sacrificed his "authentic self" by conforming to their destructive values and found he had exchanged one "tomb" for another. Unlike Dora, no clear, positive principle gave coherence to his life. Lacking positive values, Gabriel experienced himself as diffused and fragmented. By following the hic et nunc life of beatniks, he found little self-definition or coherence in his intellectual interest or social relationships, for these did not persist beyond the impulses that inspired them.

102. Ibid., pp. 100-101.
Summary

Although José Agustín's novel takes place in Mexico City, the alienating aspects of middle and upper-class Mexican society are essentially the same as those of any other large city in the western world. Paul Goodman spoke for all the Gabriels of Mexico City when he indicted a culture that is eclectic, sensational or phony:

The accumulations of the missed and compromised revolutions of modern times, with their consequent ambiguities and social imbalances, has fallen, and must fall, most heavily on the young, making it hard to grow up.... For children and adolescents it is indispensable to have a coherent, fairly simple and viable society to grow up into; otherwise they are confused, and some are squeezed out. Tradition has been broken, yet there is no new standard to affirm. Culture becomes eclectic, sensational or phony. 103

An unauthentic culture plays an important role in La tumba. The conversation of Gabriel's group is saturated with foreign culture. We have seen, however, that this foreign culture is incorporated into their conversation only to impress "others" (das man). Their culture is either "watered down" as represented by the pseudo-literary group (El círculo); sensational, as represented by the nonsense lyrics of the American rock and roll singers, or phony, as in the use of foreign words that characterize the conversation of Gabriel and his peer group.

"The authentic man," say the existentialists, "pays more attention to

what he is saying than to the words by which he says it.\textsuperscript{104} Since perfectly good Spanish words exist for the plethora of English, French and German terms used by Gabriel and his peer group, the indiscriminate use of them demonstrates that they are more concerned with the words they use than in what they are saying.

It is interesting to note that both Dora and Germaine eschew the use of all foreign words in favor of a highly idiomatic Spanish when they each drop their "unauthentic they" mask. Before her seduction by Gabriel, a typical line by Germaine ran like this: "-Sedúceme, despliega tus dotes donjuanescas. --¿Es un reto? --Mais oui. --Acepto. --Parfait ... \textsuperscript{105} When the unauthentic seduction game became an actual reality, Germaine bemoans in an idiomatic Spanish free of foreign words that she had never really meant to make love to Gabriel. Similarly, before her conversion to Marxism, Dora's conversations are characterized by the same indiscriminate use of foreign words--but upon her return, they are entirely absent.

It will be recalled that Gabriel is not able to follow Dora's example in committing himself totally to some course in life. It is probably no accident then, that--in contrast to Germaine and Dora--Gabriel's suicide soliloquy in the closing pages of the novel is still


\textsuperscript{105} Agustín, p. 60.
pocked with foreign words: "Las balas. Clic, clic. Una, clic. Dos. Clic .... Assez. ¿No tengo otra solución? Yep, pero prefiero ésta."\(^{106}\) And characteristically, his final thoughts express a contempt for his method of suicide as "vulgar"\(^{107}\)--that is, bourgeois--He should have declaimed something "ingenioso"\(^{108}\)--that is, something "smart" and "cool," but just as unauthentic. Because, as mentioned earlier, it is the flight from the unauthenticity of the bourgeois world of the adults that has driven Gabriel into the equally unauthentic world of youth and their negative "cool" conformism.

Both paths led Gabriel away from himself and into his tomb.

\(^{106}\) Ibid., p. 101.

\(^{107}\) Ibid.

\(^{108}\) Ibid.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

We have seen that according to Sartre, there is always a potential alienation between two or more persons in the subject-object relation. For Sartre this is the meaning of the famous line from the Scripture: "they knew that they were naked."¹ "I am guilty first" says Sartre, "When beneath the Other's look I experience my alienation and my nakedness as a fall from grace which I must assume... when in turn I look at the Other... I cause him to experience the same alienation which he must now assume."²

The alienation that comes from this Look or Judgment is shared by all the alienated heroes in a way that highlights the over-all artistic end of each novel.

According to one of the leading explicators of Sartre, Hazel E. Barnes, Sartre expresses the longing for the foetal state symbolizing rest, security and the absolute belonging to an all embracing mother-home as the conscious longing of the for-itself for the status quo of the


². Ibid.
in-itself.  

The dialectical terms used by Sartre are fruitful in seeing the in-itself character other people had for José Canastuj in his compulsive search for the status quo. As a for-itself, José is the only character to be given a name (a Being-for-himself) while all other characters—as seen by the first person narrative of José—are given only in-itself relationships to José in fulfilling their Being-for-him. All of these relationships are characterized by José’s compulsive search for the status quo (pleasure principle) associated with his mother or the avoidance of devenir (reality principle) associated with his father. The yearning for "enclosed places" (in-itself) with the resulting introverted activities and limiting in-itself relationships, all shrink José's being-in-the-world to that "cárcel intransferible de mi propia existencia" expressed by him.

Whereas the alienation of José in his relationships with others came from treating them as objects, the alienation of Vargas Llosa's characters is just the opposite. Alienation comes mostly through treating themselves as an object-for-others. Here a comparison between Solórzano's hero, José, and Vargas Llosa's Ricardo Arana can be helpful. Whereas José's later relations with people were determined


by his experiences in early childhood and were bound up with his unresolved Oedipus conflict, Ricardo Arana's alienation is not deterministic in spite of the implied Oedipus conflict suggested by Vargas Llosa to throw us off the track. In following Sartrean psychology, the author eschews the strict determinism of Freudian psychology for the freedom of the individual to determine his own choice of being as was noted earlier by the Jaguar.  

Recent critics such as Luis Harss and George Mac Murray use Ricardo Arana and the Jaguar as examples of what they call the combination of "social determinism and existentialism" found in La ciudad y los perros. The two terms, however, are incompatible. If existence precedes essence as existentialism espouses, then there cannot be any determinism, i.e., essence in personality. As for Sartre, he himself has said that he finds no difficulty in holding that every man is wholly conditioned by his situation and yet remains "an irreducible center of indetermination." Indeed, by first implying an Oedipus conflict and then revealing Ricardo's conscious self-for-others, Vargas

Llosa emphasizes that "irreducible center of indetermination" at the expense of social determinism.

A close comparison of Sartre's description of the self-for-others (I-It) as revealed by a masochist and a sadist, and the first face to face encounter between Ricardo and the Jaguar at the military school will show a striking similarity in terminology. Here is Sartre:

Masochism, like sadism, is the assumption of guilt. I am guilty due to the very fact that I am an object, I am guilty toward myself since I consent to my absolute alienation. I am guilty toward the Other, for I furnish him with the occasion of being guilty—that is of radically missing my freedom as such.... It is useless for the masochist to get down on his knees, to show himself in ridiculous positions, to cause himself to be used as a simple lifeless instrument. It is for the Other that he will be simply passive, for the Other that he will undergo these postures.

Now here is Vargas Llosa:

Lo que no debió (Ricardo) hacer fue arrodillarse, eso no. Y además juntar las manos, parecía mi madre en las novenas, un chico en la iglesia recibiendo la primera comunión, parecía que el Jaguar era el obispo y él estuviera confesando ... El Jaguar estaba de pie, miraba con desprencio al muchacho arrodillado y todavía tenía el puño en alto ...

And in another section, Sartre talks of the Look of the Master as sadist who looks at his Slave as masochist. "I become subject to his appreciations, to his value judgment. I am his slave." And Vargas Llosa

9. Sartre, p. 378. (My emphasis.)
has the Jaguar say to Ricardo: "'Me das asco .... No tienes dignidad ni nada. **Eres un esclavo.**"12

We have already seen that Vargas Llosa prefers not to reveal anything directly. The reader himself must induce what is only implied by the author. We have already seen too, how both Ricardo and the Jaguar became a self-for-others (I-It relationship) before arriving at the military school. Ricardo's father had hammered away at his son that he was a "mamma's boy" and hurled at him a long string of other synonyms for lacking manhood. The Jaguar grew up with his mother always telling him he would grow up to be a criminal and other synonyms for a social outcast. Sartre believes that the first encounter with a person is important, for a person's character is always given immediately in a synthetic intuition.13 As already noted, the first encounter between Ricardo and the Jaguar quickly established the self that they wanted to be for the other. That is to say, Ricardo wanted to be a masochist (slave) in order to be recognized by the sadist (master), the Jaguar.

Since the Jaguar was later able to reject his self-for-others in his new choice of being, we must assume that Ricardo was not determined by his social environment to continue to be a self-for-others.

12. Vargas Llosa, p. 54. (My emphasis.)

In other words, Ricardo chose not to choose a new authentic self and, as Sartre has shown, to choose not to choose is to make a choice. 14

To say that Vargas Llosa believes in a combination of social determinism and existentialism is to weaken the artistic end of his novel. It is true that Ricardo, Alberto and Lieutenant Gamboa (like most of us) succumb to becoming a self-for-others due to social pressure but Vargas Llosa by means of juxtaposition clearly implied that only the Jaguar acted in "good faith," that is, that he refused to continue treating others as objects, thereby rejecting his self-for-others foisted upon first by his mother, then by the I-It atmosphere of the military school.

By juxtaposing Ricardo and the Jaguar, Vargas Llosa clearly implies that while both arrived at the school as a being-for-others, the Jaguar acted in good faith, i.e., authentically, since man is a for-itself (free conscious) as well as an in-itself (self-for-others) when he stopped seeing and using people as objects. Ricardo, on the other hand, refused in bad faith to recognize the freedom of consciousness, i.e., the for-itself in order to seek out the in-itself of security and, thereby, escape the anguish of freedom and responsibility. By first implying an Oedipus conflict and then juxtaposing the good faith of the Jaguar with the bad faith of Ricardo, Vargas eschews, as does Sartre,

the strict determinism of Freudian psychology as seen in Solórzano's alienated hero and has substituted an original choice of being, a particular relation between consciousness and the rest of the world. In place of social determinism, Vargas Llosa postulates the free upsurge of consciousness in a situation established by that consciousness in the world. To say that Ricardo's alienation as a self-for-others was determined by society is to undermine the good faith shown by the Jaguar and to excuse and accept the bad faith of Ricardo, Alberto and Lieutenant Gamboa as well as the whole I-It atmosphere of the military school.

The second revealing juxtaposition is the sharing of the same cell by Alberto and the Jaguar. In this encounter, it is Alberto who is acting in good faith while the Jaguar is still following the values of the crowd (perros). Shortly afterward, however, the roles are reversed. Under pressure from the military authorities, Alberto retreats into the security of the in-itself by becoming a self-for-others, i.e., a dutiful, obedient cadet whose first allegiance is to an institution (I-It) rather than to a human being, Ricardo Arana (I-Thou). Under similar pressure from his fellow cadets (perros), who falsely accuse the Jaguar as the informer, instead of retreating into the in-itself security of the values of his peer group—which he could have easily done by

15. Ibid., pp. 557-560.
exposing the real informer--the Jaguar, in contrast to Alberto, rejects the in-itself for the for-itself. He refuses to continue to play the vicious I-It game of the perros and opts for the I-Thou relationship with his best friend Higueras and his bride-to-be Teresa.

The third juxtaposition is with the last main character, Lieutenant Gamboa. We already saw how he had to choose between the security of his family (in-itself) and his freely chosen being (for-itself) as an honest incorruptible military officer upholding the military code, symbol of the last bastion of justice in a corrupt society. As an officer with a bourgeois background, we can sympathize with his decision not to jeopardize the security of his family. On the other hand, when the Jaguar steps forward voluntarily to hand over to the Lieutenant the written confession, the reader is not expected, for reasons already given earlier, to sympathize with him. The reader is not told what is going on in the Lieutenant's mind when he reads the Jaguar's confession. After Gamboa tells the Jaguar to forget about it, the Lieutenant tears up the confession along with the telegram he has just received informing him that he was the father of a new baby boy and that the mother was in good health. We are told this information through the eyes of the Jaguar who has leaned over to pick up the juxtaposed two pieces of paper the Lieutenant had thrown away. Now, just as the good faith of the Jaguar is contrasted with the juxtaposed scene with Ricardo and a similar scene with Alberto, the good faith of the Jaguar
is juxtaposed with the bad faith of Lieutenant Gamboa. But this happens only afterward when we find out with a jolt that the Jaguar of the city and the Jaguar of the military school are one and the same. In this gestalt revelation, we have to reevaluate the juxtaposition of the Lieutenant and the Jaguar. For now we realize that the Jaguar had an I-Thou relationship with a girl too, just as the Lieutenant had with his family. In other words, the author counted on us to believe that the Lieutenant could be excused for his bad faith since he had an "essence" that the Jaguar did not have. He was an officer, good background, family, etc., while the Jaguar was a "bad guy" with nothing to lose. But, suddenly, we realize they both had something to lose; yet the Jaguar comes out a man of higher caliber because he had the courage to choose the for-itself at the expense of the in-itself while Gamboa sank to the level of in-itself in order to insure the security of his family.

It is not hard to figure out whose side Vargas Llosa takes. In the end, we see Gamboa packing for his next post, an isolated small place where he and his family are insured an in-itself security but that will symbolize Gamboa's alienation in his shrunken world of in-itself security freely chosen by him. The Jaguar, in contrast to Gamboa, leaves the alienating I-It world of the military school for the greatly expanded authentic world of his I-Thou relationship with his wife Teresa and the I-Thou relationship with his friend Higueras who
represents his new relationship with his fellow man. Because he, too, lacked the courage to act in good faith, Alberto leaves the shrunken I-It world of the military school (perros) to join the equally alienated world of his peer-group (Ciudad) who are concerned only with their self-for-others. The shooting of Ricardo by the Jaguar is not inconsistent with the over-all artistic end of the novel since it emphasizes Vargas Llosa's point that in certain circumstances (Dasein) we are all potential murderers. For, although we might think of ourselves as having an "essence" that precludes such an act, Vargas Llosa shows that there is, in fact, nothing in consciousness that will preclude any act whatsoever. There is no escaping the anguish of the complete freedom the for-itself forces on us. Moreover, the shooting scene emphasizes the other point the author is making: just as Ricardo wanted the Jaguar to be a sadist in order to live the in-itself of a masochist, the guilt of the Jaguar as murderer (self-for-others) has to be shared, not only by Ricardo who consciously encouraged his fatal role as the victim, but also by his father, his fellow cadets and the school as an institution which sees the cadets only as objects (I-It) instead of human beings (I-Thou). Lieutenant Gamboa spoke for the school when he said: "No puedo acordarme de él ... quiero decir de su vida de cadete. A otros los tengo bien presentes, recuerdo su comportamento.
en campaña, su manera de llevar el uniforme. Pero a Arana no. Y ha estado tres años en mi compañía."

José Agustín's alienated hero, Gabriel Guía, shares the self-for-others alienation of Alberto Fernández. Like Alberto, Gabriel rejects the unauthentic self-for-others as represented by the status quo bourgeois society who values security above authenticity. Thus, the parents are more concerned about what the neighbors will think (self-for-others) than in maintaining an I-Thou relationship with their son; the teachers are more concerned with their in-itself role as teachers than in their for-itself responsibility to Gabriel and others as human beings and not just students (objects). Typical of the unauthentic role members of society play in order to secure an in-itself essence is the waiter at the pseudo-sophisticated restaurant who angers Gabriel by calling him "sir." It is interesting to note that Sartre uses the role of a waiter also to demonstrate this unauthentic being-for-others: "Those 'people' are functions: ... the cafe waiter is nothing but the function of serving patrons." Gabriel rejects, as does the Jaguar, this self-for-others of the adult world; but, unlike the Jaguar who recognizes the values of his own peer group (perros) to be unauthentic


(I-It) and rejects them, Gabriel unwittingly embraces these values (as does Alberto Fernández) and, thereby, exchanges the alienated world of the adults for the equally alienating world of the peer group. The Jaguar has a literary sister in Dora who finds authenticity in rejecting both groups. Implicit in the negative relationships in La tumba is the unauthentic culture of modern Mexico City which complements and compounds the alienation of Gabriel Cuía. Like Ricardo, Gabriel succumbs to the in-itself of death; for, by committing suicide, he quiets for all time the incessant clicking of the for-itself which reminds him of his unauthenticity; that is to say, of his alienation not only from society, but from himself too. (Being-for-himself).

Juan Carlos Onetti's alienated hero Larsen is a fictional treatment of the various forms in which the conscious mind manifests negation (nothingness) because of its for-itself and in-itself nature. The for-itself of Larsen's consciousness yearns to find meaning in an absurd world (in-itself). The idea of human life as absurd had, of course, been espoused by earlier writers; but, where the characters of Camus and Sartre argue about it or discover it in the course of action, Onetti's characters present it in absurd language (monologues): the absurd situations of the shipyard, Santa María, the summerhouse and the shack, until the vision of absurdity encompasses both the detail and the totality. It is the absurdity of the in-itself best personified by Gálvez' wife that drives both Gálvez and Larsen to drown
themselves. On the symbolic level, we can say that Gálvez' wife, as the personification of all that is viscous and gratuitous, drove Larsen and Gálvez into the for-itself of action symbolized by the fluidity of water in contrast to the viscosity of mud or slime. But wherever there is for-itself, there is in-itself; and, as Sartre puts it, man is a useless passion. If Larsen settled down to the in-itself of life, he would become as alienated as José, Gabriel or Ricardo. For the in-itself will, sooner or later, take revenge on the for-itself as symbolized by the fetus in Gálvez' wife, the moss on the shipyard or the varicose veins on Larsen's arms. Yes, man can "drown" himself in ceaseless activity of the for-itself; but, in the end, it is useless since the death of the body (in-itself) will revenge itself on the for-itself activity of man's consciousness. The infinite alienating "negations" of consciousness in everyday life lead to the ultimate negation (nothingness) -- death.

All four novelists use symbols to highlight the alienation found in each novel: thus, the glass showcase in Los falsos demonios containing the religious figurines, where not even the flies can bother them, represents the alienation of José Canastuj's mind in its search for the security of the status quo (pleasure principle) and its avoidance of devenir (the reality principle). The derelict shipyard in Juan Carlos Onetti's El astillero symbolizes an absurd world forsaken by God in which men play meaningless games while awaiting for "something" to
give meaning to their lives. The constant playing of *Lohengrin* by José Agustín's Gabriel Guía in *La tumba* associates Gabriel's search for authenticity and self-identity to the quest of Parsifal for the Holy Grail, a symbol of self-identity. Gabriel commits suicide while listening to a recording of *Lohengrin*. In Mario Vargas Llosa's *La ciudad y los perros*, the leit motif of circles is symbolic. The Leoncio Prado school is surrounded by the sea on one side and the city of Lima on the other. The school itself is surrounded by walls. There are many allusions to forced encirclement already mentioned earlier such as the internment of Ricardo and Alberto on the human level, and the vicuña and the dog (la Malpapeada) on the animal level. All of the above could be called a coincidence until we remember that the Jaguar was the leader of a group called "El círculo" which was formed ostensibly to mete out punishment to those cadets who questioned their authority. The pecking order of the cadets with their I-It relationships (subject-object) along with the pecking order of the officers brings to mind Dante's Inferno with the different circles of hell. Dante's medieval vision of hell then brings to mind the famous Sartrean character who said: "So this is hell. I'd never have believed it. You remember all we were told about torture chambers, the fire and brimstone, the burning marl. Old wives' tales! There's no need for redhot
pokers. Hell is other people." When we remember how the Sartrean Look makes an object out of the subject who, in turn, is made into an object by the look of the Other in a continuous circle ad infinitum, then the symbol of the circle in La ciudad y los perros is well suited to the environment of the Leoncio Prado Military school with its I-It environment.

If we were to attempt a concrete picture of the alienated hero of the four contemporary Spanish American novels, the result would be a combination of some of the forms of Dalí: an isolated figure, partly organic, partly mechanized, with a hole in the middle, with bony excrescences jutting out into the distance, all of this set in a background of melting or disintegrating time. The figure is absurd, but so is José's desire for an irrational return to the in-itself of his mother-home. A society that does not provide a viable coherent culture and expects something other than a mechanized response from their youth is absurd, as Agustín's novel demonstrates. And although man is the being through whom nothingness comes into the world as demonstrated by Onetti's Larsen, the alienation of the for-itself invaded by the negation of the in-itself can be mitigated by the stubborn courage of a Jaguar who has the courage to elect the for-itself and to deny the nothingness that comes from seeing people as objects (Being-in-itself).

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