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only young squirrels

Only young squirrels, dancing in the night grass,
will ever catch the dark.

Those wiser and older, aware of coming acorns,
curl up in wooden comfort.

But young squirrels, dancing in the damp grass,
will always catch a chill.

And those others, sleeping sugar-plumlessly,
must sometime leave their coffin.
the father

Again—! Beth clutched the doll Jill—squeezed her hard rubber body—they were fighting again! She held her breath—listened—they were yelling again—the door was closed but she could hear them—it was so terrible when they yelled—she just got so mad and teeth clenched and breathed all hard—they were yelling and she knew whose fault it was—it was her father's fault—they couldn't fool her. He thought he could fool her by acting nice, funny—by saying they would play circus and she could stand on his knees—but she never did. Let Annie the dumb kid Annie stand on his knees the dumb little sister Annie. Pooh! She knew who was mean. She wished they would stop yelling though. Please she really wished it. The doll Jill was awfully old. She had gotten Jill when she was five, and Jill wasn't one of those stupid new teenage dolls with bride dresses. She held Jill very tightly, the rubber fingers pressing into her ribs. She wished they would stop yelling so she could play with Jill. But they kept yelling and she would go downstairs and tell them—she would tell him to shut up—she would tell him to stop yelling at Mommy. He was an awful mean man. She knew he was. Once he hit the puppy Bambi because Bambi bit Annie but it was only a little bite and Annie had been pestering Bambi. Even Mommy knew. Even Mommy said "Stop pestering the dog," all the time.

Beth opened the door. The yelling was louder. She went part way downstairs, sat where she could see them through the white bars of the banister. Her father was sitting in the grey chair, Mommy on the sofa. Her father was saying, "Well we should never have moved into this house into this neighborhood—that's what!" What a terrible thing! He was always saying things like that—like they should live in the slums—in the Bowery he called it—like they should be poor and not have a television and things like that. It frightened her she had seen the girls who didn't have nice clothes in the city. Her mother was saying, "Please Norman I have a headache—Must you?—We're here now—Isn't this enough?" But he went on and on—Mommy was terribly upset—Mommy had a headache and he just went on and on and didn't care. That proved how much he hated Mommy. She knew he did anyway. Once she asked Mommy "Why don't you get a divorce from him like other parents?" and Mommy answered "I love him" but that wasn't true. Mommy said all sorts of things like it was just a hard time for him and he'd get over it. Once when he went away for a few months she said he had gone to take a rest at a place called Richland but Beth knew it wasn't only a rest because the kids at school said Richland was an insane asylum. "You and your god-damn family—" her father again "with your ideas about how to live in happy little suburbia." Her father's voice was terrible—ugly. She thought Mommy was going to cry. She had never seen Mommy cry. She was hurting all over inside—Mommy must be hurting much more—and
mother turned off the alarm in the morning. She knew it all the time. She wondered what she was supposed to say. There was nothing—only to try very hard not to cry. Bambi kept barking—stupid puppy.

“That damn dog will wake up Annie. Beth why don’t you feed Bambi and maybe it’ll keep him quiet.”

She opened a can of dog food. This wasn’t like the real world at all. This wasn’t like being real people. She thought “I will never see my father again.” But that was silly. It didn’t make any sense. And the tears—whenever she brushed them away kept coming. She wondered if she was really sad, and if so, why didn’t she feel sad like a real person, and if not, why were her eyes all hot and teary and her throat all lumpy-stuck. She didn’t blame herself. Once she had told Grandma that she wished Annie were dead and Grandma said “Never say that because if she dies you’ll feel guilty and it won’t be your fault but you’ll think it will and you’ll never forgive yourself as long as you live.” So she knew—it wasn’t her fault. She didn’t feel guilty. Only strange.

She put Bambi’s food on the floor and the dog attacked it hungrily. Footsteps upstairs. Annie was awake.

Mommy went upstairs to see Annie. Beth followed her, entered her own room, turned on the light. Mommy was telling Annie. Well, she had wanted it this way. She had wished he was dead, and he was, so she couldn’t unwish it. Annie was starting to cry. The baby! Beth heard Annie crying and crying and crying. That was probably the right thing to do. Beth slammed the door shut. She knew Mommy was holding Annie—comforting her like Daddy used to do at night. Well—she didn’t need that—she didn’t have any right to cry even—she had wished for it. Only still there was the hotness of tears—they just kept coming and coming—and she didn’t quite know why.
naves gothicae

Hic  Perhaps what we
     Have found here
     Are august frigates
     Resting solemnly
     At the bottom
     Of time:
     A sunken fleet?

Ille  No, don’t you see!
     These are valved creatures
     Borne by crusted,
     Calcified shells
     Pegged to the floor
     Beneath the sea —

Alius  Or marine arachnids
     Nestled amid
     Their arching legs,
     Their bodies ringed
     With arrowed eyes
     To take in the light
     That makes its way
     Through the waters.
i rested on my rolled and tufted hill chaise

I rested on my rolled and tufted hill-chaise,
badly soiled by the rain,
with my head buried deep in yellowed grass,
and gulped some burnt-almond air.

The trees rebuked me with sullen silence
and turned their barks to me
like wrinkled old men, bald but for the green wigs
they kept misplacing.

Unfragrant flowers tugged at root-chains,
seeking a fugitive sun,
each kneeling with folded blossom,
each bearing a leaf-cross.

And what could I tell them?
Perfection is rare, if not ridiculous?
When the guide called at the hotel at six, I had a headache. It wasn’t a simple throbbing, but a hazy constriction, the kind that never is defined but draws the world into its unreality. I hadn’t slept well and wakefulness was impossible.

Fifteen minutes later I boarded a bus with thirty others for the Ganges, and after another fifteen of riding through what tasted like a tunnel-full of stale cigarette smoke, stopped a hundred yards from the river, where we were scheduled to row about and study religion. Innumerable blankets covered with food and religious wares that their owners sold to the tourists and faithful lined the paths before us, and farther down, a double row of beggars and lepers led to the water. None of this bothered me. I adeptly stared over the heads, and picked my way through to the bank, or what there was of one. The water and the steps were the same color, a flat black-brown, and the line between them was obliterated by the splashing bathers. On the steps, above the bathers, sat river-colored priests under what resembled beach umbrellas and sold kunkum, the red powder for the spots on the worshippers’ heads, and horoscopes. Together the water, the bathers, the steps, the priests reinforced the conviction in my head; the world was made of mud. To the left were the boats and after considerable bumping and shifting about our party boarded, five to an unpainted boat. But the fleet was jammed together, and the boats couldn’t separate. Finally, ten minutes later, we were prepared for sightseeing.

I couldn’t focus my attention. The guide was dramatizing the usual platitudes about Indian religions and culture and droned on and on, not stopping even when the boatman lost control and the boat scraped against a water-front house or turned bow to stern in an eddy. I was aggravated both by the ineptitude of the boatman whose only resource was to jump out — the river was shallow — and pull us out of trouble; and by the generalities. Both were sloshing through my head, rolling the ache over and over, rubbing the raw surface.

I tried concentrating on the shore. It was lined with buildings half-submerged in the flooding river. Boys and men stood in the upper windows, and seeing us, they often dove in and swam towards the boat. If they came too close, however, the boatman clouted them. Between the buildings were mud banks or steps on which the older men and women sat, some meditating in unison — though most were gossiping when they weren’t washing — and others alone. I saw one old woman on a bottom step lifting water in a bony hand and patting it to her shrivelled breasts. Between the boat and the shore every twenty yards or so, was a whirlpool formed by opposing eddies. I was unable to keep my mind from spinning with the debris in them. In one mandala I found myself staring at a pink fleshy object which I took to be a doll’s leg, — like those I had seen stick-
ing out of garbage cans around Christmas time. But a friend, following my stare, nudged me and pointed out the toe nails. Just one leg. Shocked, I tried to jerk my mind above the rooftops to the sky. But my eyes stopped to watch two dogs playing on a rooftop. From start to finish their copulation took less than a minute. I watched that long. After that the river overcame me. Bathers, houses, temples, whirled by in a discontinuous stream, punctuated by the boatman’s mishaps or surrealistic scenes on the bank. I remember nothing until we came to the steps where they burn the dead. This was the promised finale and the boats rammed together ten feet from the biers so that everyone could see. But our noise didn’t bother anyone, at least none of the workmen looked out toward us. Two men were raking ashes from various fires into one pile while another squatted by a corpse shrouded in red; the guide said it was a woman. From the bank above them a few Indians watched the ceremony with the same indifference. I guessed they were mourners, or perhaps tourists like us. When the sweepers had finished collecting the ashes, they walked over to the third and waited while he lifted the edge of the cloth and sprinkled water on the body’s face. Then all three carried the litter to a fresh bier and lifted it on. At that point we left. Death had been clearer than life. The proper climax to a nightmare.

We were back at the bank ten minutes later, walking up the line of beggars to the bus. I slept to the hotel and through the other tours that day.

refrain for rimbaud

It is sweet and right to love
The one I touched, but not to
Touch the one I love;

For lust’s lurking for this love
To make sweet warmth turn ague
And touch turn shove.
a folktale

I.
Hoary fathers long ago
Over empty womb are bent
Casting there a mighty spell.
Whence the craft they wield is sent,
Whence the crafty seed they sow,
Fathers' fathers cannot tell.

Witful, wise, they seek tomorrow.
"If the spell come true," they say,
"We shall live." They do; but then,
One over whom their hands would play
Says her womb they shall not borrow,
Says her sons shall be new men.

II.
Hoary fathers, withered, old,
Thought to cast a mighty spell.
Now, spellcrafty fingers numb,
They know at last and o! would tell,
If their gray lips were not too cold,
Whence the seed they sowed has come.

Now they fade like passing hours
By two bright hands swept from the face.
The pendulum is never fickle;
None receives a moment's grace,
But all fall silently as flowers
Severed by a shining sickle.
the visit

I speak to you in foreign tongue of things gone by,
Of my people, my home and my joyful land.
And you, unaware, do not understand.
You think, and write it on your face,
That he is but a child from a children's land.
You know not that I see it too and become saddened.
My visit to see has become one of honor to you,
And you believe that the honor is, with pride.
You know not how to quiet my love for you,
And now you make a fire into a bed of struggling coals.
So, finally, I stop speaking, and you thinking me dumbfounded,
Leave me unnoticed as a child.

I speak to you in foreign tongue of things to come.
Of my people, my home and my burdened land.
And you shall never fully understand,
Of how, with love's labor without love,
I shall tell the children in the children's land
That we must save you from yourselves and become slaves,
Not receiving even the visit from the false master.
Yes, you lead the slave only with scorn.
You do not see that the child, guiding, pulls the parent,
That soon, wanting to die, you would kill the child too.
So stilled, I stop speaking, and the children, now resting,
Leave you unnoticed as a corpse.
beneath the placid face

In the conflict of setting suns
And rising shadows,
Of darkness and embattled light
Messages from Hell come
Clamoring up from bondage —
The seething turmoil
Beneath the placid face.
It is all burning, scalding
Stench, corruption
Still held by gates
Guarded by a seven face dog.

The power must be met
As cracking lines are showing
Where fire and water mix,
Sending burning fluid
Higher into sense,
There waves of fire spread
Over brain and feeling
And wrong pivots into right;
Still stands the seven faced dog.
the inn keeper's
evening song

Those who have wandered
And wearied of walking,
Lost in the lanes
When the night is dark
And the demons squawking
And daylight squandered,
Drum on my door
Demanding the way,
And each complains
That the wasted day
Had passed too soon
(As though he must say,
And I understand,
That in his own land,
He could be stronger,
Under his sun
That lasted longer).

Before we're done,
He sits at my fire
And drinks my ale;
And should he inquire
Of any tale sung
From here to the moon,
I spin him a tale
And a song, and soon
The tricks of my tongue
Have told him of towns.

He gathers his gowns
Around him, and rises;
The sun surprises

His window glance,
And murmuring how
The night has fled,
And he must be sped now
Upon his journey
(And adding on something,
Softer and low,
Of towns that are waiting),
He turns to go.

We part at the door
Just where we met.
I am bound to this inn
For my life, and yet
In all the darkness
And all their fears
Whom the turning years
Have brought to me nightly,
I know each knock
I hear at the door
Will bring the shock
It has before,
Of giving some rest,
And a talk till dawn,
To a guideless guest
Who must then move on
By the path I show
To the towns I spin;
And never I know,
Being bound to my inn,
If I spin them rightly.
For third class it wasn’t crowded. In the open compartment there were a pair of benches facing each and two seats across the aisle, room for ten, but only seven seats were taken. Three middle-aged men sat next to me and a young couple and an old peasant woman sat opposite us. Of the six, the last three were more interesting.

The husband who sat by the window, his hip supporting a duffel bag that his wife leaned on, couldn’t relax. He was a chain smoker, but after three or four puffs on a cigarette he would drop it and flick his head about to glance at me or his wife. When neither of us responded, he would reach for another cigarette in his rear pocket, then for a match in the duffel bag. This meant his wife had to move twice; once when he took the matches out and once when he returned them. But she didn’t seem to care. I wondered if she knew he disturbed her.

Her eyes didn’t show it. They were either focused in space beyond her nose or not focused at all— I couldn’t tell—but they seldom changed, and when they did they rolled toward the object. The red kunkum spot on her forehead was a responsive. I thought maybe that was her third eye and the cause of the eternal admiration she gave herself.

Finally her husband gained nerve, and putting out his cigarette with an Italian toed shoe, leaned towards me to direct a question. I bent with him. He said, “I want to go to United States.” “Oh?” And that was all. For another minute we sat leaning forward as he tried to phrase a second statement in English, and I studied the perspiration oozing from his heavily greased hair. To help him was impossible; though he had listened to Indians teaching in English from grade school through college, he couldn’t speak it. Finally he gave up, and jerking back, jabbered excitedly at his wife. I imagined he told her we were speaking in English. She didn’t smile back. Satisfied, he reached for a cigarette and probed deeply for a match.

I’m not certain what bothered me; was it his grease-stained, pin-stripe pants, or his slippery eyes; the gentle touch she gave her hair after adjusting the tip of her sari, or the slight upturn at the ends of her lips? Anyway, I didn’t like them. He reminded me of a second rate tom cat, a little sadistic, a little vain, and she was his part-Persian mate, who didn’t care who the father was so long as she was well fed. I could imagine their litter.

What a contrast they made with the peasant woman. Like the girl she seldom moved, but not because she was involved with herself, but because she was not. Her stillness was like that of a moss-covered rock; a quiet awareness of nothing, the softness of inborn depth. A complete peasant, no more, no less. If measured in time, the four inches between her massive thigh and the girl’s curled up foot was a gap of forty years and more, forty years of India’s growth and decline. If they were liberated parlor cats, she was a brahmin cow.
I must have dozed then, for when I looked up at the next stop all three were gone, leaving the seat empty. When the train started again, I was about to leave my three companions and move when the husband reappeared, carrying his wife awkwardly in his arms. She was pale and quivering and looked unconscious. At first I thought she was dying. He laid her down on the empty bench, and pulling the duffel bag from overhead where I hadn’t noticed it, laid it under her head, careful to keep her face covered with the edge of the sari. This finished, he began to systematically arrange her, in one moment turning her head when she choked, in the next yanking off a sandal that had twisted on her foot. He was never gentle,—I wondered if he could be,—but extremely attentive. At one point when he lowered his head and lifted the veil a bit, she must have asked for water, for immediately he borrowed a glass from one of the three men and dashed out. By then I was concerned, and while he was gone, I envisioned myself her protector, ready to spring up if the train rolled her over or she choked. I felt she needed me. Suddenly the sari slipped away leaving her face uncovered and she opened her eyes on mine. Amid a flood of guilt I remembered what I had thought before: she is less than human. The men had the right to pity her, the woman even more, but not I. I had forfeited that inheritance, signed it away in cigarette ashes from the floor on that blank space before her eyes. The document was irrevocable. She pulled the hem back over her head, and turned towards the wall.

Soon the husband was back with the water, lifting her head in his rough manner so she could drink, forcing her when she wouldn’t. In five minutes she was raised on one arm drinking by herself. In five more she was staring out the window while he smoked. The peasant woman was back, sitting across the aisle, and the blank-face men sat beside me.
conversion

At August's height
I prostrate lay
and naked turned
beneath the Sun
to feel It smite,
but while It blazed,
I never burned.

So late on October nights
when tongues of Chill
descended upon the hill
to glaze it white,
I lay on the plate grass spikes,
but by morning,
I never was taken ill.

In November, when the rain
fell stiff, forms were cast in lead,
and the world was dumb with pain,
I went coatless and exposed,
but never, sad to remember,
was numbed past sense by the Cold.

Nature would not have me,
and so I turned to leave Her
when suddenly she struck mid-May;
I died of mild fever.
There is a road runs past my home and winds through the hills up to the next town, but it is a small place — not a lot of men live there — and the way is hot. With such a lack of rain as there’s been, the road is thick with dust and no trees shade it from the sun. Few men come by my door at all, and next to none stop to rest and tell me what’s new. I used to think of the sins in the world — so much, I soured my mind and was blind to all the good done by man. Then one night I saw come up my road a man who’d been far that day. His shoes were worn, his robes torn and brown with dirt. Slow he was, but I knew it was not with age. At my door, he asked that he might come in to rest; I gave him, too, to drink and eat. When he was through, he spoke to me of his life, and told me of the men he’d met, plights they’d borne, and the love that held them up in times of pain. “There is such depth in the mind of one man. Where does it go, and where does it end?” he asked me; I could but give him a shake of my head. I looked at him and saw a man, a thing that took up just so much room in space, and yet knew that his thoughts went more deep than his toes, more high than his head, but could not tell how far, or where their end was. So I asked, “Is the soul bound by ends?” And he told me, “A man’s soul is bound but by his fears and lack of faith.” He went on his way then and I had no chance to ask more. At first I knew not what he meant and wept with shame, but through the vent of my tears I saw my own self in his words, and found peace in the pain of my sight.
if jars cans & boxes

if jars cans & boxes could meet defeat
(a quorum, a quorum, my kingdom for that)
who thence-revelations would dare repeat?
would multitude pulchritude be there to greet?
and could you refrain from disdaining me, sweet?
(alarum, alarum, i'd knock you quite flat)

if you dear & i could the wallpaper flay
(and johnny and henry and rose marie)
do you think that our love would indeed find a way?
would there anything left be to posit or say?
don't you think we should loathe one another, that day?
(les aristocrats a la lanterne, and we)

if psyches were neckties to trade and share
(& onward & upward havana cigars)
would ever a never be there to spare?
a scruple above a repair anywhere?
wouldst think that jehovah could possibly care?
(and away, away with boxes & jars)
o sky

o sky
how much you must
enjoy being sky
for the jagged-branchéd
trees of winter
who are careful to tickle
— not scratch —
you with their skinny fingers
when you draw close to them
in the purple evenings
and creak to you their
always-fulfilled promises
of the coming spring
when they shall nudge you
with their youngest buds,
and of the coming summer
when full leaves shall shield
your o so delicate underside
from the prying eyes
of us below.
the absurdity of the human situation

A recent existentialist philosopher has likened the human situation to being isolated alone in a cold, prison-like cell with wax walls. The only possible way of communicating with another is to scratch upon the wax of which the walls of the cell are made and hope that there is another person in a similar adjacent cell and that he notices this attempt to communicate with him. It would not be missing the mark by much to suggest that this is what Eugene Ionesco is talking about in his plays.

As Charles Aughtry points out in his brief commentary on Ionesco, Ionesco is a member of a school or movement of drama known as "The Theatre of the Absurd," along with Genet, Beckett, and others. Aughtry further points out that in this context the word absurd is used in a philosophical sense referring to the absurdity of the human situation.¹

There are in our day two predominant and influential schools of philosophy: Existentialism and Linguistic Analysis. Both of these schools trace their origins to the first half of the 19th Century, Existentialism, of course, to Soren Kierkegaard, and Linguistic Analysis to the Vienna Circle and the Logical Positivism of Morris Schlick and Rudolph Carnap. Both of these movements were violent reactions against the Absolute Idealism of Hegel which prevailed at the time. In their reaction they took widely divergent courses. In a word, Existentialism took the course of emphasizing the individual, his estrangement from the world and other people, and his need for personal individual purpose in life and his search for unique reason for being. The passions, commitments, and relationships of living were emphasized and metaphysics, ethics, religion, etc., became strictly individual matters. The Analytic School, on the other hand, was concerned with knowledge and its communication. Its central principle may be simply stated: the only possible knowledge is that which is either tautological or scientifically verifiable. Metaphysics, ethics, religion, etc., were nearly thrown out the window altogether. These two schools of thought have culminated in today's existentialist concern for individual purpose and meaning in life and in today's analytic concern about the nature of language and communication.

It is my contention that the plays of Ionesco, as well as much of contemporary literature, are a sophisticated and poignant articulation of philosophical ideas reflecting a synthesis of existential and analytic thought. Inconceivable as it is that Ionesco, a literate man of the 20th Century, is unaware or uninfluenced by these movements in philosophical thought, I have no intention of playing at the game of pointing out influences on an author and tracing their results to his work. Rather I wish to point out some ideas in Ionesco's plays which are indicative of the synthesis to which I have alluded and to claim a spot for him in this movement.

Ionesco himself half builds my case for me in his essay, "The Tragedy of Language." From this essay we learn that almost the entire dialogue
and all of the characters of *The Bald Soprano* are taken from a French-English Primer and that the title was chosen, among other reasons, because “. . . no soprano, bald or otherwise, appears in it (the play).”² Obviously, Ionesco is pointing to the inability of language to communicate. In speaking of his attempt to learn English, Ionesco puts it: “To concentrate on enriching my English vocabulary, to learn words, to translate into another language what I could just as well say in French, without bearing in mind the “Content” of those words, would have been to stumble into that sin of formalism which our thought-directors of today rightly condemn.”³ Instead he wrote *The Bald Soprano* using the universal truths he had learned in the Primer. “. . . I learned not English, but some astonishing truths: that, for example there are seven days in a week, something moreover, I already knew; that the floor is down, the ceiling is up, things I already knew perhaps, but which I had never seriously thought about or had forgotten and which seemed to me, suddenly, as stupefying as they were indisputably true.”⁴ In *The Bald Soprano* is dramatized the failure of language and the consequent existential estrangement of the characters from each other.

In *Jack or the Submission* this order is reversed. The main character Jack is forced into submission to conformity, forced to give up his unique existential identity. Consequently he, like the rest of the characters, loses his ability to use language in a communicative fashion. To use Martin Buber’s terminology, “I-Thou” relationships have deteriorated into “I-it” relationships in which persons are manipulated and forced into a conformity (Jack must “adoré hashed brown potatoes.”) which is meaningless. It is a sad commentary on our society when, in final desperation trying to hang on to his identity by asking for a quantitative impossibility as a condition for submission, Jack must submit because it is an easy enough matter to add a third nose to Roberta. In the end, Jack has lost his existential identity and any ability to communicate which he might have previously had. “Roberta II: All we need to designate things is one single word: cat. Cats are called cat, food: cat, insects: cat, chairs: cat, you: cat, me: cat, the roof: cat, the number one: cat . . . It’s easier to talk that way . . .”⁵ Miaows, groans, and croakings now serve as communication. Finally only Roberta II remains with her three noses and nine fingers, personifying an ultimate meaninglessness resulting from the failure of meaningful relationships.

If there is a failure of meaningful personal relationships in *Jack or the Submission*, this failure is complete in the comedy *The Lesson*. The professor literally kills forty students out of desperation at his inability to communicate with them and from his frustration in not being able to manipulate them completely as “its” in “I-it” relationships. Indeed, the students are as good as dead to the professor anyway because he has made them so in relating himself to them.

*The Chairs*, most completely of these four plays, embodies a synthesis of existential and analytic thought. It is the absolute absurdity of the
human situation dramatized. Five elements, in particular, of current philosophy are vividly portrayed in *The Chairs*. First, there is the existential estrangement and isolation of the human condition: the setting of the play is a room surrounded by water, cut off from the mainland.

Second, in the characters is dramatized the bankruptcy of meaningful relationships. They are, except for the Old Man, Old Woman, and the Orator, invisible. They are existentially non-existent because their significance to the Old Man and Old Woman is only the fact that they will fill chairs and listen.

Third, the non-communicability of language is portrayed. The Old Man frequently reiterates: "I have difficulty expressing myself." Indeed, he must hire an orator to deliver his message. Any portion of the dialogue could be cited as an example of the difficulties of language.

Fourth, the suicide of the Old Man and Old Woman is clearly representative of the existentialist idea of death as the culmination of living. As a philosopher such as Heidegger would put it, the only certainty of living is the fact of dying. This is the limit of being. The Old Man and Old Woman, having achieved their purpose in being — gathering a group to hear "The Message" — no longer have any reason for existing, and so they seek the limit of being, nothingness.

Last, the idea that there is nothing at all universal or absolute about existence to be communicated is presented dramatically. Herein lies an important synthesis of analytic and existential thought, the existentialist saying that he has nothing important (metaphysical, ethical, religious, etc.) to communicate to anyone else, and the analyst saying that there is no possibility of communicating it anyway. At the end of the play we are left only with the deaf and dumb orator. He is going to deliver "The Message", but there is no message, there is nothing. The orator is literally deaf and dumb, but figuratively this circumstance portrays the fact that there is really nothing to say and no possible way of saying it. This is the ultimately absurd situation of being human.

These ideas are related closest to the more pessimistic European school of existentialism (Heidegger, Jaspers, Sartre, and others). Their concern is with personal relationships and communication. These ideas, first, with their emphasis on language and its difficulties, and, second, with their emphasis on the absurdity of the human condition, are indicative of the kinds of philosophy which are being pursued in our time, both analytic and existential.

In modern times, Soren Kierkegaard was one of the first men of letters to turn consciously to literature in order to articulate philosophical ideas which could not otherwise be communicated. Since the 19th Century reaction to the Absolute Idealism of Hegel, Western Thought has generally proceeded on the tacit agreement that system philosophy is not wholly possible. Consequently, philosophers are increasingly concerning themselves with the more concrete human situation rather than with meta-
physical speculation. This is creating a much greater awareness of the role the arts have always played, that of providing insights into the human condition. Contemporary artists, such as Ionesco, are providing insights of a philosophical nature into the human situation while philosophers themselves are bemoaning the impossibility of such an enterprise.


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**poem for kaylah**

*Who, in despair, enters a mutual suicide-pact with her lover, and asks of the protesting poet, Why not? Poet attempts to give answer."

- People forget: Wounds heal.
- Though the real world deals wrong, Swings steel,
- Hacks peace,
- Holds in store more anguish yet,
- Man as before
- Has this release: He cannot feel
- Any grief for long.

- Blows cease.
- Wounds heal.
- People forget.
Vacant whispers of wind
Wind into a moon-reaching ball,
Having none, reaching nowhere, searching nothing.

Let's play with the snow, Marya.
Go fly an angel,
Turn blue.

Air-conditioned echoes
Beckon only a laughing fence,
Tickled by the flashing swords forged from itself.

We could build a castle, Marya,
Pack for the stars.
Says who?

Wall-to-wall dreams
Drowned the cottontail picking berries.
The briar patch is damp and still, there is no laugh.

How about a snowman, Marya?
In the light of day?
howl, howl

howl, howl oh thou misbegotten son of man
howl until the winds of the world
are gouged with the screams of your throat
and the peoples of the earth know your suffering

(The photograph is very old and very faded
and one corner is torn away)

and whip them till their minds run red
with the lacerations of your scorn
and their bodies are broken at last

(But the girl with the golden hair smiles
her beautiful smile through the yellow of time)

then, and only then, shall they know
this single truth

(Her beautiful, beautiful smile)