

CREATIVITY AND COMMUNICATION IN THE  
RECENT WORKS OF NATHALIE SARRAUTE

by

TANIS KATHLEEN CLARKE

M.A., The University of British Columbia, 1982

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
Department of French

We accept this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

May 1982

© *Tanis Kathleen Clarke, 1982*

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of French

The University of British Columbia  
2075 Wesbrook Place  
Vancouver, Canada  
V6T 1W5

Date March 22, 1982

A B S T R A C T

By 1963, Nathalie Sarraute had written five novels. That same year she was commissioned to write a radio play. She has since then written four more novels and five radio plays. In these new works the reader cannot but recognize manifestations of two of Sarraute's major preoccupations which underlie her literary career, that is her concern with the creative process and the problem of communication. These two concerns are obviously related since communication is a lower form of the more concentrated artistic production. This essay will study the two themes in her five radio plays and two of her later novels.

In the course of writing novels, Sarraute became more and more interested in the creative process. While several literary artists have been challenged and intrigued by this topic, it has become an increasingly important theme in Sarraute's works. This essay examines the prerequisites to and the problems raised by the creative process. An analysis of the protagonists of each novel and radio play will help determine to what extent each of them participates in the creative process. As for the allied topic, communication, it is directly related to creativity, as the artist must express his 'vision' in order to confirm his creativity. This essay, therefore, both examines how these protagonists communicate with each other and analyses the limitations to mutual understanding.

The thesis is divided into three chapters, each one composed of two sections. Chapter I studies Sarraute's first

three radio plays, Le Silence, Le Mensonge and Isma.

The first half of the chapter deals with the components of creativity and with the way in which the characters participate in the creative process. The second half is a study of the processes of communication and examines as well how language, the most common medium of communication, actually limits mutual understanding. Chapter II follows the same pattern as Chapter I, except that the texts analyzed here will be Entre la vie et la mort and Vous les entendez?. The former novel concentrates on the creative act and the life experience of the artist, while the latter is mainly concerned with artistic merit in the form of aesthetic appreciation. The main focus is on the components of creativity as well as the two people necessary to the creative process, the artist and the recipient of the 'creation'. The second half of the chapter deals with the processes of communication as outlined above, but the medium in this section differs from a radio play to a novel. The last chapter concludes with Sarraute's two latest radio plays, C'est beau and Elle est là. The format is consistent with chapters I and II. However, here, the level of creative potential and the ability to communicate have diminished to the point where these two themes, creativity and communication, seem to have been exhausted.

Table of Contents

	<u>Pages</u>
1. Abstract.....	ii
2. Introduction.....	1
3. Chapter I - Creativity and Communication in <u>Le Silence</u> , <u>Le Mensonge</u> and <u>Isma</u> .....	11
4. Chapter II - Creativity and Communication in <u>Entre la vie et la mort</u> and <u>Vous les</u> <u>entendez?</u> .....	34
5. Chapter III - Creativity and Communication in <u>C'est beau</u> and <u>Elle est là</u> .....	55
6. Conclusion.....	77
7. Bibliography.....	87

### Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my advisor, Dominique Baudouin, for his helpful comments, his constructive criticism and his unflogging encouragement. My thanks also go to my mother, who took a great interest in this thesis. Finally, I would like to acknowledge Frances Griffiths, Nancy MacDonald, Vesna Kanjer and Rose-Marie Tremblay, fellow graduate students and friends for their warm support and sense of humour.

TKC

## References to Nathalie Sarraute's works

In this thesis are numerous quotations from the novels and plays studied. To cut down on unnecessary repetition, the reference to these works will be given as follows:

- by the page number only, immediately following the quotation, when the title of the work is clear from the preceding context.
- by the title and the page number in cases of possible doubt or ambiguity.

The editions of Nathalie Sarraute's works used for reference are listed below. The first one is the edition normally used here for the three plays included. All other quotations from Sarraute's critical works or from secondary sources are footnoted at the end of each chapter.

- Sarraute, Nathalie. 'Isma' suivi de 'Le Silence' et 'Le Mensonge.'  
Paris: Gallimard,  
1967, pour Le Silence et Le Mensonge;  
1970, pour Isma.
- Sarraute, Nathalie. Théâtre: Elle est là. C'est beau. Isma.  
Le Mensonge. Le Silence: Paris,  
Gallimard, 1978.
- Sarraute, Nathalie. Vous les entendez?  
Paris: Gallimard, 1968.
- Sarraute, Nathalie. Entre la vie et la mort.  
Paris: Gallimard, 1968.
- Sarraute, Nathalie. Le Planétarium.  
Paris: Gallimard, 1959.

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

At the beginning of Nathalie Sarraute's literary career, her material was original enough to be met with general incomprehension, and even literary critics were prompted to criticize her creations along with the works of other New Novelists. Sarraute's first novel, Tropismes, a collection of twenty-four sketches that date back to 1939, was not known until 1957. Her second novel, Portrait d'un inconnu, was not well accepted even with a preface by Jean-Paul Sartre, in which he describes Sarraute's novel as an 'anti-roman'.

Les anti-romans conservent l'apparence et les contours du roman; ce sont des ouvrages d'imagination qui nous présentent des personnages fictifs et nous racontent leur histoire. Mais c'est pour mieux décevoir: il s'agit de contester le roman par lui-même, de le détruire sous nos yeux dans le temps qu'on semble l'édifier, d'écrire le roman d'un roman qui ne se fait pas, qui ne peut pas se faire [...]. Ces oeuvres étranges et difficilement classables ne témoignent pas de la faiblesse du genre romanesque, elles marquent seulement que nous vivons à une époque de réflexion et que le roman est en train de réfléchir sur lui-même. Tel est le livre de Nathalie Sarraute: un anti-roman qui se lit comme un roman policier...<sup>1</sup>

In the traditional novel, unique characters are involved in a 'story' which has a beginning and an end. In contrast, Sarraute's novels do not tell a story. She leads the reader to "... le mur de l'inauthentique..."<sup>2</sup> and behind it, where lies "L'Authenticité- vrai rapport avec les autres, avec soi-même, avec la mort..."<sup>3</sup> Sarraute invites the reader, or in the case of her radio plays and theatre, the listener and the spectator, into the universe which lies behind speech and events. Her



work defines the psychological depths beneath the objective surface of situation and character. She describes, not an event, but a person's reaction to the event; not a relationship, but an individual's deepest feelings about the relationship. Of course, Sarraute was criticized for abandoning the form and content of the traditional novel for the new novel. Robbe-Grillet, another New Novelist, sums up these criticisms in Pour un Nouveau Roman, a collection of essays in which he defines the evolution and structure of the new novel.

Vous ne campez pas de personnage...Vous ne racontez pas d'histoire...Vous n'étudiez pas un caractère, ni un milieu. Vous n'analysez pas les passions, donc vous n'écrivez pas de vrais romans.<sup>4</sup>

Unlike the traditional novels, Sarraute's works do not follow a linear progression, but rather focus on responses and reactions to an event, a word or even a gesture. She has internalized character, plot and description and discarded from her form all the antiquated conventions of the traditional novel which impede the flow of movements beneath and around the levels of spoken dialogue.

Nathalie Sarraute has summed up her theories of the novel in a collection of essays, L'Ere du Soupçon, published in 1956. Life, she says, has changed drastically since the nineteenth century and so should art forms.

...l'intérêt essentiel du roman? Il ne se trouve plus dans le dénombrement de situations ou de caractères ou dans la peinture des mœurs mais dans la mise à jour d'une matière psychologique nouvelle...<sup>5</sup>

She condemns authors who copy the great works of the past:

Retravailler derrière eux la même matière et se servir

par conséquent, sans les modifier en rien, de leurs procédés, serait à peu près absurde que, pour les partisans du roman traditionnel, de refaire avec les mêmes personnages, les mêmes intrigues et dans le même style que Le Rouge et le Noir ou Guerre et Paix.<sup>6</sup>

The basic structure of Nathalie Sarraute's works is the tropism. Tropism, a biological term, describes the instinctive movement of an organism towards stimuli. In the literary context, the tropism represents the interaction of the human organism to a stimulus, which forms the basis of Sarraute's style. She describes the interior movements or tropisms that lie behind the interior monologue in L'Ere du Soupçon.

...ce qui se dissimule derrière le monologue intérieur: un foisonnement innombrable de sensations, d'images de sentiments, de souvenirs, d'impulsions, de petits actes larvés qu'aucun langage intérieur n'exprime, qui se bousculent aux portes de la conscience, s'assemblent en groupes compacts et surgissent tout à coup, se défont aussitôt, se combinent autrement et réapparaissent sous une nouvelle forme, tandis que continue à se dérouler en nous...le flot ininterrompu des mots...<sup>7</sup>

Tropisms, then, are groups composed of sensations, images, sentiments and memories. The medium through which tropisms are expressed is the subconversation, the half-formed thoughts and feelings that accompany the words we speak aloud. It is important to make the distinction between subconversation and 'interior monologue,' a form that Virginia Woolf and James Joyce made popular. Mimica Cranaki and Yvon Belaval, in Nathalie Sarraute, explain the difference between 'interior monologue' and subconversation.

La même modification du personnage- ou, si l'on aime mieux, de la vue sur le personnage- empêche de confondre la sous-conversation avec le monologue intérieur: ce dernier n'était toujours que du dialogue avec soi, un dialogue rentré, mais rentré du dehors, à peu

près dans la forme qu'il aurait gardée au-dehors; la sous-conversation vient du dedans, de la région obscure d'avant le langage, elle n'est pas encore un dialogue, elle n'est pas encore structure, elle n'est pas rentrée, elle est retenue du dedans. Telle est l'originalité de Nathalie Sarraute.<sup>8</sup>

Sarraute's works are composed of an interplay between sub-conversation and speech. The spoken word, according to Sarraute, is a 'trompe l'oeil,' ridden with meaningless clichés. An example from Sarraute's third novel, Le Planétarium, shows the discrepancy between the spoken word and the subconversation. Alain, one of the characters, is entertaining Germaine Lemaire, his literary idol, in his apartment. He feels embarrassed and uncomfortable showing her where he studies. His uneasiness is depicted by a tropism- a metaphor depicting Alain walking on a tightrope.

"Oui, j'aime mieux ça, travailler le nez au mur...C'est plus..." Il a tout à coup la sensation de marcher sur quelque chose qui se balance sous ses pieds, c'est comme une passerelle étroite jetée au-dessus d'un torrent, impétueux et sur laquelle, tandis que tous, massés sur l'autre rive se taisent et le regardent, il avance. Un faux mouvement et il va tomber. Il tâte du pied devant lui avec précaution..." "Oui, le dos à la fenêtre- c'est plus commode..." (p.169)

Alain's words are nonchalant but Sarraute's description of his feelings in the situation reveals the difference between the spoken word and the tropism, and demonstrates the inefficiency of language to express tropisms. Sarraute's innovative style is her very creation.

Perhaps, because Sarraute's first novels were not well accepted, she focuses on the relationship between author-reader-critic. Her fifth novel, Les Fruits d'or, satirizes contemporary French literary critics, depicting their opinions, tastes

and social relations. The hero of Les Fruits d'or is a novel, also called Les Fruits d'or and the structure is a series of conflicting opinions about the novel. Anonymous voices express attitudes about the book through tropisms and speech, however the dialogue form predominates. In other words, she begins to integrate the tropism and the subconversation into spoken words.

In 1963, after the publication of Les Fruits d'or, Sarraute was commissioned to write a radio play. She was intrigued by the challenge although she could not conceive how she would express tropisms given the 'spoken' nature of a radio play. True, unspoken dialogue goes hand in hand with dialogue and, in fact, the spoken word is simply the end product of the tropism and/or subconversation. But how could she integrate tropisms into the spoken word? How could she reveal internal movements external~~ly~~? She would have to eliminate narration, description, imagery and metaphors and rely entirely on the spoken word. That Les Fruits d'or is almost entirely written in the dialogue form helped to ease the transition from novels to radio plays.

Sarraute's first radio play, Le Silence, was produced in 1964. The subject of the play- the tropisms aroused by Jean-Pierre's- one of the characters- withdrawal into silence, is borrowed from a scene in Les Fruits d'or where a critic has been asked to read a few pages from the novel, also called Les Fruits d'or. He turns the page and finds nothing suitable. The following passage describes his reaction to the silence in the room while he is flipping the pages. The subconversation of the

critic predominates in this passage until he tells the others who are waiting for him to read, that he has found a good part.

Mais c'est d'eux que cela provient, de celui-ci qui l'a provoqué et qui l'observe maintenant, qui se tait... Il y a quelque chose dans sa présence silencieuse, dans leur silence à tous, assis en cercle autour de lui, dans leur attente lourde de méfiance, qui comme par un effet de succion, tire de ces mots qu'il lit toute leur sève, pompe leur sang, ils sont vidés...des petites choses desséchées...

Il tourne une autre page...Tous les mots maintenant sont comme durcis, vernis, trop brillants...on dirait que de ce silence, de ces regards un courant sort, une substance coule, se répand...Comme sous l'effet de la galvanoplastie, tout se recouvre d'une couche de métal clinquant. Il faut rompre le charme, détourner le mauvais oeil, il faut saisir n'importe quoi et le leur jeter, ne plus hésiter..."Ici, par exemple...ce passage-ci, moi je le trouve admirable...(p.161)

Le Silence recapitulates the theme of this passage- the reactions to a heavy silence. The form, though, is entirely different. Sarraute emphasizes in an interview with Gretchen R. Besser in 1976 the difficulty she encounters in introducing tropisms or subconversation in 'la conversation vocalisée':

D'habitude dans mes romans je montre les mouvements intérieurs des images, le dialogue n'en est que l'aboutissement. Ici, tout doit être exprimé dans le dialogue lui-même...<sup>9</sup>

Sarraute was therefore faced with a difficult task when she accepted to write radio plays in which the dialogue alone must sustain the full weight of the drama and where she must integrate subconversation into conversation.

This thesis will examine creation and communication in Sarraute's works. Many writers have written about creativity, but in Sarraute's works, it becomes a major theme, even an obsession after the publication of Les Fruits d'or. The discussion of creativity will focus on the protagonists of each of the

seven works studied in this thesis. A close analysis will determine to what extent the characters participate in the creative process. The discussion will include the prerequisites to and the problems raised by the creative process. The allied topic, communication, will also be examined in the seven works. The discussion on this topic will comprise the limits of true communication as well as the exchanges of dialogue among the protagonists. Language, the most common medium for communicating, is most inefficient, for it limits true mutual understanding and betrays authentic feelings. Other factors as well limit true understanding among people. Each person has his own view or version of reality which cannot be communicated to another person. Furthermore, everyone is in a constant state of flux, changing literally from minute to minute. So, to know another person fully is impossible.

This thesis will be divided into three chapters. Chapter I is a discussion of Sarraute's first three radio plays- Le Silence, produced in 1964, Le Mensonge, in 1966 and Isma in 1970. The first half of the chapter will examine the components of the creative process including the need for the artist to express his creativity freely and openly and to develop new, original material. Certain prerequisites, i.e. silence and a sensitivity to language are needed to stimulate the creative process. The role of the recipient of the artist's creativity, the art-lover, will also be examined. The second half of the chapter will study the way in which the protagonists of the radio plays communicate with each other. An analysis of the language

they use will determine to what extent the characters express tropisms and how the tropisms have externalized themselves. It will also discuss the factors which limit communication. First of all, language does not adequately reveal deep feelings. Secondly, each person has a unique view of reality, making mutual understanding, therefore, impossible.

Chapter II follows the same pattern as chapter I. The first part will analyse the theme of creativity in two novels, Entre la vie et la mort, published in 1968 and Vous les entendez?, in 1972. The central figure in Entre la vie et la mort is the writer himself and it describes the experiences he is likely to have as he fulfills his vocation. The study will examine not only how he creates but also the dilemma he faces of transmuting his creative impulse into a concrete form i.e. the written word. Vous les entendez? focuses on the art-lover and the role he fulfills in the creative process. The second part of the chapter will deal with how the writer puts his 'vision' in concrete form and how the art-lover expresses his appreciation of a work of art.

Following the same format as chapters I and II, the third and final chapter will analyse the themes of creativity and communication in Sarraute's two latest plays, C'est beau, produced in 1973 and Elle est là, in 1978. The protagonists of both plays do not participate in the creative process. Neither do they fulfill the role of the recipient of the artist's creation. Coupled with their lack of creativity is the absence of mutual understanding. Although the characters are engaged in

dialogue, the level of communication has been reduced to a minimum.

Although the main focus of this thesis is on Sarraute's five plays, it would have been artificial to have discussed them without mentioning her novels, which account for most of her writing. In fact, there is a strong link between her novels and plays, as Sarraute clearly indicates.

Chaque fois que j'ai fini un roman, j'essaie d'écrire une pièce.<sup>10</sup>

If this thesis had examined the structural differences between the novels and the plays and the way Sarraute handles tropisms in her plays as opposed to her novels, it would have followed a chronological order and discussed Entre la vie et la mort before the play Isma. This thesis, however, will analyse the creative process and communication throughout her works. It would be impossible, if Sarraute writes more radio plays, to continue the themes analysed in this thesis. The characters of C'est beau and Elle est là neither communicate nor do they have any creative potential creativity. Therefore, two of Sarraute's themes have been exhausted.



### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Nathalie Sarraute, Portrait d'un Inconnu. Préface de Jean-Paul Sartre. (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1956), p.8.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.11.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.11.

<sup>4</sup> Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Nouveau roman homme nouveau (1961)," in Pour un Nouveau Roman (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1963), p.145.

<sup>5</sup> Nathalie Sarraute, "Conversation et sous-conversation," in L'Ere du Soupçon: Essais sur le roman (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1956), p.112.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.112.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p.115.

<sup>8</sup> Mimica Cranaki et Yvon Belaval, Nathalie Sarraute (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1965), p.46, as quoted in Gretchen Rous Besser, Nathalie Sarraute (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979), p.46.

<sup>9</sup> Gretchen R. Besser, "Colloque avec Nathalie Sarraute, 22 avril 1976," in The French Review, Vol.L, No.2 (1976), p.288.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p.289.

## CHAPTER I : CREATIVITY AND COMMUNICATION IN

LE SILENCE, LE MENSONGE AND ISMA .

Sarraute has been interested in the relationship between the work of art, its environment and its fate in general. The three plays, Le Silence, Le Mensonge and Isma all contain elements of the question of creativity. While H<sub>1</sub> and Lui and Elle, the main protagonists of Le Silence and Isma represent the author or the creator, Pierre, the main character of Le Mensonge represents the reader of fiction or the recipient of the artist's creativity. While the first half of this chapter focuses on creativity and how the characters in each play participate in the creative process, the second half deals with communication. Sarraute, when faced with the challenge of writing radio plays, wondered how she would express and communicate unspoken tropisms through a medium where dialogue alone must sustain the full weight of the drama. The characters in all three plays, by their very interaction with each other, are engaged in the same process. The discussion of communication will include the inefficiency of language to reveal deeper thoughts and other factors which limit true communication processes, and thus, mutual understanding amongst the characters.

As Le Silence opens, H<sub>1</sub> has interrupted himself in the midst of describing and exotic, unspecified place. His friends, represented by H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>3</sub>, F<sub>1</sub>, F<sub>2</sub> and F<sub>3</sub>, urge him to continue his 'monologue', but H<sub>1</sub> refuses. He seems to detect a slight snicker which, he surmises, is Jean-Pierre laughing at him. Jean-

Pierre has said nothing and continues to say nothing, while the pressure of his silence builds up unbearably. H<sub>1</sub> is, at first, the only one who is sensitive to his silence, but, gradually, the others begin to reflect H<sub>1</sub>'s perturbation. They rally together in an effort to make Jean-Pierre speak. When H<sub>1</sub> resumes his lyrical monologue at the end of the play, Jean-Pierre breaks the silence.

H<sub>1</sub>, voix ferme:...C'est un art byzantin libéré, qui explose... (avec assurance) il y a là-dessus, d'ailleurs, un livre remarquablement documenté avec des reproductions superbes... de Labovic...

Jean-Pierre: De Labovic?... (p.73)

The others hail the event but H<sub>1</sub> disclaims any awareness of his silence.

Tous joyeux, émerveillés:

-Oh, il parle...

- Il questionne...

- ça l'intéresse...

H<sub>1</sub>: Mais pourquoi l'art byzantin ne l'intéresserait-il pas?

F<sub>1</sub>: Mais parce que tout à l'heure...

H<sub>1</sub>: Quoi, tout à l'heure?...

F<sub>2</sub>: Enfin vous-même...

H<sub>1</sub>: Moi-même quoi?

F<sub>3</sub>: Son silence...

H<sub>1</sub>: Mais quel silence?

F<sub>4</sub>, gênée: C'était un peu...Il m'a semblé...(Hésite un instant et puis:) Oh non, rien...Je ne sais pas...

H<sub>1</sub>: Eh bien, je ne sais pas non plus. Je n'ai rien remarqué. (p.74)

Perhaps the situation has been enacted on a preconscious level or perhaps the drama has been presented in slow motion and it all took place over a few seconds. The play presents the tropisms that an uncomfortable silence induces.

H<sub>1</sub>, the principal character in Le Silence is a potential creator. As the play opens, he has interrupted himself in the middle of an eloquent, lyrical monologue. His friends beg him

to continue.

F<sub>1</sub>: Si, racontez...C'était si joli...Vous racontez si bien...  
H<sub>1</sub>: Non, je vous en prie...(p.51)

By interrupting his monologue, he stifles his creative imagination. A creator must be willing to express his views, to allow the impulse to flower without restraint, regardless of the reaction of his audience or of his reader. H<sub>1</sub> ironically accuses Jean-Pierre of being afraid of voicing his opinions when he himself wishes that he had not let himself get carried along by his own impetus.

H<sub>1</sub>: Notre opinion vous fait peur. Et si vous disiez une bêtise? C'est que ça pourrait arriver, hein?... (p.59)

Moreover, the act of creation is reciprocal. A creator defines himself by the reaction of the recipient of his creativity. H<sub>2</sub> mentions in a conversation about the author, George Sand, that even if she never spoke

...elle avait son oeuvre pour la porter. Ça meublait le silence. (p.64)

However, the initial step must be taken by the artist, who exposes his creativity, after which the recipient responds. H<sub>1</sub>'s creative impulse falters because of the reluctance of the recipient to participate, as manifested by Jean-Pierre's silence.

If H<sub>1</sub> is the creator, Jean-Pierre is the reader who must respond to H<sub>1</sub>'s creativity. H<sub>1</sub> pleads him to join in the reciprocal creative process.

H<sub>1</sub>: Bien sûr, vous devez bien vous servir de mots de temps en temps. Il le faut bien. Pour vivre...(p.58)

As an artist needs the approval and active support of an audience or a reader, so H<sub>1</sub> tries to align himself with Jean-Pierre

against the rest of the group.

H<sub>1</sub>: Pardonnez-leur, ils ne savent pas ce qu'ils font, ne faites pas attention, ayez pitié...Je n'aurais jamais dû, c'est évident...Je suis le premier à m'en rendre compte. Mais vous devez comprendre...(p.54)

So, Jean-Pierre's silence represents in the context of creativity, a necessary component. At the end of the play, H<sub>1</sub> claims never to have noticed Jean-Pierre's silence. This suggests that contemplation is necessary to stimulate the creative imagination- silence is provocative to the potential creator. H<sub>2</sub> mentions to H<sub>1</sub>

Vous n'avez jamais autant parlé...(p.68)

The silence stimulates H<sub>1</sub>'s creativity. F<sub>1</sub> tells H<sub>1</sub>

Voilà. Ce silence était d'or. Il va vous obliger à nous écrire un joli poème...(p.66)

Implicit in this discussion of creativity is an image of the traditional novel versus the new novel. The reader of the traditional novel expects a plot, narration, description and well-defined characters. H<sub>1</sub>'s friends urge him to continue his lyrical monologue.

F<sub>1</sub>: ...Parlez-nous encore de ça. C'était si beau, ces petites maisons...il me semble que je les vois...avec leurs fenêtres surmontées de petits auvents de bois découpé...(p.51)

H<sub>1</sub>'s lyrical monologue could represent a nineteenth century type of literary expression which will be replaced by the new novel. However, the evolution of a new style calls for a silence, which provokes thought. H<sub>1</sub> expresses the need for a change of form, as do the new novelists. He states that form and content are inseparable- that, in order to talk about 'ces petits auvents', a certain form is required.

H<sub>1</sub>: C'est une question de forme. Je vous le disais tout à l'heure...Mais je viens de comprendre...C'est la forme. Il aurait fallu pour que vous les acceptiez, ces petits auvents, que je vous les présente avec politesse, comme il se doit, sur un plateau d'argent, et ganté de blanc. Dans un livre. A belle couverture. Joliment imprimé. Dans un style bien travaillé.(p.66)

H<sub>2</sub> expresses the need for a change in content, as do the new novelists. The content of the nineteenth century novel is out-of-date and H<sub>2</sub> points out that it is useless to continue to reproduce 'matière épuisée...,...banale à mourir.'(p.67)

A creator must invent something new. Not only is H<sub>1</sub> a creator but so are the others, for they all rearrange and revise a personality for Jean-Pierre, depending not on facts but on their subjective vision. F<sub>3</sub> attributes Jean-Pierre's silence to his timidity.

F<sub>3</sub>: Il est très timide, c'est tout.(p.55)

H<sub>1</sub> observes that Jean-Pierre is silent because he does not like to waste words when there is nothing to say.

H<sub>1</sub>: ...les mots pour vous...Vous n'avez jamais dit quelque chose de plat...(p.58)

H<sub>2</sub> expresses this same view. Jean-Pierre appreciates the motto 'Silence is golden!'

H<sub>2</sub>: Si quelqu'un sait que le silence est d'or, c'est bien lui...(p.58)

H<sub>1</sub> then decides that Jean-Pierre is silent because he despises H<sub>1</sub> and the group.

H<sub>1</sub>: ...Répondra pas. Monsieur nous méprise...(p.59)

Then he decides that Jean-Pierre is a snob.

H<sub>1</sub>: Monsieur est snob...(p.67)

As Jean-Pierre's silence becomes more and more agonizing, H<sub>1</sub>'s

accusations against him become more and more extreme. H<sub>1</sub> even calls Jean-Pierre an imposter.

H<sub>1</sub>: ...il n'est pas des nôtres, c'est un imposteur. Il arrête... (p.68)

Several different interpretations of Jean-Pierre's character confirm the subjectivity of the various reactions. Each individual uses his imagination and creates his own version of reality, which a creator must do. A creator also needs silence to stimulate his creative imagination as well as an audience to confirm his creativity.

Le Mensonge, Sarraute's second radio play, deals as well with creation. Whereas Le Silence focuses on the role and expectations of the artist, the emphasis shifts in Le Mensonge to the participation and expectations of the recipient of the artist's creativity-that is, the reader of fiction. Pierre, the main protagonist, unable to condone a white lie, has exploded and castigates an heiress who pretends to be a pauper. The other characters are accustomed to accepting the polite lies society is built on, but Pierre protests that truth is necessary for him and will not be denied utterance. The others are suddenly compelled to question their habitual behavior. Only Jacques pleads for wisdom and good will- in other words, tolerating a distortion of the truth. To help overcome Pierre's aversion to lying, the others suggest play-acting: one of them, Vincent, will take the part of an acquaintance, Edgar, who has a habit of making false statements and the others will practise tolerating his white lies. But, the game becomes painful when Simone begins to play in earnest. She tells a story about an

incident which took place during the war when she was in Paris. Pierre, convinced that she was in Geneva during the war, begs her to admit that she is playing the game i.e. lying. She insists that she is not playing. Her story is true.

Pierre: ...Mais elle s'amuse, elle veut continuer à jouer. Elle vous le dira. Mais Simone, dites-le. Dites que vous jouez.

Simone: Je ne joue pas, je vous dis: c'est vrai. (p.90)

Finally, after the group has begged her to admit that she was 'playing the game,' she yields and restores accepted convention.

Simone rit: Bon, bon, bien sûr, je jouais...Voilà. Vous êtes contents?

Bruits de rires heureux, de baisers, gloussements. (p.98)

Everyone, except Pierre, is convinced that Simone was playing the game. He continues to wonder if Simone said she was playing the game just to resolve the crisis.

The play raises the whole question of truth and its role in social intercourse. White lies are acceptable in society. Lucie states that

Tout le monde fait ça plus ou moins. Des petits mensonges... (p.83)

The game they play, the pretense of lying, makes a mockery of the concept of truth. Nevertheless, the search for absolute truth can lead to excessive abuses of power. Lucie alludes to 'forced confessions.'

Lucie: Simone, je vous supplie. Ne cédez pas. Ils veulent vous détruire, vous vider. Ils vont vous saisir, vous passer la corde au cou, vous raser la tête. (p.97)

So, the play suggests that the search for truth is useless for the ultimate question still looms at the end. Where is the game? Where is the truth? No one knows anymore.



A parallel can be drawn between the drama presented in Le Mensonge and the creative process. Pierre represents, in the domain of literature, the modern reader. The domain of the novel has always been the shadowy area where 'reality' is in the author's expression or style. Sarraute and other New Novelists feel that fact and fiction should be kept separate and apart. A writer presents fiction; a journalist presents facts. Sarraute feels that if fact and fiction merge, the reader will question the authenticity of what he is reading. In Pour un Nouveau Roman, Alain Robbe-Grillet sums up this theory:

...dès qu'apparaît le souci de signifier quelque chose (quelque chose d'extérieur à l'art) la littérature commence à disparaître.

Redonnons donc à la notion d'engagement le seul sens qu'elle peut avoir pour nous. Au lieu d'être de nature politique, l'engagement c'est, pour l'écrivain, la pleine conscience des problèmes actuels de son propre langage, la conviction de leur extrême importance, la volonté de les résoudre de l'intérieur. C'est là, pour lui, la seule chance de demeurer un artiste...<sup>1</sup>

Pierre, then, unable to distinguish between truth and the game, echoes the modern reader's views that truth should not masquerade as fiction.

The provocation of the drama in Sarraute's third play, Isma, is more inconsequential than in Le Silence and Le Mensonge; it is merely a disagreeable sound. 'Isme' refers to the accentuation of such words as 'capitalisme', 'structuralisme' and 'socialisme.' Such words serve to define and therefore are the cause of conflicting opinions. However, it is, ironically, not the meaning of the words which provides the crux of the dramatic situation, but rather their pronunciation.

The play opens in the midst of a conversation. The group has been gossiping about their absent friends, the Dubuits. When H<sub>1</sub> accuses them of discrediting the couple, they try to find another topic of conversation, but are unable. They exchange banalities to keep the conversation from fading. Finally, H<sub>1</sub> is forced to leave as the others label him 'impotent' and 'indifférent.' The group then begins to analyze the violent aversion that Lui and Elle have for the Dubuits. Elle finally discovers that they dislike the Dubuits because of the way they pronounce 'isme.'

Elle, excitée: Isma. Isma. Ma. Ma...Capitalismas. Syndicalismas. Structuralismas. Cette façon qu'il a de prononcer Isma... le bout se relève...ça s'insinue...Plus loin. Toujours plus loin. Jusqu'au coeur...Comme un venin...Isma...Isma...(p.33)

The others continue suggesting ways to overcome their acute dislike for the Dubuits. F<sub>2</sub> suggests to just pretend that they do not exist, while H<sub>3</sub> maintains that although he does not like the Dubuits either, his dislike is based on nothing. He claims that he has no need for 'frills.' However, while 'isma' may be an embellishment for H<sub>3</sub>, it is, for Lui and Elle the very crux of the obsession. Lui states that

C'est isma l'important. Le crime n'est qu'un enjolivement... une surcharge...inutile. Isma à soi seule...(p.36)

Language is the tropistic catalyst in Isma. It has been stripped of its meaning and reduced to its physical properties. Elsewhere in Sarraute's works are individuals who are sensitive to certain expressions, even to the pronunciation of certain words. This sensitivity is a sign of the child's predestination to become a writer in Entre la vie et la mort. The child is re-

pulsed by elongated vowels in such words as 'vaalise' or 'vaaa-cation.' Lui and Elle, then, are potential artists, as they are also obsessed by an infinitesimal pronunciation. If they can ever transfer their hypersensitivity to artistic use, they will become creators.

Lui and Elle not only possess an artist's sensitivity shown by their reaction to the pronunciation of certain words, but they are also aware of the undercurrents which swirl beneath the platitudes of ordinary, everyday conversation. Lui and Elle point out to the others who spout clichés that their conversation is sterile and imitative.

Lui: ...Ca suffit maintenant, c'est lassant, à la fin...  
Vous ne sentez pas comme ça faisait démodé, tout ça, hein?  
tout à l'heure? Ça faisait copie de copie, vous ne trouvez pas?

H: Copie de copie?

Elle: Oui, ce qu'il veut dire, c'est que tout à l'heure, quand nous parlions, ça lui faisait l'effet d'être de l'imitation...c'est ça, n'est-ce pas?(p.15)

Lui and Elle echo Sarraute's view of the traditional novel being written today. During the nineteenth century, the traditional novel was a 'new novel,' but whoever writes such a novel today, in the twentieth century, is simply photocopying an original work of the past. A creator must produce new material. He must present the product of his imagination as 'reality.' Just as Pierre in Le Mensonge, from a reader's standpoint, is concerned with truth posing as fiction, Lui and Elle, as creators, are repelled to see life imitating art, and, more specifically, life imitating the nineteenth century novel.

Despite the fact that the characters in Isma, except Lui and Elle, dwell on the surface of life, they are all potential cre-

ators to the extent that they use their imagination. F<sub>1</sub>, F<sub>2</sub>, F<sub>3</sub>, H<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>3</sub> try to explain a phenomenon which surpasses the usual way of thinking and reasoning. They all offer their opinion as to why Lui and Elle dislike the Dubuits. H<sub>2</sub> suggests

Les Dubuit vous sont antipathiques. Un point, c'est tout. Ce que vous sentez chez les Dubuit...de vague, d'indicible...ce qui vous tire, ce qui fluctue...ça éveille ce qu'on nomme l'antipathie.(p.22)

F<sub>2</sub> suggests to Elle and Lui that they should simply ignore the Dubuits, pretend that they don't exist.

F<sub>2</sub>: ...je ne le vois pas. C'est comme s'il cessait d'exister. Pourquoi le supporter, si ça m'est pénible? (p.37)

Elle also offers an explanation.

Quelque chose qui filtre d'eux, qui s'insinue...ça vous atteint...ça fait se soulever en vous...ça traverse tous les aspects...ça vient de rien...(p.26)

None of the solutions or suggestions suffice. To cover up the problem is not to solve it. The truth is, says Lui, that

...Ils sont là. Indestructibles. Irréductibles.(p.25)

Although the characters use their imagination to try to solve Elle and Lui's mysterious, inexplicable aversion to the Dubuits, the problem is never solved.

This discussion has examined the problems and components of artistic creativity in Le Silence, Le Mensonge and Isma. An artist must be willing to voice his 'vision,' to express his 'reality.' A necessary component in the creative process is silence. A creator must also be sensitive to the medium through which he expresses his creativity. The creative process is reciprocal. The creator needs an audience, a spectator or a reader to confirm his creativity. If all of these conditions are

met, a potential creator may become an actual creator. The second half of this chapter on communication will be introduced by a general discussion of tropisms and language before analysing communication among the protagonists, of the three plays.

A tropism is a series of sensations, feelings, metaphors, the subterranean feelings and thoughts on the outermost fringes of consciousness. It lies below the levels of spoken dialogue. In other words, a tropism is never 'said.' The 'spoken' nature of a radio play is therefore incompatible with the expression of tropisms. How was Sarraute to communicate tropisms in a radio play where the only means of expression is dialogue? In an interview with Gretchen R. Besser in 1976, Sarraute describes the difficulty in making dialogue do the work of sub-conversation.

...D'habitude dans mes romans je montre les mouvements intérieurs des images, le dialogue n'en est que l'aboutissement. Ici, tout doit être exprimé dans le dialogue lui-même. Alors les gens parlent d'une manière qui paraît tout à fait naturelle, mais en réalité ils disent des choses qu'on ne dit jamais, ils expriment ce qui se passe en eux.<sup>2</sup>

The characters say things they would not normally utter in everyday conversation. In a novel, the dialogue is preceded by a pre-dialogue. An example from Le Planétarium shows Gisèle furious with her father because he refers to Germaine Lemaire, the literary idol of Alain and Gisèle, as 'laide comme un pou.' Her subconversation reveals her anger. She is 'prête à le battre, à le brûler, à l'écarteler.' (p.103) The subconversation is too cruel and unacceptable to be uttered out loud. What Gisèle says reveals only a mild frustration towards her father.

Eh bien, oui, elle a ton âge, oui, elle a ton âge. Et qu'est-ce que ça fait? Tant pis pour toi. Elle a ton âge et elle est plus jeune que nous. C'est elle qui nous montre l'avenir. Tandis que toi... (p.103)

But, in the radio plays, the dialogue is unrealistic as it

contains the pre-dialogue. Another example from Le Planétarium presents a situation where Alain has been deceived by his literary idol, Germaine Lemaire. His inarticulate uneasiness is manifested by a tropism- a metaphor compares his 'vertige' to the sky whirling above his head.

...le ciel tourne au-dessus de lui, les astres bougent,  
il voit se déplacer les planètes, un vertige, une angoisse,  
un sentiment de panique le prend...(p.249)

H<sub>1</sub>, one of the characters in Le Silence, experiences the same feelings of 'vertige' because he is so upset by Jean-Pierre's silence.

...Au secours...je perds pied, je suis déporté, seul  
entre ciel et terre...oh...(p.68)

Elle, in Isma, also reveals internal movements externally. She and her partner, Lui, have an aversion to the way their friends, Les Dubuit, pronounce 'isme' when it comes at the end of a word. This obsession festers in her mind until, like a boil, its virulence bursts. She would like to exterminate the Dubuits.

...par moments, moi je pourrais, rien que pour ça, aligner  
devant le mur. Dresser les gibets...Détruire. Exterminer...  
Sans rémission. Sans pitié.(p.36)

Thus, the characters' speech in the radio plays is a mixture of outward conformity and inner commentary.

But, despite its plunges into the deep zones, Sarraute's dialogue remains banal and commonplace. Because her characters are trying to communicate these interior movements whose oral expression is unnatural, they must use language that 'others' are liable to understand. Similarly, Sarraute wants the reader or spectator to participate in the same experience as the characters without having to deal with the barrier of difficult

language.

The characters also, as a rule, lack specific identity or personality. Only one character in Le Silence has a name. He is Jean-Pierre, the one who is silent throughout the play. Although he has a name, he functions anonymously, as do the rest of the characters who are labeled  $H_1$ ,  $H_2$ ,  $F_1$ ,  $F_2$  and  $F_3$ . Furthermore, the only reason that Sarraute distributes roles in her radio plays is to forestall monotony. Sarraute explains this choice of differentiating the roles.

Je le fais presque au hasard, pour qu'il y ait un changement de voix...Mais ce ne sont pas des personnages que j'ai cherché à créer. En travaillant, je ne les distingue guère les uns des autres.<sup>3</sup>

Why did Sarraute choose to write about a silence, a lie or 'ce qui s'appelle rien'? Her aim was to make the actual subject of the play as insignificant as possible so that the 'invisible' would occupy the place of honour, and to prevent the reader from becoming distracted by what was going on on the surface. Sarraute states that

Ce qui m'intéresse, c'est de découvrir des tropismes dans ce qui apparaît comme insignifiant, inintéressant, dans les situations où l'on peut croire qu'il ne se passe rien. C'est quand il ne se passe rien que cela m'intéresse de voir ce qui se passe en réalité...<sup>4</sup>

For example, if Madeleine, in Le Mensonge had lied and consequently had hurt someone's feelings or if the lie had generated serious repercussions, the drama would never have left the surface. Likewise in Le Silence, under the stress of Jean-Pierre's silence, the characters get agitated, restless and even suffer. But when, in the end, they come back up to the surface, what has taken place?  $H_1$  remarks



...Je n'ai rien remarqué. (p.74)

The silence was, therefore, scarcely noticeable. In Isma, the catalyst is even less noticeable- the pronunciation of the final syllable 'isme!! Nothing 'happens'- the alternate title of Isma is "ce qui s'appelle rien"; therefore the thrust of the plays is what goes on below the surface of events, in the obscure regions of tropisms.

Language itself forms the heart of Sarraute's plays. The catalyst that activates tropisms is an element of speech- a silence - deliberate suppressions of language-, a lie, or the pronunciation of certain words. These elements affect the process of communication. A silence, the negation of speech, destroys conversation by erecting a blank wall that stops communication. Similarly, a lie annihilates speech by calling into question the good faith that the characters share. However, the trivial lie and the unobtrusive silence become the springboard for emotional responses. In other words, these subversive elements stimulate conversation and thus communication.

The most popular medium for communication is, of course, the spoken or written word. People need words in order to communicate in our social world. However, the importance of words is undermined by the power of a laugh, an intonation or a silence. The sudden silence and subsequent laugh of Jean-Pierre in Le Silence caused H<sub>1</sub> to react. His reaction sets the conversation in motion.

H<sub>1</sub>: ...

On entend un faible rire. Vous avez entendu?

Vous l'entendez? Il n'a pas pu le contenir. Ca a débordé. F<sub>1</sub>, très digne: C'est Jean-Pierre qui vient de rire. Avouez qu'on rirait à moins. C'est vraiment tordant. C'est lui qui déborde, il paraît.

F<sub>2</sub>: Jean-Pierre...Mais ce n'est pas possible, ce n'est pas de lui que vous parlez?

F<sub>3</sub>: Jean-Pierre, si paisible, si gentil...

H<sub>1</sub>: De qui voulez-vous que ce soit? De qui d'autre, je vous le demande...Mais vous voulez encore me provoquer... (p.53)

In Le Mensonge, the drama has been set in motion because of Madeleine's 'lie'. Pierre cannot bear someone lying, so the other characters engage in a 'game' to help Pierre overcome his intolerant obsession. In the middle of the game, when Simone starts telling a story which she claims is a true one, Pierre thinks she is lying. Simone claims that during the Occupation, she was living in Seine-et-Oise. However, Pierre thinks that she was living in Switzerland during the war, and begs her to admit that she has been lying. Finally, Simone gives in.

Simone rit: Bon, bon, bien sûr, je jouais...Voilà. Vous êtes contents? (p.98)

Pierre, however, is not convinced by her confession. Her laugh distorts the value of her words.

Pierre: ...C'était tout à fait imprévu, ce bond en arrière, au dernier moment...En laissant cela planté en moi: ce petit rire...comme un dard...(p.99)

He keeps on repeating Simone's words, testing them with various intonations to determine whether she was telling the truth when she said she was lying.

Pierre: Oui. Bon, je veux bien...(Ton franc). Bon, bon... bien sûr, je jouais. (Il rit doucement)...Bon, bon, bien sûr...(Ton hypocrite). Je jouais...(p.101)

In much the same way, Lui and Elle in Isma are obsessed with

the Dubuits and their pronunciation of 'isme'- a tiny accentuation of words ending in 'isme.' It is not the meaning of the words that matters, only their pronunciation. That a slight intonation, or a silence or a slight laugh can trigger conversation and a whole series of emotional reactions emphasizes the relative unimportance of words themselves and the inadequacy of words to express our true feelings and reactions. Therefore, if words are necessary in order to communicate, the question arises: to what extent do people actually communicate and understand each other?

Words are necessary to establish and maintain contact with others. In Le Silence, silence is a living thing set in motion by one utterance and resolved by another, which shows the power of the word, the power of language. H<sub>1</sub>'s lyrical monologue caused Jean-Pierre's unnerving and affective silence. H<sub>1</sub> implores Jean-Pierre to talk.

Juste un mot. Un petit mot de vous et on se sentirait délivrés. (p.55)

H<sub>1</sub> begs him-

Mais parlez enfin, dites quelque chose. (p.59)

The same phenomenon occurs in Le Mensonge when Pierre beseeches Simone to admit that she was lying.

...juste un seul mot. (p.96)

When Jean-Pierre in Le Silence finally does speak, what he says is absolutely insignificant.

Jean-Pierre: De Labovic? (p.73)

But these two simple words reestablish order and resolve the crisis. However, maintaining contact with people does not nec-

essarily mean that the communication process is functioning meaningfully. The characters resort to clichés, key words in a society that seeks security in conformity. The characters in Le Silence beg Jean-Pierre to speak. They spout meaningless clichés one after another.

F<sub>1</sub>: C'est vrai Jean-Pierre, dites quelque chose...

F<sub>2</sub>: Décidément, Jean-Pierre nous méprise...

F<sub>3</sub>: Jean-Pierre, vous m'angoissez...

H<sub>2</sub>: Allons, Jean-Pierre, taisez-vous...(p.64)

Likewise, the characters in Le Mensonge, who all feel embarrassed when Pierre accuses Madeleine of lying, respond in clichés-

Yvonne: J'aurais voulu rentrer sous terre.

Lucie: Moi aussi. Je ne savais pas où me mettre.

Simone: Oh. On mourait.

Jacques: Je n'en croyais pas mes oreilles...(p.79)

Clichés, by their very nature, are redundant and do not engender any flow of ideas. Therefore, although the characters engage in dialogue, meaningless clichés seldom promote mutual understanding. The dialogue follows neither a time sequence nor a logical sequence. It is an instantaneous exchange in which there are no arguments, no discussions or no persuasion. No one convinces anyone of anything, at least, not by logical means. When things happen- i.e. when Lui and Elle in Isma discover the cause of their dislike of the Dubuats, it is simply because certain words are spoken which create a favourable climate. F<sub>1</sub> suggests that what bothers Lui and Elle is their 'rire glacé.' H<sub>2</sub> observes that "On a l'impression qu'il vous claque au nez." (p.32) At this moment, Elle has a revelation.

Isma, Isma. Ma. Ma...(p.33)

Until this favourable climate is established, there is only

misunderstanding, which no amount of explanation can clear up. The characters can only start again, enter into the situation again, put themselves inside by the power of verbal magic in the hope of creating the appropriate atmosphere. When Lui insists on talking about the Dubuits, H<sub>1</sub> asks him:

Vous n'allez pas recommencer?(p.15)

Pierre, in Le Mensonge, by his determination to make Simone admit that she was lying, simply exasperates her.

Simone: Qu'est-ce qu'il y a? Ah. Ça vous reprend? Vous recommencez?(p.95)

Since their cliché-ridden, meaningless dialogue does not follow any logical pattern, the characters must constantly 'recommencer'. So, language, while maintaining contact, becomes impoverished and ineffectual at the level of speech. Communication, therefore, between people is limited.

Communication is limited also, of course, by the fact that each person perceives reality from his own point of view and, therefore, only for himself. Pierre, in Le Mensonge, when trying to understand whether Simone is lying or playing the game, admits

Mais, moi, moi je vous vois. Votre oeil pas derrière...(p.95)

Of course, because it is impossible to enter into the mind of another person, Pierre will never know Simone fully. Lucie, an observer in this same scene, feels sorry for Simone as she sees the others backing her into a corner.

Lucie: Voilà, c'est ce que je craignais, c'est déclenché... leur convoitise, leur avidité...ils vont lui arracher ça, ils la traquent, ils la pressent, leurs tiges de fer fouillent, elle se terre... un petit animal traqué...ses yeux effrayés, les observent, elle palpète, toute chaude...et moi,

comme elle...(p.97)

Yvonne, who sees her own reality, interprets the same scene differently. She tells Lucie

Mais vous revez. Elle les regarde d'un oeil glacial.(p.97)

In Le Silence, H<sub>1</sub> is embarrassed that he got carried away with his lyrical monologue. So, when the others beg him to continue, H<sub>1</sub> feels that they are making fun of him. So, he judges from his point of view one directly opposite from the others. Who is 'seeing' reality?

H<sub>1</sub>: Non, arrêtez, je vous en supplie. Oh non, ne vous moquez pas de moi...

H<sub>2</sub>: Nous moquer? Mais qui se moque, voyons...(p.52)

Not only can anyone not really know anyone else, but a character may not even know himself because he perceives things differently at different times. H<sub>1</sub>, in Le Silence, believes that his own words were picked up in advance and he imagines himself, in advance, imitated, attacked. He plays two roles, accused and accuser. H<sub>1</sub> vows that he will force Jean-Pierre to react.

H<sub>1</sub>: Je vais les décrire, moi, ces auvents, et on vous obligera, que vous le vouliez ou non. Vous serez forcé...

Il a répété forcé? Vous avez dit forcé, en riant.

F<sub>1</sub>: Non, c'est moi qui l'ai dit. Comme un écho.

H<sub>1</sub>: Non, il l'a dit aussi: Je l'ai entendu. Il l'a dit.

Forcé? en riant. Forcé, moi? Voilà ce qu'il a dit. Forcé? Qui peut le forcer? (p.67)

Two major factors impede satisfactory communication: the inefficiency of verbal expression and the fact that each person has a unique and fluctuating version of reality which, obviously, no one else can fully share and appreciate.

Sarraute's radio plays continue the treatment and discourse

underlying in her novels, but the medium is more refined. The tropisms must be audible. Pierre, in Le Mensonge, wishing to point out the forcefulness of a statement uses the familiar expression,

Ça crevait les yeux.

but he corrects himself:

...ou plutôt les tympons.(p.99)

By giving pre-eminence to the auditory over the visual and the dialectical, Sarraute makes her audience receptive to a purely verbal impact.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Alain Robbe-Grillet, "Nature, humanisme, tragédie (1958)," in Pour un Nouveau Roman (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1963), p.47.

<sup>2</sup> Gretchen R. Besser, "Colloque avec Nathalie Sarraute 22 avril 1976," in The French Review, Vol.L, No.2 (1976), p.288.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.288.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.287.



CHAPTER II : CREATIVITY AND COMMUNICATION IN  
ENTRE LA VIE ET LA MORT AND VOUS LES ENTENDEZ ?

The second chapter of this thesis will continue the discussion of artistic creativity and communication. Chapter I dealt with the components of the creative process- the need for an artist to freely express his 'vision' and to present new and original material. To participate in this process, the artist requires certain conditions. Silence is sometimes necessary to prod him into a creative effort. He must, as well, be sensitive to the medium through which he expresses his creativity- i.e. the literary artist must be sensitive to words. This discussion is developed through an analysis of the protagonists of Sarraute's first three radio plays, Le Silence, Le Mensonge and Isma. The second part of Chapter I is an analysis of the factors that impede mutual understanding among the protagonists in the three plays. Several factors limit communication. First, language does not adequately express deep feelings. Secondly, each person has a unique perspective which, due to the changing nature of the world, is constantly being disturbed and modified. It is therefore impossible for anyone to really know one's self or anyone else. Thus, mutual understanding is impossible and communication limited.

This chapter will diverge from the discussion of radio plays to a consideration of Sarraute's novels, Entre la vie et la mort and Vous les Entendez?. The protagonist of Entre la vie et la mort is the author, the creator, while the main character of Vous les Entendez? is the art-lover, the recipient of the product of the author's imaginative creation. While the literary artist and the art-lover fulfill very diff-

erent functions in the creative process, both vibrate through the art object which links them.

Entre la vie et la mort examines the writer as he is participating in the actual creative process. This process sometimes manifests itself in the form of a sensation transformed into words. At other times, words give rise to sensations. The writer has two halves which argue with each other. So, the critical half often destroys the creative half i.e. the critical half, upon rereading the product of the creative half, decides it is 'dead', because the initial sensation has not been captured. To capture the initial feeling and to concretize it into words without destroying it is to succeed in the creative process. The art-lover, by responding to the artist's creativity, is an integral part of the creative process. Thus Vous les Entendez? examines, through the eyes of the art-lover, the nature of aesthetic appreciation and the conflict in attitudes between traditional and innovative approaches to art.

The second half of Chapter II will concentrate on the processes of communication. In Chapter I, it was first of all necessary to discuss the language used and how Sarraute externalizes tropisms, given the spoken nature of the radio plays. Since Entre la vie et la mort and Vous les Entendez? are novels, they will allow us to carry out a study of communication beyond the confines of the spoken word. In fact, these two novels are written almost exclusively on the level of 'sous-conversation'. An action that takes place on this level eliminates the possibility of consciousnesses communicating with

each other. Therefore, the only means of communication among the different characters is by a sort of osmosis. They 'feel' and understand each other. So intertwined are they in an interdependent relationship that they are able to exchange 'roles' and 'become' the other. While this exclusiveness of 'sous-conversation' does not directly demonstrate the inefficiency of the spoken word to communicate deep feelings, it underlines the importance of the unspoken, inarticulate language which lies below the spoken word.

Chapter I also discussed the impossibility of really knowing another person because each individual perceives reality differently. Furthermore, it will be seen here that a person does not fully know himself either, because different influences transform his perception of the world. The subconversation of the protagonists in Entre la vie et la mort and in Vous les Entendez? shows how this phenomenon is compounded: a person tends to distort his conception of another person to fit his own expectations. It is along these lines or directions that Chapter II will continue and elaborate on the subject of creativity and communication.

Entre la vie et la mort traces the steps of a writer's career- the infatuation with words, the submission of the manuscript, the reaction of the family, the acclaim of his work and his fame. Vous les Entendez? centres on the conflict between the traditional and innovative approaches to art and aesthetic appreciation. This opposition is personified by the contrary ideas of a father and his children, while the forum for the

drama is the family enclave. This opposition is manifested not as a topic for intellectual discourse but in the form of emotion-packed tropisms of everyday life.

Entre la vie et la mort opens with the mature author trying to explain his creative activity.

Sur la page blanche, les mots, les phrases, se forment.  
Miracle. Comment peut-on? C'est un grand mystère. (p.8)

This attempt to trace the roots of his writing leads to a contemplation of his early childhood. His sensitivity to language seems to foreshadow his predestination for a literary career, for words are the very tools with which a literary artist must work. From an early age, he played with words as if they were toys.

Hérault, héraut, héros, aire haut, erre haut, R.O....  
le bruit du train a accroché cela, le bruit cadencé  
des roues va traîner ça pendant des heures, les images  
se succèdent de plus en plus vite...aussitôt le mot  
prononcé, l'image apparaît...les mots tour à tour les  
soulèvent, les sortent, on peut les intervenir sans  
ralentir leur mouvement rythmé sur le bruit des roues...  
(p.32)

A literary artist must be able to manipulate words so that, later on, they can form of their own volition. It is then that the writer knows his own creative powers.

The act of creation is complex, demanding reflexion and concentration. Sometimes words produce a new sensation and other times, a sensation give rise to words. The writer in Entre la vie et la mort explores the creative act twice. Both times he is forced to withdraw into himself in order to capture

...the writer's sensation at the instant of creation, transcribing the creative impulse itself, like a tropism at its incipient stage.<sup>1</sup>

It is then that he is able to watch words forming on the page independently of his will. Words are like a fountain, erupting and forming beautiful arabesques.

Là, il lui semble qu'il perçoit...On dirait qu'il y a là comme un battement, une pulsation...Cela s'arrête, reprend plus fort, s'arrête de nouveau et recommence... C'est comme le petit bruit intermittent, obstiné, le grattement, le grignotement léger qui révèle à celui qui l'écoute tout tendu dans le silence de la nuit une présence vivante...(p.64)

And, further on, speaking of the words again:

Ils se déploient, le fil qui les traverse se tend, ils vibrent...il écoute comme s'épandent leurs résonances... Seul avec eux, lui-même complètement redressé, hors de la substance molle et fade où il était plongé, il s'enchantait de leurs mouvements, les place et les déplace pour qu'ils forment des arabesques plus savamment contourées...il suit fasciné, leurs mouvements, ils montent, descendent, s'élancent encore et retombent. Il les guide avec précaution...(p.93)

However, after rereading the creation, the critical half of the artist overpowers the creative half. Then the artist realizes that he got carried away with the language as such, thereby losing touch with the initial feeling.

Je suis allé jusqu'à mes limites extrêmes, jusqu'au bout de mes forces...-Beau résultat. C'est mort. Pas un souffle de vie...(p.98)

So, the writer himself dies when the impulse is stifled.

Lui seul ne sait pas, installé ici, revêtu de ses beaux habits, rasé de près, fardé, vidé, et embaumé, présidant à la réception donnée en son honneur dans le salon d'un Funeral Home. (p.223)

When the writer renews the creative act, he must break the habit of playing with words and delve down to rediscover the sources of inspiration. He must recapture the initial feeling that propels the creative process. His creative half takes over as he realizes that he must follow 'this untouched living thing'

wherever it leads him.

La suivre où elle voudra...Elle qui ne se laisse pas nommer...ce que je sens...(p.252)

The difficulty is, of course, that a literary artist needs words to express his 'vision', yet words tend to kill the freshness and spontaneity of the original sensation. The work of art must radiate life.

...ensemble regardons...est-ce que cela se dégage, se dépose...comme sur les miroirs qu'on approche de la bouche des mourants...une fine buée?(p.254)

The title Entre la vie et la mort reflects the fragility of creative expression, which threatens to die at any minute. Words tend to concretize feeling, yet sensation escapes the boundaries of language. The role of the creative artist is to capture the sensation and transpose it into words without destroying it, a nearly impossible task, as the novels ironically demonstrate.

Vous les Entendez? opens with the father and his friend sitting quietly after dinner, when the sound of ringing laughter is heard from the children's room upstairs. Earlier, while the children were still with them, the guest had taken a pre-columbian statue of a mythical beast off the mantel-piece, placed it on the table and admired it. Now, the father surmises that the children are laughing at his aesthetic taste and his idea of art.

For the father, art is catalogued, classified. The statuette is a sacred object that has been handed down for generations. Art, for him, is

Quelque chose de fixe, d'immuable...Un obstacle placé sur le cours du temps, un centre immobile autour duquel

le temps, retenu, tourne, forme des cercles...(p.73)

Contrary to the father's traditional viewpoint is the children's idea which incarnates the theories of the new novelists. For them, art is free and spontaneous.

Nous, messieurs, vous savez, on n'a pas d'amour-propre d'auteur, on ne cherche pas à fabriquer l'objet rare, la pièce de collection...aucune visée de richesse, de gloire proche ou lointaine...Nous sommes détachés, très purs. Tous égaux...(p.176)

The children believe, as do the new novelists, that art should change as does society.

Ça ne porte pas de nom, comprends-tu...Plus de noms, plus d'étiquettes, de définitions...(p.179)

The father has tried to instill his idea of good taste into his children by taking them to Art galleries and museums, to no avail. This need to share his aesthetic enjoyment is similar to the creator, who is eager to share his creative enthusiasm with others. The father makes the children bow repeatedly before this 'religious' object.

N'a-t-on montré, comme il se devait, du respect? Ne s'est-on pas approché, comme si on le regardait pour la première fois, de l'objet sacré? N'ai-je pas été jusqu'à poser, moi aussi- Vous m'avez vu? - ma main pieusement...(p.17)

The father, in order to confirm his belief and insure its survival, needs the approval of others. Similarly, the literary artist depends on the reader for the survival of his work of art. The fragility of artistic creation is therefore compounded. Not only is the artist confounded by the discrepancy between his 'vision' and its manifestation through a medium, but the recipient of the artist's creativity on whom the artist depends, is continually changing as he conforms to the taste of those

around him. To the extent that the father in Entre la vie et la mort vacillates between his aesthetic taste and winning the approval of his children, so the statuette crumbles and loses its vibrations.

Rien ne vibre, n'irradie, n'émane, ne coule, ne s'épand...Il n'y a rien là...rien ne vaille...Une pierre grumuleuse, d'un gris sale, grossièrement taillée. Une bête pataude, courtaude, assez informe...  
(p.46)

Aesthetic tastes are modelled and shaped by the majority whose approval both the creator and the art-lover solicit.

Creativity, by its very nature and definition, demands that an artist produce something original. He must present as fiction his own version of reality. In Le Silence, each character who reconstructs a personality for Jean-Pierre, the character who remains silent throughout the play, is a potential creator. Similarly, the young adolescent in Entre la vie et la mort and the father in Vous les Entendez? are both potential creators, for they both reconstruct characters or scenarios orally. The writer as a small boy recreates the lives of his ancestors-

Mon père était breton. Mâtiné de normand. Son père à lui...On dit dans la famille que je lui ressemble... dans sa jeunesse, il avait été marbier. On raconte que parfois il lui arrivait de modifier les formules que son patron lui faisait graver sur les monuments, sur les stèles funéraires. Il était très gai, il aimait les facéties. Il croyait aux revenants, il racontait des histoires de fantômes...(p.13)

In Vous les Entendez?, the father is convinced that his children are laughing at his aesthetic taste and he feels guilty for trying to force his taste on his children. As he broods over their suspected mockery and his own guilt, he imagines what



could only be fictitious scenes. The first scene takes the form of a meeting between the social worker and the family, instigated by complaints of the father's abuse. One little girl accuses him of biting her because she committed 'heresy' by saying that his beloved sculpture reminded her of Cretan sculpture.

-Oui, c'est vrai...quelque fois je perds la tête, je dis n'importe quoi, juste pour dire quelque chose...Alors il s'est jeté sur moi, il a aboyé...La quoi? en prenant un horrible accent...la haine qui tordait la bouche...La quoi?...il m'a mordue...(p.105)

The next imaginary scene is a court room trial, based on the father's friend referring to the children as 'mean natures'. The friend testifies that he said that the children would be and not are 'mean natures', although he wishes he had said are, just to teach the father a lesson, for he is tired of hearing the father speak badly of his children.

The father's friend's motto 'Vivre et laisser vivre' temporarily comforts the father, for he realizes that he should tolerate his children's values and vice versa. He discovers, as does the artist, that a work of art can be both 'dead' and 'alive', that his statuette is 'dead' for some people and 'alive' for others. For a moment, he immerses himself in aesthetic pleasure without worrying about the reactions of his children. Like the writer in Entre la vie et la mort who, face to face with creation, feels the joyful sensation equated with 'l'euphorie des mourants' (p.107), so the art-lover experiences a joy which escapes the constrictures of time.

Il est un instant immobile, sans limites. Un instant fixé, pour l'éternité. Un seul instant infini, infiniment paisible...(p.130)

Although both novels deal with the creative process, Entre la vie et la mort comes closer to espousing the actual act of creation, the central conscience being the creative artist himself.

Although Vous les Entendez? focuses on the art-lover, both the artist and the recipient of the artist's creativity participate in the creative process. They depend on each other to fulfill their respective roles. Entre la vie et la mort probes the mystery of the creative act, from the artist's sensations at the instant of creation, to the manifestation of those sensations in a concrete form. The artist's critical half then determines if the work is 'dead' or 'alive.' If it is indeed 'dead,' the artist must start again. The creative process is, as I have said, further complicated by the art-lover, whose response to the artist's creativity is determined often by the aesthetic tastes of other people. It is only at the moment when both the artist and the art-lover concentrate on the work of art, casting off all outside influences, that they immerse themselves in the act of creation, for what they have done is to

...créer, donner vie une seconde fois. Pour arracher à la mort, au dépérissement... (p.21)

So, both the artist and the art-lover participate in the inseparable duality of the aesthetic experience, the one creating and the other responding to creation.

Following the pattern of Chapter I, which discussed the creative process and then the process of communication, the second half of this chapter will deal with communication. In Sarraute's radio plays, where the medium for communication is limited to

dialogue, the listener can hear the interaction among the characters. However, because Entre la vie et la mort and Vous les Entendez? are written almost exclusively on the level of sub-conversation, the reader or spectator cannot watch or hear the various characters interacting through their dialogue. The reader is constantly inside the mind of one character at a time. So, paradoxically, although the novel can explain more, its structure restricts a study of communication because there can be no interaction between people on the level of subconversation. Communication, therefore, between characters in these two novels must manifest itself by a kind of osmosis among the various consciousnesses.

Entre la vie et la mort is the story of a writer. Nothing indicates whether the writer is one and the same at the beginning as at the end. Because the reader participates only on the level of the writer's consciousness, personality traits are unrecognizable. Entre la vie et la mort traces the steps of a career and not his career. Sarraute states in an interview in 1972 conducted by Germaine Brée that because she did not intend to **por**tray a specific writer, the central consciousness could represent one or several writers.

...I thought it would be interesting to concentrate on the writer as such, not on a writer. I did not portray an individual writer and anyone can see that the attitudes I described could hardly belong to the same person...<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of the novel, the mature writer is depicted as a puppet who mechanically performs the task of tearing out the page and throwing it away.

Il étend le bras, il le replie..."J'arrache la page."  
(p.7)

As a young writer, he is a scared child who fears others.

"Et vous, au fait...Vous savez, j'ai lu votre livre..."  
Il lève la main comme pour se protéger...il s'écarte  
comme pour ne pas être éblaboussé..." Oh non, je vous  
en prie..." il se sentait si bien, hors de leur portée,  
oublié de tous et de lui-même...Qu'on le laisse tran-  
quille, c'est tout ce qu'il demande...(p.136)

Later on in his career, fame and success have made him lose all  
sense of proportion. He sees himself as 'Un prophète.Un sphinx.'

Debout les morts. ou n'importe quoi. Tout ce qui vient  
de moi sous toutes ses formes, tout est à prendre. Qui  
se détourne? Qui refuse? C'est à prendre ou à laisser.  
Et qui oserait laisser? Qui ici aurait le courage de  
courir le risque?

Personne. Ils sont matés. Dressés.(p.208)

However, ironically, fame and success have dried up all his  
inspiration.

...il a été amené petit à petit, entraîné à son insu...  
il s'est permis de prendre, il ne s'en est pas rendu  
compte, toujours plus de libertés, il a osé forcer,  
asservir ce dont autrefois il ne s'approchait qu'avec  
tant de précautions, tant de respect...(p.224)

The vision of the puppet reappearing at the end gives the novel  
a circular structure, and metaphorically suggests the continu-  
ity of the art; in other words, artists are similar to a large  
degree. Although one artist 'dries up', another artist begins  
to create. Yet, in the novel, they could be the same artist.

Prendre celui-ci pour commencer, ce fragment minuscule...  
tout ce qui doit rester de l'image, morcelée...ce bras  
comme, celui d'un pantin articulé, qui s'étend, se  
replie, s'abaisse...(p.177)

It is ambiguous whether the novel presents many different wri-  
ters or whether it traces the various phases in the career of  
one artist.

A similar ambiguity of optic occurs in Vous les Entendez?. It is probable, but not certain, that everything takes place in the father's mind and what appear to be the thoughts of the guest or the children are simply projections of his own. The reader assumes that he is in the mind of the father as the novel is written mostly in the first person singular. The father refers to himself

Je n'en ai pas, vous me l'accordez, de tempérament. Pas l'âme... (p.22)

However, the father is sometimes referred to as 'il'. Either the reader is now in the mind of one of his children or the father imagines what his children are thinking about him.

Mais c'est vrai, il n'en est pas un. Non, ce n'est pas sa place, pas du tout... (p.22)

It is, therefore, impossible for the reader to tell how many different writers are represented in Entre la vie et la mort or inside whose consciousness he is in Vous les Entendez? at any one time.

The ambiguity of optic is reinforced by the interchangeability of the characters. Sarraute maintains that human beings are basically all alike- reactions on the level of subconversation are universal. The reader cannot hope to differentiate between the 'êtres-créateurs' in Entre la vie et la mort as each writer becomes blurred in a sort of kaleidoscope conflict in which each writer could become another at any given moment.

Pareil. Même substance. Jamais aucune séparation. Ou alors les cloisons communes à travers lesquelles se produit comme une osmose constante... (p.80)

To carry the idea of interchangeability one step further, Sarra-

aute presents, in Vous les Entendez?, people belonging to the same family or who are so close that they communicate by a continual osmosis, thereby becoming receptive to each other's tropistic reactions. The children feel his presence even from afar and wonder how he could have heard them laughing.

Comment a-t-il entendu? On riait si doucement...Mais il est toujours là à surveiller chaque geste, à réprimer le moindre élan, le plus léger signe d'insouciance, de liberté, toujours à scruter, à doser, à juger...(p.17)

Because the point of view is ambiguous, the father is possibly imagining what his children are wondering. The father is as receptive to his children as they are to him.

...Il n'y a pas en lui un frémissement si infime soit-il qu'ils ne perçoivent aussitôt, instruits, exercés par lui comme ils le sont, possédant, offertes par lui, toutes les cartes les plus détaillées...(p.18)

So close are the father and his children that what one of them feels can be attributed to anyone of the others. The father actually becomes the children and vice versa. He is

Comme l'enfant qui est venu près de sa mère recevoir un baiser, puis retourne, rassuré, jouer avec ses camarades, il va redescendre...(p.160)

Does the father feel like a child or do the children treat him like one? He turns into a child in their presence.

On marche sur la pointe des pieds, on se fait tout petit... (p.165)

He even looks so forlorn when he attempts to join in their games that they give him back his toy.

Mais ne prends pas cet air désespéré, tiens, on te la rend, on te rend ton hochet, tu vois...(p.176)

These frequent transpositions show the close interaction between

consciousnesses despite their different ages, views or 'roles,' and how the father and his children communicate.

As Chapter I discussed, the communication process is limited by each individual having his own view of reality which is, of course, difficult for anyone else to understand. In Entre la vie et la mort, the artist is perhaps of a different level of consciousness awareness than the critics or his family.

...ils savent ce qui les a provoqués sans rien se dire ou peut-être y a-t-il entre eux un langage qu'eux seuls perçoivent, des signes entre eux, qu'il ne connaît pas... (p.46)

As well, his sensitivity to words foreshadows his potential as a creative artist and sets him apart.

Il est d'une matière plus poreuse, absorbante...Chaque gouttelette sécrétée par eux, un simple mot sans importance, un accent, n'importe quoi, pénètre en lui, provoque des troubles, lui fait perdre le sens des proportions...(p.80)

The writer and the critic perceive reality very differently.

The critics, used to writers trying to copy Baudelaire or Balzac, feel that they cannot fail as long as they stick to generalities.

Il n'y a rien à craindre. Les chances de se tromper sont insignifiantes. Nulles, pour tout dire. Il suffit d'appliquer à son cas le calcul de probabilités- si efficace: Combien y a-t-il, je vous le demande, de Flauberts sur mille habitants? Combien, sur cent mille, de Baudelaires? ... (p.83).... On sait bien qu'on trouve partout ce qu'on y apporte, et que tout est dans tout...on peut montrer n'importe où n'importe quoi...(p.144)

The critics, eager to stamp labels on the artist's work, do not communicate directly with the work of art, nor, indirectly with the writer. Because the critic makes little attempt to understand the artist's work, the artist and the critic can-

not understand each other. However, the critic pretends to understand the artist's creativity.

"Eh bien oui. J'ai aimé votre livre. Beaucoup." Il se penche, il se tend, il s'ouvre pour absorber les mots qui suivront...des mots sans lien visible entre eux... ils tombent durs et drus, ils tambourinent contre lui sans pénétrer. De temps à autre il parvient à en attraper quelques-uns au passage: Symbolisme. Surréalisme. Impressionisme. Gros plans...(p.140)

He even tries to discern influence where none exist, by mentioning a railway station which is non-existent.

Il cherche, il parcourt en hâte le chemin...Maintenant il refait le trajet très vite, il le survole, il scrute...rien...nulle part...pas trace d'une gare...rien qui lui ressemble...(p.142)

While this incident demonstrates the rather mindless pretentiousness of critics, the underlying theme is that two individuals cannot hope to understand each other and communicate, for each person has a unique perspective of reality.

Mutual understanding between the father and his guest and between the father and his children in Vous les Entendez? is limited, as well, as they all see reality differently. We see the wide chasm between their perceptions of reality through their differing views of art and 'good taste.' The father and his guest feel that art is a sacred cult that has been passed down through the generations and so should never be touched.

Vite...la prendre, l'envelopper, l'emporter, la mettre à l'abri. Bien gardée. Protégée. Derrière une vitrine. Aux parois incassables.(p.40)

The children, however, feel that the power of the statue is that of a dead past holding the present in shackles. Their art incarnates the values of the present generation.

...revues de mode, bandes dessinées...fermer les postes



de radio, de télévision, arracher les panneaux-réclames, les affiches...(p.95)

The father sadly acknowledges that his children do not share his point of view.

Vous avez beau vous y prendre tôt, quand ils paraissent encore malléables, imprégnables, et les mener là, les forcer à regarder...Inutile de rien forcer...(p.40)

Furthermore, even the father and the guest, who share the traditional aesthetic appreciation, differ in their interpretation of the children's laughter. The guest believes that the laughter merely emanates from the children's innocence while the father believes that the children are laughing at him. His guest tells him that:

Ces rires sont ce que vous en faites. Ils seront ce que vous voudrez. Je vous assure, je ne vous comprends pas... (p.167)

Not only do the father and his guest hold very different points of view which cannot be mutually understood, but the father realizes that, to justify itself, an attitude must condemn the other's point of view. In other words, the father must discredit the attitude of his children in order to prove the superiority of his aesthetic values. Similarly, the children must break away from the father's tyranny if they want to assert their freedom. The father makes excuses for his children's behavior because he sees in them what he wants to see and not what might be close to reality. When they don't crowd around the statuette adoringly steeped in religious devotion as he would wish, he surmises that;

Ils se sont levés, ils ont pris congé poliment, ils étaient si fatigués...(p.15)

The children escape from his 'tyranny' by retracting into themselves like snails.

Les tendres chairs visqueuses et molles, toutes frissonnantes se sont rétractées, ils se sont enfermés, impossible de les atteindre... (p.42)

No compromise or mutual understanding can ever be attained, as each seeks his identity in a continual confrontation with the other.

The problems of communication are further compounded by the fact that each person's perception of reality fluctuates and changes. The critics in Entre la vie et la mort transform the image of the writer to match their expectations. The literary groupies swarm around their latest literary idol, exalting him so that the mere act of his drinking tea becomes a sacred ritual.

"...Il fallait le voir...il avait l'air d'officier quand il versait dans la théière l'eau d'une sorte de récipient... (p.193)

Naturally, this shifting of perspective makes a fixed reality impossible. The father in Vous les Entendez? is torn between asserting his aesthetic values and a desire to communicate what he deems most precious. He reexamines and reinterprets the children's laughter. He pretends at first that their laughter is natural and harmless.

Des rires insouciantes. Des rires argentins. Clochettes. Gouttelettes. Jets d'eau. Cascades légères. Gazouillis d'oiselets... (p.7)

Their laughter is as gentle as

...eaux vives, sources, ruisselets à travers les prairies fleuries... (p.27)

Each time he repeats the incident in his mind, his mood changes.

As his suspicions fester, the more sinister the laughter becomes.

Ces rires comme des gouttes d'eau qu'on fait tomber sur le crâne des suppliciés...c'est sur nous, c'est pour nous faire souffrir, c'est pour nous détruire...(p.100)

Finally, their laughter conquers him and he ends up sinking into a morass of tropisms.

...cet individu camouflé sous l'apparence du brave père de famille...réussissait à fabriquer à partir de ces rires des miasmes, des gaz asphyxiants, des microbes mortels, un fleuve de pourriture, une mer de boue qui se serait répandue sur toute la terre...(p.194)

These varying interpretations of the laughter indicate that the mind is in constant flux, which changes makes communication with another individual impossible.

In summary, this chapter has continued the discussion of the creative process and communication. The main character of Entre la vie et la mort, the artist, is participating in the very act of creation. Creativity is fragile as the artist may kill his creativity in the process of expressing it in words. Words tend to harden the artist's initial sensation. The artist is locked into an inseparable relationship with the art-lover, the protagonist of Vous les Entendez?, for he confirms the existence of the author's creativity. Just as the artist cannot express in words his creativity, so the art-lover cannot adequately describe in words what he feels towards the work of art.

Ce qui sort de là, ce qui émane, irradie, coule, les pénètre, s'infiltré en eux partout, ce qui les emplit, les gonfle, les soulève...fait autour d'eux une sorte de vide où ils flottent, où ils se laissent porter... aucun mot ne peut les décrire...Mais ils n'ont pas besoin de mots, ils n'en veulent pas, ils savent qu'il faut surtout ne laisser aucun mot s'en approcher... (p.10)

Words, then, do not provide an adequate medium of expression

for the artist or the art-lover, for they cannot convey their feelings to others. The action, then, of Entre la vie et la mort and of Vous les Entendez? centres around tropisms trying to verbalize themselves. The characters operate on the level of subconversation, and although they communicate by a sort of osmosis, any verbal interaction among the characters will have to take place after the novel has been written. However, the characters will never fully understand each other even if they do speak to each other at a later date. In the first place, each person's view of reality is unique but not immutable because people and relationships are in constant flux. Secondly, the written or spoken word is an inadequate medium for expressing deep thoughts. Therefore, mutual understanding and communication among people is limited.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Gretchen R. Besser, Nathalie Sarraute (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979), p.99.

<sup>2</sup> Germaine Brée, "Nathalie Sarraute. Interviews with two French Novelists." [Personal Interview with Nathalie Sarraute, January 1972] Contemporary Literature, XIV, 2 (Winter 1973), p.143.

CHAPTER III :                    CREATIVITY AND COMMUNICATION  
IN C'EST BEAU AND ELLE EST LA

The third and final chapter will continue the discussion of creativity and communication in Sarraute's two latest plays, C'est beau, produced in 1973 and Elle est là, in 1978. Chapters I and II discussed the components of creativity and the act of creation, respectively. All the characters of the plays and novels participate in the creative process to some degree as they meet the necessary conditions for creativity. The child of Entre la vie et la mort and Lui and Elle of Isma show creative potential by being sensitive to silence, another prerequisite for the creative process. H<sub>1</sub>'s friends and the characters in Isma are all potential creators for they voice their opinions, their subjective imaginings, just as an artist must express his creativity. The other half of the creative process is the art-lover, the recipient of creation. Pierre in Le Mensonge and the father in Vous les Entendez? both participate in the creative process by confirming the artist's creation. Unlike the characters discussed in Chapters I and II, none of the protagonists of C'est beau and Elle est là have any creative potential. The father and mother in C'est beau as well as H<sub>2</sub> in Elle est là are afraid to voice their ideas for fear of being criticized. F in Elle est là also keeps her idea to herself, thereby stifling any creative potential. Furthermore, a creator needs to express his perception in an original style. None of the protagonists could ever develop any creative potential for they stifle each other's mental processes by spouting clichés which cannot possibly stimulate thought processes. In this light, the creative and communication processes are

intertwined. In Sarraute's earlier plays, Le Silence, Le Mensonge and Isma and in the novels, Entre la vie et la mort and Vous les Entendez?, many factors restrict mutual understanding. Each individual's fluctuating vision of reality makes it impossible to know another person or even one's self. Furthermore, the spoken or written word is an inefficient medium for the expression of authentic feelings and thoughts. Nevertheless, the characters of Le Silence, Le Mensonge and Isma do communicate with each other to a certain degree and the protagonists of Vous les Entendez? communicate with each other by a sort of osmosis. But, in these later plays, C'est beau and Elle est là, the characters speak in overused, meaningless clichés. Furthermore, the father in C'est beau and H<sub>2</sub> in Elle est là try to impose their values on the other, thus annihilating the individual's capacity to reason. Language, although it keeps the lines of communication open to some degree, is a repressive tool, which stifles the creative and communication processes. The people in C'est beau and Elle est là do not participate in the creative process as they do not communicate their 'creation.' This chapter will follow the same pattern ~~as~~ Chapters I and II: an explanation of the dramatic situation followed by an analysis of the creative and communication processes.

C'est beau introduces a family nucleus of father, mother and son. The parents represent the mores of a disintegrating society which is being replaced by the values of the present generation, incarnated in the son. The father would like his son to share his aesthetic appreciation of museums and libraries, but the

son rejects these out-of-date values for new ones - television and comic books. The dramatic conflict revolves around a cliché, 'c'est beau,' which the parents use as a blanket appreciation of a painting, music or any form of art. 'C'est beau' is a value judgment that encompasses not only art but the principles that govern the parents' generation. By labelling something 'beau,' the parents are imposing their values on their son, thereby pre-establishing his principles and stifling his faculties of judgment, which is a kind of creativity. The son considers the words 'c'est beau' meaningless, trite and representative of an attitude that is not longer valid. As he grows up and begins to assert his identity, he becomes increasingly hostile towards his father and has no respect for his mother. He resents his parents and their old-fashioned ideas. The parents become afraid of his positive convictions and of alienating their son. They do not dare even pronounce 'c'est beau' anymore in his presence.

Ironically, as the play opens, the son is daring his parents to pronounce the phrase 'c'est beau.' Frustrated that the son is stifling them, the father, in a rage, attacks his son for referring to his mother as 'she' and sends him to his room. The mother makes several attempts to bridge the split in the family that is widening because of the husband's attacks on the son. At the end of the play, the mother finally calls the son from his bedroom and the same conversation starts again. The son refers again to his mother as 'she' and the father re-establishes his parental supremacy by shouting "Qui 'elle'?"

(p.62)



Elle est là continues Sarraute's rebellion against externally imposed criteria. Whereas C'est beau focuses on the condemnation of principles and values, Elle est là dramatizes the way an 'idea' can be condemned or stifled together with the person who holds it. Elle est là recapitulates the theme of Dissent les Imbéciles, one of Sarraute's novels which was published in 1976. Its theme is that ideas must be liberated and flow freely. An idea may be labelled as something only 'fools say', but the meaning of this label not only depends on the idea but also on its proponent. Because the others label 'Hé' stupid, he actually considers himself stupid. The only way to get revenge is to call others 'little fools'. But, by attacking the proponents instead of the ideas, he lowers himself to the level of personal combat where he abandons all rational analysis. By using a cliché himself he stops his own flow of ideas. So, Sarraute is suggesting that labels i.e. simple words like 'fools say' or 'c'est beau' can be a constraining formula that impedes the free-flowing potential of the mind.

Elle est là opens in the middle of a business discussion between  $H_1$  and  $H_2$ . But  $H_2$  is thinking about a previous conversation when  $F$ ,  $H_2$ 's secretary or colleague, was with them.  $H_2$  remembers that  $F$  disagreed with something that  $H_1$  and  $H_2$  were talking about.  $F$  did not actually voice her disagreement but rather gestured disapprovingly. This upsets, bothers and obsesses  $H_2$ . He wants  $F$  to surrender her idea to him so that he can destroy it, as he cannot tolerate anyone else having an idea contrary to his own. Furthermore, that  $F$  did not voice

her own idea, but merely gestured, really upsets  $H_2$ , for he cannot combat an unspoken idea. One idea can only be disarmed by another. In other words, if  $F$  would voice her idea,  $H_2$  could seize it and destroy it with another idea. However, "Elle est là" -  $F$ 's idea remains inside her mind, inaccessible to  $H_2$  or anyone else.  $H_2$  tries to force her idea out in the open by attempting to possess her, neutralize her. The structure is circular as in C'est beau.  $H_2$  calls  $F$  into his office where he tries to talk her into surrendering her idea to him. Later,  $F$  walks in and the same conversation starts again. The third time,  $H_1$  and  $H_2$  go into her office. Each time  $H_2$  sees  $F$ , his reaction becomes more and more extreme. He even plots to kill her but he realizes that even if she is no longer there, the idea will still be there, implanted in her head. At the end of the play, he decides to let  $F$  keep her idea and he resolves to keep his to himself also.

One of the prerequisites of the creative process is the necessity on the part of the artist to express his ideas freely and openly. He must be willing to take the risk of being admired and/or criticized. The father in C'est beau is afraid of voicing his convictions in front of his son, who thinks entirely differently. So, the father justifies himself by admitting that when he was his son's age, he, too, was 'behind the times.'

Moi à cet âge-là, j'étais idiot...Un peu arriéré...  
Toujours dans les livres...Dans les musées...Mais lui,  
oh oui, pour ça oui, lui, ces choses-là, ça l'ennuie...  
il n'aime pas ça... lui c'est les bandes dessinées...  
la télé...(p.52)

The father's insecurity about his own ideas resembles that of

H<sub>2</sub> in Elle est là, who needs the assurance that H<sub>1</sub> supports his point of view.

H<sub>2</sub>: Tout à l'heure, quand nous discussions...enfin, on ne peut pas appeler ça discuter, nous étions du même avis... (p.14)

H<sub>1</sub> cannot tolerate F's differing views. H<sub>2</sub> asks H<sub>1</sub>

Vous n'avez pas remarqué? Vous ne l'avez pas senti? Elle n'était pas de notre avis. Mais pas du tout...(p.14)

And, at the end of the play, H<sub>2</sub> proves to have no creative potential, for he decides to keep his idea for himself, pure and out of reach.

C'est à mon idée à moi, à elle seule, que je pense...Je ne veux pas qu'elle s'avilisse...plus de contacts...Plus besoin de soutien de personne...Nous n'avons besoin que de ça; être seuls, tout seuls, mon idée à moi...(p.36)

F in Elle est là, as well, destroys any potential creativity by not expressing her ideas. She tells H<sub>2</sub> that

Vous avez votre idée. Moi j'ai la mienne. On n'a pas le droit? (p.17)

So, we see that the father, H<sub>2</sub> and F all deny themselves a rôle in the creative process by stifling their ideas. As H<sub>2</sub> states

Les idées, vous le savez bien, ont besoin de porteurs pour circuler...(p.31)

How does a creator generate ideas? How does he develop a new and original 'vision'? Surely, the artist must be involved in discussions or situations in which his mind is stimulated. The people in C'est beau and Elle est là cannot develop their own ideas i.e. their creativity, because they stifle each other's rational, mental processes. The phrase, 'c'est beau' is but one example of the platitudes that lard ordinary conversation and thereby reduce reality to standardized formulae. The father in

C'est beau calls his son

...espèce de petit vaurien...allons, ouste, déguerpis,  
tu nous déranges...(p.44)

and the son criticizes his father for hiding behind clichés.

Fou...Moi? Toujours les mêmes réflexes de défense, les  
mêmes échappatoires, les mêmes camouflages...(p.43)

H<sub>2</sub> crushes F's unexpressed opinions by slapping on an epithet,  
which is inflexible and pronounced with no appeal to reason.

H<sub>2</sub>: Alors vous avez tort.

F: Tiens, vous croyez?

H<sub>2</sub>: Si je le crois? Mais j'en suis sûr. Architort...

ça ne tiendra pas, ce que vous pensez...ça ne peut pas  
tenir. C'est faux...tout faux...( p.16)

F speaks to H<sub>2</sub> in platitudes as well.

F: Mais dites donc...qu'est-ce qui vous prend? mais  
qu'est-ce que vous avez? Vous perdez la tête...(p.18)

Clichés not only stifle the ideas of others but also limit the  
speaker's own creative faculties. People tend to stifle not  
only ideas, but the proponents of those ideas. H<sub>1</sub> prejudices  
F's idea because F doesn't seem very bright.

H<sub>1</sub>: ...Ça compte à ce point, ce qu'elle peut penser?

H<sub>2</sub>: Non...Oui...Enfin...

H<sub>1</sub>: Tiens...c'est curieux. C'est sûrement une bonne  
personne...Mais à vrai dire, elle ne paraît pas...

H<sub>2</sub>: Oh je sais...Ce n'est pas un foudre...Mais ce que  
nous discussions, c'était vraiment à la portée...il ne  
faut pas être grand clerc...(p.14)

One idea should be combatted by another idea, not destroyed by  
clichés or because "a certain person" utters it.

A creator must regenerate or reactivate what has become  
calcified through imitation and overuse. He must familiarize  
himself with the great works of the past, appreciate them, but  
discard them. In other words, a creator must be sensitive and  
receptive to the creativity of others, to other forms and ideas

and allow and encourage these ideas, while, at the same time, believe in his own 'truth'.  $H_2$  of Elle est là believes in his own indisputable, absolute truth; however, he does not allow others to hold their own 'truths'. He begs F to accept his truth.

$H_2$ , doux: Dites-moi pourquoi vous refusez d'accepter...  
quand c'est criant de vérité?(p.25)

He wants to take F's idea, destroy it and instill his own in its place.

$H_2$ : Ce n'est pas la tête qu'il faut détruire, c'est l'idée...Pas le porteur...mais l'idée qu'il porte... l'idée seule...la traquer...l'écraser...  
 $H_3$ : Oui, assainir. Bien nettoyer. Faire place nette...  
 $H_2$ : Et alors on pourrait à cette place, dans cette même tête, installer...Se répandant d'elle...Se propageant...  
 $H_3$ : éclairant tout autour...  
 $H_2$  et  $H_3$ , dans un même souffle: la vérité...(p.30)

So, he destroys creativity. The son in C'est beau, unlike  $H_2$ , is receptive to the convictions and values of others. He tries to explain to his parents how the phrase 'c'est beau' affects him.

Le fils, hésitant: Eh bien, c'est cette expression 'c'est beau'...ça me démolit tout...il suffit qu'on plaque ça sur n'importe quoi et aussitôt...tout prend un air...(p.59)

He rejects his parent's language in favour of a new mode of expression that will give voice to his own view of reality. Ironically, he simply replaces 'c'est beau' with 'c'est chouette'. Despite his independence of mind, he proves himself to be merely replacing one convention with another, which, in his generation, will become as sterile as that of his parents.

C'est beau and Elle est là present situations in which individuals impose their values, or try to, on other people. Such

an attitude leads to the annihilation of the individual and his innate capacity to reason. It is, therefore, incompatible with the creative process, which calls for the free flow of ideas. The protagonists of C'est beau and Elle est là do not have any creative potential. A creator must express his vision and they are afraid to voice their ideas lest they be contradicted or criticized or simply because they want to keep their ideas to themselves. A creator must also be influenced by the works of other creators or surrounded by people with ideas in order for him to create new ones. The characters of C'est beau and Elle est là, however, do not create themselves or each other, as they surround themselves with clichés which only stifle creativity. Finally, a creator must be sensitive to other people's ideas. But the characters in these two plays try to enforce their own ideas as the truth and disregard others' ideas. As well, they judge an idea not on its merits, but according to who holds the idea, an extremely limiting factor.

Since the characters of C'est beau and Elle est là do not have any creative potential, the communication process is limited. For, as shown in the first half of this chapter, the characters cannot understand each other because they do not exchange ideas. Yet, the characters are engaged in dialogue. It is, after all, a play. However, there is little or no communication because their conversation is riddled with trite, banal clichés which limit mutual understanding. The dialogue simply maintains contact between the characters. Language is an inefficient medium to express deep thoughts or sentiments. The second half of

Chapter 111 will examine how language limits communication. Other factors impede mutual understanding. First of all, everyone has a unique view of reality. Secondly, it is difficult to know anyone else or even one's self due to the fluctuating nature of people and relationships. What impedes mutual understanding even more, which will be discussed in the second half of this chapter, is the fact that it is impossible to know anyone else fully as one tends to base his knowledge of another person on gestures, documents and appearances.

Chapter 1 discussed how the radio plays express subconversation, which, by its very nature is inarticulate at the level of speech. The dialogue in the radio plays is unrealistic as it contains the pre-dialogue. Yet, it is simple despite its plunges into the depths of internal movements and fluctuations. The audience or reader must not be constrained by difficult speech, as Sarraute wants her audience to participate directly into the same experience as her characters. However, because the dialogue contains the 'pre-dialogue', the characters say things one would not normally say. The son in C'est beau, for instance, conveys his tyranny and the fear he instills in his father by secreting black ink, like an octopus.

Le fils: Eh bien, il n'y a rien à faire...C'est plus fort que moi, je me rétracte. Dans un instant(voix terrible pour rire) je vais, comme la pieuvre, sécréter...une encre noire va se répandre...Regarde papa, il est tout recroquevillé...(p.59)

Tropisms, then, in radio plays, are voiced.

In Sarraute's earlier plays, Le Silence, Le Mensonge and Isma, many factors restrict mutual understanding, yet commun-

ication takes place on a certain level. The father and his children in Vous les Entendez? communicate by a form of osmosis. Similarly, the father in C'est beau appears to understand and to be receptive to the mother's feelings.

Lui: Mais si. Dis-le. Il y a longtemps que je sens que tu me caches quelque chose. Avoue. Ça te fera du bien. Et à moi aussi...

But he doesn't really understand her motivation at all.

...je pourrai mieux comprendre ton indulgence...Elle m'exaspérera moins...(p.46)

From Sarraute's assumption that we are all basically alike, and so closely knit are members of the same family, stems the obvious conclusion that people are even interchangeable. The mother admits to her son that their roles have been reversed.

Elle: Mais mon chéri, tu sais bien...je voudrais que tu redeviennes comme tout à l'heure...quand tu comprenais tout mieux que nous, quand tu sentais tout si bien...C'est nous qui étions comme des enfants...(p.58)

Yet, despite the family's closeness, the mother admits that she doesn't understand her son at all.

Elle, au père: Ah, tu vois comme nous nous sommes trompés. Comme nous connaissions mal notre propre enfant...C'est vrai, c'est ceux qu'on connaît le moins bien...(p.60)

What impedes mutual understanding, then, between people who are in such close contact? Sarraute feels that it is language itself which operates as a hindrance to discovering the 'truth'; if we conceal the 'truth' from ourselves and others, there can never be much 'understanding'.

Language, the most common means of communication, does not adequately uncover or discover the truth. The beginning lines of C'est beau emphasize the inefficiency of language.



Lui: C'est beau, tu ne trouves pas?

Elle, hésitante: Oui...

Lui: Tu ne trouves pas que c'est beau?(p.43)

Lui does not accept her answer as such, but realizes that the way she pronounces 'Oui' is much more indicative of the truth than simply the face value of the word 'Oui'. It is ironic that, while language is the tropistic catalyst, it is not language but rather the hesitations in the voice, gestures and silences that communicate "reality" and set the dialogue in motion. So, here, as throughout her work, Sarraute emphasizes the inadequacy of words to express our deeper, more subtle and 'more real' feelings.

To make things worse, language is often used to hide one's feelings, to maintain a barrier between two people. H<sub>2</sub> in Elle est là denies that he is bothered by F's air, when, in fact, her reaction obsesses him.

H<sub>1</sub>: ...vous n'êtes pas dans votre assiette...Je vous dérange...

H<sub>2</sub>: Mais pas du tout, mais au contraire...(p.14)

H<sub>1</sub> then tells H<sub>2</sub> that he understands quite well what is bothering him, although he is wondering what is upsetting H<sub>1</sub> so much.

H<sub>1</sub>: Dites-le franchement, je comprends très bien...(p.14)

Language's main function is probably to keep the lines of communication open. Yet, ironically, it is this very quality that often makes it a repressive tool. We have to resort to clichés since no language can adequately express tropisms. Clichés stop people from thinking and therefore stop them from communicating. For example, the parents in C'est beau label any

form of art as 'beau'. Also, the father calls his son 'fou', 'espèce de petit vaurien', 'ce petit idiot', and reminds his wife that 'Tu deviens folle aussi', while later on he admits that 'Nous sommes fous...' H<sub>2</sub> in Elle est là admits that 'Je suis fou...' and F, who agrees, exclaims

...mais qu'est-ce que vous avez? Vous perdez la tête...  
(p.18)

Clichés, by their very nature, are overused and therefore lose any meaning, so are pronounced with no appeal to man's rational faculties.

The structure of their conversation shows how language stifles thought processes. Their conversation does not follow any logical argument or evolution. There are no sustained speeches and no one convinces anyone of anything, at least not by logical means. In an article on Isma, Denise Goitein discusses the structure of Nathalie Sarraute's dialogue.

Le dialogue de Nathalie Sarraute ne fait pas en lui-même progresser la pièce, car aucun échange réel n'a lieu. Les répliques, au sens classique du terme, sont absentes. Le dialogue se compose plutôt de séries d'énoncés, souvent inachevés, qui surgissent spontanément, l'un suggérant l'autre, sans que l'enchaînement obéisse à la logique normale.<sup>1</sup>

When, at the beginning of C'est beau, the son accuses the father of not being able to pronounce 'c'est beau' in front of him, the father reacts angrily and protests. So, the son wants to reinact the scene in the hope of proving to his father that he is right. Since no amount of explanation can clear up the misunderstanding, they can only 'start again', enter into the situation again, put themselves inside by the power of imagin-

ation and the verbal magic, in the hope of creating the ideal atmosphere. Thus, the son suggests

Tiens, recommençons...Pour voir...Je vais aller dans ma chambre...Et toi, tu vas répéter, tu vas dire comme tout à l'heure: "C'est beau, hein? Tu ne trouves pas?" (p.44)

Later, when the father, angry and frustrated that, as parents, they fail to stand up to their convictions, suggests that there is only one possible solution, the mother reminds him

...Ça ne servirait à rien. Tu sais bien qu'on n'y arriverait pas...C'est toi qui courrait le rappeler... Et ça recommencerait comme avant...(p.48)

When the son reappears at the end of the play from his bedroom, the mother tries to recapture the conversation, as she is sure that the three of them were headed for a compromise, a common understanding.

Elle: ...On allait toucher enfin à quelque chose... entre nous...(p.58)

She begs her son to become as he was earlier.

Mais, mon chéri, tu sais bien...je voudrais que tu redeviennes comme tout à l'heure...(p.58)

The same phenomenon occurs in Elle est là when H<sub>2</sub> has called F into his office for the second time in an effort to create the appropriate atmosphere to clear up their misunderstanding. F is aware of H<sub>2</sub>'s motives.

F: Bon, bon. Très bien. Mais ce n'est pas pour recommencer, hein? Pas maintenant...(p.23)

This type of dialogue doesn't pretend to be an exchange of ideas or a means of any progress in understanding; all it does is show how language fails to lead their discussions to any logical conclusion. This movement towards 'starting again'

lends a circular structure to the play so that at the end, they are back at the beginning, having accomplished nothing. Another technique that shows the uselessness of their feeble attempts at understanding each other is that, at times, their dialogue comes to a standstill and they forget where they are.

F: ...D'ailleurs, c'est ce que j'ai fait...je n'ai pas bronché...Mais ce n'est pas encore assez...Mais où est-on?

H<sub>2</sub>: Oui, où est-on?... (p.17)

The pattern of their dialogue indicates a total lack of communication. To every statement that the father utters, the mother replies with either a question or a statement indicating that she does not understand him.

Lui, ton ferme: C'est fini. Terminé. Pouce. Je ne veux plus jouer.

Elle: Qu'est-ce que tu as?

Lui: J'ai que tu as commis une erreur. Une erreur fatale.

Elle: Quelle erreur? Encore avec lui? Encore les langes? les biberons?

Lui: Non. Une erreur, là, maintenant avec moi. Oui. Tu as changé de jeu. En douce. Mais moi, j'ai vu. Tu avais besoin du père Janet. Et des fils Aubry. Eh bien, moi je te demande maintenant de me donner la mère Duranton... le père Duranton...Parfaitement, le père et la mère...

Elle: Quoi?

Lui: Oui. Donne-les-moi. Allons, donne. Et maintenant la fille et le fils. Oui, Duranton. Toute la famille.

Elle: Qu'est-ce que tu en feras?

Lui: Tu vas voir. Il me les faut. Et aussi les Herbart...

Elle: Je ne comprends rien... (p.53)

The same pattern appears in Elle est là between F and H<sub>2</sub>.

H<sub>2</sub>: Il faut que je vous parle...

F: Oui? De quoi?

H<sub>2</sub>: C'est idiot...c'est très difficile...Je ne sais pas comment...Par où commencer...

F: Allez-y toujours. Qu'est-ce que j'ai encore fait?

H<sub>2</sub>: Oh rien. Rien. Rien justement, vous n'avez rien fait. Rien dit. Vous vous taisiez...

F: Il fallait que je parle?

H<sub>2</sub>: Oui, ça aurait mieux valu...

F: Que je parle quand? Que je parle de quoi? je ne com-

prends rien. (p.16)

H<sub>1</sub> also expresses a lack of understanding between him and H<sub>2</sub>.

H<sub>1</sub>: Pourquoi? Je ne comprends pas...Ça compte à ce point, ce qu'elle peut penser? (p.14)

Another speech pattern that destroys any attempt at communicating is exemplified by the mother who stifles communication by ordering the father to be quiet.

Lui: Ça va continuer longtemps? Assez...Je n'en peux plus. Arrêtez...

Elle, tout bas: Attention, qu'est-ce que tu fais?

Tais-toi...

Lui: Je ne peux pas, c'est au-dessus de mes forces.

Ça me donne le tournis, ça me fait mal au coeur...

Elle, bas: Mais tais-toi donc... (p. 50)

So, people won't listen when the ideas being suggested are disturbing. Of course, here, neither the father or the mother are listening. The father pays no attention to her 'tais-toi'.

A related pattern of speech, that of echoing each other's statements does imply a certain amount of communication, although in Sarraute's plays, there is no development of ideas. In Elle est là, H<sub>2</sub> gives H<sub>3</sub> the impetus to continue his idea and vice versa, but this type of dialogue, with no sustained speeches, no arguments or discussions does not engender any development. It is a kind of mechanical reaction by convention, devoid of any serious attention or attempt at a real discussion.

H<sub>2</sub>: Notre idée serait happée, traînée, enfermée, là-bas, engluée de bave, aplatie, écrasée...On dirait que là-bas, un boa constrictor...

H<sub>3</sub>: Moi, je vois plutôt comme une petite machine, une mécanique broyeuse qui automatiquement...

H<sub>2</sub>: C'est ça: automatiquement. Une force aveugle: On peut prédire, prévoir d'avance...

H<sub>3</sub>: Un mécanisme est là, dans cette cervelle...et au-to-

ma-tique-ment il va saisir, broyer, réduire en poussière, en bouillie...

H<sub>2</sub>: ce qui respire...ce qui veut vivre...et on ne peut rien contre ça.

H<sub>3</sub>: Pas moyen de bouger. (p.27)

As H<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>3</sub> suggest above, the characters are trapped in a vicious circle, i.e. 'pas moyen de bouger'. They are forced to use language which does not express their innermost thoughts and their dialogue, composed primarily of clichés, stifles thought, thereby limiting communication.

The dialogue offers the best medium for stating the problem of communication by showing both the inadequacy and the power of words. The way the mother in C'est beau pronounces the word 'feignant' indicates that she is trying to be a part of, or at least sympathetic with her son's generation. Her use of this word causes the father to question their values.

Elle, avec défi: Si. Je l'ai dit, "Feignant." Pourquoi pas?

Lui: Oh, mon pauvre chéri...Faut-il que tu souffres...Voilà à quoi tu en es arrivée...Voilà à quoi ce petit vaurien t'a poussée...A aller te commettre...t'en encanailler...A te dégrader...te galvauder... (p.49)

Not only the pronunciation of a word, but the substitution of a synonym for a word can represent a different way of thinking. The son discards the values of his parents' generation, represented by 'c'est beau', by substituting the synonym, 'c'est chouette'.

Lui, ravi: ...Chouette...Il peut suffire d'un mot... (p.60)

Here, the conflict is exacerbated by a particular utterance. The power of the word could not be underlined more clearly.

Besides language, communication is further impeded because

each person has his own, separate view of reality. The mother and father interpret differently the scene where the father pronounces 'beau' in front of their son.

Elle: N'empêche qu'à un moment, tu'as flanché, tu as eu peur aussi, avoue-le...

Lui: Peur? Moi? Tu rêves...(p.45)

The mother, who is more sensitive to the undercurrents that lie below the level of dialogue, dwells in the past, remembering when she was pregnant and wishing that she wasn't.

Elle: Je ne me le pardonnerai jamais. Ça m'a prise tout à coup. Une affreuse pensée... Tout à coup. Oh, c'est terrible: je n'en voulais pas.(p.47)

The father, on the other hand, lives in the present.

Lui, froid: De toute manière, à quoi bon? Il vaut mieux l'oublier. Ce qui est fait est fait. Maintenant tu ne le changeras pas...(p.48)

He lives on the surface of life, preoccupied with his business affairs.

Le fils, très calme et un peu condescendant: ...mais tout à l'heure, M.Bertrand a appelé. C'est moi qui ai répondu...il va rappeler...

Lui, soulagé: A quelle heure...(p.62)

Similarly,  $H_2$  in Elle est là is sensitive and obsessed with F's differing idea, whereas  $H_1$  is concerned with day to day affairs.

$H_2$ : ...Mais juste un instant...permettez-moi...excusez-moi...je dois...je reviens tout de suite(Sort. Revient.) Trop tard, elle n'est plus là.

$H_1$ : Qui donc?

$H_2$ : Ce n'est rien...j'aurais voulu...Mais elle est déjà partie...Oui, la personne qui...

$H_1$ : Il y a quelque chose que vous deviez lui dire?

$H_2$ : Oui, justement...

$H_1$ : Vous ne pouvez pas laisser un message?...La joindre chez elle, téléphoner?

$H_2$ : Non, vous savez...comme ça...c'est difficile...Mais ce n'est rien...N'y pensons plus...Alors, vous me disiez?

$H_1$ : Eh bien, je constatais seulement que dans la conjonc-

ture actuelle...étant donné le tour que prennent...(p.13)

H<sub>3</sub> sees the world in black and white as opposed to H<sub>2</sub> who sees the shadows.

H<sub>3</sub>: J'ai vu sa nuque éclairée par la lampe...Ça m'a rappelé de nos projets...

H<sub>2</sub>: Pas moi, ça m'a attendri...Quelque chose d'innocent...sans défense...

H<sub>3</sub>: J'ai vu comme elle a sursauté, rien d'étonnant, elle ne s'y attendait pas, elle s'est retournée, elle a mis la main sur son coeur, elle a dit: "Oh, vous m'avez fait peur..."

H<sub>2</sub>: Et c'est tout? Vous n'avez vu rien d'autre?

H<sub>3</sub>: Non, rien...(p.32)

What limits communication even more than the barriers erected by each person having a unique perspective, is the tendency of most people to reduce a person's complexity to stereotypes, and reconstruct personality on the basis of letters, documents and even gestures. This "subjective" view of reality limits and distorts our knowledge of another person. For example, H<sub>2</sub> arrives at assumptions based on a single gesture or facial expression.

H<sub>2</sub>: Vous n'avez pas remarqué? Vous ne l'avez pas senti? Elle n'était pas de notre avis. Mais pas du tout...(p.14)

Perhaps the above analysis about the limitations of communication contradicts what was postulated at the beginning of this discussion on communication- i.e. that it is not the spoken word which really sets the dialogue in motion, but rather the unspoken means of communication such as silences, gestures, facial expressions and intonations. However, the point is that any medium by which we communicate is limiting. Whereas the spoken word often betrays tropistic reactions, so unspoken language can also often be misinterpreted and furthermore does



not adequately express our feelings. As H<sub>2</sub> rightly says

...Il ne faut pas se fier aux apparences. L'habit ne fait pas le moine...(p.20)

Therefore, if neither dialogue nor unspoken language are sufficient mediums of communication, then any significant mutual understanding is impossible.

Not only can we never fully know anyone else, but neither can we know ourselves. Human beings and relationships are in constant flux. In C'est beau, the mother tries in vain to exactly create a previous incident.

Lui:...Il faut savoir ce que tu veux. Qu'il recommence?...  
Le fils, l'air naïf: Que je recommence quoi?  
Elle: Mais mon chéri, tu sais bien...je voudrais que tu redeviennes comme tout à l'heure...(p.58)

Everyone, influenced by events, feelings, other people, is constantly undergoing mutations; so it is impossible to know one's self or anyone else well.

Language, the most common means by which we communicate, is inadequate for transmitting our deep feelings. A message may be misconstrued as we have the tendency to jump to conclusions from the stimulus only of a gesture or a written document. Spoken language is also limited as it is ridden with clichés, which, far from engendering communication, rather stifle thought processes. Even if language could express tropistic reactions, communication would still be limited. For each person's reality is unique and we can never be inside someone else's mind. Thus, no one can fully understand anyone else or one's self.

So, Sarraute, in her last two plays, paints a quite nihili-

stic canvas of man's endeavours to engage into a meaningful relationship with others.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Denise Goitein, "A Propos d'Isma: Réflexions sur le théâtre de Nathalie Sarraute." French Studies: A Quarterly Review, 30, 1976, p.53.

## CONCLUSION

Perhaps because Sarraute's earlier novels were initially unpopular, she became preoccupied in her later works with the creative process. Many of the characters in her three radio plays, Le Silence, Le Mensonge and Isma as well as in the novels, Entre la vie et la mort and Vous les Entendez? are potential creators. Certain conditions, however, must be met for the creative process to take place. As was demonstrated in Le Silence, silence is necessary to prod the artist in a creative mood.  $H_1$  and, consequently, the rest of the characters react to Jean-Pierre's silence. They shape a personality for him based, not on facts, but on their subjective imaginings, thereby creating.  $F_3$  supposes that Jean-Pierre is timid, while  $H_1$  labels him an impostor. On the other hand, the characters in C'est beau and Elle est là lack creative potential as they are afraid to voice their opinions.  $H_2$  in Elle est là is afraid of exposing an original idea lest it be contradicted and unpopular. He points out to  $H_3$  that " Elle n'était pas de notre avis. Mais pas du tout ..." (p.14) A creator must also be sensitive to the medium through which he is expressing himself. Just as Lui and Elle in Isma are sensitive to words ending in 'isme', so the child in Entre la vie et la mort shows signs of creativity by being repulsed by elongated vowels in such words as 'vaalise' or 'vaaacation'. The parents in C'est beau, however, spout clichés. They label any form of art as beau and the son fails in his effort to be 'different' by simply replacing 'beau' with a synonym 'chouette'.  $H_2$  in Elle est là even tries to destroy F's

idea, thereby supressing any creative potential. So, silence, imagination, sensitivity and a willingness to express one's self are all prerequisites to creativity. However, the actual creative process is painful and frustrating as every artist has a critical half and a creative half which are often in conflict. In other words, the critical mind, upon rereading the product of the creative imagination, decides that the work is dead. It is difficult to concretize creativity without destroying the initial sensation. Words tend to harden and kill the spontaneity and freshness of the creative spirit. It is, therefore, not surprising that the other theme of this thesis is communication, for Sarraute, in her literary career, was faced with the task of expressing on paper her creativity.

The very core of Sarraute's works are tropisms, the inarticulate sensations or feelings which skirt around the subconscious. Her task is to transform tropisms into words. She is faced with two opposing forces as language attempts to concretize feeling, and feeling threatens to escape the strictures of language. It therefore seems natural that one of her themes is the inefficiency of verbal expression. Spoken words are simply a 'trompe l'oeil' and do not adequately express our deeper, authentic reactions to our environment. Speech is full of useless, meaningless clichés which do not engender communication. She even suggests that our speech patterns actually stifle thought. We have seen that the characters in Sarraute's radio plays do not communicate with each other, although they are engaged in conversation. Yvonne, Lucie and Simone in Le Mensonge

all respond to an embarrassing situation by spouting clichés.

Yvonne: J'aurais voulu rentrer sous terre.

Lucie: Moi aussi. Je ne savais pas où me mettre.

Simone: Oh! On mourait. (p.64)

Compounded by the use of clichés, which do not engender any mutual understanding is the fact that each person has his own subjective version of reality, which cannot be understood by anyone else.  $H_2$  and  $H_3$  in Elle est là react very differently to their visit to F's office.

$H_3$ : J'ai vu sa nuque éclairée par la lampe...ça m'a rappelé de nos projets...

$H_2$ : Pas moi, ça m'a attendri... (p.32)

Nevertheless, and in spite of our cliché-ridden language, there exists underneath speech a level of subconversation which is inarticulate but which could express our authentic thoughts. Sarraute has succeeded in capturing and expressing through the use of images and metaphors these half-formed thoughts and feelings which accompany or precede the words we speak aloud. In fact, her novels consist of an interplay of conversation and subconversation. An example from Entre la vie et la mort demonstrates the discrepancy between speech and subconversation. A critic, eager to please the author, tells him "Eh bien oui. J'ai aimé votre livre. Beaucoup." His subconversation, however, reveals his nervousness, showing that he has not attempted to understand the artist's work at all.

Il se penche, il se tend, il s'ouvre pour absorber les mots qui suivront...des mots sans lien visible entre eux...ils tombent durs et drus... (p.140)

This example points out how ineffectual speech really is and that it is impossible to express one's true feelings and thus

communicate with each other.

Sarraute was faced with a difficult task when she was commissioned to write radio plays. No longer could she show the interplay of subconversation and actual conversation which is the basis of her novels. She had to weave subconversation into dialogue i.e. express tropisms out loud. Since tropisms do not exist at the level of speech, Sarraute had to create an unreal situation where the characters say things they normally would not say.

To show how she overcame the seemingly impossible task, let's examine and compare two passages similar in theme, one from the novel Vous les Entendez? and the other from a radio play, C'est beau. The novel alternates between subconversation and conversation while the radio play presents an ordinary, everyday situation where subconversation is expressed aloud. The setting of dramatic action of both the novel and the play is the family nucleus. In both, the action takes the form of a conflict between traditional and innovative approaches to art. The father in Vous les Entendez? as well as the parents in C'est beau hold traditional values and aesthetic tastes. They like museums and exhibits; they are champions of tradition, reverently turned toward the past. In the novel, this attitude is symbolized by the father's adoration of a statuette that has been handed down for generations; while in C'est beau the cliché 'c'est beau' symbolizes all the ideas, values, principles, music, art and literature that govern the parents' lives. The children in both works find their parents' ideas old-fashioned and restrictive,

favouring instead an unrestrained freedom of creative expression. They are the revolutionary innovators, resolutely facing the future. The following passages show the violent reaction on the part of the children to their parents' use of the cliché 'beau' and 'c'est beau'.

The father in Vous les Entendez? is thinking about the time he took his children to the museum in the hope of converting them to his love of art. In his imagination he relives the scene where they were standing in front of some paintings and sculptures:

...lui, jetant à peine un coup d'oeil, pour s'assurer que les rayons bienfaisants qui émanent de ces pierres sculptées, de ces toiles peintes, tombent bien sur eux, qu'ils sont pour cela à bonne distance, au bon endroit... Tiens, mets-toi là, où je suis, ici, sur le côté...à contre-jour tu verras mieux...les poussant devant lui doucement, se plaçant n'importe où, ne regardant rien... rien qu'eux pour suivre en eux le cheminement...ne pouvant par moments s'empêcher, sachant combien c'est dangereux, d'aider, de hâter un peu...Est-ce beau, hein, ça? n'est-ce pas beau, hein?...Et eux, comme des escargots, comme les hérissons, aussitôt se recroquevillant, rentrent leurs cornes, sortent leurs piquants, ils ne sont plus qu'une coquille, une boule autour de laquelle il tourne...C'est sa faute, il le sait, il a été maladroit, il a fait un mouvement trop osé, trop fort...ils sont si sensibles, si délicats...(p.42)

Although this scene takes place in the father's mind, there is a distinction between his spoken words and his subconversation. He tells one of his children "Tiens, mets-toi là, où je suis, ici, sur le côté...à contre-jour tu verras mieux" and further down, he also says "Est-ce beau, hein, ça? n'est-ce pas beau, hein?" The rest of the passage is subconversation. As soon as he utters the word 'beau', he feels the children's sudden withdrawal. Their rejection is manifested by a tropism - a metaphor



compares the children to snails who retract into their shells. These movements back and forth are characteristic of all relationships, but are inarticulate at the level of speech.

The son in C'est beau is equally repulsed by the pronunciation of the expression 'c'est beau'. The parents are afraid of pronouncing 'c'est beau' in front of their son as they fear his mockery. They are even afraid of saying it to each other lest it filter through the walls and reach the son's ears. The son, however, aware of his own power, delights in daring his parents to say 'c'est beau'. In the following passage, the son explains his aversion to the expression 'c'est beau'. He verbalizes the terror that he arouses in his father but not in normal, natural speech. He compares himself to an octopus that secretes black ink and compares his father to a snail who, when afraid, retracts into its shell.

Le fils: Eh bien, il n'y a rien à faire...c'est plus fort que moi, je me rétracte. Dans un instant (voix terrible pour rire) je vais comme la pieuvre, sécréter...une encre noire va se répandre...Regarde, papa, il est déjà tout recroquevillé...

Elle et Lui, voix blanches: Tu ne trouves pas ça beau? Tu détestes ça...tout ça...

Le fils, condescendant: Mais, non, voyons...il ne s'agit pas de ça...

Eux, avec espoir: Pas de ça...Oh mon chéri...de quoi alors?

Le fils: C'est...mais ça me gêne de vous le dire... je vais vous choquer...

Elle: Non, non, je t'en prie, dis-le...

Le fils, hésitant: Eh bien, c'est cette expression "c'est beau"...ça me démolit...il suffit qu'on plaque ça sur n'importe quoi et aussitôt...tout prend un air...

Elle: Oui...je crois que je vois...

Le fils: Oui, tu vois.

Elle: Je comprends...ça devient convenu...n'est-ce pas?

Le fils: Oui, si tu veux...Ces sortes de banalités dès qu'on les applique... (C'est beau , in Théâtre,p. )

Whereas the novel shows the discrepancy between conversation

and subconversation, the radio play presents voiced tropisms and clichés. It is not normal in conversation to compare one's self, as the son does, to an octopus who is going to secrete black ink on its victim, his father. The tropism is expressed out loud. However, the rest of the dialogue is normal, realistic and full of clichés. The discrepancy between conversation and subconversation and/or a spoken tropism and everyday language not only demonstrates the inefficiency of language to communicate but also how shallow and meaningless our everyday conversations are.

So, Sarraute externalizes tropisms in the radio plays. However, not all the characters in the plays are drawn to the murky regions where tropisms flourish. There are those who prefer to stay on the surface of things, on the neutral ground with which they are familiar. In other words, there are those who express tropisms and those who spout clichés. Those who express tropisms are the hyper-sensitive individuals who, like Sarraute, are potential artists. These individuals resemble the author, pointing out tropisms to the reader, who, by himself, may never have suspected their existence. For example, H<sub>1</sub> in Le Silence is sensitive to Jean-Pierre's intimidating silence, but ultimately he communicates his discomfort to the others, who are less sensitive. By the violence of his agitation, he awakens a corresponding unease. F<sub>1</sub>, F<sub>2</sub> and F<sub>4</sub> exclaim towards the end of the play that they feel very uncomfortable.

F<sub>1</sub>: ...Oh! j'ai envie de partir, à la fin. Je voudrais m'en aller. L'angoisse me gagne...  
 F<sub>2</sub>: Une sensation...moi aussi...  
 ...

F<sub>4</sub>: Je me sentirais plus en sécurité, moins abandonnée, même sur une île déserte... (Le Silence, p.72)

Another example from Isma shows Lui and Elle, the hyper-sensitive characters who are conscious of the undercurrents that swirl beneath the platitudes of ordinary conversation. Whereas the others prefer to remain on the surface, Lui and Elle try to steer them away from clichés, telling them that their conversation is only a sterile imitation, the 'copy of a copy'.

Lui: ...Vous ne sentez pas comme ça faisait démodé, tout ça, hein, tout à l'heure? Ça faisait copie de copie, vous ne trouvez pas?

H<sub>1</sub>: Copie de copie?

Elle: Oui, ce qu'il veut dire, c'est que tout à l'heure, quand nous parlions, ça lui faisait l'effet d'être de l'imitation...c'est ça, n'est-ce pas?...

(Isma, p.15)

These sensitive characters, then, have creative potential.

Whereas H<sub>1</sub> in Le Silence succeeds in transmitting his ideas to the others, Lui and Elle in Isma realize, as does the artist, that they must discard used ideas and create something new.

It seems to me, therefore, that Sarraute does indeed communicate her ideas, her theories in her novels and in her first three radio plays. But, as she becomes more and more abstract, she, too, removes herself from involvement with others. C'est beau and Elle est là, her latest plays, present characters who exhibit no creative potential. Although they are engaged in conversation, they do not succeed in communicating anything meaningful or positive to each other. The dramatic situation is obscure, abstract and sterile, because the reader cannot become involved in the creative process. And as the act of creation falters, or becomes sterile, the people in the plays become less and less real, so the reader or listener becomes less

and less able to identify with or sympathize with them. So, the characters are reduced to ciphers as the creative process has been stifled by the lack of communication. The reader or audience cannot feel involved with the characters as they are simply voices who neither participate in the creative process nor communicate to any depth with each other. It is true that Sarraute's protagonists are not engaged in an ordinary, realistic dramatic situation. However, the subject of the early plays, whether it be the tropistic reactions that arise from a prolonged silence, as in Le Silence, or someone's obsession with 'white lies' as in Le Mensonge, or someone's aversion to the way people pronounce certain words, as in Isma, offers an authentic dramatic situation with which the reader can identify and thus create himself. But, the later plays, C'est beau and Elle est là not only present an unrealistic situation, but the dialogue is almost impossibly abstract. Indeed, Sarraute ends Elle est là on a tragic note. She seems to doubt that there is any free flow of ideas. And even if an idea is voiced, it will only be destroyed by another one. Instead of a development of thought, we see a situation in Sarraute's works whereby thought is stifled. This phenomenon reaches a point in her last radio play where ideas are totally and actually wiped out, thereby stifling forever creation and communication. But perhaps this rather grotesque way of painting these rather mechanized consciences, these beings who have lost both their creative abilities and communicative tactics, is but Sarraute's way of protesting against the debilitating state of human in-

tercommunication, a state induced by man's laziness, weakness of spirit and imprecision of language; that is, against conformism. It is a rather nihilistic reaction of a unique, creative spirit that clearly belongs to Nathalie Sarraute. On the other hand, it is, perhaps, hopeful and probable that her creative force will renew itself and once again be inspired to create more positive and suggestive works in the future.

# B I B L I O G R A P H Y

## I. WORKS BY NATHALIE SARRAUTE.

(Works studied or referred to in the thesis).

### N O V E L S:

Tropismes. Paris: Denoel, 1939.  
Ed. de Minuit, 1957.

Portrait d'un inconnu. Préface de Jean-Paul Sartre.  
Paris: Marin, 1948.  
Gallimard, 1956.

Le Planétarium. Paris: Gallimard, 1959.

Les Fruits d'or. Paris: Gallimard, 1963.

Entre la vie et la mort. Paris: Gallimard, 1968.

Vous les entendez? Paris: Gallimard, 1972.

### P L A Y S:

Le Silence. Paris: Gallimard, 1967.  
(First broadcast, in German transl.,  
April 1st, 1964).

Le Mensonge. Paris: Gallimard, 1967.  
(First broadcast: March 2, 1966)

(Both plays first produced on stage:  
Dir. by Jean-Louis Barrault.  
Théâtre de France - Petit Odéon ,  
Paris, 14 janvier 1967).

Isma, ou Ce qui s'appelle rien.

Paris: Gallimard, 1970.  
(First staged: Espace Cardin,  
Paris, Febr. 1973).

C'est beau.

Paris: Gallimard, 1973.  
(First staged: Theatre d'Orsay,  
Paris, Oct. 1975).

Elle est là.

Paris: Gallimard, 1978.  
(First staged: Centre Pompidou, Paris,  
Nov. 1978).

# Editions used for reference in the thesis:

'Isma', suivi de 'Le Silence' et 'Le Mensonge.'

Paris: Gallimard, 1970.

Théâtre: Elle est là. C'est beau. Isma. Le Mensonge.  
Le Silence. Paris: Gallimard, 1978.

## Bibliography

### II. CRITICAL SOURCES

#### Books

- Besser, Gretchen Rous. Nathalie Sarraute. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979.
- Cranaki, Mimica et Yvon Belaval. Nathalie Sarraute. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1965.
- Robbe-Grillet, Alain. Pour un nouveau roman. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1963.
- Sarraute, Nathalie. L'Ere du Soupçon: Essais sur le roman. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1956.
- Tison-Braun, Micheline. Nathalie Sarraute ou la recherche de l'authenticité. Paris: Gallimard, 1971.

#### Articles

- Besser, Gretchen R. "Colloque avec Nathalie Sarraute 22 avril 1976." The French Review, L, No.2 (December 1976), pp.284-289.
- Besser, Gretchen R. "Nathalie Sarraute and the Problem of Artistic Creation." The Centennial Review, Vol.XXIII, No.4 (Fall 1979), pp.70-78.
- Besser, Gretchen R. "Nathalie Sarraute's fools." Stanford French Review 11 (Spring 1978), pp. 451-455.
- Bouraoui, H.A. "Silence ou mensonge: le dilemme du nouveau romancier dans le théâtre de Nathalie Sarraute." The French Review, XLV, Special Issue, No.4 (Spring 1972), pp.106-115.
- Brée, Germaine. "Nathalie Sarraute. Interviews with two French Novelists." Personal Interview with Nathalie Sarraute, January 1972. Contemporary Literature, XLV, 2 (Winter 1973), pp.137-146.
- Finas, Lucie. "Nathalie Sarraute: 'Mon théâtre continue mes romans.'" La Quinzaine Littéraire, 292 (16/31 Dec. 1978), pp.4-5.
- Goitein, Denise. "Nathalie Sarraute as dramatist." Yale French Studies, 46, 1971, pp.102-112.
- Goitein, Denise. "A Propos d'Isma: Réflexions sur le théâtre



de Nathalie Sarraute. "French Studies: A Quarterly Review, 30, 1976, pp.43-56.

Groves, Margaret. "Nathalie Sarraute: Vous les Entendez?" International Fiction Review I, Jan.1974, pp.59-62.

Minogue, Valerie. "Distortion and Creativity in the Subjective Viewpoint: Robbe-Grillet, Butor and Nathalie Sarraute." Forum for modern language Studies XII, I, pp.37-49.

Pieller, Evelyne. "Trois personnages et la femme-contre. Ma cervelle dans ta cervelle." La Nouvelle Critique, Nov.1978, pp.31-34.

Racevskis, Karlis. "Irony as a Creative and Critical Force in Three Novels of Nathalie Sarraute." The French Review, LI, No.I (October 1977), pp.37-44.

Sarraute, Nathalie. "Le Gant Retourné", Conférence prononcée à l'Université de Madison dans le cadre du séminaire sur l'avant-garde au théâtre et au cinéma, 1974. Cahiers de la Compagnie Madeleine Renaud-Jean Louis Barrault, 89, pp.70-79.

Whiting, Charles G. "Nathalie Sarraute: Moraliste." The French Review, XLIII, Special Issue, No.I (Winter 1970), pp.168-74.