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ÉRIC EMANUEL SCHMITT'S *HOTEL OF TWO WORLDS*: GUESTS OF NOWHERE LAND & THEIR CONFRONTATIONS WITH THANATOS

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This study aims to examine Éric Emanuel Schmitt's play, *Hotel of Two Worlds* and explore how the residents' confrontation with death transforms them. Their urgent desire for escape and the inability to escape from that atemporal and aspatial place adds fuel to the fire. While the play alludes to Sartre's *No Exit* and other existentialist works, Schmitt's emphasis on spirituality clearly distinguishes it from absurdist and nihilist literature. In this work death is not absolutely defined as the absurd destination for humans, instead, what is highlighted is the mysterious aspect of death. And the interrelation of death with the halo of light gives death a more enigmatic status rather than an absurd status. The philosophical views of Blanchot and Heidegger on death, particularly Heidegger's concept of *Sein-zum-Tode* (Being-toward-death), are central to this study. It is concluded that though death cannot be defined, it is unavoidable. Humans must live their moments as though death were near, and yet its proximity must not devitalize their lives.

Keywords: *aspatiality, atemporality, escape, omnijectivity, Sein-zum-Tode.*

Introduction

Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt, a prominent contemporary French-Belgian playwright, has established his reputation as a philosophical dramatist whose works skillfully merge narrative drama with profound existential underpinnings. Often described as a "storyteller of the soul," a creates aaccessible yet deeply resonant parables that explore the great questions of human identity, morality, and the search for meaning (Golsan, 2018, p. 12). His plays, including the celebrated *Enigma Variations*, frequently employ fantastical or surreal premises—such as a man debating God

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and the Devil in a park—to stage intricate metaphysical explorations. *Hotel of Two Worlds* (*L'Hôtel des deux mondes*, 1999) stands as a quintessential example of this method, constructing a potent liminal arena to examine humanity's most fundamental confrontation: the encounter with death and its profound impact on the meaning of a life lived (Schmitt, 1999).

The play situates its eclectic cast of characters in a mysterious hotel, an atemporal and aspatial zone suspended between life and death where deceased guests await their final passage. This setting, evocatively reminiscent of Sartre's claustrophobic drawing-room in *Huis Clos* (*No Exit*), operates as a crucible where what scholar Marjorie Attignol Salvodon terms the "urgency of release" clashes with the ontological impossibility of escape (Attignol Salvodon, 2003, p. 117). However, Schmitt consciously diverges from purely absurdist paradigms. As critic Jean-Louis Hippolyte notes, Schmitt's work is less concerned with the "nothingness" of existentialism and more with the "mystery of being" (Hippolyte, 2006, p. 42). In this interim space, death is not presented as a meaningless end but as a transformative threshold, a mysterious catalyst that compels introspection and redefinition. By engaging in dialogue with existentialist thought while infusing it with a distinct, humanistic spirituality, Schmitt recalibrates the narrative of mortality.

This study adopts a hermeneutic approach, conducting a close philosophical and literary analysis of *Hotel of Two Worlds* to elucidate how the play dramatizes the human confrontation with mortality. The methodological framework is grounded in existential and phenomenological philosophy, synthesizing the works of Martin Heidegger, Maurice Blanchot, and Jean-Paul Sartre to construct a multidimensional lens through which Schmitt's treatment of death can be interpreted. While Schmitt's spiritual humanism distinguishes him from these thinkers, the liminal setting of the hotel creates an ideal dramatic laboratory to stage and interrogate their concepts.

Central to this inquiry is Heidegger's concept of *Sein-zum-Tode* (being-toward-death), which posits that death is not merely a biological endpoint but the most certain and non-relational possibility that defines *Dasein*. For Heidegger, authentic existence arises from the conscious acceptance of finitude, an awareness that individualizes us and pulls us from the impersonal "they" (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 278–311). This framework is crucial for analyzing how Schmitt's guests are forced into a state of *Sein-zum-Tode*, and whether this confrontation paralyzes them or, as Heidegger suggests, can be made "productive for life" (Heidegger, 1968, p. 57). Blanchot's philosophy radicalizes this notion by emphasizing the impossibility of truly experiencing death. He posits death not as a personal event one can own, but as an ungraspable event that belongs to the radical unknown—the absolute

"other" (Blanchot, 1982, pp. 95–96; Blanchot, 1995, pp. 23–24). This paradox is mirrored in the hotel's liminal state, where guests are dead yet conscious, trapped in a space where death is both their reality and an elusive experience, they cannot fully grasp, resulting in a profound sense of disconnection and otherness.

Complementing this, Sartre's existentialism introduces a social dimension to the analysis. Sartre viewed death as "an absolute contingency which on principle escapes me" (Sartre, 1956, p. 545), an absurd end that threatens to rob life of meaning. Yet, he also contended that our essence is defined by the legacy of our actions and how we are perceived by others after we are gone. This resonates with his earlier exploration of existential alienation in *Nausea*, where Roquentin observes, "I am. I am. I exist. I think, therefore I am; I am because I think… but what I am, I don't know. I am waiting to find out" (Sartre, 1964, p. 97). This struggle to define oneself through the Other finds a radical counterpart in Sufi mysticism, which suggests that true enlightenment requires the utter annihilation of the self. As Amirian & Yousof argue in their study of Schmitt's work, "the illumination of Man's spirit only occurs when he has relinquished all essence of the self" (2017, p. 340). This perspective illuminates the guests' struggles to reconcile their self-image with the judgments and memories of others, highlighting the Sartrean notion that our being-for-others continues to shape our story even after death.

A key methodological synthesis of this study lies in integrating these views to advance an *omnijective* understanding of death—a perspective that strives to transcend individual subjectivity and mere objectivity to approach a more holistic truth. This omnijective view acknowledges the subjective anxiety of facing one's end (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 278–311; Blanchot, 1995, pp. 23–24), the objective fact of finitude and its impact on the living (Sartre, 1956, p. 545), and the transcendent dimension implied by Schmitt, where death appears as a natural part of a cycle of impermanence and transformation (Schmitt, 1999). By placing Schmitt's characters within this philosophical cauldron, the analysis demonstrates how *Hotel of Two Worlds* uses drama to explore the most fundamental boundaries of human existence.

At its core, this study argues that through this liminal confrontation, Schmitt moves beyond the tragic or futile connotations of death toward an enigmatic, almost sacred dimension often associated with light and transcendence. *Hotel of Two Worlds* suggests that embracing life's fragility is the very source of its vitality. The play issues a call to live each moment with the profound awareness of finitude, transforming anxiety into purpose and despair into a form of grace.

Literature review

The article is situated at the crossroads of contemporary French theater studies, existential phenomenology, and spiritual humanism in literature. The current critical field on Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt's works, particularly *Hotel of Two Worlds*, is substantial yet this study focuses on three predominant strands.

First, it engages with the tradition of existentialist interpretations in modern drama, emphasizing themes of alienation, absurdity, and the human condition. Critics such as Marjorie Attignol Salvodon (2003, p. 117) and Jean-Louis Hippolyte (2006, p. 42), Schmitt's plays draw on Sartrean motifs of entrapment and self-definition through the gaze of the Other, as seen in parallels to *No Exit*. This paper agrees with this underlying framework of existential confrontation, but attempts to elaborate on it by highlighting Schmitt's infusion of spirituality, transforming death from an absurd endpoint into a mysterious threshold that fosters transcendence rather than despair.

Second, the study is extensively inspired by phenomenological philosophy on death, which brings the main theoretical application. Its argument revolves around Heidegger's *Sein-zum-Tode* (1962, pp. 278–311; 1968, p. 57), Blanchot's notions of death's ungraspable alterity (1982, pp. 95–96; 1995, p. 23), and the impossibility of experiencing mortality. It is in agreement with other scholars such as Hossein Sabouri et al. (2023, p. 1302) who have applied Heideggerian being-toward-death to literary explorations of authenticity and finitude. This paper applies this to *Hotel of Two Worlds*, on the view that the liminal hotel space forces characters into an ontological awakening, where awareness of death individualizes them and prompts a productive reevaluation of life, beyond mere paralysis.

Third, the article reacts to humanistic and spiritual readings, which discuss the interplay of suffering, love, and meaning-making in the face of mortality. It is based on the postulate of Viktor Frankl (1985, p. 113) that responsibility and logotherapy enable humans to find purpose amid despair, as echoed in Ernest Becker's (1973, p. 5) critique of death denial through "immortality projects." This is additionally backed by the integration of Sufi mysticism, as explored by Amirian & Yousof (2017, p. 340), which posits self-annihilation as a path to enlightenment. In the analysis, the philosophies of Emmanuel Levinas (1969, pp. 199–201; 1988, pp. 156–157) and Kahlil Gibran (1923, pp. 16–17) are also used to explain the transformative power of love and *memento mori*, characterizing the characters' journeys as shifts from nihilistic void to courageous acceptance.

This synthesis of these imperative traditions moves this study beyond a single interpretation. It makes *Hotel of Two Worlds* not only a narrative of existential limbo, but a multifaceted experiment with mortality, spirituality, the alchemy of

suffering, and the enigmatic interrelation of life and death - what the article terms an *omnijective* understanding of Thanatos.

Method

The discussion explores the ways in which the hotel's enforced limbo embodies *Sein-zum-Tode*, thrusting guests like Julien from inauthentic oblivion into anxious awareness, and how Blanchot's paradox of conscious, yet *unexperiencable* death, manifests in their paradoxical state—alive in consciousness, dead in body—resulting in a profound disconnection that fuels both despair and potential transcendence. Additionally, the paper investigates whether characters' confrontations represent a shift from nihilistic flight to an *omnijective* embrace of mortality, where subjective terror, objective finitude, and mysterious spirituality converge.

This phenomenological mainstay is enhanced and contextualized by incorporating complementary philosophical and humanistic systems: Sartre's existentialism (1956, p. 545) assists in framing the social and relational dimensions of self-definition post-mortem, Viktor Frankl's logotherapy (1985, p. 113) illuminates the responsibility to forge meaning amid suffering, and Ernest Becker's denial-of-death framework (1973, p. 5) critiques futile immortality projects. Sufi-inflected spirituality, as per Amirian & Yousof (2017, p. 340), and Levinas's ethics of the Other (1969, pp. 199–201; 1988, pp. 156–157) further elucidate love's alchemical role in Julien's metamorphosis. In the end, this methodology attempts to illustrate how Schmitt's text enacts a phenomenological deconstruction of Thanatos and how it is a force that thrives on mystery and proximity, directing existence toward a vitality that is intensified by the acceptance of life's impermanence.

Discussion and results

In *Hotel of Two Worlds*, Schmitt masterfully initiates the drama by plunging both his characters and the audience into a state of profound ontological disorientation (Schmitt, 1999). The residents' initial condition is one of pure oblivion; they are conscious yet lack the fundamental coordinates of time and space that constitute a recognizable world. This existential vacuum, a direct transfer of their confusion to the viewer, creates an immediate and shared anxiety. Their desperate, yet vain attempts to reconstruct their narrative through memory mirror the human struggle to impose order on the fundamentally unknown, a struggle that, in its failure, only deepens their cynicism and desperation. As Heidegger argues, human existence (*Dasein*) is fundamentally "being-in-the-world"; when the world suddenly become

unrecognizable is to experience a crisis of the self (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 78–86). This is the unsettling foundation upon which their journey toward awareness is built.

The catalyst for their awakening is the enigmatic Dr. S., whose revelations do not provide comfort but instead deepen the existential abyss. Her explanation of their comatose state—that their bodies lie broken on Earth while their conscious selves inhabit this limbo—forces a radical and terrifying Cartesian split upon them. They are confronted with the tangible reality of their own disembodiment. For the first time, they are compelled to think of death not as an abstract concept, but from the specific, alienating viewpoint of a soul severed from its physical vessel. This moment shatters their previous understanding of existence. Blanchot's concept of death's impossibility is relevant here; they are facing the fact of their own death, yet they continue to experience consciousness, thus inhabiting a paradox where "death is always the other side of a relationship that we cannot bring to completion" (Blanchot, 1995, p. 23). They are in death, but cannot experience it as an event.

This awakening, bombards the residents with a torrent of unanswerable metaphysical questions that have haunted humanity since its inception: Is this a waystation to another life or the anteroom to absolute annihilation? The terrifying "unknowing" of the afterlife is poignantly captured in their observation that those who die embark on a "one-way trip," offering no report from the "other world." This radical uncertainty generates what philosopher Thomas Nagel might call an "absurd" tension between the earnest need for answers and their systematic unavailability (Nagel, 1971, p. 718). Their subsequent, almost instinctual, desire to "go down in the elevator" represents a desperate flight back into the familiar anguish of life—a realm they can comprehend—rather than remaining in the terrifying ambiguity of the unknown. Yet, they are powerless, stripped of agency, forced to wait and, in doing so, forced to contemplate.

It is within this state of compelled waiting that Schmitt's philosophical dramatization achieves its deepest resonance. The residents are granted a horrific yet vivifying gift: the chance to appraise their lives from the post-mortem perspective of what Heidegger calls *Sein-zum-Tode* (being-toward-death), but with the cruel twist of being already post-being (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 278–311). This forces upon them—and by extension, the audience—a profound ontological and epistemological self-examination. The audience is compelled to inhabit these voids alongside the characters, grappling with the same eternal questions of soul, death, and meaning.

Ultimately, the residents' transition from oblivion to awareness is not a movement toward answers, but toward a more profound and authentic relationship

with the questions themselves. Their spirits are forlorn, suspended between earth and sky, but in this suspension, they achieve a clarity unavailable in life. While the play leaves their ultimate fate—and the question of how they would change if given a second chance—deliberately unanswered, its power lies in its activation of the reader's conscience. We become the ones who are given the second chance; we are prompted to conduct our own appraisal, to live with the awareness of our finitude, and to infuse our actions with meaning before the elevator of our own lives reaches its final floor.

Among the four characters waiting in the hotel, Julien Portal emerges as the most restless and agitated. His frantic desire to return to Earth stands in stark contrast to the apathetic existence he led while alive, revealing a profound irony that lies at the heart of his character. It is through his tense dialogue with Dr. S. that the unsettling truth of his condition is unveiled: though he insists his presence in the hotel is due to an accident, he is categorized among those who committed suicide. Dr. S. dismantles his defensive narrative with surgical precision, exposing a life steeped in willful self-destruction. She clarifies that his final car crash was merely the culmination of a long, programmed decline—a "long and programmed suicide" fueled by alcoholism, drug use, and a conscious casting off of all ties (Schmitt, 1999, p. 25). In a devastating diagnosis, she concludes, "you were dead even long before going into coma, you were not living all your life."

This revelation is the catalyst for Julien's existential awakening. He embodies what Heidegger describes as the transition from inauthenticity to the anxious awareness of *Sein-zum-Tode* (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 278–311). In life, he fled from his own being through a series of "escapes"; in death, he is violently confronted with the void he spent his life avoiding. The shocking realization that he has been the architect of his own ruin generates a paradoxical and desperate thirst for the very life he once squandered. He is, in a sense, experiencing what philosopher Emmanuel Levinas might describe as a fundamental "uselessness of suffering"—a pain that seems to serve no purpose other than to highlight a prior failure to live authentically (Levinas, 1988, pp. 156–157).

The central, agonizing question that Julien's arc poses, is whether this awakening would truly translate into change if given a second chance. His newfound fervor for life, born from its loss, illustrates the painful human tendency to recognize value only in absence. This desire to return and "enjoy living despite all its sufferings" aligns powerfully with the logotherapy of Viktor Frankl. Having stared into the chasm of a death out of time, Julien seems to grasp Frankl's core principle: that meaning can be found in any circumstance, even suffering, and that "each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by answering for

his own life" (Frankl, 1985, p. 113). His struggle is no longer about escaping feeling but about reclaiming the responsibility to feel anything at all.

Thus, Julien becomes Schmitt's most poignant case study in the play. He represents the individual for whom the confrontation with Thanatos becomes a brutal but necessary prerequisite for embracing life. His journey suggests that awareness of death—especially a death one has unconsciously chosen—can serve as the ultimate catalyst for authenticity, forcing a reckoning with the responsibility we all hold to forge meaning before it is too late.

Julien's narrative extends beyond the stage, holding up a mirror to the countless individuals who, like him, seek refuge from life's inherent suffering in the numbing embrace of addiction. His story exposes a tragic paradox: life is a singular chance to embrace existence with all its burdens, yet many humans, unable to bear its weight, consciously choose a living oblivion. They live as if life is a trial run, postponing authenticity and torpefying themselves to the present moment, oblivious to its intrinsic worth. This state of living *ad interim*, as Schopenhauer piercingly observed, leads to a life squandered: "when at the end of their lives most men look back, they will find that they have lived throughout *ad interim*; they will be surprised to see that the very thing they allowed to slip by unappreciated and unenjoyed was just their life, precisely that in the expectation of which they lived. And so, the course of a man's life is, as a rule, such that, having been duped by hope, he dances into the arms of death." (Schopenhauer, 1974, p. 468)

This delusion shatters only at the brink of the abysmal space. For Julien, and for humanity at large, the sobering clarity of life's value often arrives simultaneously with its imminent loss. It is in the face of death that the thirst for life becomes most acute. This is why Viktor Frankl's prescription is so profoundly tangible: "so live as if you were living already for the second time and as if you had acted the first time as wrongly as you are about to act now!" (Frankl, 1985, p. 85). Julien's desperate rush to return is the embodiment of this second chance mentality, which is tragically realized too late.

The pivotal question then becomes: can humans change without needing such a catastrophic clarion call? Awareness itself is the necessary second chance, but it is often met with resistance. The common search for meaning can easily curdle into nihilism—a defensive "so what?" that absolves the individual of the effort and courage required to change. This defeatist posture, as Frankl contends, misunderstands the fundamental nature of existence. The question is not one of demand but of response: "ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather must recognize that it is 'he' who is asked… to life he can only respond by being responsible" (Frankl, 1985, p. 113).

This emphasis on responsibility is the cornerstone of an authentic existence. As Jean-Paul Sartre argued, the awareness of death forces us to confront our radical freedom and the weight of our choices (Sartre, 1956, p. 545). Irresponsibility and life negation, as exemplified by Julien's years of addiction, are not merely bad habits; as Dr. S. diagnoses, they are a form of "long and programmed suicide," the active refusal of responsibility to live (Schmitt, 1999, p. 25). To counter this, humans require what Paul Tillich called "the courage to be" (Tillich, 1952, p. 6)—the fortitude to affirm life in spite of its suffering and anxiety. This courage is not born of stoic indifference but is intimately linked to love and optimism; it is the active, responsible engagement with one's own existence that transforms life from a hell of avoidance into a meaningful project of one's own making.

Julien stands as the play's paramount exemplar of existential metamorphosis. His entrance into the hotel is marked by a corrosive hatred and profound pessimism, the culmination of a life spent in frantic flight from the concept of death—a condition akin to thanatophobia. This excessive, unexamined fear of mortality had propelled him toward a defensive nihilism; as he states, he saw no reason in anything, finding the absurdity of an ephemeral life unbearable. His philosophy was a defense mechanism: if life ends in nothingness, then it must be nothingness, thereby pre-emptively invalidating any struggle for meaning. He was trapped in a paralyzing paradox, both hating life and being terrified of death.

His sojourn in the liminal hotel, however, forces a turning point that grants his character a depth others lack. Initially, his response is one of anger and frustrated curiosity, unable to comprehend the enigmatic guidance of Dr. S. and the Magus. The true catalyst for his transformation is not a philosophical argument, but an emotional earthquake: the arrival of Laura. Love, which he initially resists, performs the alchemy his intellect could not. It transforms his foundational fear into courage, a quality that had been absent his entire life. This shift allows him to finally "catch up" with himself, moving toward a state of acceptance where, as Sartre describes, one is almost completely identified with their facticity at the moment of death: "until the moment of death. At that precise moment, I almost succeed in 'catching up' with myself. At that precise moment, my transcendence is almost over; time's up, there is nothing more to do. I am almost completely identified with my facticity" (Sartre, 1956, p. 190). Julien achieves this peace before his final departure, integrating his facticity—the truth of his death—into a new mode of being.

This journey powerfully illustrates the theories of Ernest Becker in his seminal work, *The Denial of Death*. Becker argues that much of human behavior is "immortality project"—a motivated response to the terror of death where individuals seek to transcend mortality through symbols of lasting significance:

greatness, wealth, and status (Becker, 1973, p. 5). Julien's earthly pursuits were precisely such a project, yet, as Becker predicts, they proved futile and joyless, unable to shield him from existential dread. Becker suggests that the path to an authentic life lies not in denying death, but in confronting it. By embracing our mortality, we can shatter the useless projects and appreciate the preciousness of life, connecting to something larger than ourselves—whether through love, creativity, or faith.

Julien gains access to this second-level awareness only in the hotel. Through love, he finds a "something larger" in his connection to Laura, which allows him to finally accept his mortality. This acceptance, far from being nihilistic, becomes the source of his newfound courage and peace. He transitions from a life governed by the denial of death to an end illuminated by its acceptance, demonstrating that only by staring into the abyss can we truly learn to value the light.

In stark contrast to the other disoriented guests, Laura embodies serene acceptance of her condition, mourning neither her arrival in the hotel nor her paraplegic earthly life. Instead, she revels in simple bounties—health, movement, freedom—precisely because deprivation honed her sensitivity to life's value. Her sickness barred genuine love, cloaking her in the "suffocating veil of pity" she scorned (Schmitt, 1999). This contempt echoes Nietzsche's polemic: "pity negates life […] pity is the practice of nihilism […] this depressive and contagious instinct runs counter to the instincts that preserve and enhance the value of life […] pity wins people over to nothingness!" (Nietzsche, 2005, p. 49). By refusing pity's tutelage, Laura preserved her soul's radiant vitality, attracting the Magus (who sees his daughter in her) and Julien, whose emptiness confronts her fullness. Julien's hedonistic escape from suffering depleted his soul into apathy, while Laura's embrace forged vibrant capacity for appreciation—a dichotomy echoing Frankl's epiphany amid despair: "I sensed my spirit piercing through the enveloping gloom […] I felt it transcend that hopeless, meaningless world […] 'Et lux in tenebris lucet'—and the light shineth in the darkness" (Frankl, 1985, pp. 48–49).

Laura is that light in Julien's nihilism. His ontological dread—"why live if we die?"—resolves not logically but through love's communion. Pre-Laura, he fled the Other's "mortal proximity" (Blanchot, 1995, p. 34), deserting relationships. With her, love engages soul-over-body; her unescaped suffering teaches that evading pain evades meaning. His hedonism was soul-suicide; through her, he revives, his frantic return dissolving into tranquility. For the first time, words align with feeling: "my lips have said these words a hundred times […] but for the first time […] it burns" (Schmitt, 1999, p. 51). This rekindling purges via love born of suffering's embrace.

Julien's sincerity peaks in selfless responsibility—the obverse of selfishness—exemplifying Levinas's ethics: the self, constituted by infinite obligation to the Other, arriving as "obsession" (Levinas, 1969, pp. 199–201). Shared by Magus and Dr. S., it awakens soul-communication unclouded by physicality. This aligns with mystical divestment: "a soul can divest itself of the created state […] to realize the pre-creational state […] enabling even the embodied, earthly soul to achieve a lasting and essential union with God" (Robinson, 2001, p. 12). Far from Sartre's nausea: "when the existentialist looks inside himself […] he sees the void […] the chasm of the ego" (Sartre, 1956, p. 7), Julien's "nothing" becomes fertile ground for self-authored meaning. The Magus crystallizes this via appetite: "Lack of appetite is perhaps the worst of all evils… Life is only beautiful because it is a bit beyond our means" (Schmitt, 1999, p. 28). Thus, residents like Marie, Laura, and the Magus—who endured earthly lack—display greater will to live and lesser fear of dying, their struggles honing appetite for mystery. Meaning emerges not as gift but forged pursuit; challenge-less life is half-lived, absence the true teacher of living.

The concept of *memento mori*—the remembrance of death—serves as a profound catalyst in *Hotel of Two Worlds*, jolting the characters from existential slumber into a state of heightened awareness. This awakening to finitude is a fundamental step toward authenticity, forcing individuals out of the impersonal "they-self" and into a mode of Being that is resolutely their own (Sabouri et al., 2023, p. 1302). This reflection on mortality is not a morbid fixation but a desire that prompts humans to capture fleeting experiences, leaving them both exhilarated and melancholic. It is the impulse to hold onto something inherently transient. Though life on earth is equally fleeting, this truth is often met with collective oblivion. The Magus articulates this shift in perspective, confessing that on earth, he, like most, lived in denial: "Down there, we knew we were dying, but we turned our backs to the tracks, we refused to see the train, we told ourselves that the next one wouldn't be for us." In contrast, the hotel forces a confrontation with finitude, making him "greedy" to savor each unfolding moment "like a piece of candy" (Schmitt, 1999, p. 27).

This forced mindfulness aligns with Maurice Blanchot's assertion that "death is not an event in life: we do not live to experience death. If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present" (Blanchot, 1982, p. 16). On earth, the characters were too caught in the "hustle and bustle" to seize the day. Julien, in particular, embodies this blindness. As Amirian notes, "he drives too fast, he loves too fast, and thinks too fast. He has all the prejudices of today's ready-made thinking, known as negative convictions. This ideological burden stifles him, prevents him

from living, and committing himself" (2010, pp. 154–155). The hotel's enforced wait deconstructs this frantic pace, forcing him to contemplate his destiny and radically transforming him. He leaves not with answers, but with "the strength of consent."

Julien's journey from clinging to life to embracing its mystery echoes the philosophical poetry of Kahlil Gibran, who wrote, "We cling to the earth, while the gate of the heart of the lord stands wide open." Gibran portrays life as an enchantress whose seductive beauty distracts from its wiles, and death not as an end but a transition—a "wedding feast among the angels" and a "pillar of light" (Gibran, 1923, pp. 16–17). This perspective encourages not mourning but celebration, an acceptance of death as a natural part of an eternal cycle. Julien undergoes this exact shift. His terror of death is replaced by equanimity through his connection with Laura, who acts as an angelic figure obviating the terror of the void. Her presence incarnates love in the hearts of Julien, Dr. S., and the Magus, awakening them to a higher reality.

His transformation is so complete that he no longer sees life as an absolute advantage and death as an inconvenience. He feels genuine joy for Laura's return to life, a selflessness that signifies his divinization. This aligns with Gibran's exhortation to "rejoice with me in white raiment" and to understand that those who have passed remain "among you, now and for evermore" (Gibran, 1923, p. 16). The play suggests a form of spiritual reincarnation where the soul's journey continues beyond the grave. As one character reflects, "The reality of life is life itself, whose beginning is not in the womb, and whose ending is not in the grave. For the years that pass are naught but a moment in eternal life" (Gibran, 1923, p. 17). Through the *memento mori* experience, the characters finally extend their knowledge beyond the "narrow cavern" of their birth, understanding the divinity within them that they once condemned. They learn that the true terror is not death, but the failure to awaken to life's profound and eternal reality while living.

Conclusion

In conclusion**,** Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt's *Hotel of Two Worlds* ultimately argues that the confrontation with mortality is not a descent into nihilism but a necessary stimulus for achieving authentic existence. Through the liminal experiences of his characters, Schmitt moves beyond the nihilistic paradigms of earlier existentialism, proposing instead that the awareness of death—our *Sein-zum-Tode*—can instill a profound urgency to live meaningfully. Julien's transformation from a thanatophobic nihilist to a courageous and loving individual, catalyzed by his connection to Laura, demonstrates that the impulse to escape suffering ultimately

leads to a hollow existence, while the courage to embrace life's fragility is the true source of vitality. The play suggests that the metaphysical "unknowing" of death need not be a source of despair. Instead, by accepting this fundamental limitation, human beings can shed the distractions of the mundane and achieve a state of mindful presence, or *memento mori*, savoring each moment as the Magus learns to do. The hotel, therefore, does not function as a purgatory of punishment but as a crucible of clarity. It forces its residents—and by extension, the audience—to abandon the useless pursuit of definitive answers and embrace an "omnijective" understanding of death that acknowledges its objective reality, subjective terror, and mysterious potential for transcendence. Ultimately, Schmitt's work serves as a powerful philosophical intervention, asserting that to live fully and responsibly, one must not flee from the thought of death, but rather integrate it as the very condition that makes life precious and urgent.

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ԷՐԻԿ-ԷՄԱՆՈՒԵԼ ՇՄԻՏԻ *ԵՐԿՈՒ ԱՇԽԱՐՀՆԵՐԻ ՀՅՈՒՐԱՆՈՑԸ*. «ՈՉ ՄԻ ՏԵՂԻ» ՀՅՈՒՐԵՐԸ ԵՎ ՆՐԱՆՑ ԱՌՃԱԿԱՏՈՒՄԸ ԹԱՆԱՏՈՍԻ ՀԵՏ

Նարջես Ջաֆարի Լանգրուդի

Սույն հետազոտության նպատակն է քննության առնել Էրիկ-Էմանուել Շմիտի «Երկու աշխարհների հյուրանոցը» պիեսը և բացահայտել, թե ինչպես է մահվան հետ առճակատումը կերպարանափոխում բնակիչներին: Փախուստի նրանց հրատապ ձգտումը և այդ անժամանակ ու անտարածական վայրից խուսափելու անհնարինությունը է՛լ ավելի է բորբոքում իրավիճակը: Թեև պիեսն աղերսներ ունի Սարտրի «Փակ դռների հետևում» (No Exit) դրամայի և էկզիստենցիալիստական այլ գործերի հետ, սակայն Շմիտի շեշտադրումը հոգևորականության վրա այն հստակորեն տարանջատում է աբսուրդի և նիհիլիստական գրականությունից: Այս երկում մահը բացարձակապես չի սահմանվում որպես մարդու համար նախատեսված աբսուրդային վերջնակետ. փոխարենը՝ շեշտվում է մահվան առեղծվածային կողմը: Մահվան փոխկապակցվածությունը լույսի լուսապսակի հետ մահը բնութագրում է որպես ավելի շուտ առեղծվածային, քան աբսուրդային իրողություն: Բլանշոյի և Հայդեգերի փիլիսոփայական հայացքները մահվան վերաբերյալ, մասնավորապես՝ Հայդեգերի «Լինելություն դեպի մահ» (Sein-zum-Tode) հայեցա-

կարգը, առանցքային են այս ուսումնասիրության համար: Հետազոտությունը եզրահանգում է, որ թեև մահը հնարավոր չէ սահմանել, այն անխուսափելի է: Մարդիկ պետք է ապրեն իրենց կյանքի յուրաքանչյուր պահն այնպես, կարծես մահը մոտ է, սակայն այդ մերձավորությունը չպետք է կենսազրկի նրանց կյանքը:

Բանալի բառեր՝ *անտարածականություն, անժամանակություն, փախուստ, համասուբյեկտիվություն, «Լինելություն դեպի մահ»:*