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# Performance as a Response to the Absurd: A Study of Morris Panych's *7 Stories*

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**Abstract**

*Albert Camus describes the Absurd as emerging from the confrontation between the human need for meaning and the unreasonable silence of the world. In dealing with the indifference of the world, Camus's absurd hero dares to live the absurd. The characters in Morris Panych's 7 Stories, having similarly realised the nature of the world, are consciously performing their lives. To escape boredom, they play the game of killing each other, pretend to be God, perform life like a theatre-artist and such. They are so engrossed in their act that nobody is bothered by the Man who is eager to jump from the seventh storey. This research aims to analyse the play 7 Stories by Morris Panych and study how the individuals in the play resort to performance to deal with the inevitable absurdity. It also aims to examine how their constructed reality helps them deal with their everyday existence. The researcher uses textual analysis and close reading to meet the aims of the study.*

**Keywords:** *Absurd; existentialism; performance; meaninglessness; acting.*

## Introduction

Questions regarding human life and its nature have always baffled inquisitive individuals. From trying to ascertain the very nature of life to the role of human existence in the world to the realisation of the inescapable absurdity of the universe, humans have been preoccupied with these questions for over a millennium now. Philosophers, plot-makers, poets and scientists have all approached these questions uniquely and have reached diverse responses. Though thinkers since Socrates have delved on the topic of existence, Existentialism as a movement emerged in the post-war France with the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Albert Camus. These writers had, among other concerns, the very concern of man's being here in this world and his subsequent dealing with his existence. Despite the fact that Existentialism as a moment is a byproduct of a post-war world, these concerns have well been explored by earlier philosophers such as Soren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, and Fredrich Nietzsche as well. Existentialists such as Sartre focused on the idea that human beings have to carve out their essence after their existence unlike human inventions that have a pre-determined essence before their existence. Sartre in Existentialism is a Humanism explicitly

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explains what his dictum of existence precedes essence means. "We mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world— and defines himself afterwards" (5). Sartre along with other existentialists focused on the ideas of freedom, free will, authenticity, and search of meaning in a distressed world. Although the concerns of these philosophers overlap, many of them resented the label 'existentialism'. Camus, too, rejected this label focusing on the absurdness of the universe and man's response to it. Camus's works focus more on the very notion of the absurd which he defines in his phenomenal essay, The Myth of Sisyphus as "born out of this confrontation between the human need [to search for reason] and the unreasonable silence of the world" (31). Many of his characters can be seen as responding to this realisation of absurd and dealing with it.

Camus's characters are often placed in a situation marked by an inevitable confrontation with the absurd. Despite recognising the absurd, they try to carry on their day-to-day engagements as neutrally as possible. For instance, Dr. Bernard Rieux in The Plague carries out his duties as a doctor despite knowing very well that the situation (plague) was way beyond his control. In the absence of God, he finds meaning in human solidarity. While discussing with Tarrou he says, "…what interests me is being a man" (124). He remains faithful to his role as a healer and tries his utmost to connect to people. For another Camusian character, Meursault, the answer to the question of absurd is in his indifference to everything that goes on around him. He lives almost like a stoic. His realisation of the absence of any higher morality makes him turn to physical sensations and carnal pleasures as ways to counter the absurd. Yet for another character, Caligula, the realisation of the absurd pushes him closer to tyrannical insanity and leads him towards destruction. These characters, upon realising the absurd, find ways to deal with it. The realisation of the absurd moulds them completely leaving no chance to return to their previous selves. Camus points out "a Man who has be-come conscious of the absurd is forever bound to it" and they continue to live the absurd (35).

The absurdity man faced, particularly in the post-war era, found it's voice in the works of playwrights such as Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, Edward Albee and others. The plays of the writers are usually marked by lack of conventional plot, monotonous settings, broken language, and a tragicomic tone. M.H Abrahms in his Glossary of Literary Terms mentions how literature of the absurd, "is to subvert the foundations of our accepted modes of thought and experience so as to reveal the meaninglessness of existence and the underlying "abyss," or "void," or "nothingness," on which any supposed security is conceived to be precariously suspended" (228). These plays gave rise to what we know as the 'theatre of the absurd'. The term, theatre of the absurd was coined by Martin Esslin in his 1960 book titled The Theatre of the Absurd and came to be associated with these writers and their works. In his work Esslin points out, "the Theatre of the Absurd forms part of the unceasing endeavour

of the true artists of our time to breach this dead wall of complacency and automatism and to re-establish an awareness of Man's situation when confronted with the ultimate reality of his condition" (291).

The play *7 Stories* presents all the elements of an absurd play. The play is not divided into acts or scene and the setting of the stage remains static throughout. The Man appears on the ledge at the beginning and stays there while other characters emerge from their respective windows engaging and communicating with him. The monotony of the stage setting is in sharp contrast to the attempt of the characters to find some excitement in life. We also find that the conversation among the characters is marred by discontinuities and misunderstandings. The apparent jump of the man towards the end is also metaphorical in nature. Besides, the ending of the play signals towards it being a play within the play narrative with the police officers declaring that "the show's over" and that everyone should go home now (142). Like many other absurdist plays the meaning is not served readily on a platter, rather the reader is left free to interpret the play.

The play 7 Stories (first produced in May 1989 and published in 1990) revolves around the residents of the seventh storey of a residential apartment. The central character, Man, who remains unnamed throughout the play is standing on the ledge of his apartment contemplating suicide. The other residents of the storey move about their everyday existence interrupting the Man, consulting him and urging him to engage in conversation while being totally unbothered by his presence on the ledge. Most of the residents barely notice that he is on the verge of suicide. As the play proceeds, it becomes clear that Panych wishes to highlight the questions about the nature of life, its inherent absurdity and the very idea of living in such a world, through this play.

## 2. Literature Review and Research Gap

The available research on the play *7 Stories* mostly deals with the dramatic production of the play. In the paper titled "Falling Up: Play, Improvision, and Absurdism: A Reflection on Directing 7 Stories", Jessica Buchanan details her insights into the artistic production of the play. Reid Gilbert's paper "The Theatrical Stories of Morris Panych" also details the outstanding presentation of the play in theatre. Other papers, such as, "Marking up of Dramatic Text: A Case Study of "7 Stories" by Morris Panych" by Ivan Bekhta and colleagues deals with the processing of dramatic texts. The authors use various tools including computational linguistics to study the play. Though this play has often been performed and discussed, academic work around this text remains underdeveloped. No research so far has studied the idea of performance of the characters as a means to counter the absurd. This paper

aims to fill in that particular gap and contribute to the existing study of the play, *7 Stories* , as well as of the theme of the absurd. The research uses close reading and textual analysis to achieve its objective of analysing how performance becomes a means for individuals to respond to the awareness of the absurd.

### 3. The Unnamed Man

The central character, Man, remains unnamed throughout the play. His character represents any man and every man in search of meaning. We find him standing on the ledge throughout the play and it is only towards the end that the readers are told how the man's life was going well until one day, everything became chaotic. He mentions how he lost the track of days, lost his way to work and mistakenly rammed his car into another car believing it to be his parking spot. How the very same environment that seemed so natural to him, came crashing down and became unfamiliar all of a sudden. His predicament reminds us of the central character of Sartre's play Nausea, Antoine Roquentin, who feels nauseous and suffocated by feeling that "existence penetrates me everywhere" (146). Similar to him, the man feels everything starting from his faith in days shatter and he feels alien. Camus, too, talks about the sudden weariness in The Myth of Sisyphus. He mentions:

It happens that the stage sets collapse. Rising, streetcar, four hours in the office or the factory, meal, streetcar, four hours of work, meal, sleep, and Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday according to the same rhythm—this path is easily followed most of the time. But one day the "why" arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement. "Begins" — this is important. Weariness comes at the end of the acts of a mechanical life, but at the same time it inaugurates the impulse of consciousness. It awakes consciousness and provokes what follows. What follows is the gradual return into the chain or it is the definitive awakening. At the end of the awakening comes, in time, the consequence: suicide or recovery (17).

It is the same weariness that has overtaken the Man and led him to suicide. It was the same mechanical routine he followed until the 'why' arose. It is perhaps now that the Man has realised his inherent freedom and that very realisation has unsettled him. As Dostoevsky points out in the grand inquisitor scene in The Brothers Karamazov, "Nothing is more seductive for Man than his freedom of conscience, but nothing is a greater cause of suffering" (320). He finds himself face to face with freedom and realises that he is unable to accept it.

While thinkers debate on the issue of suicide, science has also identified various key factors leading an individual to self-annihilation. In a paper titled "The Psychology of Suicide: From Research Understandings to Intervention and Treatment" Levi-Belz et.al, argue that "Suicide

is a highly complex and multifaceted phenomenon…It may be determined by the interaction between various factors, such as neurobiology, personal and family history, stressful events, and sociocultural environment". They further point out that "the key factor leading to suicide is unbearable mental pain" (214). It is perhaps the everydayness of Man's existence that has unsettled him and caused him agonizing mental pain and his attempt to find relief has led him to the ledge.

### 4. Performance as a Response

In dealing with the absurdity of the world, characters of the play *7 Stories* have created their own realities. The text underscores, through these realities, the distinction between illusion and reality, very subtly. Their focus remains on performing well in their adopted realities that have emerged from their realization of the absurd. They do this either to mask their suffering or to find relief from the imminent boredom they find in their everyday existence.

The very first couple to appear from their window are Charlotte and Rodney. They interact with the Man on the ledge and through their dialogues it becomes evident that they are living in their own make-belief reality. Their life is marked by, as they themselves agree, boredom; and to kill the boredom they play pretentious games including that of trying to strangle and shoot each other. It becomes apparent that having realized the absurdity of life, they have found ways around it and indulge in silly games or word plays to deal with the irrational. Charlotte admits that engaging in such banter "keeps the relationship alive" (60). They have internalised themselves so much in their roles that life-death seems all mere matter of fun to them. When the Man questions them regarding the gunshot he heard, they answer his question in a light-hearted manner. Rodney jokes even about death saying, "I aimed for her head and accidently hit the wall. But thank you for your concern" (32). They keep dragging the Man into their conversation despite his evident discomfort in answering their questions. After initially identifying the Man as a witness to Rodney's attempt to kill her, Charlotte again drags the Man into their conversation.

Although Rodney distrusts her words and claims she "distorts the facts once again", her ability to understand life appears far superior to other characters (56). As the play proceeds it becomes clear that Charlotte is aware of and in control of the whole situation. Her words show us that it is all a constructed reality that they are living in:

> Man. Why do you treat each other this way?
>
> Charlotte. It's all words and gestures. Pomp. There's absolutely no substance to it.
>
> Man. He was choking you to death.

> Charlotte. Oh, that. It gives him a tremendous sense of power to hear me gasping helplessly for air. (57)

Charlotte very clearly understands the meaninglessness of existence and futility of all endeavours. In her outburst on why Rodney despises art she says, "because art is the act of climbing to the top of that ridiculous wall of his – and standing on the ledge – to look out into a cruel and pointless world – devoid of meaning – where fact is merely fiction. And anybody with any courage would simply leap off the edge and be done with it" (19). It is very consciously that she has made the decision of taking refuge in fiction not just for entertainment but as a means to make life stimulating.

Another interesting character appearing through his window is Leonard who is a sleep-deprived psychiatrist suffering from paranoia. The absurdity of his situation is that while he is a psychiatrist who ideally should be able to help people deal with insomnia, paranoia and other maladies, he is himself engulfed in these problems. His entrance into the scene is dramatic and his subsequent dialogues almost neurotic. Like Estragon from Waiting for Godot, he is fearful of some unidentified people who he believes are plotting against him. His conversation shows a discontinuity of ideas and he fears the Man to be an agent of 'they' and his presence as a means to torture him (Leonard). His conversation reveals his state of mind:

> Leonard. Well, you see! You're naïve. You are the perfect candidate for them to carry out their insane plan.
>
> Man. What insane plan?
>
> Leonard. Well, they didn't tell you of course. They wouldn't want YOU to know!!
>
> Man. Know what? Who's they? (34)

Leonard's performance is that of a sane man. He himself accuses the Man of thinking that he (Leonard) might be losing his mind and says, "You think I'm insane! That I have completely lost my grip on reality." While his words present him as being hysterical, he admits that he is "painfully cognizant of the world around me [Leonard]" (30). However, his conversation with the man, like many other, is marked by a lot of misunderstandings and uncertainties. Their conversation also reveals the inability of characters to communicate and to understand what is being communicated as the realities or illusions of the characters are unique to themselves and not co-shared. As their narrative trails back and forth to their half-understood communication, we realise that the characters have lost their ability to even conceive the idea that they would be understood. Hence, they find no substance in listening to what the Man or

others have to say. They come, talk about themselves and as the Man says something they almost immediately cut off his words and continue their talk.

Of all the characters in the play, it is Mike (Micheal Merchant), a theatre artist, who best displays performance as a means to counter the absurd. His idea of life resonates strongly with the Shakesperean dictum of the world being a stage and the actors' mere players. He is a play-actor who has decided to spend the rest of his life playing a character called Marshall and thus extending his performance to real life. He endorses the idea of presenting oneself as different from what one actually is. He says, "… I much prefer to form my own false impression" and that is what he has done (48). He confesses to having totally relinquished his personality and has adapted to his character so realistically that the difference between his real personality and his adopted one has blurred. He declares, "Counterfeit emotion is my style. Counterfeit everything" (61). His fake moustache, hair colour and identity become so realistic that it goes almost unnoticeable. Since it's acting either way, it doesn't make much difference for him. His endeavour to live as a theatrical character is for him "… no worse than what I was doing. Just a little more involved" (62). As far as he is concerned, life itself is a drama. He says, "Yes. It's funny, now that I think about it. Well, it's all an act anyways. Isn't it? The whole stupid dumb show. Life, I mean" (66). His further dialogue with the Man presents his attitude towards life. He says:

> Man. But you've given up your family. Your friends. You are making a complete mockery out of your existence. A joke. Doesn't your life mean anything?
>
> Marshall. Well, I've lived so many, haven't I? Lives are just short little episodes. You're on and then you're off. Just like that. Which reminds me. I'm off. (69)

Marshall's attitude towards life makes all the more sense in the chaos of the modern world where the difference between illusion and reality is often blurred. In the age of virtual reality and Al, truth seems to have lost the significance it once held. Especially with a whole generation keen to appear and appeal in a certain fashion, the question of reality itself becomes problematic. With facial surgeries becoming commonplace and individuals living their lives as Marshall did, one is compelled to think if this is a way to counter the absurd. Marshall's way to live appears nothing short of a well-laid out strategy to deal with life.

The next character we see emerging through the window is Rachel who engages herself in helping the people on the storey below hers and is very much aware that she can only play the role of God to those who live on storeys below seventh. She expresses her inability to help the Man on the ledge of the seventh storey. She "spreads things around" and hands over toaster, electric heater, and even money to answer the prayers of the residents below hers

(76). Rachel's actions are clearly an afterthought of the realisation that there is not supreme authority and in the absence of such authority she steps in the lives of these people. However, when people below have doubts, she hands them over-due electric bills and eviction notices as if to punish them for doubting God. Her façade shakes when she blurts out:

> Rachel. … that somehow, I'll confess to my doubts. But you'll never make me
>
> Man. If I'm not mistaken, you already have.
>
> Rachel. I have not.
>
> Man. You said that you'll confess to your doubts
>
> Rachel. You've turned this whole thing inside out.

Upon not finding any other reply she casts the Man as the devil tyring to stray her away from her path. Almost all the characters in the play need some certainty to live and for Rachel that certainty is her religiousness. She is so convinced by her thoughts (on God) that she sees her mother's taking of diazepam (in which she might have been instrumental) as the benevolence of God. When she argues that God gave her mother the strength, the Man tells her, "Suicide is not an act of God… Because it is a human act. It's the one act that defies all predestiny. And it's got nothing to do with anybody else. It stands alone. Complete and of itself" (88). Camus's in The Myth of Sisyphus deals with the problem of suicide and states "the answer, underlying and appearing through the paradoxes which cover it, is this: even if one does not believe in God, suicide is not legitimate" (4). Despite the fact, that human fails to understand the nature of life, Camus does not endorse suicide. He sees the realisation of the absurd as liberating rather than diminishing.

It becomes clear upon investigation that the act of the lady is again a pretence she maintains. She has realised the absence of God, the subsequent absurd and has taken upon herself to fill in the gap. She presents herself as a devout Christian. However, the reader is forced to wonder if she really believes why does she have to cover up for God's absence. She argues that the problem is Man's presence on this particular storey. Had he been on the fifth or the sixth storey, she (Rachel) could have helped him change his perspective. She says, "Unfortunately, you're on the wrong floor. I can't help people up here on the seventh storey, but the people on the sixth and fifth are well looked-after" (76). Her God-like powers are limited as she is a human. She cannot be omniscient and omnipotent but she does fill in for him (God) to the best of her ability. Her powers can look after the people on the stories below seventh in this particular apartment. However, for people on the seventh storey she is helpless. It is not as if she finds meaning in safeguarding the faith of people or presenting herself as a devout

Christian, rather it is her performance that she stays faithful to. Similar to other characters in the story, she holds on very strongly to her anchor that helps her exist.

Similar to Charlotte and Rodney, Joan and Micheal appear at their window and drag the Man in to their conversation as if it's normal to find a man on the ledge. Joan asks the Man "his opinion" on pink tones. Again, the presence of the Man on the ledge does not startle them. Rather, they engage in perfectly normal conversation. For this couple, all that matters is style and decorations. They have spent their life decorating and redecorating their apartment in an attempt to live life aesthetically. So far, it is eighteen times as they were troubled by the possibility of options. This couple engages in the Sisyphean task of arranging and rearranging the apartment endlessly to find perfection. In order to find an escape from the meaninglessness of the world, this couple, indulge themselves in artistic endeavours and spend time decorating and redecorating their apartment.

While most characters have constructed their reality, characters such as AL and Percy play roles to adjust in the world they are living. They are lonely beings and their performance ensures that loneliness and alienation are kept at bay. Their performance becomes an attempt to find ways to make themselves acceptable while also dealing with social anxiety. Percy finds solace in exhibiting himself as a socialite with many friends. He keeps a count of them (940) and flaunts them whenever possible though he has hardly met any of his virtual friends in reality. He also attends as many parties as possible simultaneously keeping a count of them (111 this year). Similarly, AL's words betray his ideas. He says, "Well, I don't want to be antisocial. Don't get me wrong. I love parties. If only it wasn't for the people at them…" (109). AL's comment reflects how he wishes to be perceived as a socializer despite that fact that he soon gets tired of it. His mockery peaks when he declares that he once started a fire in order to end the party soon. Both these characters present themselves under the garb of extroverted individuals to seem more acceptable to the society. For them attending parties and meeting people is a routine skit they perform even though they abhor the idea of meeting other individuals. Their endeavours help them feel alive in the world and it seems the only possible way out of the staunch alienation that engulfs them.

While many characters either belittle the fact that Man is on the ledge or completely ignore it, nurse Wilson seems to be the first character interested in the Man and she urges him to jump. She argues that suicide is a perfectly logical thing to do and implores him to hurry before the police arrive and convince him to live on. Being the caretaker of a hundred-year-old Lilian Wright, she talks straightforwardly without any sympathy and the Man for the first time seriously contemplates if he wishes to jump after all. She tries to convince the Man of the inherent absurdity of life and urges him to jump. She even tells him that, "They're [police]

experts. They listen to all your problems… Eventually they convince you that life has some meaning. That there's some thread to hang onto" (120). Having served in the hospital for a considerable period of time, she appears very comfortable with the idea of death and does not seem perturbed by the immanent death of the Man.

The answer to the question that whether the Man jumps or not remains ambiguous. He, after all, has realised that there is no meaning of all his endeavours. He says, "There really is no reason to live, is there" (130)? He faces the same dilemma Hamlet rambles about. To jump or not to jump? Lilian cites him the example of Albert, her pigeon, and talks to him as if he is also a pigeon who could "do a circle round the building and come back" (123). The ending of the play, however, remains unclear. The man apparently jumps, flies and does come back to meet Lilian. Despite the vagueness, the play doesn't portray the man as committing suicide and ending his life. Suicide is in no way presented as an answer to the struggles of an individual. The central character of Beauvoir's The Mandarins, too, realises right before her attempt to suicide that, "My death does not belong to me" and is able to realise within a few seconds that her death would be an injustice to her loved ones and that she had no right to leave them with "endless remorse" (761). While we find no such statement uttered by the Man, the reader is left to wonder how the Man would continue his life thereof.

Characters other than the Man also mention the idea of jumping off the ledge. Though they mention how they are tempted and allured to jump off and end it all, none of them takes the drastic step to do so. Jennifer says, "Whenever I get too close to the edge, I feel like jumping…" (22). Percy also mentions his urge to jump: "My God I feel like jumping. Right here and now. I'd rather splatter my guts all over the pavement than go back in there" (99). Percy and Jennifer, though feeling like jumping off the ledge, have found tasks such as attending parties they are not even invited to, in order to make life liveable. Others are as nurse Wilson mentions: "finding reasons not to jump themselves" (118).

The Man's desire for suicide can be seen as the first step towards his wish to live authentically. Contemplating on death, Martin Heidegger, in his seminal Being and Time declares, "thus death reveals itself as a possibility which is one's own most, which is non-relational, and which is not to be outstripped" (292). Heidegger expands on how Dasein's death is in each it's downmost possibility. For the Man, having realised the absurd nature of existence, the only authentic answer available seems suicide. The other residents of the storey have possibly gone through this stage already and have found some anchors to hold onto. They have realised that life is unpredictable and have found ways around it to make life interesting. It is almost as if they are mocking back the absurdity by trying to kill each other or trying to find the

perfect tone to match their aesthetic taste. In any case, it remains performance that the characters resort to in order to make bearable.

On one hand the realization of the absurd leads to some characters creating a make-belief environment, while severely unsettling others. On the other, it appears as if everybody except the Man has already gone through this phase (realisation of the absurd) and having realised the meaninglessness, have come up with clever ways to deal with it. Leonard's hysterical conversation and the stark difference in the manner he perceives things showcases the paranoia and hallucinations that are resultant of the realization of absurd. His inability to trust anyone including himself is presented in a stark contrast to the characters who despite living in illusionary settings are able to convince themselves of the situation. The characters apart from the Man have found reasons not to jump of ledge while the central character the Man is unable to do so, and hence we find him on the ledge.

From playing games such as threatening one another with death to sliding into a dramatic character and becoming one, these characters seem to be well aware of the fact that they are performing their lives. When asked by the Man, Charlotte accepts, "I was pretending to die. He finds it amusing" (58). The play suggests that creating alternative realities through performance becomes one possible means of negotiating a seemingly meaningless existence.

The language of the play and the banter in which the characters engage explicitly reveal the absurdity of modern life, marked by a profound gulf between what is said and what is understood. We find this deep unattainable gulf between what is said by the Man and what is understood by the characters. All conversations lead to mislead understandings and distorted facts. Conversation with Leonard, for instance, shows his inability to connect with any previous statement. Charlotte finds sense in making the Man her mouth-piece and using him as a tool in her conversation with Rodney. The preconceived notion that their words would not be understood makes the characters interrupt the Man throughout, hardly ever allowing him to finish his sentence.

Besides, the play shows that how sometimes the difference between acting in a drama and acting in life, and the difference between fiction and truth gets blurred. Charlotte retorts, "Oh, I don't know. There's such a fine line between truth and fiction, isn't there?" (57) Similarly for Marshall his own version of truth stands as something of foremost value. He says, "What difference does it make? The truth is irrelevant. One's own opinion on the other hand is more appealing. One should always form a strong opinion, one way or the other. Regardless of the facts" (77). The blurred line between truth and fiction, reality and acting present the ways these characters deal with the absurdity of their existence.

The play clearly presents how none of the characters are in cognizance of the whole truth, per se. Every character sees the Man from his/her window and has only a limited preview, both physically and metaphorically, into the Man's life. Each of them has his or her own version of truth or reality and they have woven their lives around those truths. Characters themselves acknowledge at different places that they do not know all the facts. Rodney says, "He [the Man] doesn't know the whole story" (56). In fact, nobody knows the whole story as everyone perceives the world through their own understanding which is tainted by misplaced emotions and distorted comprehension. Despite that, the characters continue to imbibe their professional roles with their personal lives. Rodney a lawyer, Marshall a theatre actor, and Leonard a psychiatrist, all inevitably bring aspects of their profession in private spheres which shapes their lives and, at times, makes it bearable.

## 5. Conclusion

Panych presents how individuals in 7 Stories deal with the absurdity of modern existence by consciously indulging in performance. Their performance ranges from playing games of killing to adopting the persona of a theatrical character to playing the role of God in people's lives. Clearly, they have created some kind of meaning to hold onto even amidst the chaos and absurd. However, the Man's inability to find any fixture in his confrontation with the absurd has led him onto the ledge. The current study, by analysing the play, has presented how performance becomes a mindful act in the lives of these individuals helping them navigate through the uncertainties of their existence. Finally, this paper contributes to the existing scholarship on *7 Stories* by focusing on how performance becomes a device to combat the absurdity individuals find in their existence.

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