Sartre on Violence: a Political, Philosophical and Literary Study.

Bernard John Quinn
Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/1805

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
QUINN, Bernard John, 1945-
SARTRE ON VIOLENCE: A POLITICAL,
PHILOSOPHICAL AND LITERARY STUDY.
[Portions of Text in French].
The Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College,
Ph.D., 1970
Language and Literature, modern

University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan
SARTRE ON VIOLENCE: A POLITICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL AND LITERARY STUDY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in The Department of Foreign Languages

by
Bernard John Quinn
B.A., University of South Florida, 1966
M.A., Louisiana State University, 1968
May, 1970
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writer would like to express his appreciation to Dr. Dieter Galler, under whose direction this dissertation was written, for his suggestions and guidance.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. POLITICS AND VIOLENCE</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. EXISTENTIALISM AND MARXISM: TOWARD</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AN ONTOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF VIOLENCE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. VIOLENCE IN SARTRE'S NOVELS AND SHORT STORIES</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. VIOLENCE ON STAGE AND SCREEN</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

iii
ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to contribute to a better understanding of the genesis of violence among men by exploring the views of Jean-Paul Sartre relative to the subject. As one of the most imposing intellectual figures of our time, he offers a penetrating and lucid analysis of the problem in his many political, philosophical, and literary works.

After probing the author's major pronouncements dealing with politically-instigated violence both on a theoretical level—Matérialisme et révolution—as well as practical—his essays on the Hungarian uprising, the Algerian and Cuban revolutions, and the Vietnam war—it can be said that not only is conflict the ontological basis of all political action, but that recourse to violent tactics within the framework of opposing political groups is sometimes a categorical imperative. And, if violence in politics is to be judged ethically, then the sole, absolute frame of reference is socialism.

In going deeper into the problem of violence, Sartre strives to make violence intelligible from an ontological point of view both in L'Être et le néant and Critique de la raison dialectique. To begin with, violence among men
becomes comprehensible when one comes to terms with the essential ambiguity of human relations: concrete relations with others such as sadism, masochism, indifference, hatred and even love, find their original meaning in conflict. The fundamental impossibility of attaining union between the Nothingness of the world of the pour-soi and the Being of that of the en-soi provides the backdrop against which violence can be given a rational explanation. It becomes even more intelligible when it is realized that the genesis of violence, whether undergone, threatened or perpetrated, can be traced to each person's perception of the other as one-too-many through interiorized scarcity. Possible reciprocity with others on a basis of mutual recognition of freedom is modified by conflict and tension arising from the existential implications of the presence of others in the world and the objective problem posed by the struggle to overcome scarcity. This is the ontological structure of the human condition which provides a rational basis in any effort to explain both individual and group violence.

By and large, the diverse manifestations of violence in Sartre's novels and plays, ranging from metaphysical to class violence, must be understood within the context of the morals of Being and the morals of Doing. The author's bourgeois characters generally confront violent situations in the tradition of the French roman d'analyse; that is, the effects of violence are personalized by each because, as a
result of their class origins, they lack the ability to identify with others. They are victimized by some of the worst kinds of attitudes; egomania, unbridled exercise of freedom, anarchism, pacifism, soul-searching, all of which involve, either directly or indirectly, the pursuit of absolute Being.

The revolutionary militant who has risen from the ranks of the oppressed and whose major exponent is Hoederer in *Les Mains sales*, presents a markedly different picture of the whole problem of violence. In the first place, he either implicitly or explicitly posits violence as an integral part of his situation and that of those with whom he identifies. Though the Sartrean rebel is not violent by "nature," he bears the stamp of his oppressed condition; he and his brothers have been nurtured in the most violent kind of oppression resulting from the inequities of social, political and economic structures. By means of concerted action, he carries out a theory of counter-violence, developed by him, to meet the threat of his enemies. Solitary as an individual yet solidary as part of the group project, he uses violent tactics, when everything else has failed, to destroy not other men as such, but rather, the unjust systems they have fostered. Finally, at all times should the loss of life be kept at a minimum in the struggle to secure a more equitable distribution of the social collective's labors.

Since scarcity is a relative term, Sartre is somewhat
reluctant to put forth an absolute panaces. But, man is condemned to keep struggling, and, in this fight, a flexible socialism presents itself as the best possible solution.
INTRODUCTION

That we are living in an era in which violence is rampant is beyond dispute. Never has man's inhumanity to man been so evident. Partly as a result of instant worldwide communication made possible by an advanced technology, and partly because of an aroused social consciousness among members of the world community, mankind has been made aware of its violent behavior.

Human beings have and are being subjected to the most horrifying atrocities during this so-called period of the "revolution of rising expectations." From the all-but-forgotten Spanish civil war to the present conflict in Southeast Asia, man has emptied his arsenals in a never-ending race to rain death, misery, and destruction on the peoples of the world. Both the oppressed and the oppressor have resorted to the cruelest methods of torture, ranging from interpersonal violence to genocide, that have virtually shaken the very foundations of human credibility. Existing politico-economic structures, either wittingly or unwittingly, have contributed to the debasement of millions. Untold numbers starve—as in the Biafran debacle, for instance, under conditions of unbelievable depravity.

In the United States, panels composed of distinguished
and respected sociologists, psychologists, educators, political scientists, moralists, philosophers, legislators and other persons of such ilk have attempted to explain the root causes of violence in order that they may predict or prevent further eruptions of this kind of behavior that has plagued the American city. Violent, at times brutal, confrontations occur daily throughout the world, from San Francisco to Tokyo, between young dissidents and the forces of law and order. In a word, violence envelopes the human race today with a shocking and terrifying immediacy.

The English philosopher Hobbes claimed that man lives in a state of constant war with his neighbor. Many would no doubt agree that his is an accurate appraisal of the human condition. The forces favoring peaceful relations with one's fellow man are being sorely tested. The hopes of many advocates, past and present, of non-violence and peaceful co-existence are being shattered by intransigent political, social and economic structures. Unfortunately, violence and its corollary, terror, do seem to be an inherent part of man's individual and group projects.

What produces violence? What is its ontological basis? How is it manifested? Can the use of violent means justify sought-after ends? Is violence a necessary appendage to human behavior? To answer these questions and many others pertaining to the nature of violence, I will strive to present the views of one of the most popular and controversial intellectual figures of our time: Jean-Paul Sartre. Many will
undoubtedly disagree with his pronouncements. Yet, rarely has one man expended so much time and energy portraying man as he is. Accordingly, it is hoped that an intensive analysis of this man's life and works will help shed some light on the seemingly hopeless struggle to make violence more intelligible.

"Je déteste mon enfance et tout ce qui en survit."\(^1\)

Thus does Sartre describe his youth in *Les Mots*, a most penetrating and lucid autobiography. In 1904, a young naval officer, Jean-Baptiste Sartre, already wasting away with the fevers of Cochin-China, made the acquaintance of Anne Marie Scheitzer whose relative Albert, was to become a legend in his own day. The sickly Jean-Baptiste courted Anne Marie, married her, begot a child in quick time and died shortly thereafter in 1907. The child, destined to be fatherless, was none other than Jean-Paul Sartre born in Paris, June 21, 1905. Soon after his father's death his mother, reintegrated into the old family structure, assumed a relatively passive role with regard to the upbringing of her son. The central figure of authority in Sartre's childhood was the grandfather, Charles Scheitzer, professor of German and author of several pedagogic texts in the same field.

The old Alsacian's world focused on those indispensable transmitters of culture: teaching and books. "J'ai commencé

ma vie comme je la finirai sans doute: au milieu des livres. Dans le bureau de mon grand-père, il y en avait partout. . . . Je ne savais pas encore lire que, déjà, je les révérais, ces pierres levées," says Sartre. As most young children will do, he strove to please his elders by imitating their behavior. He soon discovered the magic, romantic world of words through which reality could be manipulated and altered at will. Thus did the young idealist, whose first glimpse of the world was filtered through the rose-colored glasses of fiction, come into being. Unlike the offspring of the working classes whose introduction to life involved having to face the harsher realities of pure survival, the young Sartre was raised in the protective womb of a well-to-do bourgeois family. He now notes with some bitterness, "j'ignorais la violence et la haine, on m'épargna ce dur apprentissage, la jalousie." Being an only child, he received the lavish attention bestowed on him by the family circle.

Be that as it may, by virtue of his enculturation, lack of direct exposure to the colder, more difficult realities of life and, more important, his class status, Sartre was to be ill equipped to associate and identify with the masses. And as if to confirm a social superiority given him at birth, he imagined himself playing the role of a clairvoyant along the lines of a Chatterton or a Moïse. He was to lead the herd to the promised land of truth and reality and, so that he might

---

2Ibid., p. 29.  
3Ibid., p. 17.
effectively accomplish this task, he decided to become a writer. For decades to come literary success was to be his burning ambition.

Following the completion of the baccalauréat in 1924, he was accepted at the elite École Normale Supérieure during which time an already skilled mind was sharpened even further. He was put to the test more, it seems, from interminable discussions with fellow students such as Raymond Aron, Paul Nizan, and Simone de Beauvoir, to name only a few, than by his professors. One of his contemporaries described him as "un merveilleux entraîneur intellectuel."\(^4\) However, a bookworm he was not. He displayed a surprisingly good sense of humor, an intense sociability, as well as the makings of a budding literary talent. At 23, "Sartre avait une belle voix et un vaste répertoire; old man river et tous les airs de jazz en vogue; ses dons comiques étaient célèbres dans toute l'Ecole: c'était toujours lui qui jouait, dans la Revue annuelle, le rôle de M. Lanson."\(^5\) He and the craze of surrealism lived a "mariage de convenance." Politically and socially, his views bordered on anarchism but stopped short of being either revolutionary or nihilistic. In fact, the very existence of a corrupt politico-social structure was essential to this devil's advocate for what would there be


\(^5\)Ibid., p. 335.
left to write about if there was nothing to combat?

Sartre was called to the carpet more than once during these years for his anarchistic-idealism. Many of his friends who had already embraced Marxism, accused him of being a petit bourgeois intellectual at heart. Although he could not deny his background, he was revolted by such labels. Such a stigma, for him, "ne suffisait pas à définir ses attitudes; il posait le problème, épineux, de l'intellectuel, issu de la bourgeoisie, qui est capable, selon Marx lui-même, de dépasser le point de vue de sa classe." The long, drawn-out duel between him and Marxist practioners had already begun and has not ended to this day.

Sartre finished at the head of his class in 1929. Much to the dismay of his entourage he had failed part of the qualifying examination the previous year. Now, faced with compulsory military service, which he regarded as a humiliating imposition, he followed the advice of Aron and took up the study of meteorology. Aside from a persistent intellectual curiosity, he did nothing of much consequence at this time. "Les livres, les spectacles comptaient beaucoup pour nous; en revanche, les événements publics nous touchaient peu."

In the spring of 1931, he was informed that someone

---


7Ibid., p. 55.
else had been given the lectureship in Japan for which he had applied earlier. Thus did he choose to become professor of philosophy at Le Havre where he taught from 1931 to 1933. Apart from performing his official teaching duties, he spent most of his time reading, writing, and enjoying the company of close friends; particularly that of Mlle. de Beauvoir who was teaching at Rouen. Though his sympathies lay decidedly on the Communist side of the political spectrum, nothing could shake him from his apolitical behavior. Contrary to what some critics have inferred from reading La Nausée, Sartre was quite fond of his stay in Le Havre. He, Simone de Beauvoir and a close circle of intimates actively took part in the going fads. The popular rage at the time was the yo-yo and Sartre practiced from morning to night with somber perseverance. Again, though certainly not blind to the disastrous effects of the Great Depression, he refused to commit himself to overt participation in the fight to help alleviate the sorry plight of the impoverished and unemployed worker. He would speak out on behalf of the struggle of the proletariat but could not reconcile his personal mission in life with the demands of political activism. He had the highest opinion of Trotsky's ideal of "permanent revolution" which conveniently suited his anarchistic bent. He and Mlle. de Beauvoir "nous voulions exercer une action personnelle, par nos conversations, notre enseignement, nos livres; ce
It was Raymond Aron, who was spending a year at the French Institute in Berlin, who was instrumental in introducing his former colleague to German phenomenology. The neophyte philosopher had been toying with the notion of contingency and, finding that Husserl had devoted some interesting, though inadequate, commentary to that very concept, Sartre decided to undertake a serious study of the man's philosophy. He took the necessary steps to succeed Aron at the French Institute where he studied under Husserl and Heidegger during the 1933-34 academic year. Greatly disturbed by the rise of fascism in the host country, he was all too glad to leave it when his stay came to an end.

The years 1934 to 1939 were spent teaching first at Le Havre, then at Laon and finally in Paris at the Lycée Pasteur. During this time he achieved a life-long ambition by breaking into the ranks of the littérature: L'imagination appeared in 1936; Le Mur was published in the N.R.F. the following year; La Nausée in 1938 and the complete collection of Le Mur in 1939. However, in spite of the fact that the public was beginning to take note of this young talent, literary success did not come overnight. Able to see, for the first time, his star shining brighter and brighter above the literary horizon, he concentrated on writing. His political and social aloofness remained undaunted by the much-

Ibid., p. 141.
publicized violent atrocities of the civil war in neighboring Spain. "... les événements pouvaient susciter en nous de vifs sentiments de colère, de crainte, de joie: mais nous n'y participions pas; nous restions spectateurs."\(^9\)

As far as his role as professor is concerned, it is reported that he disliked discipline and was prone to occasional fits of anger. Sometimes his outbursts would terrorize half the class. On one such day at Le Havre, he broke off in the middle of expounding a point and lashed out "Sur tous ces visages, pas une seule lueur d'intelligence!"\(^10\)

Most of the time, however, he was considered by the great majority of his students as being most kind and helpful.

Although Sartre had shied away from possible violent conflicts of any kind, the black cloud of German and Italian fascism was beginning to cast a menacing shadow over Europe. He was soon to be confronted with one of man's most violent enterprises: war. It was a time for choosing sides. Chamberlain's failure at Munich convinced Sartre that the only option left was war against the Nazis. "... un nouveau recul serait criminel; en transigeant, nous devenions complices de toutes les persécutions, de toutes les exterminations."\(^11\) When asked whether a France at war would be worse than a France under Nazi rule he replied, "Je ne veux pas qu'on m'oblige à manger mes manuscrits. Je ne veux pas qu'on

---

arrache les yeux de Nizan (a close friend, left-wing activist and promising young writer) à la petite cuiller! While France awaited the German attack, political aloofness became an untenable posture.

Prior to the advent of World War II Sartre's existence had been as dégagé, as care-free and as pleasant as possible. Mlle. de Beauvoir describes those frivolous days: "En fait, nous étions d'ordinaire portés par un courant; quand nous allions aux sports d'hiver, en Grèce, à un concert de jazz, à un film américain, quand nous applaudissions Gilles et Julien." Four years of having to live under the German occupation were to produce a marked change on his whole outlook on life.

He accepted mobilization stoically, was stationed near the front and, following the complete rout of the French army, was made prisoner in 1940 and incarcerated at Stalag XIID. Prison life was far from unbearable. It afforded him his first experience of a genuine sense of community, of solidarity with other men. He wrote, produced and staged what can be called his first " pièce engagée" under the very noses of the enemy. The theme of the play, entitled Bariona, was that of the traditional mystery play dealing with the birth of Christ. The drama, however, centered on the Roman occupation of Palestine and fellow prisoners were quick to grasp its significance. To fight the occupying power, he

\[12\text{Ibid., p. 367.} \quad 13\text{Ibid., p. 370.}\]
chose to do what he knew best: literature.

Upon his release from forced confinement, he returned to Paris intent on organizing a resistance group of his own; an effort that met with little success. Accordingly, he aligned himself with other, better organized movements.

In 1943, Les Mouches, a shrill call to every Frenchman to assert his freedom, was staged in Paris in full view of the German occupants. Contrary to popular belief, however, the blatant allusion to freedom did not go unnoticed by some German critics. Too, many collaborators, working for the well regulated press, clearly saw what Sartre had done. As a consequence, rumors began to spread among intellectual circles to the effect that the secret police were out to silence him. For better or for worse, he had cast his lot with those who had chosen active resistance as opposed to adopting either a wait-and-see attitude or siding squarely with Pétain's collaborationists. He joined the Paris Resistance movement as a journalist, contributing to various underground newspapers such as Les Lettres Françaises and Combat, the latter edited by Albert Camus.

Literary critics and historians generally refer to the period from 1943 to 1945 as the zenith of "Existentialism." \(^{14}\) 1943 saw the publication of the mammoth L'Être et

le néant in which its author, greatly influenced by Husserl and Heidegger, elaborated his philosophy of existence. Sartre's popularity rose daily. He was finally confirmed as the leader of a new avant-garde movement whose initial impetus had been provided by the common struggle to combat the Nazi invaders.

Thanks to the financial success of Les Mouches and Huiss Clos (staged in 1944) and to several screenplays he had written, he resigned as professor of philosophy to devote full attention to writing. The year 1945 was highlighted by a trip to the United States as a reporter for Combat, unexpected public notoriety (especially in foreign countries), and the founding of Les Temps Modernes which was to serve as the mouthpiece of the new movement.

A great deal of what has transpired since the Liberation is relatively well known. Accordingly, I will strive to be as brief as possible in concluding this "unfinished profile."

"La célébrité, pour moi, ce fut la haine." Thus does he characterize the post-war years of his life. As is customary in those periods following a military conflict, people are quick to forget hard times. Former members of the resistance soon became a thorn in the side of those who wished to return to a "business as usual" daily existence.

Concerted efforts were being made to justify the actions of collaborators but, there were many, Sartre included, who could not or would not forgive. Both left- and right-wing newspapers villified Sartre and his associates in their editorial columns. The former faction accused them and their philosophy (few had even bothered to read Sartre's philosophical opus) of petit bourgeois individualism while the latter condemned them for fostering orgies of debauchery and for promoting irresponsible behavior on the part of the young generation. Ever since, he has been regarded as a painful thorn in the eyes of the so-called members of the French establishment.

Through his numerous philosophical, literary and political essays as well as a prodigious body of creative literature, he has maintained a critical, though not always constructive, posture vis à vis man and society. His fame is due, largely, to the success of his novels and theater. Three volumes of Les Chemins de la liberté have appeared since 1945 and, in addition to Les Mouches and Huis Clos, we have Mort sans sépulture, 1946; La Putain respectueuse, 1946; Les Mains sales, 1948; Le Diable et le bon Dieu, 1951; Kean, 1954; Nekrassov, 1955, and Les Séquestrés d'Altona, 1960. Not since this last play has he written a work of fiction; a fact which demonstrates a sad disillusionment on his part with the functional value of literature as a whole. A second opus magnum has appeared to test the mental
dexterity of even the most courageous of both his admirers and detractors: *La Critique de la raison dialectique* (1960) the length and complexity of which sometimes overshadows *L'Être et le néant*.

In 1949 he threw his hat into the political arena in helping to form the R.D.R. (Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire). The utter failure of the party at the hands of the electorate quickly shattered any hope he may have had concerning active participation in party affairs. As Mlle. de Beauvoir tells it, "quatre ans plus tôt, nous étions amis de tout le monde, et maintenant tenus par tous pour des ennemis."^16 They were being held responsible for "un bon nombre de suicides, de délits, d'assassinats, etc."^17 Disheartened, Sartre turned to busying himself with putting out issues of *Les Temps Modernes* and writing.

His activities from then on have been quite varied. From writing piercing commentaries on such crucial issues as Korea, the Soviet invasion of Hungary, anti-Semitism, the Algerian revolution (his apartment was bombed twice by O.A.S. terrorists) and Vietnam (he chaired the War Crimes Tribunal in Stockholm in 1967) to his frequent trips to Italy, the Soviet Union, Cuba, Brazil, Belgium, Sweden, and other countries, little has escaped his critical eye.

What, perhaps, can be considered his most perplexing problem over the years has been his inability to resolve the

---

basic contradiction which he carries within his being. He is at once the bastard child of the bourgeoisie, a class which he despises, and the bête noire of the Communists with whom he has repeatedly tried to identify. Although the absence of the analysand does not allow an in-depth psychological study, it can be said that this has been his fundamental nightmarish dualism. Perhaps it is the same dilemma philosophers have encountered throughout the ages; they are the thinkers and not the homme d'action.

Sartre is at once a thinker, dramatist, novelist, essayist, political theorist and activist, lecturer, existential psychoanalyst and sociologist. In a word, he is a philosopher in the truest sense of what that word implies; one who searches for the truth and expresses his findings with all the means at his disposal. I suspect, however, that if he could have done otherwise, he would, after his transition from the detached intellectual observer prior to World War II, to the man who coined the phrase "littérature engagée" near the end of the conflagration, have preferred to impose himself on the human condition politically above all else. His attempt to organize and lead the R.D.R. illustrates clearly his political orientation. Accordingly, a discussion of the occurrence of violence as part of

---

political behavior would seem to provide a suitable point of departure for this study.

Chapter I deals with the problem of violence and non-violence in politics, based on the many pages Sartre has devoted to the subject in his penetrating analyses of various cases where violence has erupted throughout the world. Obviously, violence as such, though the term's significance may be either restricted or expanded depending on the whims of the user, is, by and large, an objective reality. But, facts must be interpreted if they are to convey any meaning at all. Therefore, this chapter has to do primarily with questions of morality, ethics, and theory, all of which may be grouped under the general heading of political philosophy. It is a valuation of politically-related violence with which we are concerned most, as opposed to a scientific or pseudo-scientific cataloguing of genetically motivated aggression.

Beginning with an examination of Matérialisme et révolution published in 1946, and ending with the author's contributions to the deliberations of the War Crimes Tribunal, held in Stockholm in 1967 to establish the validity of the claim that the United States was guilty of genocide in South Vietnam, I have strived to give an accurate account of Sartre's views on violence as it occurs or should occur in a political context. In doing this, I have generally given more weight to what I consider to be his major politically inspired essays rather than to the veritable plethora of brief and largely impromptu interviews that have appeared
through the years.

Political theory and action represent but one aspect of man's undertakings in the world. To reach a more generalized, all-inclusive understanding of the genesis of violent behavior, whether it be precipitated by the individual or by the group, I have drawn heavily from Sartre's two main philosophical giants L'Être et le néant and Critique de la raison dialectique. Thus, Chapter II consists of a presentation of relevant ontological observations on the nature of violence, with special emphasis placed on interpersonal and intergroup actions and reactions both on a metaphysical or psychological level as well as on a physical level. The subtle coexistence of cooperation and conflict of the individual within a collective structure with respect to the problem of economic scarcity has produced an interesting, complex and contradictory blend of existential and Marxist interpretations of violence. Essentially, then, this particular section is an effort to explain the author's point of view with regard to the philosophical ramifications of in-group and intra-group violence.

Most amateur and professional critics expend a great deal of time and energy probing Sartre's works of fiction in order to uncover this or that fragment of his philosophy, just as many of them do with the novels of Emile Zola: they read Le Roman expérimental and then, having collated the necessary ingredients, they put the formula to the test, so to speak. This approach is not without its merits. In
Sartre's case, it is a must if one is to grasp the full significance of the psycho-social ambiance evoked in his fiction. The average reader, however, is not as sophisticated as the trained specialist. Consequently, in broaching the topic of violence in the novels and dramas of Sartre, I have attempted to accomplish two things: explain the diverse manifestations of violence in each work by relating the findings to the structural evidence of the text itself, and, when appropriate, include pertinent references to the author's political and philosophical views with the purpose of interpreting the facts as they have been presented. Personal interpretation, particularly in the area of literary criticism, however, reasoned the presentation may be, is always subject to that cruel tyrant: time. The validity of such an enterprise is threatened even more by the fact that Sartre is still among us!

Chapter XII consists of a chronological plunge into the universe of Sartre's novels and short stories from the collection of short novellas Le Mur to his last contribution to the genre Drôle d'amitié that was published in Les Temps Modernes in 1949. Crime, war, self-inflicted wounds, and the intricacies of the class struggle represent but a few examples of the myriad forms of violence that dominate the pages of these works.

Chapter IV is devoted to the study of violence on stage and screen. This is where Sartre displays the most brilliant side of his many talents. In this genre, where the
use of "extreme situations" is most effective, the author has created an atmosphere that is truly permeated with violence in some of its most extreme forms. There is the theme of torture in *Morts sans sépulture* and *Les Séquestrés d'Altona*, either political assassination or revolution or both in *Les Mouches, Les Jeux sont faits, L'Engrenage, Les Mains sales* and *Le Diable et le bon Dieu* and, there is even a case of racist-inspired lynching in *La Putain respectueuse*.

In the conclusion I have attempted to give an overview of Sartre's treatment of violence and have tried to arrive at at least a tentative synthesis of the material analyzed. Finally, it is hoped that this study will provide the reader with some new or different insights into the problem of violence that is plaguing our era.
CHAPTER I

POLITICS AND VIOLENCE

Ever since Sartre has been in the public eye, legions of essays, articles, interviews, magazine bylines, radio and television programs and an untold number of newspaper accounts have offered a running commentary on his numerous political tracts. Several important extensive and comprehensive studies have been devoted to the general ramifications of his political philosophy, of which Philip Thody's critical work remains unchallenged in terms of objectivity and impartiality. Specifically, however, what Sartre has said and written about the relationship of violence to politics has never been given the attention it deserves.

Politics, local, national and international, has, to

---

be sure, been uppermost in Sartre's mind since the end of the Second World War. Radicalized by his participation in the common struggle to liberate France, he has since been an outspoken critic in the field of political theory and action among the French Left. Using *Les Temps Modernes* as a means of expressing his views on the many burning issues that have affected France and the world, his innumerable political pronouncements have been known not only for their admirable grasp of a situation, but for the heated and bitter controversy they have produced.

*Matérialisme et révolution*, first published in *Les Temps Modernes* in 1946, must be considered his initial significant essay on politics, if not one of the best he has ever written. Its importance as regards the subject of this chapter is paramount, for it contains the core of a political philosophy in which violence plays a crucial role. The essay has a twofold purpose; it is at once a critique of dialectical materialism of the sort embraced by post-war doctrinaire Marxists and an aid to those young, disillusioned revolutionaries who, having rejected the myth of materialism, were looking for acceptable arguments to enable them to align themselves with the forces fighting for the creation of a socialist revolution. After having successfully demolished Pavlovian behaviorism, he proceeds to outline what he believes to be the essential characteristics of a true revolution, as well as the path the revolutionary must follow in his quest to achieve its ultimate goals.
According to Sartre, a revolution becomes manifest when "le changement des institutions s'accompagne d'une modification profonde dans le régime de la propriété." It follows, therefore, that a revolutionary party or movement is one whose program envisages the eventual liquidation of the propertied class. Here he obviously adopts a Marxist—slightly modified—vision of man and society. Man's alienation results from an unjust class structure that prevents him from fulfilling his true creative potential and from obtaining the natural product of his labors.

The revolutionary belongs to those who are either directly or indirectly employed by the dominant class and is, by necessity, a worker living under conditions of oppression. He and the working class are subjected to the violence of an inequitable social, political, and economic structure. He defines himself "par le dépassement de la situation où il est," looking beyond his miserable environment to a new and better age by struggling for "la libération de la classe opprimée tout entière." At this point it should be remembered that Sartre makes a clear distinction between the révolté who acts alone by personalizing his experiences—Malraux's heroes for instance—and the honest revolutionary who can only be understood in his relationships of solidarity with the oppressed brethren of his class.

---

3Ibid., p. 179.
Thus is the revolutionary project, which is above all else "une absorption et une assimilation de la classe d'oppression par la classe opprimée,"\textsuperscript{4} given a definite base --the proletariat--and a sense of purpose--the overthrow of the ruling capitalist system and the establishment of socialism. But, the revolutionary struggle does not entail the total destruction of a whole class \textit{per se}. The revolutionary understands that his oppressors are men too, and that while involved in the monumental process of making the revolution, it would not be wise to dispose of the enemy completely, for they possess many of the skills essential to the operation of a country's economic infrastructure. "Sans doute il leur fera violence, il tentera de briser leur joug, mais s'il doit détruire quelques-unes de leurs vies, il tentera toujours de réduire cette destruction au minimum, parce qu'il a besoin de techniciens et de cadres; ainsi la plus sanglantes des révolutions comporte-t-elle malgré tout des ralliements."\textsuperscript{5} He is aware of the fact that a revolution is not just a simple absorption of ideas but that it will perhaps cost dearly in blood, sweat, and human lives. This is so because force is the only effective means at the disposal of the revolutionary to liberate himself and his brothers. In other words, a revolutionary attitude requires a theory of violence to counter the violent situation against which it is fighting.

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., p. 189.  
\textsuperscript{5}Ibid.
Sartre contends that recourse to either materialistic or idealistic terminology to help explain this violence and counter-violence fails to provide a reasonable ontological base. Violence can only be rendered intelligible by taking into account the complex nature of human relationships. "Une philosophie révolutionnaire doit rendre compte de la pluralités des libertés et montrer comment chacune tout en étant liberté pour soi doit pouvoir être objet pour l'autre. C'est seulement ce double caractère de liberté et d'objectivité qui peut expliquer les notions complexes d'oppressions, de lutte, d'échec et de violence." Here Sartre puts to use the ontological considerations which he expounded three years earlier in L'Etre et le néant. The essential ambiguity of man's relationship to others, characterized by the duality of object and subject, must be turned to when attempting to shed some light on the intricacies of violent behavior. Although the ontological aspects of violence will be treated at greater length in the following chapter, it should be stated that the goal of the revolutionary movement is to eradicate these basic conflicts within and among men. Its ideal purpose is "de faire passer la société par la violence d'un état où les libertés sont aliénées à un autre état fondée sur leur reconnaissance réciproque."  

Sartre's desire to witness the birth of classless
societies formulated along Marxist lines—achievements which could not be accomplished without resorting to violent means—has been his basic political frame of reference since the publication of *Matérialisme et révolution*. He has given his approval to those governments or organizations whose ideals include the setting up of revolutionary states. Of the many revolutionary and violent situations he either mentions or discusses in his "committed" writings, only a few have undergone close scrutiny: the Soviet intervention in Hungary, the war in Algeria, the Cuban uprising and the conflict in Vietnam. These detailed and well-argued analyses are more significant than his many spontaneous, passionate, and perhaps ill informed reactions to various manifestations of politically motivated violence. His brief comments on the Korean war, for example, are notorious for their inaccuracy. Some critics have deemed it necessary to include all that has appeared in *Les Temps Modernes* since 1945, regardless of authorship, as being a direct expression of Sartre's views. This is a questionable practice, however, especially when one takes into consideration the many quarrels Sartre has had with some contributors to the journal such as Merleau-Ponty and Francis Jeanson. Accordingly, then, this study will limit itself only to those articles written by Sartre himself.

The Soviet invasion of Hungary during the months of October and November of 1956 was as much of a shock to the French Left then, as was the recent debacle in Czechoslovakia. Sartre was quick to condemn the Communist giant for
Intervening in the internal affairs of its weaker neighbor: "From every point of view the intervention was a crime. It is an abject lie to pretend that the workers are fighting side by side with the Soviet troops." Shortly after those words were uttered, he set out to examine the factors which produced the shocking slaughter of thousands of Hungarian freedom fighters.

The introductory remarks of Le Fantôme de Staline establish a necessary relationship between morality, politics and violence. Sartre's reply to supporters of the philosophy of absolute non-violence who claim that only they have the right to make moral judgments is extremely significant. "Mais c'est précisément parce qu'ils condamnent à priori l'action politique ... la politique est nécessaire et nul ne peut s'en mêler--fut-ce le simple citoyen qui vote tous les quatre ans pour un parti--s'il n'accepte d'avance que la violence en certains cas, soit le moindre mal." All political action implies the acceptance of violence as a possible mode of behavior. He then goes on to discuss the relationship of morality and politics.

Mais la politique, qu'elle qu'elle soit, est une action menée en commun par certains hommes contre d'autres hommes; fondées sur des convergences ou des divergences d'intérêts, les relations de solidarité comme les relations de combat et d'hostilité définissent une attitude globale de l'homme envers l'homme,

---

8Michel-Antoine Burnier, Choice of Action, p. 104.

les objectifs immédiats s'éclairent par des objectifs lointains, la praxis se contrôle par des jugements de valeur qu'elle engendre et qui sont indiscernables des jugements de fait; ainsi la véritable politique contient en elle à l'état implicite sa propre appréciation morale. Et le meilleur moyen de juger totalement l'entreprise d'un gouvernement ou d'un parti, c'est de la juger politiquement.\textsuperscript{10}

Finally, "pour apprécier une entreprise politique, le socialisme est référence absolue."\textsuperscript{11} Political action, then, when considered ontologically, is always based on conflict between men or groups of men. This conflict may be defined as a condition of implicit violence which at any given moment can become explicitly manifest. The morality of such behavior is determined by the political philosophy of the group "project." And, as far as Sartre is concerned, the only absolute political standard is socialism; politics is inseparable from morality; and political violence, when it takes place, must necessarily be judged with reference to the revolutionary project. This is, in fact, precisely what he attempts to do in \textit{Le Fantôme de Staline}. What political motives could possibly have made the Soviet use of military power the lesser of evils within the context of world socialism?

What brought on the workers' uprisings throughout Hungary? In order to find the answer, Sartre goes back to an original set of choices made by the Hungarian leadership in 1949. "La surindustrialisation et la collectivisation

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{10}]Ibid., pp. 147-48.
\item[\textsuperscript{11}]Ibid., p. 149.
\end{itemize}
accélérée étaient déjà criminelles: elles portaient en elles du premier jour les massacres de Budapest comme leur aboutissement."¹² Systematically pushed into a corner, the Hungarian people had but one option left: rebellion. There was absolutely no question of outside interference on the part of Western powers. The violent and oppressive measures used by the Hungarian dictatorship to build a socialist state had the effect of creating solidarity among the workers, but it was a solidarity directed against an unrealistic and tyrannical leadership. Unfortunately, the Russians and their Hungarian allies were blind to the concrete realities of the situation.

"La violence et l'oppression éloignent progressivement ce pays martyrisé du camp socialiste; pour l'y retenir ils n'ont plus qu'un moyen: l'oppression et la violence."¹³ The decision to crush the rebellion with the use of armed force was the direct result of the triumph of a certain political line in Moscow. In the first place, the revolutions that occurred in Eastern Europe after World War II had really not been popular ones. Rather, they had been imported and imposed by the Red Army. The only exception to this was the case of Tito's Yugoslavia where the mass support of the people prevented Moscow from dictating the rules of the game. While Stalin's policies had yielded a noticeable victory in the Soviet Union in terms of establishing a viable economy,

¹²Ibid., p. 158. ¹³Ibid., p. 217.
the same could not be said of the application of similar measures in the satellite countries. After the death of Stalin the Soviet leadership began to expose the many faults of its former dictator—circumstances permitted such a move—and they soon discovered that Stalinism had met with complete failure in neighboring areas. The Soviets could not or would not admit the monstrous crimes they had committed and, as a result, Neo-Stalinism reared its ugly face. Sartre concludes that "les dirigeants soviétiques ont fini par prendre peur et par recourir à la force."\(^{14}\)

Did the questionable interests of the Soviet State really require that she commit aggression against Hungary? Did its intervention serve to strengthen the cause of world socialism? Although Sartre is of the opinion that, in certain cases, the ends do justify the means, he does add one note of caution: "ce sont les moyens qui définissent la fin."\(^{15}\) If the Soviet Union had intended to save socialism, she clearly went about it the wrong way.

Quand ses dirigeants, pour sauver le socialisme, lancent l'armée du peuple contre un pays allié, quand ils font tirer leurs soldats ... sur des ouvriers qui ne peuvent plus supporter leur misère, quand sans prendre en considération les exigences concrètes de la situation, il décident de leur action en fonction des incidences qu'elle peut avoir ailleurs. ... ils font du socialisme une chimère et transforment l'U.R.S.S. en une nation de proie.\(^{16}\)

The Soviet leadership must be held totally responsible for what Sartre would certainly call a politically immoral act.

\(^{14}\)Ibid., pp. 270-71.  \(^{15}\)Ibid., p. 277.  \(^{16}\)Ibid.
The atrocities perpetrated by the Red Army risked destroying the cause of socialism everywhere, and for that, they are to be emphatically condemned.

After the Hungarian affair, Sartre turned his attention more and more to the revolutionary efforts of the indigenous masses of the underdeveloped world directed toward breaking the shackles imposed on them by colonial and neo-colonial powers. The rising tide of nationalism in the "Third World" overshadowed the failures of socialism in the industrialized countries of the West. France was caught in the middle of this new violence abroad: she was at war in Algeria.

As early as 1956, Sartre came out against France's colonial policies in general and, specifically, the way in which they were being implemented in Algeria. He lashed out against those naive liberals who believed that if the Arab population were well fed, given work and taught how to read, they would no longer feel ashamed of being inferior to the civilized colonist. He also wanted to explain why the Algerian rebels had chosen to fight the system politically above all else, and why all other solutions to the problem were irrelevant until Algeria had been liberated from the bonds of colonialism.

Colonialism is a preconceived system which affects both colonizer and colonized. The history of Algeria, according to Sartre, consists of a progressive concentration of the best arable land in the hands of Europeans at the
expense of Algerian-held property. The Métropole gave Arab land to the colons in order to increase their purchasing power which, in turn, allowed the industrialists in France to sell them the finished products of a developed economy. The colony sells its raw materials to the imperialist power and buys expensive manufactured goods from them. The system is highly profitable to both parties involved but not to the native population. To insure the success of the enterprise, indigenous labor must be had for practically nothing. That fact alone produces economic abuse and exploitation on a massive scale. The very nature of this brand of colonialism necessitated a violent response from independence-seeking Algerians. Ironically, this agricultural sub-proletariat could not even count on the support of the poor working classes in France because they too lived off the system. More important, however, was the fact that Algerian links with the colonists had been forged with acts of violence: "La conquête s'est faite par la violence; la surexploitation et l'oppression exigent le maintien de la violence, dont la présence de l'Armée."¹⁷ The existence of a situation such as this was bound to produce explosive and far-reaching effects.

France's colonial attitude contained one major contradiction: colonialists generally enjoy the benefits and

privileges of a democratic society in the mother country while denying those same rights to the people they have subjugated. It is the system itself that produces such a contradiction. If the colons were to grant full citizenship to the colonized, the whole mechanism of colonialism would break down. Therefore, "le colonialisme refuse les droits de l'homme à des hommes qu'il a soumis par la violence, qu'il maintient de force dans la misère et l'ignorance," says Sartre. To further justify his actions the colon adopts a racist attitude: the Algerian is inferior to the European from all points of view and is therefore not worthy of being treated like a free man.

When the system began to reel under the repeated blows of insurgent warfare, it had to resort to the most violent tactics to preserve its equilibrium. Reprisals, massacres, regroupment camps and other such inhuman measures became commonplace. Sartre's first printed reaction to the widespread use of torture in Algeria was prompted by the publication of Des rappelés témoignent—edited by the Comité de Résistance Spirituelle in which a number of priests spoke out against the criminal atrocities that were being committed in the colony in the name of the French people. He urged his fellow countrymen to face up to the truth of the situation,

18Ibid., p. 52.

19Jean-Paul Sartre, "Vous êtes formidables," Situations V. The eyewitness accounts of torture reported in Des rappelés témoignent had appeared shortly before.
accept their complicity in these crimes and put an immediate end to the war through negotiation.

He first analyzed the nature and use of torture in a review of Henri Alleg's *La Question*. The book dealt with the torture to which Alleg was subjected at the hands of Frenchmen in Algeria. Sartre, however, is less concerned with the role of the individual in this matter than with specific human attitudes which permeate the act of torture itself. "Une sorte de haine errante, anonyme, une haine radicale de l'homme s'acharne à la fois sur les bourreaux et les victimes pour les dégrader ensemble et les uns par les autres. *La torture est cette haine*, érigée en système, et se créant ses propres instruments." Hitler was only a precursor, as he sees it, to the malignant use of torture that has plagued our epoch. Its particular application in Algeria "est une vaine furie, née de la peur: on veut arracher d'un gosier . . . le secret de tous." It is an exercise in futility meant to seek out an enemy who is at once everywhere and nowhere. The very nature of the struggle--a people's war--dictated the repressive measures carried out by the military and civilian authorities. "La torture s'est imposée d'elle-même, elle était devenue routine avant même qu'on

---

20 Published in February, 1958 by Editions de Minuit.


22 Ibid., p. 83.
s'en fut avisé. Mais la haine de l'homme qui s'y manifeste, c'est le racisme qu'elle exprime."23

To summarize, then, colonialism as a system is nothing short of organized violence applied to a native population through economic, social, and political structures. Material gain is its raison d'être while racist attitudes, carried to their logical conclusion in torture, are its means of self-perpetuation. The only effective means the Algerian nationalists could use to destroy this oppressive system was to devise a theory of counter-violence.

Sartre was so convinced that France had positioned herself on the wrong side of History, that he took the extreme position of advocating violent action in the Métropole to help bring the colonial system to its knees. When asked by a reporter about the violent tactics of France's younger generation to protest the Algerian war, he replied that they "have had no other recourse open to them but rebellion."24 Wasn't the sending of half a million men to Algeria every year an act of violence? Once again, the system had dictated the political rules of the game. The young were responding to an impotent Left which had been mystified by de Gaulle's political maneuvers. "Disgusted by the whole situation they are launching into violent action."25

23Ibid., p. 86.
25Ibid.
While the war still raged in Algeria, Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir traveled to Cuba where they discovered, for the first time, the promise of the success of a true, socialist revolution. "Pour la première fois de notre vie, nous étions témoins d'un bonheur qui avait été conquis par la violence; nos expériences antérieures, la guerre d'Algérie surtout, ne nous l'avait découverte que sous sa figure négative: le refus de l'oppressore." 26 As one critic has already noted in a rather tongue-in-cheek remark, "Fidel Castro is Jean-Paul Sartre in power." 27

In a number of interesting articles, several of which were based on personal interviews with Castro and Che Guevara, Sartre probed into Cuba's history in order to find the seeds of the revolution. No sooner had Cuba freed herself from the grapple of a rapidly disintegrating Spanish empire, than she found herself at the mercy of an ill-fated sugar economy imposed on her from without by the United States. She was prevented from industrializing her economy by American profiteers who were aided in their task by corrupt middle-men such as Batista. To liberate his people from these oppressive conditions, Castro and his small guerilla band chose violence because there was no other way. "The masses can make up their minds to revolt only as a last resort and after


they have tried everything else—adjustment of interests, mutual concessions, reforms."\(^{28}\)

Sartre is also quick to add that the successful, violent overthrow of a government by a popular movement does not, by itself, guarantee the ultimate triumph of a socialist revolution, nor is violence somehow erased from the arena of political behavior after the overthrow.

A society breaks its bones with hammer blows, demolishes its structures, overthrows its institutions, transforms the regime of property and redistributes its wealth along other principles, attempts to increase its rate of growth as rapidly as possible, and, in the very moment of most radical destruction, seeks to reconstruct, to give itself by bone grafts a new skeleton. The remedy is extreme; it is often necessary to impose it by violence.\(^{29}\)

Predictably, Sartre has not remained silent on the question of the present war in South Vietnam. He elucidated his position on the matter at the end of the War Crimes Tribunal in 1967; a tribunal which, incidentally, saw him acting in the capacity of executive chairman. The issue under consideration at these meetings was whether or not the United States was guilty of genocide in South Vietnam.

Consistent with previous stands taken against colonial and neo-colonial wars, Sartre's sympathies are decidedly in favor of the National Liberation Front and against the Saigon government and its allies. The term genocide is defined on


\(^{29}\)\textit{Ibid}. Underlining my own.
the basis of intent, stated as such in Article 2 of the 1948 Geneva Convention. Are United States forces, then, guilty of intentionally killing Vietnamese solely because they are Vietnamese, just as Hitler had tried to exterminate the Jews?

"Every case of genocide is a product of history and bears the stamp of the society which has given birth to it."30 Furthermore, genocide "is a simultaneous expression of the economic infrastructure of that power (capitalist), political objectives and contradictions of its present situation."31 It follows that U.S. motives must be understood, in the main, in light of economic and political factors. The first objective, he argues, is dictated by the necessity of establishing a Pacific line of defense; a move which becomes obligatory only in a context of general policies of imperialism. The second important consideration is economic in nature, but this particular aspect is not too clear at first glance, since the United States does not have industrial enterprises in South Vietnam. The conclusion, then, is that the Americans are engaged in a "war of example," somewhat similar in geo-political terms to the Soviet Union's decision to invade Hungary. It must be demonstrated to the world that guerilla warfare and popular revolutions do not and will not pay. In short, U.S. military efforts in Vietnam, and South-East Asia as a whole, are really directed against all


31 Ibid.
revolutionary movements in the "Third World" generally, and against the possibility of Castroist uprisings in Latin America specifically.

It is a case of the greatest power on earth pitted against a poor peasant people, in order to protect an imperialistic system. And, since the U.S. has chosen to suppress the true standard bearers of socialism, "genocide presents itself as the only possible relation to the rising of a whole people against the oppressors."\(^{32}\) The American soldiers who have become enmeshed in this struggle are, in spite of themselves, "living out the only possible relationship between an overindustrialized country and an underdeveloped country, that is to say, a genocidal relationship implemented through racism--the only relationship, short of picking up and pulling out."\(^{33}\) To make matters even worse, concludes Sartre since the U.S. in not involved in colonialism as was the case in Algeria (France could not decimate the whole population because she needed them to work for her), there is nothing, short of world opinion, to keep the U.S. from committing genocide.

In an interview in 1965, Sartre expressed the opinion that although violence still remains as a viable political weapon in the Third World, it is no longer an effective tool to be used in modern societies.

\(^{32}\)Ibid., p. 83. \(^{33}\)Ibid., p. 82.
We must rediscover a kind of seriousness in commitment, without losing a certain violence. But it will no longer be romantic, as was the violence of the Resistance or the Algerian war. Much as this may be regretted, it is no longer appropriate for our situation, although it still is for, say, the Vietnamese. We must find a rational violence.34

His remark can only be interpreted in one way; the danger of total nuclear devastation presents too much of a risk, given the problems posed by the cold war. But, this does not make of Sartre a proponent of non-violence. Whether it be romantic or rational—we are left in the dark as to the meaning of that phrase—violence is violence. To those ardent supporters of non-violence, he has written:

Comprennez enfin ceci: si la violence avait commencé ce soir, si l'exploitation ni l'oppression n'avaient jamais existé sur terre, peut-être la non-violence affichée pourrait apaiser la guerelle. Mais si le régime tout entier et jusqu'à vos non violentes pensées sont conditionnées par une oppression millénaire, votre passivité ne sert qu'à vous ranger du côté des oppresseurs.35

History has, in the final analysis, laid the ground rules of man's struggles, especially as they apply to the violent confrontations that have and are taking place in the Third World.

Sartrian politics, then, is characterized by conflict. Recourse to violent political action may, depending on the circumstances, be the lesser of evils. It should be

emphasized that it must be used only as a last resort, although in certain situations it is absolutely necessary. The violence of the revolutionary movements in Algeria, Cuba, and Vietnam was not gratuitous; it was the only politically effective means of reacting to oppressive conditions. And, if violence in politics is to be judged morally, then the sole and absolute frame of reference is socialism. Political violence is morally justified only when it is directed toward either saving or promoting the cause of socialism throughout the world.
CHAPTER II

EXISTENTIALISM AND MARXISM: TOWARD AN ONTOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF VIOLENCE

Violence has, up to this point, been examined with the express purpose of rendering it more intelligible within the framework of political action. A more complete, albeit more complex picture of its place in human behavior, can be had by focusing our attention on three of Sartre's major philosophical giants: L'Etre et le néant, Saint Genet; comédien et martyr and the Critique de la raison dialectique. First of all, one point must be made quite clear and that is that there has been a definite evolution in Sartre's thought relative to the human condition since the publication of L'Etre et le néant in 1943. Moreover, it is only by taking these later views into consideration that one can arrive at an overall synthesis. This approach should most definitely lead to a better comprehension of Sartre today, in addition to shedding some new light on the role of violence in his most recent literary works, particularly Les Séquestrés d'Altona.

The observations dealing with concrete relations with others found in L'Etre et le néant are highly pertinent to this study. At the very start of the chapter devoted to these relations Sartre informs the reader that he will be
treatng "les différentes attitudes du pour-soi dans un monde où il y a l'autre." The pour-soi—the conscious being that is capable of changing itself through free choice and reflecting upon itself—is the cornerstone of all relations; in fact, it is this relation. The basic origin of my concrete relations with other people "sont commandés tout entiers par mes attitudes vis-à-vis de l'objet que je suis pour l'autre." However, my being objectified by the look of the other person does not prevent me from doing the same to him. This reciprocal and fluctuating relationship is characterized as follows: "Pendant que je tente de me libérer de l'emprise de l'autre, autrui tente de se libérer de la mienne; pendant que je cherche à asservir autrui, autrui cherche à m'asservir." This essential ambiguity, always irreconcilable, epitomizes the core of man's dilemma. This being that we are for others, over which we have no control, finds its original meaning in conflict. Absolute unity with others cannot be attained. Even love itself, according to Sartre, is based on conflict.

The inextricable ambiguity of man's relations with his fellow man generally leads him to adopt either of two patterns of behavior; masochism or sadism, both of which are doomed to failure. If I adopt a masochistic attitude toward

---

2Ibid., p. 430.
3Ibid., p. 431.
others, then my project is "de me faire absorber par l'autre et de me perdre en sa subjectivité pour me débarrasser de la mienne . . . puisque autrui est le fondement de mon être-pour-autrui, si je m'en remettais à autrui du soin de me faire exister, je ne serais plus qu'un être-en-soi fondé dans son être par une liberté." ⁴ The principal obstacle to the success of this attitude is my own subjectivity. First of all, this implies the voluntary denial of my own freedom. The masochistic project can thus be restated: "Je tente donc de m'engager tout entier dans mon être objet, je refuse d'être rien de plus qu'objet, je me repose en l'autre; et comme j'éprouve cet être-objet dans la honte, je veux et j'aime ma honte comme signe profond de mon objectivité." ⁵ But, this attitude is and must be considered a failure because "plus il tentera de goûter son objectivité, plus il sera submergé par la conscience de sa subjectivité, jusqu'à l'angoisse." ⁶ As an example of this, Sartre describes a masochist who pays a woman to whip him, treats her as an instrument and by that very fact poses himself as transcendence in relation to her. In other words, the masochist ends up by looking at or using the other as object and by transcending this other toward his own subjectivity. The inevitable failure of such an enterprise is, however, not lost on the masochist for it is love of failure itself which constitutes the very meaning of the masochistic project. "Il

⁴Ibid., p. 446. ⁵Ibid. ⁶Ibid., p. 447.
nous suffit de signaler que le masochisme est un perpétuel effort pour anéantir la subjectivité du sujet en la faisant réassimiler par l'autre et que cet effort est accompagné de l'épuisante et délicieuse conscience de l'échec, au point que c'est l'échec lui-même que le sujet finit par rechercher comme son but principal."

The lack of success of masochism, even love itself, can be explained by the futility inherent in any effort on the part of someone to deny his own subjectivity by attempting to coincide with his being-for-others. Another attitude which many adopt to escape from the anguish of freedom is characterized by indifference, desire, hatred, and sadism.

Indifference as a possible mode of relating to others can best be described as a state of blindness towards others. "J'ignore concurremment la subjectivité absolue de l'autre comme fondement de mon être-en-soi et mon être-pour-l'autre, en particulier mon 'corps pour l'autre.'" Nevertheless, even this attitude does not keep one from experiencing a certain feeling of insufficiency in one's being, "car la cécité à l'égard de l'autre fait concurremment disparaître toute appréhension vécue de mon objectivité." Yet this is a very common attitude which, as Sartre sees it, can be embraced and held on to for a lifetime, in spite of several excruciating moments of lucidity that may occur.

If a person fails in his attempt to ignore the freedom

---

7Ibid. 8Ibid., p. 449. 9Ibid., p. 450.
of the other, he can turn to sexual desire in order to try to fascinate and then possess this freedom. Sexual desire, says Sartre, entails much more than mere physical union with the other. "Ma tentative originelle pour me saisir de la subjectivité libre de l'Autre à travers son objectivité—pour-moi est le désir sexuel." Furthermore, "un corps vivant comme totalité organique en situation avec la conscience à l'horizon: tel est l'objet auquel s'adresse le désir." Sexual desire as a possible attitude towards others contains one basic flaw; what should happen, does not. The other's subjectivity does not coincide with his objectivity (flesh) and as a result, desire fails in its attempt to ensnare the illusive freedom of the Other.

Sadism is quite similar to desire and indifference inasmuch as its initial goal is to break out of the vicious circle of the ambiguity of human relations. It is described by Sartre in the following manner:

Le sadisme est passion, sécheresse et acharnement. Il est acharnement parce qu'il est l'état d'un Pour-soi qui se saisit comme engagé sans comprendre à quoi il s'engage et qui persiste dans son engagement sans avoir une claire conscience du but qu'il s'est proposé ni un souvenir précis de la valeur qu'il a attachée à cet engagement. Il est sécheresse parce qu'il apparaît lorsque le désir s'est vidé de son trouble. Le sadique a ressaisit son corps comme totalité synthétique et centre d'action; il s'est replacé dans la fuite perpétuelle de sa propre facticité, il s'éprouve en face de l'autre comme pure transcendance; il a en horreur pour lui le trouble, il le considère comme un état humiliant; il se peut, aussi, simplement, qu'il ne puisse pas le réaliser en lui. Dans la mesure où il

\[1^0\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 451. \] \[1^1\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 455. \]
Sadism is an effort to incarnate the Other in a very literal sense by having recourse to violence. It is an attempt to make of the Other pure objectivity. To put it differently, the sadist wants to appropriate for himself the freedom of the Other by making it coincide with the Other's flesh which is being subjected to violence. This enterprise is cloaked with self-deception: "le Pour-soi dès l'origine peut se donner l'illusion de s'emparer instrumentalement de la liberté de l'autre, c'est-à-dire, de couler cette liberté dans de la chair, sans cesser d'être celui qui provoque, qui empoigne, etc."13

Sadism, like masochism, is a reaction of the pour-soi to the hellish presence of the Other in the world. It is a futile attempt to appropriate the Other absolutely; masochism, on the other hand, is a vain effort to bury one's own subjectivity in one's flesh by posing as absolute object for the Other.

The failure of sadism can lead to hatred of the Other which is the conscious pursuit of his death. A person who hates wishes to "se débarrasser de son insaisissable être-objet-pour-l'autre et abolir sa dimension d'aliénation. Cela

12 Ibid., p. 469. Underlining of last sentence is my own.
13 Ibid., p. 470.
Sartre summarizes his treatment of concrete relations with others as follows: "Ainsi sommes-nous renvoyés indéfiniment de l'Autre-objet à l'Autre-sujet et réciproquement; la course ne s'arrête jamais et c'est cette course, avec ses inversions brusques de directions, qui constitue notre relation à Autrui." Since it is extremely difficult to adopt an attitude of reciprocal recognition of the Other's freedom, most human attitudes involve a violation of this freedom. Sexual desire, sadism, masochism, indifference, and hatred have one attribute in common: they imply a denial or refusal of human freedom. If, as Sartre has said, conflict constitutes the very fabric of human relations, then some form of violence must almost inevitably occur when these relations become actualized. This rather pessimistic view is displayed time and time again in the behavior of Sartre's fictional characters who live and act in bad faith. He evokes a world in which its members, when faced with the problem of responsible choice, which is to say the human act itself, usually engage in self-deception. They choose to avoid experiencing the feelings of anguish and despair which accompany the realization that man is free, that his nature is ambiguous and that his presence in the world is totally without justification.

Sadism, indifference, sexual desire, and masochism represent concrete ways of relating to others. Still another way is to join the ranks of the Serious World in which the value of its subjects is guaranteed at birth by some mythical body or institution. This esprit sérieux is generally proclaimed by either religious belief, the State, or the particular values of social class. This aspect, however, will be given more attention in a later chapter.

It seems appropriate, at this particular juncture, to discuss the ethical implications of the above remarks. Although, in L'Etre et le néant, Sartre devotes most of his time explicating those modes of being which are in bad faith while promising that a future work will be consecrated to the ethical implications of his philosophy, this does not mean that he has not broached the subject elsewhere. He has defined what is an authentic attitude toward oneself and toward the Other in Réflexions sur la question juive:

"L'authenticité, cela va de soi, consiste à prendre une conscience lucide et vérifiée de la situation, à assumer les responsabilités et les risques que cette situation comporte, à la revendiquer dans la fierté ou dans l'humiliation, parfois dans l'horreur et la haine."\(^{16}\) To understand what these responsibilities and risks consist of, one must turn to Francis Jeanson's excellent critical study devoted to the

problem of morality in Sartre. Authenticity is intimately tied to human freedom. Jeanson, after having analyzed two cases of inauthentic behavior, makes the following observation: "... nous ne pouvons nous faire libre sans vouloir dépasser l'une et l'autre vers de libres rapports avec les libertés d'autrui, vers une communication interhumaine qui soit un ressaisissement sur le plan moral du fait ambigu de l'existence d'autrui." He goes on to say that one cannot chose oneself as freedom in any given situation without choosing a mode of free relations with others. Other notable critics have arrived at a similar conclusion. To be aware of one's ambiguous nature as well as that of others and to

17 Francis Jeanson, Le Problème morale et la pensée de Sartre (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1955), p. 277. It should be pointed out that Sartre has given his wholehearted approval to Jeanson's study, considering it one of the best works devoted to the exposition of his existential philosophy.

18 Anthony Manser's Sartre, A Philosophical Study (London: The Athlone Press, 1966), contains some revealing insights. "Authenticity consists therefore in the recognition of incompleteness, and hence responsibility. Inauthenticity is the attempt to escape from such recognition, by claiming that one is of a certain nature, that one cannot do otherwise... That the authentic individual must desire the liberation of other men would seem to follow from the definition of authenticity. To understand oneself is to understand to some extent all men, for we all partake of a common condition, in that we are all free individuals in a single world. A free man can only desire relations with free men." p. 157. Hazel E. Barnes in her work Humanistic Existentialism: The Literature of Possibility (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1959), reaches a similar conclusion: "Conduct in good faith, whether on an individual basis or in politics, is based on the recognition that all men are free. Each one is totally responsible and without excuse." p. 271.
develop relations with others on that basis is what constitutes the core of the authentic attitude.

Much was left unsaid in 1943. Significant factors such as man's relations relative to the group, the influence of childhood experience, the impact of history and the role of different methods of economic production were left almost untouched. Sartre's public had to wait until the appearance of the Critique de la raison dialectique in 1960 to find at least some of the answers to those problems. One of the factors which is central to this study has to do with what Sartre has proffered in the area of group behavior. Specifically, what is of special interest is the need to gain a better comprehension of group violence.

Sartre had already changed perspective somewhat by 1952 with the publication of Saint Genet: Comédien et martyr. As Simone de Beauvoir notes in her diary, "Il (Sartre) s'était rapproché à la fois de la psychanalyse et du marxisme et il lui apparaissait à présent que les situations limitaient étroitement les possibilités de l'individu."19 Jean Genet, for instance, was greatly influenced by the judgment of his elders when they pronounced him a thief. As a young child he did not possess the necessary background which might have enabled him to assert his own freedom vis à vis the stigma that had been attached to his

---

person. Also, Sartre places a great deal of emphasis on the fact that Genet's early crisis can be understood only when examined within the context of the French community environment. The rigid code of conduct imposed on the members of such a world, and particularly the sacrosanct nature of private property explain the scandalous reaction to the young Genet's act of thievery and the repressive measures taken against him. Sartre claims that if Genet had been brought up in an industrial area, he would most likely have been exposed to different stimuli. In a big city, for example, he probably would have heard the very right of private ownership contested and would have discovered the existential truth that one's essence is not guaranteed at birth but, on the contrary, must be forged against the background of what one does. In other words, there is a kind of social conditioning at work in the world which results directly from the nature of the economic, social, and political structure in which the individual is raised. Sartre points out that to understand Genet's relations with others, environmental factors that may have influenced him must be given judicious scrutiny.

It goes without saying that *Saint Genet* represents a significant stage in the transition of Sartre's thought. Much more emphasis is given to cultural conditioning than before. One's concrete relations with others find their original meaning in conflict caused by the presence of others in the world, but the strictures, values, etc., imposed on the
individual by the group in which he has been raised add to the limitations on human freedom. Therefore, it can readily be assumed that if violence is to be rendered more intelligible, then the added dimension of group behavior must be taken into account.

Sartre elucidates the problem of violence in his *Critique de la raison dialectique*, in which he attempts to justify the validity of both existentialism and a certain kind of neo-Marxism. In his opening remarks, he states that any philosophy remains effective only as long as the praxis which produced it remains alive. With regard to that claim, he recognizes only three periods of philosophical creation; that of Descartes and Locke, Kant and Hegel, and that of Marx. Each of these philosophical eras affected all particular thought and all the outer limits of the whole culture. Man-kind, having passed through the first two epochs, is now living in the age of Marxism which is, much to Sartre's chagrin, undergoing a dangerous crisis. While society is experiencing dramatic cataclysms all over the world, Marxism remains motionless. Only the very movement of history, the conflict of men at all levels of human activity, can free captive thought and allow it to reach its full development. It is in that precise sense that Marxism is in a state of crisis. Its more popular interpreters and practitioners have failed to revitalize a philosophy that is rapidly losing touch with reality.

Now, when Sartre speaks of existentialism, he
understands it as an ideology—that which has been nourished by the living thought of a great philosophy. It is "un système parisitaire qui vit en marge du Savoir, qui s'y est opposé d'abord et qui, aujourd'hui, tente de s'y intégrer." Meanwhile, it has not lost its relevancy to the present human situation. Until Marxism reaches its ultimate triumph—when that will happen is impossible to predict—existentialism remains as the only valid approach to comprehending l'homme en situation. In answer to the question as to why existentialism has kept its autonomy and has not been dissolved by Marxism, Sartre replies, "nous étions convaincus en même temps que le matérialisme historique fournissait la seule interprétation valable de l'histoire et que l'existentialisme restait la seule approche concrète de la réalité." He holds to this position in spite of its obvious contradictions of which he is only too fully aware. The problem can be presented differently by saying that Marxism is unable to satisfy our need to comprehend the world from the particular situation in which we are placed. What is of utmost concern to Sartre is that Marxism has ceased to live with and direct history because it has attempted through bureaucratic conservatism, to reduce change to identity. Marxism has absorbed man into preconceived ideas while existentialism searches

---


21 Ibid., p. 24.
for man everywhere where he can be found. If Marxism is to survive, it must free itself from its present inertia so that it may, once again, become the prime force of our time.

According to the Critique, reciprocal and triadic relations are the starting-point of all relations including all forms of reification (to regard something abstract as a material thing) and alienation. How does reciprocity work? I see the other as an agent of a totalization in his movements toward his ends in the same movement as that whereby I project myself toward my own. This process enables me to discover myself to be object and instrument for his ends by the same act whereby I constitute him as object and instrument for my ends. Complete reciprocity, as was the case earlier (complete unity with the other is impossible), cannot be realized; it can only be positive or negative. Negative reciprocity is refusal of reciprocity:

\[ \text{Chacun refuse de servir la fin de l'autre et, tout en reconnaissant son être objectif de moyen dans le projet de l'adversaire, il met à profit sa propre instrumentalité en autrui pour faire de celui-ci, en dépit de lui-même, un instrument de ses propres fins: c'est la lutte; chacun s'y résume dans sa matérialité pour agir sur celle de l'Autre; chacun, par des feintes, des ruses, des fraudes, des manoeuvres, s'y laisse constituer par l'Autre en faux objet, en moyen trompeur.} \tag{23} \]

\[ \text{I must confess, at this point, to having obtained some much-needed help in digesting M. Sartre's Critique from Laing & Cooper's Reason & Violence (New York: Humanities Press, 1964). Sartre has, in a preface written especially for the study, given his personal stamp of approval to this commendable expository work.} \tag{22} \]

\[ \text{Jean-Paul Sartre, Critique de la raison dialectique, p. 192.} \tag{23} \]
In a struggle of this kind, however, the end does not involve the conscious pursuit of the death of the other. "En fait, la lutte a pour origine en chaque cas un antagonisme concret qui a la rareté, sous une forme définie, comme condition matérielle et le but réel est une conquête objective ou même une création dont la disparition de l'adversaire n'est que le moyen."^24

A reading of L'Etre et le néant demonstrated that the original crisis in one's relations with others was provoked by the presence, that painful "look" of the other. Under those conditions, one felt one's initial alienation by experiencing the feeling of being de trop in the world. Now, under the empire of scarcity (the material needs of each), human beings are seen as excess, as future consumers, as unnecessary at least, and as a threat more fundamentally.

The fulfillment of one's objective needs is hindered by the presence of the other who, at the same time, is seeking to meet the concrete exigencies of his own needs. Since at this stage of history possible reciprocity is modified by scarcity, the other is seen quite literally as a contre-homme. Need and scarcity determine the Manicheistic basis of action and morals: evil must be destroyed. It is at this level, says Sartre,

\[\ldots\text{qu'on doit définir la violence comme structure de l'action humaine sous le règne du manichéisme et dans le cadre de la rareté. La violence se donne}\]

\(^{24}\text{Ibid.}\)
toujours pour une contre-violence, c'est-à-dire pour une riposte à la violence de l'Autre. Cette violence de l'Autre n'est une réalité objective que dans la mesure où il existe chez tous comme motivation universelle de la contre-violence : et c'est tout simplement le fait insupportable de la réciprocité rompue et de l'utilisation systématique de l'humanité de l'homme pour réaliser la destruction de l'humain.

. . . Qu'il s'agisse de tuer, de torturer, d'asservir ou simplement de mystifier, mon but est de supprimer la liberté étrangère comme force ennemie, c'est-à-dire comme cette force qui peut me repousser du champ pratique et faire de moi un "homme de trop" condamné à mourir. 25

Yet by destroying the contre-homme which resides in each member of a threatening group, I may destroy in him his humanity and in so doing, realize my own inhumanity. Once again man is faced with a viscious circularity in his relations with others: "C'est bien moi que je veux détruire en lui pour l'empêcher de me détruire réellement dans mon corps." 26 And until scarcity no longer regulates man's projects in the world, evil is irremediable and violence will be a contingent necessity.

The origins of societal structures can be discovered by examining the economic conditions which engendered them. Although man's praxis has been shown to be negative reciprocity, this negation can itself be negated in the form of collaboration with others which becomes necessary in the struggle to overcome scarcity. Scarcity not only explains the concrete antagonisms which separate men from their neighbors, it also reveals the genesis of all human societies.

26 Ibid.
According to Sartre's social theory, there are two basic forms of social structure; the series and the group, each of which has important distinguishing characteristics. The first collection of persons is united only by external proximity. A queue of individuals awaiting the arrival of a bus may signify that each person in line has the same reason for being there but, the gathering as a whole does not have an interiorized collective purpose. These persons form a plurality of solitude, the essence of which can be grasped as a relationship of negative reciprocity which has been negated, in silence, by the desire to avoid a fight on the platform of the station. Most of mankind's social life is permeated by such series.

There is, on the other hand, another kind of plurality which Sartre calls the group. The group, unlike its seemingly lifeless counterpart, is noted for its discipline and its commitment to a goal displayed by each member. To exemplify this, Sartre resorts to describing a football team in which each participant acts as a member of that group. A societal group comes into being when each member, faced with the danger of scarcity, gives his pledge to become an integral part of the collective and not to defect from or betray it in any way. Here Sartre introduces, along with the Pledge, the notions of Violence and Terror, all three of which must constitute the basis of the group if it is to keep itself from being dissolved into a disorganized seriality.

A group in-fusion is one which faces a present,
material danger. This is what initially binds its members together and gives meaning to the group project. Once the group in-fusion becomes a Pledged group, nothing of an immediate material threat binds its members, the danger is not real, it is only possible. The real menace from the outside having passed, the danger to the permanence of the group is from dispersion and seriality. A reflexive fear arises, causing a widespread feeling of anxiety which in turn explains the true origins of the Pledge. Fear must be reinvented to replace the external fear that has become rather remote. Fear reinvented is at the heart of the pledge. In Sartre's own words, it is "une libre tentative pour substituer la peur de tous à la peur de soi et de l'Autre en chacun et par chacun, en tant qu'elle réactualise brusquement la violence comme dépassement intelligible de l'aliénation individuelle par la liberté commune." 

Violence-Terror is a fundamental link in the structure of the pledged group since each member has freely consented to the possible liquidation of his own person. Moreover, pledged praxis implies a practical comprehension of the group and of the pledge and therefore, the reign of Violence-Terror is a categorical imperative if the unity of the group is to be maintained.

An atmosphere of Terror (threat of violence) within a group also has a positive effect: its presence has a

27 Ibid., p. 450.
cohesive impact on each member of the pledged group. "Ces
hommes . . . en tant qu'ils se sont constitués par serment
individus communs, trouvent leur propre Terreur, les uns
chez les autres, comme la même; ils vivent ici et partout
leur liberté fondée (c'est-à-dire limitée) comme leur être-
dans-le-groupe et leur être-dans-le-groupe comme l'être de
leur liberté." 28 Terror is a force engendered by the group
as contra-violence directed against the violence that has
been experienced and is still alive in the memory of the
group. It may also be directed against anticipated violence
such as a possible counter-attack. Its end result is that
all interior behavior on the part of members of the group
such as fraternity, love, friendship, hate finds its awesome
strength in Terror.

Violence is the action of freedom upon freedom by the
mediation of the material world. Free praxis can directly
destroy the freedom of the other by mystification and strat­
egems. Violence can also be action against the necessity of
alienation, or be exercised against one's own or another's
freedom in order to forestall the possibility of dissipating
into seriality. Violence, whether against "contra-man" or
against one's brother, as freedom to annihilate freedom, as
terror, fraternity and so on, is in every case a reciprocal
recognition of freedom and negation of freedom by the inter­
mediary of the inertia of exteriority. It is within this

context that oppression and exploitation in the class struggle become objective forms of violence.

The dilemma with which the human condition is confronted is not just the simple existence of others as was indicated above in *L'Étre et le néant*. There it was shown that concrete relations with others found their original meaning in conflict. Sadism, masochism, indifference, hatred, and other similar attitudes were described as ways of reacting to man's original sin; referring, of course, not only to the presence of the Other in the world but also to his inability to overcome the circular nature of human relations. Now it can be seen that a new dimension has been added in the sense that violence, whether undergone or threatened, can be traced to each person's perception of the other as one-too-many through interiorized scarcity. The rationality of the praxis of each is the rationality of violence.

Human violence is not to be viewed as being the product of some sort of animalistic ferocity, love of killing, torture, or any other factor which is purported to explain its causes. The veritable cause which makes violence intelligible in terms of in-group behavior is the comprehensible reinteriorization of each of the contingent fact of scarcity. And, until man can solve the problem of scarcity, he will continue to experience his original alienation from others. Violence will be either an implicit or explicit condition of man's relations with others. Unfortunately, says Sartre, no one is able to foresee the day when man will no longer be condemned to such a fate.
CHAPTER III

VIOLENCE IN SARTRE'S NOVELS AND SHORT STORIES

"Ma salive est sucrée, mon corps est tiède; je me sens fade. Mon canif est sur la table. Je l'ouvre. Pourquoi pas? De toute façon, ça changerait un peu. Je pose ma main gauche sur le bloc-notes et je m'envoie un bon coup de couteau dans la paume. Le geste était trop nerveux; la lame a glissé, la blessure est superficielle. Ça saigne. Et puis après? Qu'est-ce qu'il y a de changé? Tout de même, je regarde avec satisfaction, sur la feuille blanche, en travers des lignes que j'ai tracées tout à l'heure, cette petite mare de sang qui a cessé enfin d'être moi. Quatre lignes sur une feuille blanche, une tache de sang, c'est ça qui fait un beau souvenir..."¹ "Tu sais ce qu'ils font à Saragosse? Ils couchent les types sur la route et ils passent dessus avec des camions..."² "Il y eut un moment d'hésitation et Lucien comprit que ses copains allaient abandonner la partie. Alors ce fut plus fort que lui, il bondit en avant et frappa de toutes ses forces. Il entendit


quelque chose qui craquait, et le petit bonhomme le regarda
d'un air veule et surpris: "Sales . . ." bafouilla-t-il.
Mais son œil poché se mit à béer sur un globe rouge et sans
prunelle; il tomba sur les genoux et ne dit plus rien . . . "3
"Vous serez curieux de savoir, je suppose, ce que peut être
un homme qui n'aime pas les hommes. Eh bien, c'est moi, et
je les aime si peu que je vais tout à l'heure en tuer une
demi-douzaine: peut-être vous demanderez-vous: pourquoi
seulement une demi-douzaine? Parce que mon revolver n'a que
six cartouches . . . "4 "C'était un ouvrage du Colonel
Picot sur les blessés de la face; les premières pages man-
quaient, les autres étaient cornées. Il voulut le reposer
très vite, mais il était trop tard: le livre s'était ouvert
de lui-même; Pierre vit une tête horrible, du nez au menton
ce n'était qu'un trou, sans lèvres ni dents, l'œil droit
était arraché, une large cicatrice couturait la joue droite.
Le visage torturé gardait un sens humain, un air ignoblement
rigolard. Pierre sentait des picotements glacés sur toute
la peau de son crâne. . . "5 "L'air siffla, hurla, frappa
Mathieu en pleine face: un air chaud et lourd comme de la
bouillie. Mathieu tomba assis par terre. Le sang l'avou-
glait; il avait les mains rouges jusqu'aux poignets; il se


5Jean-Paul Sartre, Le Surcis (Paris: Librairie Galli-
mard, 1945), pp. 49-50.
frottait les yeux et mêlait le sang de ses mains à celui de son visage. Mais ce n'était pas son sang: Chasseriau était assis sur le parapet sud, sans tête; un gargouillis de sang et de bulles sortait de son cou. . . . Il s'approcha du parapet et se mit à tirer debout. C'était une énorme revanche; chaque coup de feu le vengeait d'un ancien scrupule. Un coup sur Lola que je n'ai pas osé voler, un coup sur Marcelle que j'aurais dû plaquer, un coup sur Odette que je n'ai pas voulu baiser. . . . Il tirait, les lois volaient en l'air, tu aimeras ton prochain comme toi-même, pan dans cette gueule de con . . . il tira, il regarda sa montre: qutorze minutes trente secondes: il n'avait plus rien à demander sauf un délai d'une demie-minute, juste le temps de tirer sur le bel officier si fier qui courait vers l'église. . . . Il tira: il était pur, il était tout puissant, il était libre.  

"La bouche s'ouvre, la mâchoire pend, les cheveux claquent; cette rafale qui les frappe et s'enfuit, c'est la mort. Il se fascine sur ce visage stupéfait, il pense: c'est à moi que cette mort arrive. Les Allemands dévalent la pente en s'accroupissant aux arbres, il se relève et marche à leur rencontre: sa mort vient seulement de commencer."  

To the uninitiated in the field of Sartrean ontology,  


a first reading of the author's novels and short stories with their plethora of violence and conflict generally produces a reaction that borders on acute depression. From *La Nausée*, which appeared for the first time in 1938, to *Drôle d'amitié*, Sartre's last work of prose fiction that was published in two installments in *Les Temps Modernes* in 1949 as excerpts from the yet to be completed fourth volume of *Les Chemins de la liberté*, violence, in its myriad manifestations, plays a fundamental role. The reader is exposed to a variety of violent situations that seem to run the gamut of human experience. They range from a considerable number of personal clashes involving fisticuffs to the more complex metaphysical crises undergone by a select group of characters and, from the harsh realities of the class struggle, to the problems heaped upon mankind by war. The extracts listed above are meant to present a kaleidoscopic view of a literary world pervaded by violence and conflict; a world which reflects the many pertinent philosophical, social, and political pronouncements set forth in preceding chapters.

*La Nausée* and *Le Mur*

*La Nausée* is primarily a philosophical novel--some would prefer to call it an essay on metaphysics--written in the form of a diary, which contains the essence of Sartre's phenomenological ontology that was to appear in a more systematized fashion five years later in *L'Étre et le néant*. It is a case study dealing with one man's struggle to come to
grips with the nauseating and horrifying truth that one's existence in the world is de trop, that one's Being in the world is contingent and totally without justification. It is during the course of Antoine Roquentin's painful search for the meaning of life that we encounter two integrally related levels of violence. The first and by far the more important one occurs on the metaphysical plane, the second concerns the self-inflicted wound.

Roquentin, having traveled rather extensively throughout the world, has been residing for three years in the French city of Bouville (Le Havre) in order to finish a historical research project on the Marquis de Rollebon. One day he decides to start keeping a diary so that he might somehow gain clearer insight into the meaning of his existence. The end result is that the reader is repeatedly plunged into the innumerable dark and dank pits of Roquentin's moments of Nausea to the point of being practically overwhelmed by the cloak of nothingness that gradually envelops the middle-aged researcher.

There is little that would indicate that Roquentin is prone to violent behavior. Only one seemingly meaningless incident is mentioned having to do with a physical confrontation that took place years earlier in Morocco between him and an unnamed native assailant. The event itself according to Roquentin is now quite unimportant. It was simply something that had happened to him at a given time and place in the past and bears little significance to his present condition.
What does concern him in the realm of the present is the discovery that to him the world of objects has become at once fascinating and odious. He has developed a mortal fear of their overpowering presence. "Et moi, ils me touchent, c'est insupportable. J'ai peur d'entrer en contact avec eux tout comme s'ils étaient des bêtes vivantes." In addition, there are those excruciating moments of lucidity that he experiences which become more and more unbearable as their frequency increases. It is as if there were an invisible worm coiled up within his Being, ready to rear its ugly, figureless head incessantly and without warning. "La Chose qui attendait, s'est alertée, elle a fondu sur moi, elle se coule en moi, j'en suis plein.--Ce n'est rien: la Chose, c'est moi." This flowing, transparent film of nothingness evokes a feeling of horror which is worse than his fear of material things. Whenever he senses its presence, his state of mind resembles that of a man walking down a dark alley who suddenly realizes he is about to be attacked from behind. In fact, that analogy corresponds with Roquentin's attempts to verbalize his Nausea: "Les pensées naissent par derrière moi comme un vertige, je les sens naitre derrière ma tête. . . ." The image of being stalked from behind will be carried to a logical conclusion of sorts immediately

---

8Sartre, La Nausée, p. 23.
9Ibid., p. 127.
10Ibid.
following the scene in which he commits an act of self-mutilation.

Roquentin, torn by the ambiguity of his nature, resorts to what has been described as a futile attempt to alter in some way the contingency of existence. He nervously stabs himself in the palm of the hand with a pocket-knife, hoping that perhaps this gesture would in some way alter the desperate situation which he faces. But, no matter what he does, he cannot silence the hidden voice within him that keeps reminding him of his inescapable predicament. Nothing has changed. A few splotches of blood on a piece of white paper and a small scar are all that remain of this futile experiment. He knows that even if he were to choose to escape from his dreadful freedom by embracing the deceptive solace of his room, this would not prove to be an acceptable solution. "Même si je reste, même si je me blottis en silence dans un coin, je ne m'oublierai pas. Je serai là, je pèserai sur le plancher. Je suis."

Having recognized the folly of his attempts to flee the anguished state in which he finds himself, he decides to leave his living quarters. He then purchases a newspaper and reads the account of a sensational crime which has been perpetrated on a young girl. The authorities have discovered


12Sartre, La Nausée, p. 130.
the body of little Lucienne who, according to the report, has been raped and strangled to death. Upon reading the story, Roquentin begins to perceive the ultimate significance of what he himself has been going through. He is thinking about the strangled child:

Son corps existe encore, sa chair meurtrie. Elle n'existe plus. Ses mains. Elle n'existe plus. Les maisons. Je marche entre les maisons, je suis entre les maisons, tout droit sur le pavé; le pavé sous mes pieds existe, les maisons se referment sur moi, comme l'eau se referme sur moi sur le papier en montagne de cygne, je suis. Je suis, j'existe, je pense donc je suis, je suis parce que je pense, pourquoi est-ce que je pense? Je ne veux plus penser, je suis parce que je pense que je ne veux pas être, je pense que . . . parce que . . . pouah! 13

Descartes' cogito ergo sum does not suffice to resolve Roquentin's dilemma. He senses there is something beyond substantive thought, something beyond the words swimming aimlessly around in his head. The more he probes into the unknown, the more his thoughts become confused with recollections of the unpleasant incident he has read about. "Je fuis, l'ignoble individu a pris la fuite, son corps violé. Elle a senti cette autre chair qui se glissait dans la sienne. Je . . . voilà que je . . . Violée. Un doux désir sanglant de viol me prend par derrière, tout doux, derrière les oreilles, les oreilles filent derrière moi. . . ." 14

Then, both images converge to reveal the fundamental nature of his metaphysical crisis:

. . . l'existence prend mes pensées par derrière,
There is no way he can put a halt to his prodding, penetrating pour-soi. At least the raped child is dead and no longer exists. His affliction is of a different kind. He is destined to experience the metaphysical rape of himself by his inner Look until his existence is terminated in death or he learns to live with and accept the condition to which he has been condemned.

Roquentin finally comes to realize that contingency is the key to explaining the source of his misery and that this cardinal notion destroys all pre-established values that may appear to exist in the world. Contingency signifies that everyone and everything in the world is superfluous and that if any meaning is to be conferred on human action, man must create these values. This discovery enables Roquentin to understand the true nature of freedom and leads him to conclude that his new-found liberté "ressemble un peu à la mort." Whether he will choose to commit his freedom is a moot question at this point. He does, however, near the end of the novel, entertain the thought of writing at some time in the future in order to elucidate his past hoping that, in

15Ibid., p. 132.  16Ibid., p. 196.
so doing, he may eventually be able to accept himself.

Another violent episode occurs in *La Nausée* which, though dissimilar to what has already been discussed, must be given careful attention. In one of Bouville's public libraries the "Autodidacte" is physically assaulted by an enraged clerk for allegedly having made sexual advances to a young school boy. The scene is described through the eyes of Roquentin.

... le Corse émit un petit gémissement voluptueux et soudain il écrasa son point sur le nez de l'Autodidacte. Une seconde je ne vis plus que les yeux de celui-ci, ses magnifiques yeux béants de douleur et de honte au-dessus d'une manche et d'un poing brun. Quand le Corse retira son poing, le nez de l'Autodidacte commençait à pisser le sang. Il voulut porter les mains à son visage, mais le Corse le frappa encore au coin des lèvres. L'Autodidacte s'affaissa sur la chaise et regarda devant lui avec des yeux timides et doux. Le sang coulait de son nez sur ses vêtements.17

To understand the real significance of this one-sided example of interpersonal violence, one must reconstruct the life of the lamentable victim. The French critic R.-M. Albéres has very adroitly pinpointed the role of the Autodidacte in the novel: "L'Autodidacte est chargé ... de représenter, de la façon la plus grotesque et la plus sordide, les illusions intellectuelles des hommes, comme les bourgeois de Bouville seront chargés de figurer leurs comédies hypocritement morales."18 The Autodidacte is, in effect, nothing


but a rather gross caricature of various erroneous and pre-
tentious manifestations of traditional human Reason. One is
reminded of Pio Baroja's *El arbol de la ciencia* in which
the dubious contributions of Knowledge and Science are criti-
cized and held up to ridicule for their failure to provide
concrete solutions to the problems posed by the realization
that men are born to die. The Autodidacte has chosen to
unlock the secrets of the universe by reading, alphabetically,
all of the books on the shelves in the library which he and
Roquentin frequent! He symbolizes the epitome of naive,
abstract humanism. He very discreetly informs Roquenten
that he belongs to a socialist party. He believes that all
men are good and are basically well-intentioned. Meanwhile,
however, he is hard put to describe the good qualities of a
total stranger sitting next to him in a restaurant.

The fight scene, then aside from having been provoked
by his scandalous behavior, definitely takes on a much broader
meaning. Sartre is quite obviously adding a final, rather
messy, apocalyptic note to the future prospects of human
Reason and Knowledge as it was known at the time. The
Autodidacte's beating symbolizes the death of intellectual
illusions and as a corollary, emphasizes its state of

---

19 Pio Baroja, *El Arbol de la ciencia* (New York: Las
Americas), Andres Hurtado, the protagonist, having explored
the tree of Life and the tree of Knowledge, ends up by com-
mitting suicide when he learns that medical science has been
unable to save either the life of his wife or that of their
new-born during childbirth.
utter helplessness—the Autodidacte is unable to find the proper words to defend himself, when confronted with ambiguous human situations.

The year following the publication of La Nausée, there appeared a collection of short stories by Sartre, three of which are highly pertinent to the study at hand: Le Mur, Erostrate and L'Enfance d'un chef. These novellas, although not as widely known as La Chambre and Intimité, provide examples of violence that are even more radical than the ones that have already been covered.

The plot of Le Mur is somewhat reminiscent of Meursault's ordeal at the end of Camus' L'Etranger. The three principal characters, Pablo Ibietta, Tom Steinbock and Juan Mirbal, have been arrested and imprisoned by fascist authorities in Spain for allegedly taking part in anti-Franco clandestine activities. From Ibietta, the prison officials wish to extract information leading to the whereabouts of a certain Ramon Gris, a leader of a local partisan group with which Ibietta has fought. Steinbock is an avowed partisan while Mirbal is just a young lad who had evidently been encarcerated along with the rest by mistake. All three are to face the firing squad at dawn. The drama centers on their behavior during the precious few hours they have left on earth. Their various reactions will be witnessed by a Belgian doctor who enters the cell to observe them.

Ibietta, though certainly not the intellectual type, is the clairvoyant in this situation and is the one to whom
the author has given the task of pondering the significance of their impending doom. "Il (Steinbock) ne se rendait pas compte de la situation, et je voyais bien qu'il ne voulait pas s'en rendre compte. Moi-même je ne réalisais pas encore tout à fait, je me demandais si on souffrait beaucoup, je pensais aux balles, j'imaginais leur grêle brûlante à travers mon corps." But his apprehension is based on something more than the possibility of experiencing momentary physical pain and suffering. What does a man do or think when he learns that his future is about to be abruptly terminated? In other words, what kind of attitude does one adopt in the face of death?

The cruel, disruptive effect produced by the unexpected arrival of the doctor provides the backdrop against which the story unfolds:

Nous le regardions tous les trois parce qu'il était vivant. Il avait les gestes d'un vivant, les soucis d'un vivant; il grelottait dans cette cave, comme devaient grelotter les vivants; il avait un corps obéissant et bien nourri. Nous autres nous ne sentions plus guère nos corps—plus de la même façon, en tout cas. J'avais envie de tâter mon pantalon, entre mes jambes, mais je n'osais pas, je regardais le Belge, arqué sur ses jambes, maître de ses muscles, et qui pouvait penser à demain. Nous étions là, trois ombres privées de sang; nous le regardions et nous sucions sa vie comme des vampires.

Unlike the quasi-sadistic doctor whose future is still open, the three experimental mice over which he has been sent to hover are, in existential terms, dead. Their freedom to

choose has been clearly limited. All past illusions of being immortal, of acting as if there were no tomorrow, have been dissipated. How they will ultimately choose to face death represents the range of possibilities available to them.

What proves to be most embarrassing to Ibietta is the apparent lack of control over his body. On the subjective level he is seemingly able to accept the finality of his existence but objectively, that is to say, the en-soi part of his nature, appears to have a mind of its own.

Je ne tenais plus à rien, en un sens, j'étais calme. Mais c'était un calme horrible à cause de mon corps: mon corps, je voyais avec ses yeux, j'entendais avec ses oreilles, mais ça n'était plus moi; il suait et tremblait tout-seul, et je ne le reconnaissais plus. J'étais obligé de le toucher et de le regarder pour savoir ce qu'il devenait, comme si c'avait été le corps d'un autre.22

It has been suggested and, one might add, substantiated by Simone de Beauvoir, in an article written by Sidney D. Braun23 that Ibietta's involuntary physiological responses to fear of violent death correspond to "the theories on the subject proposed by Georges Dumas, in his Traité de Psychologie published in 1923. Ibietta is experiencing a nonreflective emotional consciousness of fear as revealed by the many neurological and endocrinal reactions of his body. He becomes shockingly

22Ibid., p. 27.

aware of this fear and recognizes it as such because of the presence of others in the cell. When he describes Tom as having the look of death written all over his body, he realizes that he too is being looked at by the others, especially the doctor. His desire to conceal his fear is thwarted by the Object that he is in the eyes of those around him. The interplay of consciousness upon consciousness, the conflict generated by the circularity of the *pour-soi*, *en-soi*, and *pour-autrui* relationship create the existential framework in which *Le Mur* takes place. Sartre most definitely goes beyond the stage of simple behaviorism and in no way does he contradict his existential postulates.

It is surprising, though perhaps not so much at this point in Sartre's career, that in spite of the fear and anguish experienced by Ibietta, his concern for the way others will eventually judge his act is found wanting. Why, for instance, has he chosen to face the firing squad to save Ramon Gris' life? In light of his treatment of similar situations in later works, here the author seems to be displaying a distinct neglect for the social implications of his character's behavior. As far as Ibietta is concerned, no one life is more valuable than the next. It is all the same to him whoever they line up against the wall. Although he is very much aware of the fact that Gris is more useful to the cause of Spain than he, he really does not give a damn about Spain's internal struggle, nor does he care about the purportedly anarchistic cause to which he had allied himself.
Nothing is important to him anymore. Why then does he wish to trade his life for someone else's when by revealing the location of Gris' hiding place he could save his own skin? This is what he thinks about his predicament and his refusal to betray Gris: "Je trouvais ça plutôt comique: c'était de l'obstination." 24

Could it be, however, that having prepared himself to die, he can no longer find any reason to go on living? Perhaps. One thing does seem evident. Sartre's light-hearted treatment of Ibietta's motives is a reflection of the author's apolitical, uncommitted posture vis-à-vis society prior to the advent of World War II. The twist of irony that is added at the end of the story seems to bear this out. Ibietta, his two companions having been killed, is brought before his executioners and given one last chance to confess. He jokingly tells them that Gris is hiding in a cemetery nearby, knowing all along, of course, that the information is false. In the meantime, unfortunately, Gris has left his original hideout and sought refuge in that very same cemetery. Gris is shot to death and Ibietta's life is spared. The latter cannot conceal the ironic nature of the situation when he learns of Gris' fate: "Tout se mit à tourner et je me retrouvais assis par terre: je riais si fort que les larmes me vinrent aux yeux." 25

Erostrate is essentially a modern day adaptation of

24Sartre, Le Mur, p. 32. 25Ibid., p. 34.
the story of a historical personage by that name who achieved illustrious fame by burning down the temple of Ephesus, then one of the seven wonders of the world. To this day the identity of the architect remains unknown while Erostrate's daring act has gone down in history. Sartre's version is shockingly different and seems to have been directly inspired by the infamous acte gratuit made popular by Gide. The author has weaved a frightening tale about a nondescript Parisian bourgeois who, displaying all the earmarks of a sadist, sets out one fine day to randomly massacre half a dozen people in the celebrated "City of Lights." The story is narrated by Paul Hilbert, the one who will soon decide to strike terror in the hearts of innocent souls.

Hilbert's attitude toward himself and toward others is revealed at the very outset. Gazing upon passers-by in the street below from his seventh-story apartment, we listen to him as he meditates on his relationship to the outside world: "Or, précisément, quelle est ma supériorité sur les hommes? Une supériorité de position, rien d'autre: Je me suis placé au-dessus de l'humain qui est en moi et je le contemple."26 The lofty confines of his residence represent but a temporary retreat from the revolting presence of others in the world.

Il fallait quelquefois redescendre dans les rues. Pour aller au bureau, par example. J'étouffais. Quand on est de plein-pied avec les hommes, il est beaucoup plus difficile de les considérer comme.

26Ibid., p. 71.
des fourmis: il touchent. Une fois, j'ai vu un type mort dans la rue. Il était tombé sur le nez. On l'a retourné, il saignait. J'ai vu ses yeux ouverts, et son air louche, et tout ce sang. Je me disais: 
"Ce n'est rien, ça n'est pas plus émouvant que de la peinture fraîche. On lui a badigeonné le nez en rouge, voilà tout." Main j'ai senti une sale douceur qui me prenait aux jambes et à la nuque, je me suis évanoui. . . .27

Hibert's avowed imperviousness with regard to others is nothing but a sham. The truth of the matter is that he has a mortal fear of the freedom that he is and, correspondingly, of the freedom of others. This fear has been translated into a profound hatred of all that is human in man. Hatred, indifference, and sadism characterize his concrete relations with others.

Hilbert finds the prospect of engaging in authentic relations with others, women in particular, abhorring. "Moi je ne demande rien à personne, mais je ne veux rien donner non plus. Ou alors il m'aurait fallu une femme froide et pieuse qui me subisse avec dégoût."28 His sex life borders on voyeurism. He would hire a prostitute, accompany her to her hotel room, have her disrobe in his presence, and stare at her awkward form until he achieved orgasm. Thus was he able to entertain the illusion of possessing a woman without having to touch her body. His perverted behavior takes a turn for the worse when he discovers one night that Léa, the courtisan whom he frequents on a regular basis, has not shown up at her customary haunt. As a result, he persuades Renée, 

---

27Ibid., pp. 71-72.  28Ibid., p. 73.
another woman of ill-repute, to do his bidding. After they have entered the appointed room, he immediately tells her to undress. When she subsequently refuses to tolerate Hilbert's outrageous requests, he forces her at gunpoint to perform a series of degrading acts until his desires have been satiated.

Following this little escapade in sadism Hilbert, now safely cloistered in his domicile, is suddenly overcome with a tremendous sense of superiority. He can not get over the way he successfully terrorized Renée especially when one considers, thinks Hilbert, that whores aren't so easily shocked or astonished. The experience has caught his imagination: "Voilà ce que je voudrais, les étonner tous." This passing moment of triumph is soon shattered by the lingering memory of the Look of the victimized prostitute. Just as it was pointed out earlier, the sadistic project is doomed to failure because the executor eventually realizes that he has not brought the subjectivity of the other under his command. "Que j'ai été bête," says Hilbert, "Et je sentis un remords amer: j'aurais dû tirer pendant que j'y étais, crever ce ventre comme une écumoire. Cette nuit-là et les trois nuits suivantes, je rêvai de six petits trous rouges groupés en cercle autour du nombril."^29

It is during the course of a conversation with his colleagues that he learns of the legendary fame of Erostrate and begins to think of its possible application to his

^29Ibid., p. 77. ^30Ibid.
situation. "Il y avait plus de deux mille ans qu'il était mort, et son acte brillait encore, comme un diamant noir. Je commençais à croire que mon destin serait court et tragique." The hatred he feels for mankind could be crystallized in a similar fashion by committing an act so odious in nature that history would never forget. He would be remembered eternally as the premeditated, cold-blooded killer who one day disposed of five innocent people in order to show the world that he hates all men. The act would confer upon him an everlasting essence:

Il s'emparerait de moi, bouleverserait ma laideur trop humaine—un crime, ça coupe en deux la vie de celui qui le commet. Il devait y avoir des moments où l'on souhaiterait revenir en arrière, mais il est là, derrière vous, il vous barre le passage, ce minéral étincelant. Je ne demandais qu'une heure pour jouir du mien, pour sentir son poids écrasant.

The act itself would accomplish two things; it would actualize Hilbert's hatred of humanity—hatred, in Sartrean terms, is wishing for the death of the other—in which case the massacre would represent the symbolic slaughter of all men, and secondly, it would mean the death in Hiblert of his ambiguous human nature which he cannot tolerate, in which case the act would take on suicidal overtones.

It has often been said that the best laid plans of mice and men often go astray and, in the case of this killer-at-large, the saying is quite appropriate. He panics at the very last moment and fires on a total stranger apparently

\[31^{\text{Ibid.}}, \text{ p. 79.}\]

\[32^{\text{Ibid.}}, \text{ pp. 83-84.}\]
out of fear rather than according to the dictates of his twisted designs. Leaving the poor soul whose stomach he has just riddled with three bullets, he flees the scene of the crime hearing shouts of "assassin" ringing out behind him. Afraid of being suffocated in the middle of a crowd in which he finds himself, he blindly fires two more shots, breaks away from the panic-stricken group and finally seeks asylum in the restroom of a sidewalk restaurant. He cannot even bring himself to commit suicide with his last remaining round. In the end he surrenders to the police and thus is Hilbert's dream of becoming god-like, of achieving illustrious immortality in the eyes of the world, brought to a most humble and humiliating conclusion.

_L'Enfance d'un chef_, the last of Sartre's short stories to be discussed in this chapter, deals with the case history of Lucien Fleurie, son of a bourgeois industrialist, who is destined to become, like his father, a respected boss in the managerial class. This particular character has become one of the best representatives of Sartrean bad faith. Accordingly, Lucien's evolution from the stage of innocent childhood to his final ascent into the privileged domain of society has received ample critical attention. The theme of the _salaud_ is repeated throughout the author's literary creations. With _L'Enfance d'un chef_ Sartre moved from a more generalized approach to the _bourgeoisie_, as was the case

---

33 Hazel E. Barnes, _Humanistic Existentialism_, pp. 55-66.
for Bouville's "immortals," to a specific analysis of the genesis of one of its members.

Sartre makes a very interesting comment in *Les Mots*:

"Je ne suis pas un chef, ni n'aspere à le devenir. Commander, obéir, c'est tout un. Le plus autoritaire commande au nom d'un autre, d'un parasite sacré--son père--transmet des abstraites violences qu'il subit." The connection between this and Lucien's ultimate choice of himself as a member of the ruling class will become evident as this discussion progresses.

Some crucial events in Lucien's life which lead up to the scene in which he takes part in a vicious assault on a helpless Jew bear witness to the significance of that act of brutality. When Lucien first goes to school, he experiences a terrifying encounter with the Look of the Other. He is visibly shaken by an inscription he reads on the bathroom wall which describes him as having the appearance of a beanpole. He is horrified by the discovery of his Being-for-others. From this point on in the story he will be haunted by the person others have conceived of him to be.

Lucien is so uncertain as to who he really is and as to whether his existence has any substance that he begins to toy with the idea of killing himself to prove to the world and to himself the néant of existence. He contemplates

---

carrying out the act with his mother's pistol:

C'était un petit bijou, avec un canon doré et une crosse plaquée de nacre. On ne pouvait pas compter sur un traité de philosophie pour persuader aux gens qu'ils n'existissaient pas. Ce qu'il fallait c'était un acte, un acte vraiment désespéré qui dissipât les apparences et montrât en pleine lumière le néant du monde. Une détonation, un jeune corps saignant sur un tapis, quelques mots griffonnés sur une feuille.35

This promise of violence never materializes since Lucien's interest in going through with this theatrical gesture is but a passing impulse.

He soon turns to Berliac, a rather derelict poet, steeped in the trappings of Freud and Surrealism, who attempts to instruct his young disciple in the subtleties of the subconscious mind. Having been guided along the path of this unfathomable psychology, the young Fleurier takes his first step into the world of bad faith. He has finally found a means of circumventing those dreadful moments of existential anguish. If the subconscious is the force motrice governing all of man's choices and if the subconscious mind can be neither reached nor understood, then all Lucien need do is wait for those hidden messages emanating from the bottomless pit of his psyche and they will give meaning to his existence. His hopes quickly vanish, however, when he learns that Berliac is out to seduce him. Lucien's bad faith is compounded even further when, following the homosexual relations the two have had, he refuses to accept any responsibility for his

35Sartre, Le Mur, p. 160.
role in the affair.

Unable to withstand the ever-present anguish and emptiness of his existence, he then befriends Lemordant who is a leading member of a fascist anti-Semitic organization. This is where Lucien commences to find the reassurance for which he has been searching. This is the point at which he is introduced to the Serious World in which its constituents need not justify their actions, or offer any explanation whatsoever for their prejudices. They are men of "conviction" hard as steel, whose essences have been guaranteed at birth. Lucien is told that he has a certain knack at pointing out Jews in any given crowd and because of this, he gains the instant admiration and respect of the other members of the group. He becomes a man to be reckoned with after he apparently delivers the fatal blow in an unprovoked attack he and his friends have fostered upon a lone Jew. Having passed the supreme test, he then decides to become an active member of a group known as the Young Royalists.

By now, Lucien's every action is permeated with bad faith. His choice of himself in relation to others as one who is superior to Jews was triggered by his hatred of them. It is the rock-like hardness of the emotion itself, experienced in the presence of those around him, that gives him the permanence which he seeks. When he is all by himself the subjective, transparent film of nothingness invades his Being mercilessly. At a party one evening, Lucien rudely leaves when he feels he has been forced to shake hands with
a Jew. Once he is alone, outside the house, he catches a brief glimpse of the futility of his racist attitude:

"Oh! pensa-t-il avec désespoir, ce que je les hais! Ce que je hais les juifs!" et il essaya de puiser un peu de force dans la contemplation de cette haine immense. Mais elle fondit sous son regard, il avait beau penser à Léon Blum qui recevait de l'argent de l'Allemagne et haïssait les Français, il ne ressentaît plus rien qu'une morne indifférence.36

All is changed the following morning, however, when his friend who had held the party apologizes for having invited the Jew and excuses Lucien's uncouth behavior on the grounds that a person with convictions such as his could not help but do what his conscience prescribed. Lucien is delighted. His actions now coincide with his être-pour-autrui, so he believes, and any doubts he may have had the night before are quickly dissipated. People finally recognize him for what he wishes to be; someone to be respected and feared: "l'antisémitisme de Lucien était d'une autre sorte: impitoyable et pur, il pointait hors de lui comme une lame d'acier, menaçant d'autres poitrines. "Ça, pensa-t-il, c'est . . . sacré."37

He knows that from this day forward the real Lucien will have to be sought in the eyes of others. The fear and obedience that he would strike in the hearts of men would serve to reconfirm his implacable essence. He realizes that his place in the world has been secured for ages: "Bien avant sa naissance, sa place était marquée au soleil, à

Ferolles. Déjà—bien avant, même, le mariage de son père—on l'attendait; s'il était venu au monde, c'était pour occuper cette place: "J'existe, pensa-t-il, parce que j'ai le droit d'exister."\textsuperscript{38}

Although the importance of the physical violence in which Lucien engages must not be minimized, there is another aspect of violence in this work which must be mentioned. Lucien has chosen himself as one who as a member of the ruling class will continually violate the freedom of others. "Qu'est-ce qu'ils viennent nous embêter avec leur lutte de classes," his father had once told him, referring to the established and sacred duties of leaders in industry, as if one were to infer from leftist propaganda that "les intérêts des patrons et des ouvriers étaient opposés!"\textsuperscript{39} And this is the "abstraites violences" that Sartre talks about, which are passed down from generation to generation. \textit{L'Enfance d'un chef} contains the seeds of the particular brand of violence associated with the class struggle. It will assume a far greater role in the works to come.

\textit{Les Chemins de la liberté}

Most of this three-volume collection was written either during the war years—\textit{L'Age de raison} and \textit{Le Sursis} both appeared in 1945—or during the immediate post-war period when memories of the holocaust were still vivid—La

\textsuperscript{38}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 221. \textsuperscript{39}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 189.
Mort dans l'âme and Drôle d'amitié (the incomplete fourth volume) were published in 1949. It goes without saying that these works reflect the climate of violence that held Europe in its grips for over five years. Not only are they excellent pieces of literary fiction but they also provide the student of history with a brilliant commentary on the effects that war produced on the French nation.

The function of L'Age de raison, if viewed as just one part of the total body of Les Chemins de la liberté, is basically expository in nature. The structure of the novel is relatively simple. The author leads us through the diverse crises of Mathieu Delarue, a thirty-four-year-old professor in a Paris lycée, as he interacts with a rather motley cast of characters. There is Marcelline, Mathieu's mistress, Daniel, an obnoxious homosexual, Ivich and Boris, two former students of Mathieu, and Lola, an aging nightclub songstress with whom Boris has developed an amorous relationship. The cast is further composed of several secondary members of which Brunet the Communist activist, Sarah the pacifist, her husband Gomez, off fighting in Spain, and Jacques, Mathieu's bourgeois brother, play significant supporting roles. The Spanish civil war provides the background against which the narrative is related.

Mathieu, like Roquentin in La Nausée, is a bourgeois intellectual plagued by his own self-penetrating lucidity. We are informed of this from the very beginning when Marcelline tells him that because of his lucidity and his fear of being
his own dupe, he would refuse the most rewarding of adventures that might be offered him. He could not run the risk of lying to himself. He could not act in a gratuitous fashion; he had to have logical reasons for deciding to commit himself to a particular course of action. His relationship with Marcelle was conceived, at least in his own mind's eye, as one in which total honesty should prevail. "Il ne pouvait aimer Marcelle qu'en toute lucidité; elle était sa lucidité, son compagnon, son témoin, son conseiller, son juge." The truth is quite different from the way Mathieu perceives the situation. She is, in fact, nothing but a mere reflection of what he would have her think of him. This faithful mirror has become a convenient habit for Mathieu, just as everything else in his life has developed into a boring routine. But, there is a surprise in store for this intellectual who has "le goût de s'analyser." The quality of his supposed authentic attachment to Marcelle is given its first true test when she tells him she is pregnant.

Mathieu, without really exploring Marcelle's feeling on the matter, would like to hire the services of an abortionist so that he may put an end to this unforeseen, unpleasant and disruptive affair. An emotionally upset Mathieu goes to see Sarah to implore her to help him find a safe but inexpensive doctor. When he arrives he has the

disagreeable experience of encountering Brunet, a former good friend of his. Mathieu's problems and worries are rather petty compared to Brunet's turbulent life. "Et puis Brunet amenait avec lui l'air du dehors, tout un univers sain, court et têtu de révoltes, de violences, de travail manuel, d'efforts patients de discipline." Brunet was less concerned with mulling over the sticky, metaphysical problems of existence than with working with the laboring classes to improve their lot. He was a man of action.

After Brunet has excused himself in order that Mathieu and Sarah may be left alone, the reader is given his first taste of Sartre's treatment of pacifism. Sarah, as a self-proclaimed pacifist, tells Mathieu that she is truly ashamed of her husband's role in Spain's civil war. She had forgiven him all of his infidelities, his harsh behavior and so forth, but not his departure for Spain. He had gone to kill men and she knew that he had done so on many occasions. For Sarah, the taking of another man's life was an unconscionable act because "la vie humaine était sacrée." Marcelle's pregnancy, the embarrassing meeting with Brunet and the knowledge that Gomez has committed himself to the cause of a democratic Spain, prompt Mathieu to take stock of his own situation. While sitting by himself on a park bench, he indulges in a rather accusatory appraisal of his past.

41 Ibid., p. 44. 42 Ibid., p. 45.
Je suis vieux. Me voilà affalé sur une chaise engagé jusqu'au cou dans ma vie et ne croyant à rien. Pourtant, moi aussi j'ai voulu partir pour une Espagne. Et puis ça ne s'est pas arrangé. Est-ce qu'il y a des Espagne? Je suis là, je me déguste, je sens le vieux goût de sang et d'eau ferrugineuse, mon goût, je suis mon propre goût, j'existe. Exister, c'est ça: se boire sans soif. Trente-quatre ans. Trente-quatre ans que je me déguste et je suis vieux. J'ai travaillé, j'ai attendu, j'ai eu ce que je voulais: Marcelle, Paris, l'indépendance; c'est fini. Je n'attends plus rien. Il regardait ce jardin routinier, toujours nouveau, toujours le même, comme la mer, parcouru depuis cent ans par les mêmes vaguelettes de couleurs et de bruits. Il y avait ça: ces enfants qui couraient en désordre, les mêmes depuis cents ans, ce même soleil sur les reines de plâtres aux doigts cassés et tous ces arbres; il y avait Sarah et son kimono jaune, Marcelle enceinte, l'argent. Tout ça était si naturel, si normal, si monotone, ça suffisait à remplir une vie, c'était la vie. Le reste, les Espagnes, les châteaux en Espagnes, c'était... Quoi? Une petite religion laïque à mon usage? L'accompagnement discret et séraphique de ma vraie vie? Un alibi? C'est comme ça qu'ils me voient, eux, Daniel, Marcelle, Brunet, Jacques: l'homme qui veut être libre. Il mange, il boit, comme tout le monde, il est fonctionnaire du gouvernement, il ne fait pas de politique, il lit L'Oeuvre, et Le Populaire, il a des ennuis d'argent. Seulement il veut être libre, comme d'autres veulent une collection de timbres. La liberté, c'est son jardin secret. Sa petite connivance avec lui-même. Un type paresseux et froid, un peu chimérique mais très raisonnable au fond, qui s'est sournoisement confectionné un médiocre et sordide bonheur d'inertie et qui se justifie de temps en temps par des considérations élevées. Est-ce que c'est ça que je suis?43

The obvious discrepancy between Mathieu's monotonous existence, his intellectualized notion of freedom as being "son petit jardin secret," and his lack of authentic commitment to anything whatsoever is clearly delineated. His existence on earth is described as "une attente," which means, by implication, wasted.

43Ibid., pp. 53-54.
Son unique soin avait été de se garder disponible. Pour un acte. Un acte libre et réfléchi que engageait toute sa vie et qui serait au commencement d'une existence nouvelle. Il n'avait jamais pu se prendre complètement à un amour, à un plaisir, il n'avait jamais été vraiment malheureux: il lui semblait toujours qu'il était ailleurs, qu'il n'était pas encore né tout à fait. Il attendait. Et pendant ce temps-là, doucement, sournoisement, les années étaient venues, elles l'avaient saisi, par derrière; trente-quatre ans. "C'est à vingt-cinq ans qu'il aurait fallu m'engager. Comme Brunet. Oui, mais alors, on ne s'engage pas en pleine connaissance de cause. On est couillonné. Je ne voulais pas non plus être couillonné." Il avait songé à partir pour la Russie, à laisser tomber ses études, à apprendre un métier manuel. Mais ce qui l'avait retenu, chaque fois, au bord de ces ruptures violentes, c'est qu'il manquait de raisons pour le faire. Sans raisons, elles n'eussent été que des coups de tête. Et il avait continué à attendre. . . .

Mathieu is unable to commit his freedom partly because every time he invents reasons for performing this or that act, they are immediately obliterated under the ever-present, sceptical and lucid inner glare of his subjectivity. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that within the Sartrean perspective, Mathieu chooses himself that way and is consequently responsible for his present state of inaction. If his life is nothing but a mediocre and sordid "bonheur d'inertie," it is because he has so willed it.

Jacques, to whom Mathieu has gone to borrow some money to pay for the abortion, is quick to define the Mathieu as others see him. He had thought that freedom consisted in looking openly and squarely at a given situation in which one finds himself and accepting all of its inherent responsibi-

44 Ibid., p. 56.
lities. He then condemns his brother for betraying the very freedom in which he professes to believe. Why does he decry the injustices of a capitalist society when at the same time he persists in working for that very society? Why does he sympathize with the programs of the Communist Party when he has not even voted for them in an election? Why does he condemn the bourgeoisie when he was born of that class and lives and acts like one of its members?

"Pourquoi ne suis-je pas dans le bain, avec Gomez, avec Brunet? Pourquoi n'ai-je pas envie d'aller me battre? Est-que j'aurais pu choisir un autre monde? Est-ce que je suis encore libre?"45 thinks Mathieu. An occasion does present itself however that would allow him to change the course of his meaningless existence. Brunet confronts him with a concrete choice: why not join the violent world of the Communist Party? What good is freedom if it is not committed? Why, Brunet implores, have you purportedly cleansed yourself of a whole bourgeois past? "Tu vis en l'air, tu as tranché tes attaches bourgeois, tu n'as aucun lien avec le prolétariat, tu flottes, tu es un abstrait, un absent."46 In spite of the fact that Mathieu senses the truth—he recognizes the accuracy of Brunet's judgment—and despite the fact that he is envious of his companion's life-style, he cannot bring himself to accept the proposition. Brunet exists in another dimension. Unlike the abstract intellectual,

he represents the image of the total man, "aux muscles puis-
sants et un peu noués, qui pensait par courtes vérités
sévères, un homme droit, ferme, sûr de soi, terrestre,
réfractaire aux tentations angéliques de l'art, de la psy-
chologie, de la politique. . . ." 47 Mathieu does not belong
to that world. As Francis Jeanson has pointed out in his
excellent book Sartre par lui-même, Mathieu is a bastard
among men in the sense that he does not seem to fit anywhere.

The scene in the nightclub in which he and Ivich
engage in self-inflicted violence demonstrates his concept
of what it means to be free. The stubborn Ivich has just
defiantly stabbed herself in the hand with a knife. Mathieu
takes up the challenge; "Il planta le couteau d'un seul coups
dans sa paume et ne sentit presque rien. Quand il le lâcha,
le couteau resta fiché dans sa chair, tout droit, le manche
en l'air." 48 This grandiose gesture is more important to
him than it would seem on the surface. It is his childish
way of flaunting his abstract, disengaged freedom in front of
everybody; "Ce n'était pas seulement pour braver ïvich, qu'il
s'était envoyé ce bon coup de couteau, c'était aussi un défi
à Jacques, à Brunet, à Daniel, à sa vie." 49 Has this
romanescque act offered real proof to others that he is free?
"Je suis un con, pensa-t-il, Brunet a bien raison de dire
que je suis un vieil enfant." 50 Nevertheless, he feels a

47 Ibid.
48 Ibid., p. 200.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
certain degree of satisfaction and contentment at having done something that is generally reserved to adolescents taking part in the proverbial game of "I dare you."

As the novel draws to a close we learn that Mathieu has reaped a rather barren harvest from what he has so gratuitously sown in life. Daniel marries Marcelle, Ivich has failed her final examination and must leave Paris to rejoin her parents in the countryside and, as a result, Mathieu is left completely alone. Never having related authentically to anybody, he is not bothered very much by the prospect of being left without companions. In fact, the whole messy business has been rather educational. It is now time, he tells himself, to put aside his youth and embrace the age of reason: "Déjà des moralités éprouvées lui proposaient leurs services: il y avait l'épicurisme désabusé, l'indulgence souriante, la résignation, l'esprit de sérieux, le stoïcisme, tout ce qui permet de déguster minute par minute, en connaisseur, une vie râtée." So do we leave Mathieu, meditating on the unimpressive qualities of his wasted existence from his "perspective plongeante."

If a survey of Mathieu's complacent and detached view of human relations fails to supply a great deal of additional fuel to the subject of violence, Daniel, the guilt-ridden homosexual, fills the lucuna admirably. The latter's behavior, in relation to himself and to others in the novel,

51 Ibid., p. 309.
can be characterized as a permanent flight from the ambiguity of human freedom. Just as Lucien in L'Enfance d'un chef sought to achieve a Being that would have the permanence of a rock by attempting to make his en-soi coincide with his être-pour-autrui, so does Daniel, through his disgusting deportment, strive to have others see him as he sees and hates himself. At first, he tries on several occasions to commit acts of self-mutilation but later realizes that only others can reinforce and sustain his project of incarnating the hatred and guilt which he feels.

He cuts a pimple while in the process of shaving, a would-be act of self-destruction. He wears a heavy coat on a hot day to punish himself as would a monk who flagellates himself in order to expiate his sins. But these are minor gestures that bear no serious consequences. When he comes face to face with the possibility of suicide his lack of courage becomes evident. "Quand on n'a pas le courage de se tuer en gros, il faut bien le faire en détail,"\(^\text{52}\) says he, before he attempts to drown his cats in the Seine (ostensibly, the creatures he loves the most in the world). However, he cannot bring himself to carry out this act of self-mutilation. Later, he tries to castrate himself but cannot force his hand to move the razor. His final project in the novel is to incur the wrath of his friends by telling Mathieu that he intends to wed Marcelle despite the fact that he is a homo-

\(^{52}\text{Ibid.}, p. 95.\)
sexual and hates women. Mathieu is unimpressed.

In *Le Sursis*, the second opus of *Les Chemins de la liberté*, Sartre attempts to convey the mood in Europe during the period immediately preceding the actual outbreak of hostilities between the Axis and Allied powers. Borrowing John Dos Passos' narrative technique, Sartre jumps from city to city, country to country and from character to character as he brilliantly depicts individual, and through a multiplicity of individuals, the collective reactions to the impending crisis. Fear of violent global conflagration provides the setting within which the continuing story unfolds. With Hitler threatening to unleash Germany's armed might against Czechoslovakia if she refuses to relinquish the Sudetenland, and with Britain and France pledged to protect that country's territorial integrity, France is caught in the grip of war fever.

At the start of the novel, the author's eye follows Maurice and Zézette, two members of the working class (he belongs to the Communist Party), as they stroll down the streets of a bourgeois neighborhood of Paris, inspecting the vast array of consumer goods displayed in the boutiques. Maurice's future is now a question mark: "À présent, il n'était plus sûr de rien: à Saint-Ouen (workers' district), c'était la guerre en permanence, mais pas ici. Ici c'était la paix." What is noteworthy about this short episode is

---

that for the first time in his works of fiction Sartre characterizes the state of the proletariat as a condition of permanent conflict and violence. Will war really be that different from the existence to which Maurice and his comrades have been condemned?

Le matin encore, il en était sûr et les copains en étaient sûr comme lui. Ils étaient au bord de la Seine, ils regardaient la file de grues et la drague, il y avait des gars en bras de chemise, des durs de Gennevilliers qui creusaient une tranchée pour un câble électrique et c'était évident que la guerre allait éclater. Finalement, ça ne les changerait pas tant. Les gars de Gennevilliers: ils seraient quelque part dans le Nord à creuser des tranchées, sous le soleil, menacés par les balles, les obus et les grenades comme aujourd'hui par les ébouls, les chutes et tout les accidents du travail; ils attendraient la fin de la guerre comme ils attendaient la fin de leur misère.54

Then the scene shifts from Paris to North Africa where we find Pierre, a bourgeois taking in some of the local color, accompanied by his new-found mistress Maud, a member of a traveling orchestra. While rummaging through the stacks of a bookstore, Pierre happens upon a grotesque reminder of what war can do to people. He purchases the dishevelled remains of a book brimming with photographs of war veterans who have suffered extensive facial wounds. Maud, who suspects that Pierre is a coward at bottom, asks him if he bought that particular work. "Eh bien, oui, dit Pierre. Après? Je suis un homme, moi, je n'ai pas peur: je veux connaître la gueule que j'aurai l'an prochain."55 But she is nobody's

54Ibid. 55Ibid., p. 55.
fool. He makes a feeble attempt to justify his fear. "Tous les hommes ont peur. Tous. Celui qui n'a pas peur n'est pas normal; ça n'a rien à voir avec le courage. Et toi tu n'as pas le droit de me juger, puisque tu n'iras pas te battre." His awkward reasoning fails to convince her. Much later, during their return trip to France, she will deceive him by sleeping with the ship's captain. Pierre has been found out: the existing aura of war has revealed that he is a coward.

Mathieu responds to the new situation in his predictably detached and philosophical manner: "Je n'ai plus rien à moi, pas même mon passé. Mais c'était un faux passé et je ne le regrette pas. Il pensa: ils m'ont débarrassé de ma vie. C'était une vie minable et râlée, Marcelle, Ivich, Daniel, une sale vie, mais ça m'est égal, à présent, puisqu'elle est morte." When Jacques (Mathieu is vacationing with his brother and family in Southern France) questions him regarding his attitude toward the war and, specifically, why he has chosen to take part in it, Mathieu offers the following explanation: "Je pars parce que je ne peux pas faire autrement. Après ça, que cette guerre soit juste ou injuste, pour moi, c'est très secondaire." Mathieu has his own personal war to fight; the one that has been raging in his head. At this stage, all else is immaterial to him.

Sartre now takes the reader into the residence of

56Ibid., p. 56.  57Ibid., p. 72.  58Ibid., p. 87.
Sarah, Gomez and their son Pablo. The father, having returned from troubled Spain for a short visit with his family, is delighted to see his young progeny busily engaged in playing war with a toy rifle. The mother, convinced pacifist that she is, is irritated beyond description by her husband's cruel and inhuman approval of their son's behavior. Had not Gomez been steadfastly against all forms of violence when they were first married? When he replies that there are times when a man must feel the urge to fight, she retorts, "Jamais. En aucun cas. Il n'y a rien qui vaille la peine que je me retrouve un jour sur une route avec ma maison en morceaux à côté de moi et mon petit écrasé dans mes bras."\(^{59}\)

Though he is willing to acknowledge her high ideals, he cannot accept her point of view because it belonged to those "qu'il fallait négliger par principe, sinon on n'arriverait jamais à rien."\(^{60}\) His argument is consistent with Sartre's own political philosophy. Implicit in what Gomez says is the fact that certain situations necessitate recourse to violent measures as the lesser of evils.

If Sartre does not treat Sarah too harshly for her naive and humanistic views, the same cannot be said of Philippe, one of the new characters in the novel. This juvenile, would-be poet and prophet of his age whose father is, of all people, a high-ranking member of the French military "establishment," is by far the most despicable example

\(^{59}\)Ibid., p. 84.  
\(^{60}\)Ibid., p. 85.
of a pacifist yet offered by the author.

"Ma petite maman, voici le temps des assassins, moi, je choisis le martyre. Tu auras peut-être un peu de peine: je me le souhaite." It is with this note that Philippe, having been soundly rejected by the editor of a pacifist newspaper, informs everybody that he has decided to leave home. We are told that he proposes to have some official documents forged in order to seek asylum in Switzerland. His reasons for doing this are not of a commendable nature. Actually, there runs through his viens a disturbing element resembling cowardice which is vaguely camouflaged by a thin veil of pacifist sentiment.

An incident that occurs involving Philippe, Maurice, and Zézette is, to say the least, at once pathetic and humorous. The young twentieth century Rimbaud has rented a room in a working-class district, and quite by accident, it happens that Maurice and his wife are lodged in an adjacent room. Maurice is scheduled to leave Paris the next morning to rejoin his old unit as part of the general mobilization that has been decreed. While he and Zézette are busily engaged in love-making, Philippe overhearing their hushed conversation, decides to invade their privacy in order to convince the Party member not to go to war. The latter does not take kindly to the whining of this half-crazed intruder. Philippe openly admits that he is a deserter (this is not

---

61 Ibid., p. 116.
true since he has not even been called up) and offers to give Maurice fake papers that would enable him to flee the country. The rugged representative of the proletariat is outraged at this. "Bien sûr que la guerre te fait horreur, bien sûr que tu ne veux pas combattre les fascistes. Tu les embrasserais, les fascistes, Hein? C'est eux qui protègent tes sous, gosse de riches." He then effectively disposes of this "petit salaud" by administering several well-placed blows after which Philippe takes his leave, blustering out his hatred for them.

It is not until later in the novel that Philippe's convictions are really tested. Having noticed a small group of people, nearly all of whom are wearing uniforms, he greets them with shouts of "A bas la guerre" and "Vive la paix." A scuffle ensues as a result of his one-man demonstration against the evils of war:

Ils (la foule) l'entouraient à présent et il se sentait à son aise, pour la première fois depuis quarante-huit heures. Ils le regardaient en levant les sourcils et ils ne disaient rien. Il voulut leur expliquer qu'ils étaient victimes de l'impérialisme capitaliste mais sa voix ne pouvait plus s'arrêter, elle criait: "A bas la guerre!" C'était un hymne triomphal. Il reçut un coup violent sur l'oreille et continua à crier, puis un coup sur la bouche et un coup sur l'œil droit: il tomba sur les genoux et il ne cria plus.63

His life is spared only because Mathieu, who moments earlier had rejected the notion of committing suicide in the Seine as a meaningful flight from freedom, is nearby and suddenly

chooses to intervene in the fray. He puts an end to the fight by passing himself off as a policeman. On the morrow, Philippe will turn himself in at a local police station, ask that he be arrested, tried, and imprisoned on the charge of desertion, and then learn, much to his disappointment, that his stepfather, the general, has arranged to have him freed and returned to the family fold.

Included in the complex weave of characters and situations in Le Sursis is a personage whose behavior readily invites comparison with the idiot in Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men. His name is Gros-Louis and he is one of the most unrepresentative of Sartre's fictional characters. The violence to which Gros-Louis is subjected, though not necessarily dissimilar to what has been seen so far, is unique in the sense that Sartrean ontological terminology seems inadequate to help explain its genesis.

An illiterate sheep-herder by profession, Gros-Louis, so huge and tall that his very appearance is intimidating, arrives in Marseille to look for work. The only person who will have anything to do with him there is a poor Negro whom he encounters in a public park. After talking to him for a short while, his new-found friend departs, leaving Gros-Louis to fend for himself. He ends up at a local sailors' dive where he has gone to get something to eat. Two Italian customers Mario and Starace, tempted by the wad of bills Gros-Louis so innocently displays, proceed to get him drunk. Oblivious to his companions' designs (it does not even cross
his mind that they might be after his money) he agrees to go out with them into the night under the pretense of looking for the Negro. Once outside, he begins to sense that something evil is afoot:

Gros-Louis pensa: il vont me tuer, la peur le glaçait jusqu'aux os, il prit Mario à la gorge avec sa main libre et le souleva de terre; mais, au même instant sa tête se fendit jusqu'au menton, il lâcha Mario et tomba sur les genoux, le sang lui coulaït sur les sourcils. Il essaya de se rattraper au veston de Mario. Mais Mario fit un bond en arrière et Gros-Louis ne le vit plus. Il voyait le nègre qui glissait à ras du sol mais sans toucher terre, il ne ressemblait pas du tout aux autres nègres, il venait vers lui, les bras ouverts, en riant. Gros-Louis étendit les mains, il avait cette énorme douleur cuivrée dans la tête, il lui cria: au secours, il reçut un second coup sur le crâne et il tomba le nez dans le ruisseau. . . .64

When he has recovered somewhat from the ordeal, covered with blood, and now penniless, he cries like a baby. Not since the death of his wife has he shed so many tears. Interestingly enough, he may just as well have been the victim of a tornado. He expresses no resentment whatsoever with regard to his assailants who have fled into the night. He quickly dismisses the thought of reporting the incident to the authorities.

Eventually, he is told that he must report for military duty—a stranger had to read the pertinent information for him that was printed on his "livret militaire." Since his simple mind cannot grasp the meaning of the events that are shaking the foundations of European civilization, he understands

64Ibid., p. 142.
nothing. Like a child who wonders why grown-ups quarrel all the time, Gros-Louis is truly incapable of comprehending the "serious world" of military life. When peace is mistakenly declared, he simply decides to leave his barracks to return home. A fist-fight breaks out between him and a group of soldiers who have been sent to stop him. He is finally subdued but not without having put up a good fight.

Gros-Louis is truly innocent. He is not responsible for his actions just as is the judge's son in La Peste. Both have been unknowingly swept up by the merciless winds of war without understanding the situation completely.

Two additional remarks need to be made concerning the subject under consideration before passing on to the next novel. The first has to do with Daniel, and the other deals with another facet of bourgeois pacifism.

Daniel, now married to Marcelle, has not faltered in his wish to actualize his masochistic project. "Peut-être que j'arriverais à coïncider avec moi-même. Pas pour m'accepter, dieu mon: pour être enfin l'objet pur de ma haine. . . . Etre ce que je suis, être un pédéaste, un méchant, un lâche, être enfin cette immondice qui n'arrive pas à exister. . . . Etre pédéaste comme le chêne. S'éteindre. Eteindre le regard intérieur." Daniel, now married to Marcelle, has not faltered in his wish to actualize his masochistic project. "Peut-être que j'arriverais à coïncider avec moi-même. Pas pour m'accepter, dieu mon: pour être enfin l'objet pur de ma haine. . . . Etre ce que je suis, être un pédéaste, un méchant, un lâche, être enfin cette immondice qui n'arrive pas à exister. . . . Etre pédéaste comme le chêne. S'éteindre. Eteindre le regard intérieur." Marcelle, the real victim in this whole affair, slowly slips into oblivion.

While on his way to the front, Mathieu reads a letter

---

65Ibid., p. 107.
from Daniel in which is inscribed the latter's history of existential anguish and his subsequent acceptance of God as a panacea. The way Daniel describes his metaphysical crises recalls Roquentin's nauseating experiences. "Crois bien que ce viol perpétuel m'a d'abord été odieux: tu sais que mon plus ancien rêve, c'était d'être invisible." So that he might relieve himself of the responsibility of being permanently looked at and judged by his pour-soi, Daniel has chosen to place himself under the perpetual gaze of God. By positing a Supreme Being as the absolute Subject, he believes that he can finally be the rock-like Object for which he has always yearned. His guilt and hatred can really and truly exist once and for all under the all-seeing eye of the Almighty. Whatever project he may choose to adopt from now on will be sure to have a faithful witness in the guise of the unrelenting Look of God.

After Maurice leaves Paris, Zézette is visited by a certain Mme. Suzanne Tailleur bearing a petition which rejects unconditionally any recourse to violence. Zézette momentarily mystified by the elegant lady, unwittingly signs her name to the document. She is then overcome with shame knowing that Maurice would surely chastize her for having compromised herself so.

Part One of La Mort dans l'âme is dominated by the mood of pessimism generated by the triumphant victory of

---

66 Ibid., p. 320. Underlining is my own.
fascism throughout the continent that has sent France's unprepared armies in full retreat. In Spain, Franco's regulars have crushed the remnants of the leftist rag-tag army, causing Gomez to flee to New York. Sarah and Pablo make up part of the deluge of refugees fleeing from the advancing German hordes. Violence has shattered the delicate bonds that once tied people together. The first to suffer La Mort dans l'âme is Sarah. Her idealism is dealt a fatal blow after her offers of Christian charity are repeatedly rebuked by members of the passing flood of humanity. Her metamorphosis is complete: "elle était devenue pareille aux autres, une bête du troupeau; des langues de feu lui léchaient les bronches à chaque respiration; une douleur aiguë et fausse lui sciait l'épaule; une fatigue qui n'était ni généreuse ni voulve battait du tambours dans sa poitrine. Une fatigue de mère et de Juive, sa fatigue, son destin. L'espoir s'effaca. . . . "

The veritable drama of this first section, however, concerns the violent death of Mathieu at the hands of attacking German units. It is as a member of a disorganized and disillusioned French troop of soldiers holed up in the village of Padoux located near advancing enemy forces that Mathieu dies. History will not treat gently these defeated men, Mathieu included, for they are the ones who must answer those who would sit in judgment over their acts and question their valor.

67Sartre, La Mort dans l'âme, p. 24.
Mathieu is plagued with doubt concerning history's critical eye. If only he had committed an act of heroism, if only he had left his mark somewhere in this chaotic war, his life might have some value.

"Si je m'étais battu, si j'avais appuyé sur la gâchette, un type serait tombé quelque part..." Il leva brusquement la main et s'envoya une bonne claque contre la tempe; il baissa les doigts et vit sur son index une minuscule dentelle sanglante, un type qui saignerait sa vie sur les cailloux, une claque sur la tempe, une pression de l'index sur la détente, les verres multi-colores du kaleidoscope s'arrêteraient net, le sang dentellerait les herbes du sentier. J'en ai marre! S'enfoncer dans un acte inconnu comme dans une forêt. Un acte. Un acte qui engage et qu'on ne comprend jamais tout à fait.68

His whole life was behind him, a plethora of empty gestures such as the time he stabbed himself in the presence of Ivich. He had misinterpreted all of that as constituting authentic exercise of human freedom. Even now, the possibility of expending shells at a few German seemed futile: "Casser, détériorer, ça n'est pas une solution; un coup de tête, ce n'est pas la liberté. Si seulement je pouvais être modeste."69

What he is truly after is, to a certain extent, what Paul Hilbert sought in Erostrate: that absolute, irrevocable act, that "diamant noir," that eternal moment that might allow him to coincide with and be that act. The opportunity to do so is close at hand.

Abandoned by their officers, the small band of men is soon joined by a group of soldiers who have been ordered to

68Ibid., p. 77. 69Ibid., p. 153.
fight rear-guard actions. The new arrivals intend to make a last-ditch stand at Padoux and prepare to set up defensive positions. Following the example of Pinetta, a comrade-in-arms, Mathieu decides to join the fight. Both pick weapons from a pile of discarded rifles and then station themselves on top of a church steeple along with three other men. All five soldiers realize that the situation is hopeless, that it is only a matter of time as to when all will be killed.

In spite of the fact that Mathieu has finally chosen to do rather than to think, he must struggle one last time to ward off the feelings of uncertainty that invade his mind:

"Finis les remords, les réserves, les restrictions: personne n'est mon juge, personne ne pense à moi, personne ne peut décider pour moi." Il décida sans remords, en connaissance de cause. Il décida, et, à l'instant, son coeur scrupuleux et pitoyable dégringola de branche en branche; plus de coeur: fini. "Je décide que la mort était le sens secret de ma vie, que j'ai vécu pour mourir; je meurs pour témoigner qu'il est impossible de vivre; mes yeux éteindront le monde et le fermeront pour toujours."

The highly dramatic scene which follows need not be reviewed in its entirety for it has captured the attention of innumerable critics. Mathieu, the lifeless bodies of his companions strewn next to him, fires at the attacking Germans in the street below, symbolically exorcising all of his past gestures and scruples; in short, all that his "vie râtée" stood for, until he is no more.

Victor Brombert, in the chapter of his book devoted

---

70 Ibid., p. 174.
to Sartre's intellectual hero, sees Mathieu's acceptance of death as a confirmation of the tragic nature of his "impossible" situation. Sartre's intellectual-adventurers, says Brombert, are condemned to live an impossible condition: even in the midst of dedicated commitment, the intellectual realizes that he is wrong all along the line because his primary concern is not to identify with the suffering of others, but, rather, to seek personal salvation for himself. Thus is he confronted with an ambivalent contradiction, with the tragic impasse of the meaning of his acts.71 This is undoubtedly true in the case of Oreste in Les Mouches, Hugo in Les Mains sales and Goetz in Le diable et le bon Dieu, all three of which will be analyzed in the next chapter. But, to have used Mathieu as an example is to have overlooked some striking differences.

In the first place, Mathieu's "projects" do not conform to the pattern established by the Sartrean intellectual-adventurer; he has not even enjoyed the kind of vicarious adventures often ascribed to the decadent and cerebral hero à la Huysmans. Too, his freedom remains uncommitted, his final act is barren of meaning within the context of social action. Why, for instance, did he not choose, as Brunet will do, to accept the defeat for the moment so that he might live to fight the Germans at a later date? This is not to say that both men are alike, but what it does mean is that

the option to go on living was present in both cases. The truth of the matter is that Mathieu is enacting the only absolute which his intellectually detached lucidity cannot defy. He commits this suicidal act "en connaissance de cause," in order to affirm the single, unshakeable meaning of life: all men are born to die. And as Francis Jeanson points out, the significance of Mathieu's act, like that of a gratuitous suicide, will remain an enigma to all, or "en suspens" because of his death alone.72

Mathieu's tragic (perhaps pathetic would be a more suitable qualifier), death marks the end of the first half of the novel. In Part Two, Sartre leaves behind all of the heretofore-mentioned characters with the notable exception of Brunet and Maurice. The author inserts a new figure Schneider who, along with Brunet, constitute the central pillars of the remainder of the work.

There is a clear shift in emphasis from the culte du moi of a Mathieu to the sphere of political action, the principal exponent of which is Brunet, the committed Party member. Schneider, who plays the role of devil's advocate, was defrocked by the high priests of the central committee before the war but refrains from recalling that regrettable experience in front of Brunet. His real name is Vicarios and he represents, to a certain degree, a reconstituted Mathieu

but who, unlike the latter, has pursued a career of commitment to the cause of socialism by putting to work his skills as a writer. That he resembles the Jean-Paul Sartre of the post-war period, disillusioned with the Communist Party hierarchy, is unmistakable. Brunet, on the other hand, is still the man of violence and action, a convinced revolutionary who has never questioned the dictates of the Party since he first joined its ranks. The Party is his conscience. A temporary prisoner of war camp and the interior of a train that will take them to a stalag in Germany provide the settings in which the story of these two men unfolds.

Brunet, his status in life now reduced to that of a simple POW, discovers much to his chagrin that for the first time in fifteen years he has nothing to do. Cut off from any knowledge whatsoever as to the current Party line, he sets out on his own to convert and organize as many of his fellow prisoners as possible to insure the survival of the communist faith even under such oppressive and hopeless conditions. His only serious competitor is an army chaplain.

Schneider hammers away incessantly at Brunet's blind convictions and selfish motives. It is rigid dogmatism such as his, says Schneider, that allows men to be treated like cattle. "Tu est un abstrait," says Schneider accusingly, "et c'est vous tous, les abstraits, qui avez fait de nous les déchets que nous sommes."73 Brunet's humanization has

begun. He too will eventually succumb to *La Mort dans l'âme* as a result of his association with Schneider. For the moment, however, he stubbornly refuses to adapt to a new situation that in no way corresponds to his concept of what it takes to build true solidarity among men. "Il faut la souffrance, la peur et la haine, il faut la révolte et le massacre, il faut une discipline de fer. Quand ils n'aurons plus rien à perdre, quand leur vie sera pire que la mort..."74 Time will temper Brunet's revolutionary zeal.

Sartre's novel draws to an unfortunate close with the publication of two extracts from the fourth volume of *Les Chemins de la liberté* in *Les Temps Modernes* under the title of *Drôle d'amitié*. Brunet and Schneider, having developed a good friendship between them, have, for six months, been involved in various organizational aspects of prison life in a stalag in Germany. Both, through their untiring efforts, have earned the respect and admiration of their fellow inmates and have risen to positions of considerable authority.

The healthy routine to which each has grown accustomed is cruelly disrupted when a new prisoner Chalais, who is a high-ranking member of the Party, begins to take over Brunet's responsibilities. Not only does he inform the latter that the French Central Committee unanimously supports the non-aggression pact the Soviet Union has signed with Germany and that the official line now encourages accommodation with the

Nazis, but, to make matters even worse, he reveals Schneider's true identity. This news runs counter to what Brunet has been dutifully telling his men all along. The effect is devastating:

Il creve le toit, file dans le noir, explode, le Parti est au-dessous de lui, une gelée vivante qui couvre le globe, je ne l'avais jamais vu, j'étais dedans, il tourne au-dessus de cette gelée périssable: le Parti peut mourir. Il a froid, il tourne: si le Parti a raison, je suis plus seul qu'un fou; s'il a tort, tous les hommes sont seuls et le monde est foutu. La peur se lève, il tourne en rond, s'arrête hors d'haleine. . . .

Although he reluctantly goes along with Chalais' suggestions, his position is now desperate.

Chalais soon discovers that the successful performance of his duties is hampered by the fact that the men trust Brunet, not him. He must discredit Brunet or else he will never accomplish his tasks. Betraying a confidence that only he, Brunet and Schneider (Vicarios) shared, Chalais suggests that Brunet's former right-hand man is a social-traitre, despite the fact that the accusation is false. On hearing this, two men, Rasque and Senac, set out to accost Vicarios. Brunet happens upon the scene and decides to help his friend:

Rasque lève le bras et frappe Vicarios sur la bouche, Vicarios sort une main et s'essuie la bouche, Rasque veut frapper encore, Vicarios lui attrape le poignet, Senac se jette en avant et cogne à son tour, Vicarios détourne la tête et le poing de Senac l'attent derrière l'oreille. C'est un combat d'ombres chinoises sans bruit ni relief: on n'y vroit pas. Brunet fonce et, d'un coup de patte, envoie Senac contre la baraque.

75Sartre, Les Temps Modernes, p. 1021.
Vicarious saigne, les yeux de Rasque étincellent. Brunet voit le sang et la haine, le piège se referme sur lui, la haine l'entoure: il y croit.

Brunet's humanity finally shines through the veneer of years of dried and brittle Party propaganda. Friendship has prevailed.

It is certainly in keeping with the general tone of this study that Drôle d'amitié should end in violence. Brunet and Vicarios' daring escape from the stalag results in the death of the latter who is apparently struck by a bullet fired by German guards who have been lying in wait for them. Brunet finally accepts the tragic verity that "tous les hommes sont seuls," as he broods over the body of the only friend he had in the world. It is now time for him to suffer La Mort dans l'âme; his death has just begun.
CHAPTER IV

VIOLENCE ON STAGE AND SCREEN

The atmosphere of Sartre's first play Les Mouches, staged in 1943, is reminiscent of a bloodbath one generally associates with the aftermath of defeat on a battlefield: "Des murs barbouillis de sang, des millions de mouches, une odeur de boucherie, une chaleur de cloporte, des rues désertes, un dieux à face d'assassiné, des larves terrorisées qui se frappent la poitrine au fond de leur mains--et ces cris, ces cris insupportables. . . ."¹ For fifteen years the inhabitants of Argos have been suffering from a self-imposed feeling of guilt and remorse, symbolized by the vast swarms of flies that have found fertile breeding grounds in and around the city. The people are living in a state of perpetual atonement for their alleged complicity in the brutal slaying of Agamemnon, the father of Oreste and Electre. The murderer Egisthe, an unprincipled ruffian, was aided by Clytemnestre, the slain king's wife. The two assassins now rule the city. Electre was allowed to remain with the royal family while Oreste has ostensibly been killed to keep him

from avenging his father's tragic fate.

In order to maintain law and order among the sheepish citizenry, it was decreed that everyone should experience masochistic remorse for having silently approved Agamemnon's death. To that end and to keep the contrition of the masses at a high pitch, Egisthe has instituted the Day of the Dead, a yearly ritual which is marked by an official public ceremony with the royal family and its entourage in attendance. The highlight of this special occasion takes place when the high priest, invoking his supernatural powers, causes the rock at the entrance to a cave leading to the underworld to roll aside. Then, the oft-maligned, deceived and vengeful souls of the departed stream out of the opening to haunt and torture the living. It is on this very day that Oreste, accompanied by his faithful pedagogue, returns to Argos. For reasons of personal security, he enters the city in the guise of a young Corinthian by the name of Philèbe.

We soon learn that, his life having been spared and then raised by a rich bourgeois family in Athens, Oreste has been taught a disengaged "scepticisme souriant" by his tutor who has been his companion throughout their many travels. His freedom resembles that of Mathieu at the beginning of L'Age de raison. He has learned to adopt a superior and detached view of humanity which has left him unscathed by the raw and earthy machinations of men in society. Like Mathieu, his freedom has not yet materialized. He tells the pedagogue: "tu m'as laissé la liberté de ces fils d'arraisonné
et qui flottent à dix pieds du sol; je ne pèse pas plus qu'un fil et je vis en l'air." 2 If only he could belong someplace by imposing himself on the people of Argos and become part of their situation. "Ah! s'il était un acte, vois-tu, un acte qui me donnât droit de cité parmi eux; si je pouvais m'emparer, fût-ce par un crime, de leurs mémoires, de leur terreur et de leurs espérances pour combler le vide de mon cœur, dûsse-je tuer ma propre mère..."3

Oreste's uncommitted posture is contrasted with Electre's defiant gestures when he meets her for the first time. Though he has not yet revealed his true identity, she unabashedly informs him of her hope that one day her brother would come to punish Egisthe and Clytemnestre for whom she has a passionate hatred. Tempers begin to flare when their mother interrupts their conversation. It is here that we are given a glimpse at what will eventually happen to Electre after she and Oreste commit the dual slaying. Clytemnestre is quick to observe that her daughter's violent gesticulations are only too familiar.

Clytemnestre: Je n'ai rien à te dire, Electre. Je vois que tu travailles à ta perte et à la nôtre. Mais comment te conseillerais-je, moi qui a ruiné ma vie en un seul matin? Tu me hais, mon enfant, mais ce qui m'inquiète d'avantage, c'est que tu me ressembles: j'ai eu ce visage pointu, ce sang inquiet, ces yeux sournois--et il n'est rien sorti de bon.

Electre: Je ne veux pas vous ressembler! Dis, Phîlêbe, toi qui nous vois toutes deux, l'une près de l'autre, ça n'est pas vrai, je ne lui ressemble pas?

2Ibid., p. 26. 3Ibid., p. 29.
Oreste: Que dire? Son visage semble un champ ravagé par la foudre et la grêle. Mais il y a sur le tien comme une promesse d'orage: un jour la passion va le brûler jusqu'à l'os.\(^4\)

Clytemnestre does not regret her role in the killing of her husband. As a matter of fact, she danced joyously then and when she thinks of the bloody event now, she still feels a tingle of pleasure. Her actual remorse is based on having given her consent to the death of her own son. That is her crime, as she sees it, for which she has been repenting all these years. But, she will not stand to be judged by her daughter whom, incidentally, she does not love. Ironically, she predicts in no uncertain terms Electre's downfall:

Tu es jeune, Electre. Il y a beau jeu de condamner celui qui est jeune et qui n'a pas eu le temps de faire le mal. Mais patience: un jour, tu traîneras après toi un crime irréparable. À chaque pas tu croiras t'en éloigner et pourtant il sera tournant aussi lourd à traîner. Tu te retourneras et tu le verras derrière toi, hors d'atteinte, sombre et pur comme un cristal noir. Et tu ne le comprendras même pas, tu diras: "Ce n'est pas moi, ce n'est pas moi qui l'ai fait." Pourtant, il sera là, cent fois renié, toujours là, à te tirer en arrière. Et tu saurais enfin que tu as engagé ta vie sur un seul coup de dés, une fois pour toutes, et que tu n'as plus rien à faire qu'à haler ton crime jusqu'à ta mort. Telle est la loi, juste et injuste, du repentir. Nous verrons alors ce que deviendra ton jeune orgueil.\(^5\)

Having been led to believe by Oreste that the peoples of other cities in the world are relatively content with their lot, Electre decides, in the second act, to defy the traditional obsequies by appearing at the ceremony dressed in glaring white. When she has almost convinced the audience

\(^{4}\)Ibid., p. 37.  
\(^{5}\)Ibid., p. 40.
that their remorse is but the result of mystification, Jupiter cancels this threat by resorting to magic. The crowd turns against her fearing that her frivolous behavior might anger the souls of their dead. Her solution that actually amounts to nothing more than a different kind of mystification, fails to rid Argos of the plague that has infected everybody. Only then does she open her eyes, and Oreste's, to what must be done to counter the machinations of both the ruling pair and the Gods. She relates her discovery to Oreste:

... Tu es venu avec tes yeux affamés dans ton doux visage de fille, et tu m'as fait oublier ma haine; j'ai ouvert mes mains et j'ai laissé glisser à mes pieds mon seul trésor. J'ai voulu croire que je pourrais guérir les gens d'ici par des paroles. Tu as vu ce qui est arrivé: ils aiment leur mal, ils ont besoin d'une plaie familière qu'ils entretiennent soigneusement en la grattant de leurs ongles sales. C'est par la violence qu'il faut les guérir, car on ne peut vaincre le mal que par un autre mal.6

Oreste, who yearns desperately to become "un homme parmi les hommes," decides on a violent course of action after having consulted with Zeus as to what path he should follow. The ridiculous tricks that Jupiter performs behind the scenes lead Oreste to conclude that the silence of the Gods excludes divine intervention and that, furthermore, Good and Evil are but artificial human conventions. Only man, through his acts, can give meaning to one's existence. He likens the act he is about to commit, a deed which will

6Ibid., p. 63. Underlining my own.
purportedly give him "droit de cité" among men, to an axe that will split the city and its population at the seams.

Je deviendrai hache et je fendrai en deux ces murailles obstinées, j'ouvrirai le ventre de ces maisons bigotes, elles exhaleront par leur plaies béantes une odeur de mangeaille et d'encens; je deviendrai cognée et je m'enfermerai dans le coeur de cette ville comme le cognée dans le coeur d'un chêne.  

Oreste's sudden metamorphosis is on the verge of materializing. At the end of the second act he and Electre set out to gain entry into the palace where the executions will take place.

While Oreste and Electre remain hidden in the heart of the King and Queen's abode, Jupiter confronts Egisthe with the dire fate he and his wife are about to meet. Egisthe learns that his ignoble crime has been used over the years by the Gods to mystify the people. The murder of Agamemnon served the forces of religion marvelously because of its unpremeditated, irrational, and bestial quality. Jupiter defines Egisthe's act as follows:

J'ai aimé le tien parce que c'était un meurtre aveugle et sourd, ignorant de lui-même, antique, plus semblable à un cataclysme qu'à une entreprise humaine. Pas un instant tu ne m'as bravé: tu as frappé dans les transports de la rage et de la peur; et puis, la fièvre tombée, tu as considéré ton acte avec horreur et tu n'as pas voulu le reconnaître. Quel profit j'en ai tiré cependant! Pour un homme mort, vingt mille autres plongés dans la repentance, voilà le bilan. Je n'ai pas fait un mauvais marché.  

Why then, thinks Egisthe, does not Jupiter strike Oreste dead with a bolt of lightening? In one of the most

7Ibid., p. 71.  
8Ibid., p. 83.
significant statements of the play, Jupiter reminds his worldly henchmen that the gods can not interfere in human projects: "Quand une fois la liberté a explosé dans une âme d'homme, les Dieux ne peuvent plus rien contre cet homme-là. Car c'est une affaire d'hommes, et c'est aux autres hommes—à eux seuls—qu'il appartient de le laisser courir ou de l'étrangler."\textsuperscript{9}

As it turns out, Egisthe and Clytemnestre perish by the sword. Oreste delivers the fatal blows "en connaissance de cause" as Mathieu might have said, with neither fear nor remorse. He has rejected "le monde du repentir": "que m'importe Jupiter? La justice est une affaire d'hommes, et je n'ai pas besoin d'un Dieu pour me l'enseigner. Il est juste de t'écraser . . . et de ruiner ton empire sur les gens d'Argos, il est juste de leur rendre le sentiment de leur dignité."\textsuperscript{10} With those words, Egisthe is silenced forever.

The apparent solidarity that has developed between the two protagonists begins to crumble amidst the ear-shattering screams of Clytemnestre being put to death by her son: Electre's courage commences to falter. It soon becomes evident that she cannot bear the consequences of the slayings to which she has given her consent. She chooses to revert back to the Serious World of "le repentir" at Jupiter's behest.

Why do Electre and Oreste part company? Why does the

\textsuperscript{9}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 86.  \textsuperscript{10}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 88.
latter assume the responsibility of his act while the former
flees into the world of bad faith? One obvious answer, of
course, is that the girl's fundamental ties with the
bourgeois world, the Serious World in which she was raised,
remained essentially unbroken. It will be remembered that
her mother was astute in noting a similarity between Electre's
fits of anger and the way she behaved during her own youth.
Jupiter provides an important clue to her rebellious attitude
characterized by her childhood dreams of wishing for the
death of her mother and stepfather:

Les autres petites filles souhaitent de devenir les
plus riches ou les plus belles de toutes les femmes.
Et toi, fascinée par l'atroce destin de ta race, tu
as souhaité de devenir la plus douloureuse et la plus
criminelle. Tu n'as jamais voulu le mal; tu n'as
voulu que ton propre malheur. A ton âge, les enfants
jouent encore à la poupée ou à la marelle; et toi
pauvre petite, sans jouets ni compagnes, tu as joué
au meurtre, parce que c'est un jeu qu'on peut jouer
toute seule.\textsuperscript{11}

Her acts of defiance toward the King and Queen were not
responsible acts in the existential sense of the word but,
rather, they were mere theatrical gestures meant to irritate
the rulers and people alike. The presence of Egisthe and
Clytemnestre permitted her to act out the role of the rebel-
lious adolescent but, once the murder was committed, appear-
ance became unbearable reality.

Her dream that one day her brother would come to
purge Argos of its flies sustained her and caused her to

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 107.
carry out token but harmless gestures of courage and defiance. Within this framework, she played the role of the "bad girl," alienated from yet tolerated by the society in which she lived. When the time came to commit an irreparable act, she refused to accept Oreste's invitation to travel "De l'autre côté des fleuves et des montagnes." Lacking the intestinal fortitude to assume the basic loneliness and insecurity that comes from the loss of innocence and the realization that freedom is dreadful--she likens her situation to that of a "boeuf écorché"--she takes refuge in a world which is so structured that it guarantees the worth of its subjects.

In a very real sense, both mother and daughter come from the same mold. They are products of a Serious World which is, in this case, the ruling class and its religious myths. Just as Clytemnestre stood by in the wings to watch Egisthe assassinate Agamemnon, only to repent for her role in the whole affair, so does Electre witness the death of her mother and stepfather and then seek the protection of the world of bad faith. In so doing she resigns herself to being nothing more than a marionette to the Gods and a shallow symbol of authority to the masses. Robert Champigny in a chapter devoted to the analysis of Les Mouches makes a very pertinent comment concerning Electre's sequestration by the esprit sérieux of her bourgeois environment: "In the gallery

12 Ibid., p. 116.
of Sartre's characters, she belongs with those children of bourgeois families who do not get beyond the stage of adolescent revolt."^13

If Electre's viscous environment militated against the possibility of authentic commitment, the thought that her shameful reversal was totally due to a predetermined nature should be dismissed. After all, Oreste was raised by members of a similar social class, yet he is perfectly willing to assume the responsibilities inherent in the situation. While under pressure from the furies to repent, Oreste is first to point out the affinity of their responses to the acts of violence.

C'est ta faiblesse qui fait leur force. . . . Ecoute: une horreur sans nom s'est posée sur toi et nous sépare. Pourtant qu'as tu donc vécu que je n'aie vécu? Les gémissements de ma mère, crois-tu que mes oreilles cesseront jamais de les entendre? Et ses yeux immenses--deux océans démontés--dans son visage de craie, crois-tu que mes yeux cesseront jamais de les voir? Et l'angoisse qui te dévore, crois-tu qu'elle cessera jamais de me ronger? Mais que m'importe: je suis libre. . . .14

The truth of the matter is that she is at once too young and simply too weak to accept the dreadful consequences of having exercised her freedom.

The ending of the play has often been criticized from the point of view that Oreste's glorious departure, reminiscent of the legendary exploit of the pied-piper ridding the


14Sartre, Théâtre, p. 103.
populace of its rats, is pure theater that somehow takes away from the authenticity of his violent act. However, if one interprets the act and what follows it as a reflection of the historical setting in which it occurs—France under German occupation—there is really little else Oreste can do. Members of various Resistance groups who chose to assassinate Frenchmen who were collaborating with the Germans were, by force of circumstance, condemned, as Oreste is, to travel the lonely path of freedom. But be that as it may, it is his metamorphosis, through which the freedom of all is affirmed, that constitutes the essential "message" of the drama. He has succeeded in sweeping aside the sticky mess of superstitions, myths, religious sophistry, remorse, divine intervention, communal soul-searching and political mystification which, by the way, the collaborationist press so ably employed, by committing an act of violence and then assuming its painful consequences. And, while it is true that his act remains ambiguous to a certain extent, simply because it is subject to the interpretation of others, this is precisely what the maquisard had to endure.

Perhaps the most notable aspect of the play is that for the first time in Sartre's fiction the reader witnesses an act of violence which has not only demonstrated positive results in terms of Oreste's liberation but serves a didactic purpose as well. By killing Egisthe and Clytemnestre, by having incarnated his freedom through violence, Oreste's act serves as a guidepost to others who would follow in his
footsteps. He shows the true path that engaged freedom must take and indicates by his rejection of pre-established values that "tout est à commencer."\(^{15}\)

Sartre's next play *Huis clos* (1945) needs no introduction for it has become a classic in contemporary French theater. Each of the three characters who are destined to discover that "l'enfer c'est les Autres," has been placed in this interpersonal hell for acts of violence committed against other human beings. Estelle, the sensual "coquette," is guilty of having killed her new-born child by drowning him in a lake in Switzerland. Inès, the sadistic lesbian, has driven her lover to suicide. Garcin, the pacifist journalist, did not only suffer a coward's death at the hands of a firing squad but has also subjected his wife to psychological torture by sleeping with his mistress under her very nose. The violence that each has perpetrated on others could easily form the dramatic infrastructure of three different plays.

Garcin is first to learn that the hell to which he has condemned himself will not consist of the usual instruments of torture. What he and the others will experience is a special kind of violence in which each will become the *bourreaux* of the other two. Figuratively speaking, Estelle, Inès, and Garcin have reached a self-imposed ontological stalemate. They are *vivants-morts*. In existential terms, each sees his future as a dead-end by denying the possibility

\(^{15}\)Ibid., p. 120.
of responsible choice as a means of changing their present situation. Each has, in his or her own way, engaged in the pursuit of Being within the context of their relationship with others. Inès, for instance, claims that her sadistic forays in the past were somehow predetermined by her fixed nature. "Je suis méchante; ça veut dire que j'ai besoin de la souffrance des autres pour exister,"¹⁶ she tells her two cellmates. On earth, "j'étais ce qu'ils appellent, là-bas, une femme damnée, Déjà damnée."¹⁷ She had simply accepted the judgment of others as final and decided to play the role to perfection.

There is truly no exit to the vicious circle of torture to which each subjects the other. Inès needs to possess Estelle as she has done so many times before to other women but Garcin's presence keeps her from achieving her goal. Estelle would like to pose as the poor, helpless little bird fallen from its nest in front of Garcin but Inès successfully destroys the possibility of a sexual relationship forming between the two because she knows Garcin is a coward. On the other hand, Garcin must convince Inès of the purity of his intentions. They must go on torturing each other, the infanticide, the sadist, and the coward for, regardless of the number of deceptive arguments each may offer, their acts have already spoken for them.

Simone de Beauvoir explains the genesis of Sartre's

¹⁶Ibid., p. 157. ¹⁷Ibid., p. 156.
next play Morts sans sépulture (1946) in the following manner:

Pendant quatre ans il avait beaucoup pensé à la torture... Il avait rêvé aussi sur le rapport du tortionnaire à sa victime... Il y opposa encore une fois morale et praxis: Lucie se bute dans son orgueil individualiste tandis que le militant communiste, à qui Sartre donne raison, vise l'efficacité.18

For having portrayed torture so openly on stage, the author earned the repulsion and shock of numerous theatergoers and critics. It may be that the cinema might have been a more appropriate medium for such a production. Be that as it may, Morts sans sépulture is a veritable case study of the most extreme form of violence, torture, and its concommittant aspect of relationship of torturer to victim.

Fifteen-year-old François, his sister Lucie, Sorbier, Henri the intellectual, and Canoris the militant have all been captured by France's fascist militia following an abortive attempt to wrest a village from the enemy in the name of the Resistance. They have been handcuffed and imprisoned in the attic of a schoolhouse while they await their encounter with their torturers in the classroom below. Jean, the leader of the partisan group, has managed to escape but his whereabouts is unknown to the unlucky five. The irony at the start of the play, then, is that the prisoners have nothing to confess to their interrogators. Too, their

failure to defeat the collaborationist forces has led to a number of reprisals, over three hundred, of which the tragic execution of a thirteen-year-old girl stands out as the most despicable. This is an added burden which they must carry.

Canoris, like Brunet and Gomez, is a tough militant who has already been exposed to torture in Greece under Metaxas. Henri, the educated one in the group, plays the role of intellectual gadfly for whom imminent torture and death without apparent moral justification have seemingly wrecked his chances of dying heroically. Canoris accuses him of being too romanescque in his verbalization of the belief that his death will be absurd.

Canoris: Tu te fais du mal parce que tu n'es pas modeste. Moi, je crois qu'il y a beau temps que nous sommes morts: au moment précis où nous avons cessé d'être utiles. À présent il nous reste un petit morceau de vie posthume, quelques heures à tuer. Tu n'as plus rien à faire qu'à tuer le temps et à bavarder avec tes voisins. Laisse-toi aller, Henri, repose-toi. Tu as le droit de te reposer puisque nous ne pouvons plus, nous sommes des morts sans importance. C'est la première fois que je me reconnais le droit de me reposer.

Henri: C'est la première fois depuis trois ans que je me retrouve en face de moi-même. On me donnait des ordres. J'obéissais. Je me sentais justifiés. À présent personne ne peut plus me donner d'ordres et rien ne peut plus me justifier. . . . Canoris, pourquoi mourrons-nous?

Canoris: Parce qu'on nous avait chargés d'une mission dangereuse et que nous n'avons pas eu de chance.

Henri: Tu vivais pour la cause, oui, mais ne viens pas me dire que tu meurs pour elle. . . . La cause ne donne jamais d'ordres, elle ne dit jamais rien; c'est nous qui décidons de ses besoins. Ne parlons pas de la cause. Pas ici. Tant qu'on peut travailler pour elle, ça va. Après, il faut se taire et surtout ne pas s'en
servir pour notre consolation personnelle. Elle nous a rejetés parce que nous sommes inutilisables; elle en trouvera d'autres pour la servir. . . . Nous avons essayé de justifier notre vie et nous avons manqué notre coup. A présent nous allons mourir et nous ferons des morts injustifiables.19

It is interesting to note that Henri used the cause to justify his own existence and not because he necessarily identified with the plight of others. Canoris' whole life, on the other hand, has been a continual flow of acts directed against the forces of oppression. The arguments presented by both characters have already been heard on several occasions in Sartre's novels.

Suddenly, a new catalyst is inserted. While Sorbier's screams of pain fill the room, Jean, who has been picked up for questioning (he has given his captors a false identity) is unexpectedly thrust upon the prisoners. When Sorbier is brought back to the attic, François nervously asks him if the treatment was bearable. The victim answers: "Je ne sais pas. Mais voici ce que je peux t'apprendre; ils m'on demandé où était Jean et si je l'avais su je le leur aurais dit."20

The experience has taught him one thing, especially now that Jean is among them: since they all have something to hide he would confess under repeated torture and would be branded a coward. A whole life wasted!

Henri is overjoyed at Jean's presence because his

19Sartre, Théâtre, pp. 201-202.
20Ibid., p. 209.
return has restored meaning to their struggle with their interrogators. Though Jean wants to turn himself in to avoid further suffering on his account, Henri reminds him that the group has now been given a raison d'être. He voices his elation just as he is about to follow Canoris to the torture chamber:

Ecoute! si tu n'étais pas venu, nous aurions souffert comme des bêtes, sans savoir pourquoi. Mais tu es là, et tout ce qui va se passer à présent aura un sens. On va lutter. Pas pour toi seul, pour tous les copains. Nous avons manqué notre coup mais nous pourrons peut-être sauver la face. Je croyais être tout à fait inutile, mais je vois maintenant qu'il y a quelque chose à quoi je suis nécessaire: avec un peu de chance, je pourrai peut-être me dire que je ne meurs pas pour rien.21

In the second tableau the attention of the spectator is focused on the three executioners. There is Landrieu who is in command, Pellerin, and Clochet, the sadistic butcher for whom the act of torture is an end in itself. Landrieu is well aware of the fact that if the prisoners do not talk, the atrocities to which the latter have been subjected will only serve to confirm the moral superiority of the victims.

The scene below where Henri undergoes torture is the one that hit the exposed nerves of so many who had come to see the play. Henri taunts Clochet and challenges him to make him scream. Clochet, obviously well-versed in his trade, describes his victim's ordeal:

Tu n'es pas humble. Il faut être humble. Si tu tombe de trop haut tu te casses. Tournez [sticks have been inserted in the ropes that bind his wrists

21Ibid., p. 213.

Fortunately, Henri passes out momentarily, but only to be awakened by Clochet who announces that he will now employ other more effective instruments of torture. Landrieu emphatically orders his henchman to do his dirty work in the next room. Henri's screams, however, can still be heard through the door. So, the commander, whose attitude betrays a certain sensitivity to his victim's painful cries, turns on the radio to drown out those unpleasant sounds.

Landrieu and Pellerin cannot bear to witness the defiant Look of Henri when he is brought back. They are fully cognizant of the criminal and cowardly image the victim has conceived of them. "Baisse les yeux," Pellerin shouts to Henri, "Je te dis de baisser les yeux." Landrieu knows that they must find a coward among the enemy or face defeat.

Sorbier is then brought back for questioning because

---

22Ibid., p. 222.  
23Ibid., p. 224.
they feel that he is a coward and will undoubtedly talk. His open admission to being a coward promises a victory for the interrogators. But, just as he is on the verge of confessing, Sorbier asks to be untied, having indicated that he will give them the information they seek; he runs to the window sill and then, shouting to his friends above that he has not betrayed them, he leaps out of the window to meet a most unceremonious death on the ground below.

At the beginning of the third tableau we learn that Lucie has just been returned to the attic after having been manhandled by Landrieu and company. When François sees her disheveled hair and torn blouse, he feels the last bit of his courage slip away. His sister has been raped! Lucie reacts violently to her brother's apparent intention to give their executioners all they need to know:

*Ils ne m'ont pas touché. Personne ne m'a touchée. J'étais de pierre et je n'ai pas senti leurs mains. Je les regardais de face et je pensais: il ne se passe rien. Il ne s'est rien passé. A la fin je leur faisais peu. François, si tu parles, ils m'auront violée pour de bon. Ils diront: "Nous avons fini par les avoir!" Ils souriront à leurs souvenirs. Ils diront: "Avec la môme on a bien rogolé." Il faut leur faire honte: si je n'espérais pas les revoir, je me pendrais tout de suite aux barreaux de cette lucarne....*24

Nothing else matters to her now; her past love for Jean, the cause or the possibility of escaping death. Her only concern is that Landrieu and his butchers pay for what they have done to her. That is why she consents to having François

24Ibid., p. 237.
strangled to death by Henri because she realizes he will talk under pressure. Everybody except Jean voices his approval to do away with the young boy but not because they think him a coward. Canoris speaks for all of them when he tells François: "Tout est de notre faute. Nous n'aurions pas dû t'emmener avec nous: il y a des risques qu'on ne fait courir qu'à des hommes. Nous te demandons pardon." When Jean tries to prevent François' death by threatening to turn himself over to the men downstairs, he is again reminded that the issue is clearcut: either François dies or the lives of sixty maquisards, whom Jean must warn because they are heading for certain death, will be wasted. Jean remains silent. After striving to reconcile himself with Lucie only to discover that she has become nothing but a "désert d'orgueil," he is released by the guards. Before his departure, however, he does suggest a solution to the seemingly impossible situation in which his friends find themselves: he will put the dead body of a fallen comrade in a grotto which will allow the prisoners to save themselves by telling their interrogators that Jean is hiding in the cave. They will then assume that the dead man is Jean and may then decide to free their victims.

In the fourth and final tableau, Landrieu tells the prisoners that if they confess they will be set free. Lucie takes this as a sign of defeat and loudly proclaims victory

25 Ibid., p. 239. 26 Ibid., p. 247.
for her and her friends:


Canoris does not agree with Lucie's position. Seeing that they now have a slim chance of survival and that they once again may be useful to the cause, he decides to convince the others that they must choose life over death. They should heed Jean's advice.

At first, Henri and Lucie refuse to consider anything of the kind. Henri wants to die because he is unsure as to why he killed François. Was it really for the cause, or did he do it out of selfish pride? "Je traînerai ce doute comme un boulet. À toutes les minutes de ma vie, je m'interrogerai sur moi-même. Je ne peux pas! Je ne peux pas vivre,"28 he tells Canoris. As far as Lucie is concerned, to speak is to justify the rape and the murder and, more important, it will give their executioners a temporary victory. In the end, however, both she and Henri reluctantly agree to side with Canoris. They reveal the alleged whereabouts of Jean but, instead of being given their freedom, Clochet takes them outside and has them shot.

27 Ibid., p. 259. 28 Ibid., p. 263.
In view of what Simone de Beauvoir has said about the essential conflict of the play—the struggle between individualistic morality and effective praxis—it should be re-emphasized that Sartre intended that Canoris' choice be the correct one. It is he and not the others who by his decision to proclaim the supremacy of life and to affirm his desire to help assuage the suffering of mankind, even if it means helping those working in the mines of the Third Reich, to whom the author has given his blessing. Lucie and Henri were, at first, interested only in personal salvation, like so many of Sartre's would-be activists. They are both plagued with a bourgeois conscience. Continued resistance to torture and eventual death would have purged them once and for all of the culpability and shame they both feel: Henri for having strangled François and for having lost face in front of his executioners by crying out; Lucie for having approved of her brother's death and for the disgust she feels for herself from having been maliciously raped by a group of ruffians. They viewed their return to the rack and subsequent death as a *deus ex machina* that would have saved them from having to assume complete responsibility for their respective odious activities.

---

29See Claude K. Abraham, "A Study in Autohypocrisy: Morts sans sépulture," *Modern Drama*, III, No. 4 (February, 1961), 343-47. The author is guilty of totally misrepresenting Sartre's intent. He interprets Canoris' decision to give their interrogators the false information Jean had suggested as a classic example of Sartrean bad faith. In other words, the militant has betrayed himself and the others by allegedly embracing the world of "duty" to the cause. Abraham's conclusions are not atypical.
and unforgiveable experiences. Canoris, on the other hand, is ready to shoulder the burden of what has transpired, as dreadful as it may be, in order to pursue the fight against tyranny, be it class oriented or resulting from the cruelties of a fascist dictatorship. Though his argument wins out and though his future project of rejoining the struggle is cut short at the hands of a firing squad, the important thing to remember is that the risk was worth taking. To bury one's pride and to transcend the personal—a course of action that neither Mathieu nor Oreste could or would follow—is to affirm the validity of social action. It is with men such as Canoris, whose unselfish commitment to violent acts to counter conditions of oppression contrasts sharply with his doubt-ridden friends, that social action becomes a viable force in the fight to ameliorate the human condition.

*La Putain Respectueuse* (1946) is considered by most liberal critics to be a violent attack against racism in the United States. This judgment is irrefutable to say the least. Specifically, however, it is a representation of how certain elements of a society—any society for that matter—adopt and respect the righteous moral values propagated by the oppressive class. Moreover, in choosing a common prostitute as the central character, the author shows that even persons who are viewed by some as base outcasts of society must, at one time or another, come to grips with the problem of responsible choice. The facile submission of Lizzie, the whore, to the world of respectability, coupled with the Negro's complacent
attitude toward his oppressors, are a result of having been thoroughly mystified by the righteous white supremacists. It is the lamentable weakness of the victims that contributes not only to the violent tragedy and travesty of justice in the play but also to the seeming impasse in race relations that seemed to exist according to Sartre, in 1946. "C'est que ma pièce reflète l'impossibilité actuelle de résoudre le problème noir aux Etats-Unis." 30

That some of the events that occur in the play are incredulous and come awfully close to transgressing the rules of verissimilitude is unquestionable. But, the play was conceived and written in a matter of days! Lizzie is a prostitute from New York who, while on her way down South to find a suitable milieu in which to ply her trade, has what will prove to be a most compromising experience. She has witnessed the shooting of a Negro passenger by an inebriated white. The assassin's cousin, Fred, spends the night with her in order to entice her to substantiate a fabricated story. If she signs a document testifying that the falsely accused Negro tried to rape her and that his relative, Thomas, shot and killed him to protect her, then the murderer will be set free. It will also mean that the Negro in question will be hunted down and lynched for an act he did not commit. Lizzie, then, has to choose between the imprisonment of a "respected pillar of the community" or be the instrument responsible

---

30 Beauvoir, La Force des choses, p. 129.
for the certain death of an innocent Negro. Furthermore, if she does not side with the whites, they have guaranteed her that she will be jailed on a trumped-up charge of prostitution.

At first Lizzie refuses to give false evidence under pressure from Fred. She still declines to bear false witness when the police, friends of the family, break into her room and threaten to send her to jail for prostitution. It is only when Senator Clarke, the accused man's uncle, mystifies Lizzie with his smooth words about Righteousness being on the side of his nephew, that she, quite befuddled at this point, decides to sign. Almost immediately she regrets what she has done. When the Senator returns, bringing her a pay-off of one hundred dollars from the accused man's mother instead of the respect and recognition she had hoped for, her disillusionment is complete. Though later she turns away members of a lynching party who have come to search the premises (the Negro is hiding in her bathroom), this half-hearted attempt to rectify her mistake is short-lived.

An impassioned Fred forces his way into Lizzie's apartment after having been a party to the hanging of the wrong Negro. He tells her of the sexual desire he felt for her during the lynching, the sight of which caused him to fire several shots into the lifeless form as it dangled from the rope. He then discovers the Negro hiding in the bathroom, tries to kill him, but the victim gets away. Angered at Fred's behavior, Lizzie aims a revolver at him with the
intent of killing this madman but, like the Negro to whom she has already offered the pistol, she cannot bring herself to pull the trigger. The play terminates with Fred promising that he will soon become her permanent and only client.\textsuperscript{31}

It is Lizzie's respect for the bourgeoisie and its esprit sérieux which leads to her betrayal of the innocent Negro and, by adhering to this attitude, she is much like him who has indicated his refusal to defend himself against the whites simply because "ce sont des blancs."\textsuperscript{32} Too, her profession is indicative of her global project to avoid freedom and responsibility: "Mon idéal, ce serait d'être une chère habitude pour trois ou quatre personnes d'un certain âge, un le mardi, un le jeudi, un pour le week-end."\textsuperscript{33} Her aspiration in life amounts to being nothing more than an object of sexual desire for a number of respectable men. When conflicts arise which demand lucid interpretation, she shrinks from responsible choice by resorting to superstition. She attributes any misfortune that might befall her as being caused by the ominous serpent-like bracelet she wears. When

\begin{footnotes}
\item[31]See Maurice Cranston, \textit{Jean-Paul Sartre} (New York: Grove Press, 1962), p. 102. Cranston quotes Sartre's reply to Kenneth Tynan's question dealing with the happy ending given to the play by its Moscow producers: "I didn't see the production, but I agreed to an optimistic ending, as in the film version, which was made in France. I knew too many young working-class people who had seen the play and had been disheartened because it ended sadly. And I realized that those who are really pushed to the limit, who hang on to life because they must, have need of hope."

\item[32]Sartre, \textit{Théâtre}, p. 309.
\item[33]\textit{Ibid.}, p. 288.
\end{footnotes}
Fred tells her that she must choose between truth and falsehood, she summarizes her situation in the following manner: "Je suis dans la crotte jusqu'au cou; pour changer [to her bracelet] Saleté, pourriture, tu n'en fais jamais d'autres."\(^{34}\)

Lucien Fleurier from *L'Enfance d'un chef* would undoubtedly find a suitable companion in Fred Clarke. The latter's deportment represents, to a certain extent, a continuation of the former's decision to assume the role of member of the ruling class. It has already been demonstrated how this kind of choice implies the acceptance of violence on a massive scale. Evil, for Lucien, was an entity that existed somewhere outside of his being—mainly personified by the Jews—while Fred's scapegoat is the Negro race and everybody else in life who does not have the right to exist.

As far as Fred is concerned, whatever violence may have occurred in the play is a result of the work of the Devil. In fact, he accuses Lizzie of being the embodiment of evil on earth and suggests that her very presence in the train precipitated the Negro's death. "Tu es le Diable:" he tells her, "avec le Diable on ne peut faire que le mal. Il a relevé tes jupes, il a tiré sur un sale nègre, la belle

\(^{34}\text{Ibid., p. 290. For an excellent discussion of this type of behavior on the part of some of Sartre's female characters, see Hélène Nahas, *La Femme dans la littérature existentielle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957), p. 136. "Dans la superstition la femme déplace la responsabilité pour ne pas avoir à l'endosser. Elle accuse une chose d'être la cause de son bonheur ou de son malheur."}
affaire; ce sont des gestes qu'on a sans y penser. Ça ne compte pas. Thomas est un chef, voilà ce qui compte."35

Fred's twisted, perverted and malicious nature is further revealed in what is perhaps the most enigmatic scene of the play. It happens just as he returns from the hanging.

**Lizzie:** On dirait que ça te fait de l'effet de voir lyncher un nègre.

**Fred:** J'ai envie de toi.

**Lizzie:** Quoi?

**Fred:** Tu es le Diable! Tu m'as jeté un sort. J'étais au milieu d'eux, j'avais mon revolver à la main et le nègre balançait à une branche. Je l'ai regardé et j'ai pensé: j'ai envie d'elle. Ce n'est pas naturel.

**Lizzie:** Lâche-moi. Je te dis de me lâcher.

**Fred:** Qu'est-ce qu'il y a là-dessous? Qu'est-ce que tu m'as fait, sorcière? Je regardais le nègre et je t'ai vue. Je t'ai vue te balancer au-dessus des flammes. J'ai tiré.

**Lizzie:** Ordure! Lâche-moi. Lâche-moi! Tu es un assassin.

**Fred:** Qu'est-ce que tu m'as fait? Tu colles à moi comme mes dents à mes gencives. Je te vois partout, je vois ton ventre, ton sale ventre de chienne, je sens ta chaleur dans mes mains, j'ai ton odeur dans les narines. J'ai couru jusqu'ici, je ne savais pas si c'était pour te tuer ou pour te prendre de force...36

The obvious connection between violent death and sexual desire appears to be somewhat perplexing, although incidents of this sort are not too uncommon in Sartre's fiction. Lucien furiously and voraciously made love to Maud

---

after he and his bigoted friends killed the Jew. Clytemnestre and an old lady, whom Jupiter questions in the first act of *Les Mouches*, both report that Agamemnon's death occasioned feelings of sexual titillation. Paul Hilbert, though he stopped short of murder, received sexual satisfaction from degrading and villifying Renée. The ultimate torture to which Lucie was subjected was rape. The Marquis de Sade would undoubtedly have a great deal to say indeed about this diabolical clientele!

In discussing the philosophy of the infamous de Sade, Simone de Beauvoir makes what appears to be a very appropriate statement concerning the relationship of sadistic sexuality and murder. Murder, it would seem, represents the symbolic apogee of the sadistic project: "il (le meurtre) représente la revendication exaspérée d'une liberté sans loi et sans peur." On seeing the body of the dead Negro, Fred immediately felt an irresistible urge to either kill or rape Lizzie. Both avenues are essentially the same except that rape signifies the symbolic death of the other while at the same time assuring that the act can be repeated over and over again. It will be noted that Fred appropriates Lizzie—"Tu es à moi." She has become his private piece of property who, in return for a comfortable but discreet home, will have

---

to satisfy his every want: "il faudra me passer tous mes caprices."\textsuperscript{39} Unbridled freedom without responsibility seems to lead either to physical violence or the violation of other human freedoms.

The message Sartre wishes to convey in his first scenario \textit{Les Jeux sont faits} (1947) is that death is the supreme finality and that there is no way one can undo what one has already been done in life. The screenplay, from which a highly successful film has been made, relates the story of the hero Pierre Dumaine, leader of a group that is about to mount an insurrection against a tyrannical ruler, and the heroine Eve Charlier, bourgeois wife of the secretary of the secret police, both of whom, after a violent death, are given a second chance for happiness on earth. If they can succeed in loving each other for twenty-four hours then they will be allowed to go on living. But, their motives for returning to the world of the living are not really based on love alone. During the course of their brief period of phantom-like death, Pierre learns that the tyrant is fully aware of the time and place of the workers' revolt; while Eve discovers that in addition to having been poisoned by her husband for her dowry, her avaricious mate plans to treat Lucette, Eve's sister, in a similar fashion. Though each will strive to remain indifferent to what they know will happen to their friends, the bond of love is much too fragile

\textsuperscript{39}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 316.
to become an end in itself. Pierre could not live with himself if he did not at least make an effort to warn his fellow revolutionaries that the despot is aware of their plans. And, Eve eventually succumbs to her latent desire to save Lucette from her avaricious husband. In the end, they both realize that what will happen will happen in spite of their desperate attempts to change the course of future events. Recognizing that after death "les jeux sont faits," they are condemned to lose the wager with the authorities of the after-life and must return to their ghostly existence.

Many of the ingredients relative to violence that have been examined so far appear in the work. To begin with, Sartre has again demonstrated the importance of one's social origin by very clearly delineating the class barrier that separates Pierre and Eve. The clash that takes place between these two personalities, who are members of the proletariat and bourgeoisie, respectively, seems inevitable.

Eve is visibly taken aback when Pierre tells her about his role in the forthcoming insurrection: "Je déteste la violence," she murmurs. "La nôtre, mais pas la leur," says Pierre bitterly. Eve, like so many of Sartre's female characters, reveals her ignorance of and indifference to the problem of class violence. The life experiences of the two protagonists have been profoundly marked by the economic

---

strata in which each has been raised. Eve's residence, for instance, is richly decorated, lavishly furnished, kept clean to perfection by a maid, and, by and large, reveals all of the trappings of bourgeois living. Compare this to the miserable living conditions to which she is exposed when she and Pierre go to a poor workers' ghetto that reeks of the effects of class violence. The streets of the neighborhood are strewn with garbage, ragged and dirty children roam the area, and a queue of poverty-stricken women can be seen in front of a sordid grocery store. When they enter the apartment building they encounter an elderly man "au visage creusé par les privations et la maladie, et qui descends marche en toussant."41 Little Marie Astruc, whom Pierre and Eve have promised to rescue from the clutches of her mother and lover who does not love the child, is sitting on a step near which "un tuyau de descente de vidange crevé laisse ses eaux puantes couler le long des marches."42 One is reminded of the numerous scenes depicting the squalor, poverty, and cruelty of working-class districts in Emile Zola's impressive output of naturalistic novels--the despicable child beatings in *L'Assomoir*, for instance.

*L'Engrenage*, the author's second and last scenario, originally entitled *Les Mains sales*, was written during the winter of 1946 but was not published until two years later. Sartre makes a point of informing the reader that this

41 Ibid., p. 139.  
42 Ibid., p. 140.
production has nothing in common with the play. This flash-back-ridden screenplay is cast in a revolutionary setting with violence as its principal theme.

The work opens as the opponents of Jean Aguerra, the main character, are engaged in the violent overthrow of his regime. Jean, knowing that his desperate cause is lost, refuses to have the best of the opposition killed when they enter the palace: "C'est fini pour moi, Je te céderai à mon successeur." François and Suzanne, leaders of the coup, accuse Jean of having given in to foreign petroleum interests by not nationalizing the industry's holdings in the country, of having submitted his people to a rule of Terror and finally, of having betrayed the tenets of democratic socialism by establishing dictatorial rule. The conspirators, most of whom are former comrades-in-arms of the now deposed Aguerra, propose that a trial be held to officially condemn and sentence Jean for the crimes he has allegedly committed against the civilian population. It is during the proceedings of this kangaroo-style court that, through a series of flashbacks, the spectator or reader is able to reconstruct the chain of events that have led to the present state of affairs.

Nine years have elapsed since Jean led the initial revolt of the petroleum industry workers against their country's leaders whom they had designated as being lackeys

---

of foreign imperialists. Jean and Lucien, a journalist, were
the masterminds behind the successful revolution whose forma­
tive stages had included the premature take-over of the
petroleum plants. Jean had voiced his opposition to that
plan at a workers' meeting: "Camarades, j'ai toujours été
opposé à la tactique du sabotage et des grèves. C'est une
mauvaise tactique en ce moment parce que nous y épuisons nos
forces." Lucien, on the other hand, who brings with him a
full contingent of bourgeois pacifist attitudes, was against
the occupation of the plants but for a different reason: "Il
y aura certainement des violences. Je ne m'associerai jamais
à un acte de violence." Hélène, Lucien's wife, speaking
before the tribunal, substantiates her deceased husband's
pacifist philosophy:

Hélène: Vous savez qu'il a tenu parole. De sa vie,
il ne s'est jamais associé à un acte de violence.

François: Nous le savons. Toute sa vie il a
répété: "Aucun triomphe ne vaut la perte d'une
seule vie humaine.

Hélène: C'est pour cela qu'il est mort. Il est
mort parce qu'il a voulu garder jusqu'au bout les
mains propres. Il a tout de même voulu prendre part
à l'occupation de l'usine, parce qu'il y avait du
danger et parce qu'il voulait rester avec Jean et moi.
Il aimait Jean.  

In a subsequent flashback, set in the countryside a
short while after the failure to seize the plants, we learn
that Jean was the one who first suggested recourse to

46Ibid., pp. 119-20.
violence. "Lucien, le moment est venu de changer de politi-que. Les salaires sont misérables. Les paysans s'endettent pour tenir. Les villes sont mal nourries. Nous sommes dans une situation révolutionnaire." He proposed that a clandes-tine revolutionary committee be formed to plan and execute an armed insurrection against rigid and oppressive structures that could only be toppled by means of violent tactics. Lucien remained silent for a moment and then balked at his friend's suggestion: "Tu sais ce que donnera ton projet? Des milliers de morts de part et d'autre. Je . . . je ne pourrai pas supporter l'idée que je suis responsable de ces morts. Je . . . j'ai horreur de la violence, Jean." He is on the side of those who would only engage in passive resistance. Jean tried to change the other's mind by voicing Sartre's notion of violence and counter-violence: "Regarde. Là-bas, il y a des milliers d'ouvriers réduit à la misère. Est-ce qu'ils ne sont pas victimes de la violence eux aussi? Et si tu ne luttes pas contre elle, est-ce que tu n'es pas complice?" Lucien replied that he did, in fact, wish to fight but in his own way. Not being a man of action but a writer instead, he wanted to denounce tyranny with the pen. Seeing that he could not be made to dirty his hands by involving himself in bloodshed, Jean offered a compromise:

Ecoute. Bon, je suis un râleur. Mais je vais te faire une proposition. Dans ces trucs-là, c'est

47 Ibid., p. 130. 48 Ibid., pp. 131-32. 49 Ibid.
Lucien accepted. He would serve as the conscience of the movement.

The revolution achieves a military victory. But, no sooner is Jean elected to head the new government does he come face to face with the realities of international power politics. If he fulfills the promises he and his comrades have made to the people, the end result will be disastrous: Nationalization of the petroleum industry would invite armed aggression on the part of powerful foreign interests; the election of a constituent assembly would only lead to a call for nationalization; and, freedom of speech and of the press would only endanger the revolutionary project. The sole area in which reform is feasible is in the agrarian sector of the economy. Unfortunately, though, Jean has had to employ violent measures against the tradition-oriented peasantry to modernize agriculture. Condemned to bear the full burden of his unpopular programs, he will live to see the day when his former compatriots turn against him.

Near the end of his bloody rule Jean visits Lucien whom he has imprisoned for publishing critical accounts of his seemingly cruel and unreasonable policies. Lucien, who

\[50\text{Ibid.}, \text{ pp. 133-34.}\]
is on the verge of death, tells Jean that he does not hate him in spite of what he has done: "Non, je te plains. Moi j'aurai gardé jusqu'au bout les mains propres. Je ne regrette rien." "La pureté c'est un luxe," answers Jean, "Tu as pu te le permettre, parce que j'étais près de toi et que je me salissais les mains."^51

Having taken everything upon himself, all of the murders and even Lucien's tragic death, he reaches a point where he can no longer stomach what he has had to do. He has become a monster in the eyes of others and who, looking at his reflection in a mirror, feels nothing but horror and revulsion at the image that is constantly before him. "La violence! Toujours la violence! Les sauver de force. Industrialiser de force les campagnes. Qu'ai-je fait bon Dieu! pour être condamné à la violence?"^52 His whole life has been submerged in violence:

Ecoute. ... La violence était partout au début. En moi, et hors de moi. Mon grand-père était un vieux pirate. Mon père a tué un homme à coups de fourche. Au village, je voyais les paysans saouls battre leurs enfants et leurs femmes. Je suis paysan et violent comme eux tous. Mais à douze ans, j'ai eu le bras broyé à coups de talons, dans une bagarre entre gamins, et la violence n'a fait horreur. Je suis venu à la ville dès que j'ai pu, et j'y ai retrouvé la violence.^53

Though Jean will be executed—a welcome fate considering his state of mind—François, who becomes the new head of government, quickly learns that he must compromise with the

---

^51Ibid., pp. 215-16.  ^52Ibid., p. 208.

^53Ibid., p. 179.
vested interests of foreign holdings in his country in order to save the revolution. Only then does he comprehend what Jean had been saying all along. Within the context of the revolutionary project, the horrendous and allegedly gratuitous crimes Jean had perpetrated upon the people were political necessities designed to preserve the cause of revolutionary socialism. Nationalization of the foreign oil combine would have meant an invasion by a big power and a return to ruthless capitalistic rule. François realizes, as Jean had many years earlier, that nationalization would become a reality only when the time was right; that is, when the foreign power controlling their economy became enmeshed in a global conflict that would weaken her military capabilities. Then, and only then, would the smaller country, victimized for so long by her more powerful neighbor, be able to accomplish all of its revolutionary goals.

Les Mains sales was first staged at the Théâtre Antoine in Paris in 1948. Not only did the play enjoy a huge success at the box office but, in 1955, the text of the work was included in a list of French best-sellers. Next to Huis Clos and Les Mouches it is probably the author's most widely read and produced drama. One of its central themes is the problem of effective political action and the corresponding question of the proper relation between means and ends. Specifically, the author treats of the ethical implications posed by the use of acts of violence as a means of achieving political goals.
The play, composed of seven tableaux of which sections two through six are presented as a flashback sequence, deals with a confrontation that takes place between Hugo and Hoederer. The former, a young, bourgeois intellectual trying to reshape his persona, is a devout follower of the Party line. Hoederer is an old hand at politics and is pressing for an alliance with the sworn enemies of the Party in order to create a united front against the Germans who have occupied their small country in their retreat from the advancing Russian armies. Also, such an alliance would, in Hoederer's view, facilitate the Party's ascent to power after the cessation of hostilities. But, there are those in the Party who do not agree with Hoederer's diagnosis of the situation and, as a result, they have sent Hugo to assassinate Hoederer so that the revolutionary principles of the Party not be compromised.

After a great deal of hesitation, soul-searching, and a multitude of arguments with his wife Jessica, Hugo, who has been working for Hoederer as his personal secretary, shoots his boss but at a moment when he is not quite sure as to what motivated him to pull the trigger. The incident occurs while Jessica is seducing Hoederer. Thus Hugo, much like Henri in Morts sans sépulture, does not know whether his motive derives from a feeling of personal jealousy or the belief that Hoederer had actually transgressed the wishes of the Party.

Hugo is incarcerated for several years for his deed,
during which time he is still plagued with self doubt concerning the significance of the murder he has committed. Upon his release from prison, he is told that the Party has come over to Hoederer's point of view and that Hugo's victim is now considered a hero by all. He is thus faced with a crucial decision: on the one hand he can adopt the official Party line and say that his deed had been a crime of passion or, maintain that he killed for political reasons. At the end, he refuses to comply with the Party's wishes and, as a consequence, is presumably shot and killed.

There are essentially three basic factors which contribute to the dramatic tension of the play; Hugo's personal struggle with the problem of commitment, Hoederer's humanistic but revolutionary posture and the apparent lack of flexibility on the part of certain Party dogmatists. Violence and the ultimate value of human life provide the ethical backdrop against which the story unfolds.

Hugo's dilemma has to do with his apparent inability to identify with the militants of the Party to which he has given his allegiance. He vents his frustration in front of Georges and Slick, two of Hoederer's bodyguards who are members of the working class:

Je vous dis que je les connais: jamais ils ne m'accepteront; ils sont cent mille qui regardent avec ce sourire. J'ai lutté, je me suis humilié, j'ai tout fait pour qu'ils oublient, je leur ai répété que je les aimaïs, que je les enviais, que je les admirais. Rien à faire! Rien à faire! Je suis un gosse de riches,
un intellectuel, un type qui ne travaille pas de ses mains.\textsuperscript{54}

To become what someone is not and never shall be is something that Hugo has yet to understand. In spite of his ardent desire to be a working-class activist, his bourgeois origins present a formidable barrier to this project. Commenting on Jessica's presence among them, Hoederer is quick to observe that the young intellectual has not left everything behind:

\begin{quote}
Je suppose que tu es son luxe. Les fils de bourgeois qui viennent à nous ont la rage d'emporter avec eux un peu de leur luxe passé, comme souvenir. Les uns, c'est leur liberté de penser, les autres, une épingle de cravate. Lui (Hugo), c'est sa femme.\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

In addition to having brought his wife with him Hugo's suitcase contains a good number of photographs of him as a youth.

Hugo's problem, among others, is that he has not yet become a man. He tells his boss that he is apprehensive about outliving the comfortable innocence and purity of youth. The other replies that he does not know what youth is all about because "je suis passé directement de l'enfance à l'âge d'homme."\textsuperscript{56} Hugo's rejoinder consists of another indictment of bourgeois living. Youth, according to him, "est une maladie bourgeoise."\textsuperscript{57}

In a scene subsequent to the one above, Hugo becomes outraged at Hoederer's proposal that the Party form an

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[54]{Jean-Paul Sartre, \textit{Les Mains sales} (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1948), p. 100.}
\footnotetext[55]{\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 136-37.}
\footnotetext[56]{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 142.}
\footnotetext[57]{\textit{Ibid.}}
\end{footnotes}
alliance with the Pentagon, a resistance group consisting of liberal democrats, and the Prince of Illyria's conservatives, in order to form a coalition government after the departure of the conquering Russian armies. Hugo's argument against such a merger is abruptly terminated when a bomb explodes outside of the conference room. Karsky, head of the Pentagon, has been wounded slightly. Hugo is visibly frustrated at their display of courage in the face of sanguine violence. 

Tu vois: tout le monde est calme, tout le monde est content. Il saignait comme un cochon, il s'essuyait la joue en souriant, il disait: "Ce n'est rien." Ils ont du courage. Ce sont les plus grands fils de putain de la terre et ils ont du courage, juste ce qu'il faut pour t'empêcher de les mépriser jusqu'au bout. . . . 58

If only he could be like Georges and Slick and not think all of the time. All of the others have come to view violence as a way of life while Hugo has yet to cross that threshold. And, what makes matters even worse is that the bombing attempt was a message, a message to Hugo telling him that those who have sent him to kill Hoederer have lost faith in him. Olga, who has managed to gain entry into the house, warns him that if the job is not done within twenty-four hours, the Party will send someone else to do it for him.

The ideological confrontation that occurs between Hugo and Hoederer, instigated by Jessica, constitutes what is perhaps the most important part of the play. All three of them are in the young couple's room. Hugo tells Hoederer

58Ibid., p. 164.
that he does not have the right to compromise the Party's principles by engaging in an alliance with her enemies.

"C'est une organization révolutionnaire et vous allez en faire un parti du gouvernement," says he. In the following exchange between the two men, Hugo's position is close to Trotsky's notion of "permanent revolution" and, by extension, hints of anarchism.

**Hoederer:** Les partis révolutionnaires sont faits pour prendre le pouvoir.

**Hugo:** Pour le prendre. Oui. Pour s'en emparer par les armes. Pas pour l'acheter par un maquignonnage.

**Hoederer:** C'est le sang que tu regrettes? J'en suis fâché mais tu devrais savoir que nous ne pouvons pas nous imposer par la force. En cas de guerre civile, le Pentagone a les armes et les chefs militaires. Il servirait de cadre aux troupes contre-révolutionnaires.

Hoederer wants to use the arrival of Soviet troops in his country to the best advantage. They, like any other conquering army, will occupy a country which is already in ruins. They will set out to live off the land and, eventually, their presence will become unpopular. A coalition government with the liberals and conservatives in a majority will become the scapegoat for all of the country's ills. Then, and only then, will the Party be able to exploit this discontent and take over the government with the backing of the people. In short, Hoederer's strategy is designed to gain power for the Party because without it, it can do nothing: "Qu'est-ce que

---

tu veux faire du Parti? Une écurie de courses? A quoi ça sert-il de fourbir un couteau tous les jours si l'on n'en use jamais pour trancher? Un parti, ce n'est jamais qu'un moyen. Il n'y a qu'un seul but: le pouvoir.Ó What about the question of having to lie to the men in order to achieve these ends? Hugo reproaches his boss for even suggesting such a sacrilegious thought.

Hoederer: . . . Ce n'est pas en refusant de mentir que nous abolirons le mensonge: c'est en usant de tous les moyens pour supprimer les classes.

Hugo: Tous les moyens ne sont pas bons.

Hoederer: Tout les moyens sont bons quand ils sont efficaces. . . . Comme tu tiens à ta pureté, mon petit gars! Comme tu as peur de te salir les mains. Eh bien, reste pur! A qui cela servira-t-il et pourquoi viens-tu parmi nous? La pureté, c'est une idée de fakir et de moine. Vous autres, les intellectuels, les anarchistes bourgeois, vous en tirez prétexte pour ne rien faire. Ne rien faire, rester immobile, serrer les coudes contre le corps, porter des gants. Moi j'ai les mains sales. Jusqu'aux coudes. Je les ai plongées dans la merde et dans la sang. Et puis après? Est-ce que tu t'imagine qu'on peut gouverner innocemment?Ó Finally, we get to the crux of the matter. As far as Hoederer is concerned the Party's tactics must not only seek to gain control of the government but they must also be used in such a way as to minimize the loss of human life:

. . . si nous traitons avec le Régent, il arrête la guerre; les troupes illyriennes attendent gentiment que les Russes viennent les désarmer; si nous rompons les pourparlers, il sait qu'il est perdu et il se battra comme un chien enragé; des centaines de milliers d'hommes y laisseront leur peau. Qu'en dis-tu? Hein? Qu'en dis-tu? Peux-tu rayer cent mille

hommes d'un trait de plume?\textsuperscript{63}

He accuses Hugo of not loving men but principles. The pursuit of absolutes is much less troublesome than the responsible exercise of freedom. Sartre's humanism shines through as Hoederer delivers a passionate diatribe against anarchism and violence for the sake of violence:

Et moi, je les aime pour ce qu'ils sont. Avec toutes leurs saloperies et tous leurs vices. J'aime leurs voix et leur mains chaudes qui prennent et leur peau, la plus nue de toutes les peaux, et leur regard in­quiet et la lutte désespérée qu'ils mènent chacun à son tour contre la mort et contre l'angoisse. Pour moi, ça compte un homme de plus ou de moins dans le monde. C'est précieux. Toi, je te connais bien, mon petit, tu es un destructeur. Les hommes, tu les détestes parce que tu te détestes toi-même; ta pureté ressemble à la mort et la Révolution dont tu rêves n'est pas la nôtre: tu ne veux pas changer le monde, tu veux le faire sauter.\textsuperscript{64}

To those who understand the existential realities of the human condition, principles are but mere inventions: "Nous autres, ça nous est moins commode de tirer sur un bonhomme pour des questions de principes parce que c'est nous qui faisons les idées et que nous connaissons la cuisine: nous ne sommes jamais tout à fait sûrs d'avoir raison."\textsuperscript{65}

Hoederer's arguments are most convincing. But, just as Hugo is about to accept the world of effective praxis, he happens upon the seduction scene. Reacting impulsively, thinking that Hoederer has extended a helping hand only to be able to possess his wife, he shoots him. In the end, he

\textsuperscript{63}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 211-12. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{64}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 212-13. \\
\textsuperscript{65}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 228.
decides to let himself be killed by the Party out of pride more than anything else. He is truly "non-récupérable."

*Le Diable et le bon Dieu* is the cornerstone of an evolution in Sartre's thought, parts of which have already been detected in several of the preceding plays. Along with *Saint-Genet, comédien et martyr*, the play was written at a time when the author had shifted his philosophical perspective from the morals of Being to the morals of Doing. In the play, "Sartre opposait de nouveau à la vanité de la morale l'efficacité de la praxis . . . dans le Diable et le bon Dieu se reflète toute son évolution idéologique. Le contraste entre le départ d'Oreste à la fin des Mouches et le ralliement de Goetz illustre le chemin parcouru par Sartre de l'attitude anarchiste à l'engagement."66

In Act I of the work, the archbishop of Worms learns of the victory of his troops over those of Conrad, a revolted vassal who has been killed in battle. Also, it is revealed that the bourgeois of Worms have also rebelled against the temporal representative of the Church and that Goetz, half-brother of Conrad, has laid siege to the city. But, now that Conrad's armies have been defeated, the archbishop and his banker wish to pardon the merchant class of Worms because they do not want to see the city destroyed. The treasury of the realm requires that Worms prosper financially. A city in ruins cannot pay taxes. Goetz, therefore, must be persuaded

---

to lift the siege. Meanwhile, within the walls of the famished city, Nasty, the leader of the poor, tries to counter the news of Conrad's defeat by telling the miserable paupers gathered around the bishop's palace that the latter, who is being held prisoner, is concealing much-needed provisions in his granaries. Heinrich, on the other hand, a priest who was once poor, attempts to fight Nasty's influence over the people. In the end, the poor riot and the bishop is killed but not before he has had the opportunity to entrust Heinrich with the key to an underground passage that will admit Goetz's troops.

In the second tableau, the scene shifts to Goetz's camp. Heinrich cannot bring himself at first to give the key to Goetz but when convinced that he and the military commander are both outcasts and that they both loathe themselves, Heinrich hands the key over to him. Now Goetz must decide what to do with it.

Third tableau. Goetz is offered the generalship of the poor by Nasty but, the former refuses to be tempted. He will invade the city as planned. Heinrich, however, succeeds in convincing Goetz that since Good deeds are impossible on earth—God has so dictated—therefore everybody commits Evil. Goetz's unique identity, based on the pursuit of Evil, quickly dissolves. Not to be outdone, though, he will prove to Heinrich that Good is possible by erecting God's City of Love among His people. Thus, he decides to spare Worms as well as Catherine, his whore, whom he had intended to "marry"
off to his men. Finally, he tells Heinrich to meet him in one year in order to verify whether he has won his bet.

Act II. Goetz proposes to give all of his land to the peasants. Nasty tries to discourage this gesture because he realizes that it would lead to a premature revolt on the part of the oppressed. Goetz stubbornly refuses to change his mind. Heinrich saves the day by suggesting that all the priests quit their parishes, leaving the superstitious peasants paralyzed by fear of the unknown. Nasty agrees.

In the absence of the clergy, the peasants take refuge in the abandoned churches. Heinrich's plan has worked. Their leader is Hilda who is loved and respected by all. Goetz wrests the minds and hearts of the poverty-stricken peasants from the hands of Hilda by piercing his hands in a Christ-like gesture. The peasants accept him as a prophet.

Act III. While in other parts of the country peasants have started to rebel, Goetz has established his utopian Cité du Soleil based on the absolute principles of love and nonviolence. While Goetz is away, his disciples are urged to join the rebellion and, when they refuse, they are all killed with the exception of Hilda who manages to save herself. Goetz has failed. He decides to quit the human race and become a masochistic hermit.

One year has elapsed since Goetz's bet with Heinrich. The latter now approaches him to determine to whom should go the victory. The ensuing exchange exposes the comedy both have been playing. Goetz now realizes that God does not
exist. Heinrich cannot accept that truth and is killed by Goetz. Finally, Goetz agrees to take over as commander of the rebel army to help fight their war.

It goes without saying that the whole play is permeated with the aura of revolutionary violence. Nasty is the spokesman for the Sartrean rebel. All ethical questions should be discussed with his point of view in mind. When a woman asks him why her child died from starvation (Heinrich was unable to satisfy her curiosity) Nasty fulfills her need to know by giving her a Marxist interpretation of the situation: "Il est mort parce que les riches bourgeois de notre ville se sont révoltés contre l'Archevêque, leur très riche seigneur. Quand les riches se font la guerre, ce sont les pauvres qui meurent." This is an obvious reference to wars that have been spawned by national interests between those who have but want more, at the expense of the have-nots.

Heinrich, a man of the poor who has embraced the self-serving morality of the ruling class, tells Nasty that he is for the poor when they are suffering but against them when they attempt to spill the blood of the Church hierarchy. "Tu es pour nous quand on nous assassine," says Nasty, "contre nous quand nous osons nous défendre." Heinrich tries to justify his position by saying that he owes his Being to the

---


68 Ibid., p. 39.
Church. "Je ne connais qu'une Eglise; c'est la société des hommes," replies the other.

Thus, an ethical point de repère is established from the very start of the play. Nasty's socialistic project must be considered as the absolute frame of reference against which the various manifestations of violence must be judged. Heinrich, who vies for the allegiance of the peasants on a different plane, may be placed in the category of those who embrace the values of the Serious World and who, in so doing, betray their original class ties. Whatever they choose to do, they are traitors. So, for the sake of two hundred priests who have an essential right to exist, Heinrich gives the key to the city to Goetz which meant for the moment at least, the massacre of twenty-thousand poor.

Goetz, it seems, has divorced himself from the realm of human affairs. Society has defined him as a bastard, therefore Evil, and he appears to not only want to play the role to the hilt but to go even beyond it. The violence that he has engineered—he is guilty of fratricide and an untold number of deaths by serving the interests of the rich without knowing it—is a problem that only concerns Goetz, the one and only actor of his little drama, and the scriptwriter himself, God:

Je ne daigne avoir affaire qu'à Dieu, les monstres et les saints ne relèvent que de lui. Dieu me voit, Curé, il sait que j'ai tué mon frère et son coeur saigne. Eh

69 Ibid., p. 41.
Just as Daniel in *Les Chemins de la liberté* sought to cast God in the role of absolute passive witness, so does Goetz wish to believe that he has risen above the human to be gazed upon by God alone. He refuses to lead the peasants against the nobles and the bourgeois to help create Nasty's City of God (socialist state?) because he claims he loves the propertied class. In fact, it is their very existence on earth as the personification of all that is Good that allows him to negate Good through Evil. Without them Goetz, the doer of Evil, would vanish: "Ce serait la nuit polaire."  

Nasty defines him as nothing but a useless uproar. Goetz replies:

> Inutile, oui. Inutile aux hommes. Mais que me font les hommes. Dieu m'entend, c'est à Dieu que je casse les oreilles et ça me suffit, car c'est le seul ennemi qui soit digne de moi. Il y a Dieu, moi et les fantômes. C'est Dieu que je crucifierai cette nuit, sur toi et sur vingt-mille hommes parce que sa souffrance est infinie et qu'elle rend infinie celui qui le fait souffrir.  

Fortunately, Heinrich is able to dispel any notion Goetz may have entertained about having sole monopoly on Evil. Goetz's transition from Evil to Good will prove to be as disastrous and as irrelevant to society as was his former posture. This cerebral change in role has not altered Goetz in the least because as he says, "c'est encore la meilleure

---

manière d'être seul. J'étais criminel, je me change: je retourne ma veste et je pari d'être un saint.73

As mentioned earlier, Goetz the saint soon discovers that his projected good deeds are not well received by Nasty and the peasants whom he represents. But, Goetz will go on playing the game of "charity-worker" even if it means violence: "Le Bien se fera contre tous."74 Nasty is repulsed by the saint's theological sophistry. When Goetz asks him whether he should become a "mauvais riche" as opposed to a do-gooder, Nasty replies, "il n'y a pas de mauvais riches. Il y a des riches, c'est tout."75 It is neither personalities nor antiquated questions of morality against which Nasty's efforts are directed but, rather, against the existence of an inequitable class structure that breeds conditions of violence. Goetz is unable to follow Nasty's line of argumentation. The former's game is still being played on a metaphysical plane. Their worlds are obviously quite far apart at this point. Although Goetz maintains that he too is poor in the sense that he is a social outcast, Nasty draws the line of demarcation between the two: "Il y a deux espèces de pauvres, ceux qui sont pauvres ensemble et ceux qui le sont tout seul. Les premiers sont les vrais, les autres sont des riches qui n'ont pas eu de chance."76

For one thing, the would-be saint soon learns that he

73Ibid., p. 119. 74Ibid., p. 136. 75Ibid., p. 137. 76Ibid.
does not understand the mentality of the peasants and this
fact alone keeps him from converting them to his cause. If
only someone could show him the way to their hearts! It is
when he enters the church to see Catherine, now dying of
shame for having been discarded by Goetz, that he encounters
Hilda, a member of the rich class who has relinquished all
of her worldly possessions and pride to work with and for
the poor. Here is a case where a representative of Sartre's
corrupt bourgeoisie appears to have successfully shed the
trappings of her class by going over completely to the other
side. However, it should be made quite clear that she is
with the poor but is not one of them. She does not share
their religious fears and superstitions, nor has she been
oppressed as they have. Her philosophy is simple and cogent:
"je suis du parti des hommes, et je ne le quitterai pas."77
Goetz immediately becomes envious of the fascinating hold
she has on the peasants. She loves them and they love her
while Goetz has yet to be loved by anybody.

To win the allegiance of the people gathered in the
church, so that he may become Good incarnate in their eyes,
Goetz commits a narcissistic act of violence against himself.
He carefully pierces the palms of his hands while the peasants
have momentarily left the church. Then, in front of every­
body, he exorcises Catherine. Having witnessed the Christ-
like stigmata as well as Catherine's salvation, the people,

77Ibid., p. 177.
convinced that Goetz has performed a miracle, swear their blind allegiance to him. He now possesses a sizable enough group to begin establishing his Cité du Soleil.

Goetz's utopia appears to achieve a limited success until one day Karl, a militant rebel, interrupts the proceedings of one of the city's brain-washing sessions to inform the people in attendance that the peasants and barons are about to engage in battle all around this little haven of peace and friendship. The rank and file of the peasant forces are embittered over the presence of this sequestered colony in their midst. Karl voices their feelings:

Ils disent que votre bonheur a rendu leurs souffrances plus insupportables et que le désespoir les a poussés aux résolutions extrêmes. . . . Quand je retournerai au village, j'annoncerai partout cette bonne nouvelle. Je connais des familles entières qui crèvent de faim et qui seront bien aises d'apprendre que vous êtes heureux pour le compte.78

Karl's appeal falls on deaf ears. Goetz's disciples have been well-trained in the art of turning the other cheek and remaining true to their idealistic absolutes. They proudly proclaim that they will not take part in violence of any kind. That Sartre is alluding to contemporary political, social, and economic conditions seems self-evident. The ethical question he seems to be raising is this: can so-called industrialized and well-fed societies exist side by side with the rest of humanity—the Third World—that has been condemned to misery? Can would-be civilized man afford

78Ibid., p. 203.
to preach and practice a philosophy of non-violence while violence runs amok all around him? The answer according to Karl and Sartre too, is a resounding no! To remain passive and indifferent to the needs of others who suffer daily at the hands of oppressive political systems is to condone that violence. There is no middle ground.

Nasty enters Goetz's safe harbor to beseech him to lead the peasant revolt which is sure to fail if it is not given the proper leadership. To lead, however, is to give one's assent to violence. Nasty's troops are in dire need of discipline; to change that will cost many lives:


*Nasty:* Soit. Il le faut.

*Goetz:* Il faut aussi que je me change en boucher; vous n'avez ni les armes ni la science: le nombre est votre seul atout. Il faudra gaspillier les vies. L'ignoble guerre.

*Nasty:* Tu sacrifieras vingt mille hommes pour en sauver cent mille.79

Goetz is unable to choose by himself. He seeks Hilda's advice, she tells him not to fight, and they both decide to bear the consequences of this move. In the meantime, Goetz will try to convince the peasants by telling them the truth about their predicament: they are too weak to win the

struggle against the powerful barons.

Goetz's hopes to put a halt to the peasant uprising are futile. He returns to the enclave he has built and finds that it has been burned to the ground, all of his converts have been killed and only Hilda has survived the catastrophe. The inhabitants refused to join forces with the rebel army. The effect of this on Goetz is devastating. The world of relative values and the basic ambiguity of human action is too much for him.

Thus, Goetz decides to flee the arena of human concerns by becoming a masochistic hermit to enable him to destroy the fleshy part of his nature which, according to him, is the cause of man's petty and sorry condition. But, Hilda is always there to remind him that he is wrong in resorting to this new sort of dupery. The human body and what one makes of it is for man alone to decide and not some moral law handed down by divine revelation. Hilda aptly denounces his monastic prudishness:

Il y a plus d'ordures dans ton âme que dans mon corps. C'est dans ton âme qu'est la laideur et la saleté de la chair. Moi je n'ai pas besoin d'un regard de lynz: Je t'ai soigné, lavé, j'ai connu l'odeur de ta fièvre. Ai-je cessé de t'aimer? Chaque jour tu ressembles un peu plus au cadavre que tu seras et je t'aime toujours. . . . car l'on aime rien si l'on n'aime pas tout.80

Goetz is torn from his self-imposed sequestration with the arrival of Heinrich who has come to witness his failure to do Good. Suddenly, however, Goetz becomes his own judge,

80Ibid., p. 253.
undergoes a *prise de conscience* and proclaims the death of God. He realizes that he alone is responsible for all that he has done, that he has invented the notions of Good and Evil which he so ardently pursued and, more important, that man is the center of the universe. Heinrich is overcome by fear at the discovery of the nothingness of existence:

"Goetz, les hommes nous ont appelés des traîtres et des bâtards; et ils nous ont condamnés. Si Dieu n'existe pas, plus moyen d'échapper aux hommes... Notre Père qui êtes aux Cieux, j'aime mieux être jugé par un être infini que par mes égaux." He tries to silence the voice of this new prophet among men but Goetz defends himself and finally kills him with a knife.

Goetz echoes Oreste's cry to be "un homme parmi les hommes" but does not, as did the latter, leave the stage without having committed his freedom permanently. He decides to take part in the peasant revolt but is reticent about leading them into battle: "les chefs sont seuls: moi, je veux des hommes partout: autour de moi, au-dessus de moi et qu'ils me cachent le viel. Nasty, permets-moi d'être n'importe qui." Goetz, understandably, is not just anybody; he is a trained leader and if he is to be useful to the cause of fighting oppression, he must serve in that capacity. Solidarity with others does not mean that one escapes the anguish and despair which accompanies the realization that

---

one is free and totally without justification. A common struggle only assures a partial respite from alienation. The only way out of this concrete existential dilemma is to accept the contradiction posed by the problem of group behavior. As Goetz tells Hilda, "nous serons seuls ensemble." Moreover, to accept to work with and for man in the hope of either minimizing or eliminating altogether the violent conditions imposed on certain elements of society by the existence of privileged classes, is to recognize that violence is a categorical imperative for those downtrodden masses of History. In fact, violence, at this point in time, is an objective reality for all men: "Le crime. Les hommes d'aujourd'hui naissent criminels, il faut que je revendique ma part de leurs crimes si je veux ma part de leur amour et de leurs vertus," says Goetz, prophetically.

The successful staging of Sartre's last play *Les Séquestrés d'Altona* in 1959 coincides with two very

85 The two plays not covered here are *Kean* (1954) and *Nekrassov* (1955), both of which have been published by Gallimard. The former is an adaptation of Alexandre Dumas' *Kean*, written by Sartre, it would seem, to give vent to Pierre Brasseur's remarkable acting abilities. The action of the play centers on a Goetz-like character named Kean who is a famous Shakespearean actor in London. Kean, however, is only a stage name for a certain Mr. Edmond and the problem, at least one of them, is that Kean is not sure whether his actions are those of the actor or of Edmond, the man behind the mask. The work reminds one of the Genêt type of theatre in which most characters are inextricably enmeshed in role-playing. Kean thinks he loves a certain Comtesse de Koefeld. The Prince of Wales also loves this woman because he believes Kean to be in love with her. But, Elena, the Comtesse, is
important events; the publication of the *Critique de la raison dialectique*, reflecting the author's philosophical evolution, and the continuing war in Algeria which was beginning to produce exposes of atrocities committed by Frenchmen, of which torture was the most shocking aspect.

enamored with Kean the actor and not Kean the man. The important question is who is Kean? The entry of Anna Damby, who immediately falls in love with Kean and who only plays at being herself, most of the time anyway, precipitates the crisis and dénouement. The play ends on a happy note with the announcement that she and Kean will marry and move to New York.

*Nekrassov* is a satire on the anti-Communist syndrome that is so prevalent in the West. In the opening scene we find Georges de Valera, a confidence man, attempting to commit suicide in the Seine. He is somewhat reluctantly rescued by two beggars who then protect him from possible capture by the policemen who are searching for him. After he fails at doing away with himself, Georges hides out in a journalist's flat. This particular fellow, who goes by the name of Sibilot, is employed by a right-wing newspaper to write scathing reports on the evils of the Soviet Union. Georges pretends he is Nekrassov, an important Soviet minister of state who has fled to the West and is presently seeking asylum in France. He convinces the staff of the paper for which Sibilot works and subsequently produces a string of sensational revelations about life inside Russia and about her intentions to conquer France. But Georges, with the help of Véronique, the militant daughter of Sibilot, soon discovers that he is being manipulated. He is told he faces deportation if he does not testify against two innocent Communists who have written against the rearming of Germany. He eventually tells the truth about his imposture to the Communist paper *Libérateur*. Unfortunately, his efforts to rectify his mistakes are in vain for the ultra-conservative organ, the *Soir à Paris*, goes to press with an article stating that Georges de Valera the confidence man has sold his soul to the Communists. Satire is not devoid of serious content. The turning point in Georges' career takes place when Véronique convinces him that his complicity in this right-wing propaganda may discourage the poor and lead them to despair: "... quand il ne s'en trouverait qu'un sur mille pour avaler tes boniments, te serais déjà un assassin." (p. 143) The message is quite clear: words can produce violence-laden consequences of the worst kind.
The play's unifying theme is torture, though it was not given the kind of contemporary treatment Sartre had envisaged. No theater in Paris would have consented to producing a work having to do with French torture in Algeria. The author therefore chose to do two things; he set the play in post-war Germany and then focused his attention on the torture committed by the Nazis.

What follows is a chronological rendition of the action, a great part of which is recalled from the past through the use of flashbacks. During the time of the rapid rise of Nazi Germany, Herr von Gerlach, a wealthy shipbuilder, approved the construction of a concentration camp on his property. One day Frantz, elder son of the old Gerlach, came across an escaped inmate, a Polish rabbi, to whom he offered refuge in the family mansion. The old Gerlach learned of his son's humanitarian deed and, fearing complications with the Nazi regime, informed Goebbels. The S.S. guards came and killed the rabbi as Frantz watched helplessly. Because of the enormous influence of his father, Frantz was pardoned on condition that he enlist in the army of the Third Reich. Frantz went off to war, despite his alleged anti-Nazi feelings, and used every means at his disposal, including torture, to win. Only through victory could his criminal behavior be justified. However, Germany loses the war and Frantz realizes that only greater atrocities on the part of the victorious Allies can excuse his personal war guilt. He believes that he is well on his way to removing this guilt
complex, particularly with the advent of the American bombing of Hiroshima. He anticipates and longs for the inhuman punishment and degradation of a ruined Germany.

Immediately following the Nazi defeat, Léni, Frantz's sister, provokes an anti-Semitic American officer whom she has coldly seduced only to terminate the relationship by calling him a Jew. The soldier tries to rape her but she retaliates by rendering him unconscious by rapping him on the head with a bottle. The victim is sent to a hospital, and Frantz decides to assume responsibility for the incident. The father, hoping to avoid a public scandal, again uses his influence and arranges it so that Frantz may leave the country unharmed. He refuses to flee to Argentina and sequesters himself in an upstairs room in the family residence. He tells everybody that his reason for doing so is that he cannot bear to witness his country's agony.

Frantz remains locked in his room for thirteen years (his father has let it be known that his accused son has died in South America) seeing no one except Léni. There, he and his perverted sister carry on an incestuous relationship which she has instigated by promising to nourish his schizophrenic illusions. He thinks of himself as the defense lawyer for all of the crimes committed by his contemporaries during the twentieth century, all the while addressing his arguments to future generations. He will be History's best apologist. He repeatedly presents his case to a fictitious tribunal of Crabs. He records speech after speech on his
tape-recorder, constantly striving to find the appropriate words that will justify the cruelties of all men generally, and Frantz's own crimes specifically. Léni sustains his illusion that Germany is in ruins by giving him horrifying accounts of orphans suffering everywhere, unjust oppression and other similar tragedies. In the meantime, she conceals from him the fact that the von Gerlach firm is enjoying new heights of prosperity under a booming post-war economy.

The father has organized a family reunion which includes Léni, Frantz's younger brother Werner, and the latter's wife Johanna. He then makes the dramatic announcement that the doctors have told him he will die of cancer within six months. Consequently, he must compel Léni and Werner to swear on the family Bible that they will not leave the house at Altona during their lifetime. Both parties eventually agree to do just that.

Then, old von Gerlach strikes a bargain with Johanna in order to placate her obvious unwillingness to go along with his wishes. If she can manage to persuade Frantz to grant his father an interview, he will release Werner from his oath and he and Johanna will be free to leave.

Johanna succeeds all too well in carrying out her end of the agreement. Much to her surprise, she finds in Frantz's madness a certain fascination. She refuses to tell him of Germany's real situation and begins to believe in his delirium to such an extent that she fancies herself in love with him. Léni, however, will not allow this to happen. In
a fit of jealousy, she tells Frantz the truth about the world outside and at the same time informs Johanna that Frantz voluntarily tortured and killed Russian partisans. Johanna rejects Frantz.

Now that Frantz knows the truth, nothing is left to sustain his madness. He leaves the "upstairs room" to see his father. The two men are reconciled through a mutual prise de conscience after which they drive off in Léni's car to commit suicide. Léni replaces Frantz upstairs and Johanna and Werner leave the stage.

The von Gerlach family as it is presented at the outset of the play is an apparent depiction of a formerly Pledged group that has fallen into seriality. Each member of the family or class, is bound together by a set of values that are outmoded, outdated and irrelevant. Having summoned Werner and Johanna to his side, the Père wants everyone to pledge his allegiance on the family Bible (16th century edition), a formalistic ritual meant to impose a rigid code of conduct on the group. Ironically, old Gerlach himself recognizes the anachronistic nature of this gesture: "Les principes s'en vont, les habitudes restent: Bismarck vivait encore quand notre pauvre père a contracté les siennes," says Léni to Johanna. Why then go ahead with this farce if, as Johanna sees it, nobody believes in the myth of God and

---


The world in which the old von Gerlach flourished was one where Being was identified with having and doing in an absolute sense. A nineteenth-century laissez-faire economy permitted the accumulation of vast amounts of material wealth which brought with it its corollary, unrestricted power. A privileged situation such as this demanded a clearly delineated set of self-serving rules designed to sustain it. First of all, the women in the old Gerlach ensemble were relegated a priori to an inferior position. They simply did not count. Among the men, however, a distinction was made based on the law of the jungle; the powerful automatically took charge while the weak obeyed. Frantz, whom the father wishes to see before he dies, was destined to be the Prince of the Enterprise, a leader among men. Werner, on the other hand, never displayed the indispensable quality of egomania, so a leadership role was never within his reach. In fact, it appears that the father is partially responsible for Werner's mental castration. Now, says Werner, "quand je regarde un homme dans les yeux, je deviens incapable de leur donner des ordres." 88 Why, he argues, was he not inculcated with the necessary dosage of pride, arrogance and ego that

87 Ibid., pp. 18-19. 88 Ibid., p. 21.
comprise the Gerlach cult of superiority, instead of having been taught passive obedience? The father quickly counters his son's accusing remarks: "Obéir et commander: dans les deux cas tu transmets les ordres que tu as reçus." There was perhaps a time when a real difference did exist—Bismarck's era—but now everything has changed. Even the old man admits that for the past ten years he has been nothing but a faceless symbol as head of the Gerlach enterprise. The system now hires specialists who are paid to tell the leaders what orders to give.

The only thing that the Gerlachs have left is their possessions; that which gives them an essential identity in the eyes of others. This is one of the reasons why the father insists that everyone pledge that they will not leave the home. Being is having. "Une famille, c'est une maison," says the old man. Too, in the event that cancer should overtake him before he gets the chance to speak with Frantz, someone must be there to take care of him. And then, one day, "tout finira bien. Frantz ne vivra pas très long-temps . . . avec lui disparaîtra le dernier des vrais von Gerlach . . . je veux dire le dernier monstre." But, the last of the Gerlach monsters will not live out his last days within the four walls of his room.

Frantz's first encounter with violence came at a time immediately after the outbreak of World War II when his

---

89 Ibid., p. 22. 90 Ibid., p. 29. 91 Ibid., p. 35.
father permitted the building of the concentration camp. He had to confess his moral revulsion at seeing hundreds of ragged Jewish inmates reduced to the level of bestiality: "Je me dégoûte mais ce sont eux qui me font horreur. Il y a leur crasse, leur vermine, leurs plaies." He reproaches his father for not suffering enough at the sight of human misery. "Tu les méprises," his parent countered, "parce qu'ils sont sales et parce qu'ils ont peur. . . . Il vroyait encore à la dignité humaine." The impact which his exposure to the Jewish prisoners had on Frantz constituted, according to Sartre, his original sequestration.

Frantz is also a séquestré from the beginning. The first sign that Frantz was really guilty of torture, that he was actually the first to torture, is his reaction to the Jewish prisoners. He was disgusted by their dirt and degradation rather than revolted by their plight. This is not the reaction to have. You can see from that that he was going in for such abstractions as "human dignity" and that sort of thing.

The parallel between Frantz's reaction and that of the liberal press in France to the deplorable situation of Algerian nationals in relocation centers—"ce ne sont plus des hommes"—is seemingly intentional.

Since Frantz's attempt to save the life of the Polish rabbi was made for the wrong reasons, his father easily and

---

92Ibid., p. 47. 93Ibid., p. 49.
95Sartre, Les Séquestrés d'Altona, p. 47.
efficiently reduced his offspring's dubious act to the realm of gesture. And, having been made to feel impotent for the first time in his life—four S.S. guards held him off while they strangled the Jew—he resolved never again to find himself in such a state of helplessness. From that point on, he embraced the code of the Gerlach world by pursuing power and authority until he finally reached the apogee of his search in torture. This earned him the title of "boucher de Smolensk." Was there anything wrong with Frantz wanting to help the Jew? "Tout ce que je peux vous dire, c'est que les Gerlach sont des victimes de Luther: ce prophète nous a rendu fous d'orgueil," says the Père to Johanna. Looking at Frantz's picture on the wall, Werner's wife adroitly describes the monster's youthful revolt:

C'était un petit puritain, une victime de Luther, qui voulait payer de son sang les terrains que vous avez vendus. Vous avez tout-annulé. Il n'est resté qu'un jeu de gosse de riches. Avec danger de mort, bien sûr: mais pour le partenaire . . . il a compris qu'on lui permettait tout parce qu'il ne comptait pour rien."

Frantz's folly was to have pursued power for power's sake to feed his insatiable ego. "J'irai jusqu'au bout. Au bout du pouvoir," he tells his father in the fifth act, recalling his experience at Smolensk. His phraseology is clearly reminiscent of Camus' Caligula who sought to impose his will absolutely on mankind in the face of the apparent

---

96Ibid., p. 49.  
97Ibid., pp. 55-56.  
98Ibid., p. 205.
absurdity of life. Frantz's goal at the time? "Je mani-
ifesterai mon pouvoir par la singularité d'un acte inoubliable:
changer l'homme en vermine de son vivant." But just as
Caligula's odious project was abruptly terminated when he
was stabbed repeatedly by those he chose to oppress, so does
Frantz realize, ever so slightly at first, that the Look or
presence of the other in the world presents itself as the
natural limit to a ravaging, unbridled freedom. Frantz's
victims at Smolensk did not speak; a jolting reminder of his
inability to totally appropriate the freedom of others.

With the defeat of Nazi Germany and the advent of the
war crimes tribunal at Nuremburg, Frantz soon realized that
the victor had branded him a common criminal. To avoid being
judged by others he chose, instead, to prove to himself and
to the world that History would eventually demonstrate that
Human Nature was the guilty party and not any particular
individual. A ravaged Germany, for instance, was ample proof
that the victor was just as capable of committing acts of
atrocities as he was:

Les ruines me justifiaient: j'aimais nos maisons
saccagées, nos enfants mutilés. J'ai prétendu que
je m'enfermerais pour ne pas assister à l'agonie de
l'Allemagne; c'est faux. J'ai souhaité la mort de
mon pays et je me séquestrais pour n'être pas
témoin de sa résurrection.100

There is much more to the play than the question of
determining who is guilty of torture. There is an infernal,

99 Ibid., p. 207. 100 Ibid., p. 208.
vicious and self-destructive dialectic at work, of which the
death of Frantz and the father, and the cold-blooded violence
they have inflicted on others represent anti-thesis and
thesis, respectively. As Oreste Pucciani correctly points
out, the principal objective posited by the Gerlach code is
the pursuit and exercise of power. The final truth of such
power is violence and the violation of human freedom.101
But, there is another central truth that is brought out in
the last act: the original von Gerlach industrial enterprise
has now become an invisible, self-perpetuating and gigantic
monolith whose only raison d'etre is to seek out financial
gain regardless of human considerations. The powerful
oppress their victims only to realize in the end that they
have been effectively manipulated by the industrial complex.
For those who belong in such a universe the game is called
"qui perd gagne," for the rules of economic expediency dic­
tate that the enterprise always be on the winning side. Old
Gerlach knew this all along. He had been playing "loser­
wins" since the outbreak of the war. What about "ceux qui
aimaient assez le pays pour sacrifier leur honneur militaire
à la victoire."102 Frantz asks his father? "Ils risquaient
de prolonger le massacre et de nuire à la reconstruction.
... La vérité, c'est qu'ils n'ont rien fait du tout,

101 Oreste F. Pucciani, '"Les Séquestrés d'Altona' of
Jean-Paul Sartre," The Tulane Drama Review, V, No. 3 (March,
102 Sartre, Les Séquestrés d'Altona, p. 213.
sau des meurtres individuels."

Then comes the crushing news that will precipitate their suicide. In what have to be the most significant lines of the play, old von Gerlach proclaims the absurdity of the dialectics of power:

Mon pauvre petit! Je voulais que tu mènes l'Entreprise après moi. C'est elle qui mène. Elle choisit ses hommes. Moi, elle m'a éliminé: je possède mais je ne commande plus. Et toi, petit prince, elle t'a refusé du premier instant: qu'a-t-elle besoin d'un prince? Elle forme et recrute elle-même ses gérants. Je t'avais donné tous les mérites et mon âpre goût du pouvoir, cela n'a pas servi. Quel dommage! Pour agir, tu prenais les plus gros risques et, tu vois, elle transformait en gestes tous tes actes. Ton tourment a fini par te pousser au crime et jusque dans le crime elle t'annule: elle s'engraissee de ta défaite. . . .

Before they die each assumes responsibility for his complicity in violence against their fellow men; Frantz the acts of torture at Smolensk, old von Gerlach for having given birth to this "mad" world. Their death must be viewed as a true liberation for only by committing suicide can their expiation be authentic and an end be put to the vicious circle of violence they have created. In that sense their death is anti-thetical because their destruction signals a crossing over from the world of gesture to that of authentic action. Sartre, unfortunately, does not posit a new thesis. What Johanna and Werner will do in terms of avoiding the murderous dialectic which is probably latent in all men, is a moot question. We do know, however, that Léni decides to

---

103 Ibid.
104 Ibid., p. 215.
replace Frantz. She has been so perverted by the machinations of the Gerlach universe that to be forced to live with others on a basis of mutual recognition of freedom would probably be fatal. Her final decision resembles that of a super-patriot whose unrestricted fanaticism becomes his very reason for existing. The amorality of heroism, even if the hero happens to be a butcher, can be most shocking; in Léni's case it leads to incest and madness. An interesting parallel could be developed between the vainglorious world of Corneille's Horace and the cult of egomania of the Gerlach dynasty!

It could be argued that the historical changes to which old Gerlach refers in his closing statement is a direct reference to the colonial system France maintained in Algeria. Sartre was convinced that the only way Algeria would win her independence was to make the system unprofitable for the Métropole. It was strictly a matter of economics. Therefore, those who fought against the rebels and who may have sacrificed their "honor" by resorting to torture to win, did so without the knowledge that the colonial system's sole concern was profit and not abstract notions of freedom or territorial rights. This is the crux of old Gerlach's prise de conscience. It is the system that rules, not the people it has bred.
CONCLUSION

Let us now summarize the ontological foundations of violence, particularly as they were discussed in the first two chapters. Initially, Sartre observed in L'Être et le néant that man's primary encounter with the world, perceived via each individual consciousness, was one of conflict resulting from the rupture effect produced by the distanciation between the pour-soi and the en-soi. Other freedoms in the world were also perceived as en-soi. Various attitudes developed from the objective realization of the impossibility of attaining union between Being and Nothingness, particularly as regards the horrifying presence of other freedoms in the world and the impasse one reaches in trying to grasp one's being-for-others. This fluctuating and essential ambiguity in human relations gives rise to tension and conflict which, in turn, provide the ontological structure in any effort to render violence intelligible. The fall of man, so to speak, that provides the rationality of violence derives from one's perception of the pour-soi as absolute freedom in a metaphysical sense, condemned to coexist in the world with two basic factors which impede this freedom; facticity, that is, the pour-soi's necessary connection with the world of the en-soi (race, physical makeup, national
origin, etc.,) plus the inescapable fact that freedom is not free not to be free, and the objective limitations of the existence of a multiplicity of other freedoms in the world. In this context, the rationality of violence depends first of all on the perceptions and choices of the individual consciousness but, since man is a social being, this rationality is subject to alteration by the Look of the other upon which the individual must lean for meaning and identity. The ethical and political implications of the existence of this alienation in man is that he should strive to reduce this conflict by establishing relations with others on a basis of mutual recognition of freedom.

Now with the publication of the Critique, Sartre has attempted to give a much more concrete basis for the genesis of conflict and violence in the world. Whereas before the impenetrable Look of the other stripped me of my subjectivity in a social context, and therefore violated my freedom, this alienation becomes more comprehensible within the framework of each individual's struggle for survival. Possible reciprocity with others is modified by the universal problem of scarcity. My individual determination as to what I need to sustain my person amongst other men and what I propose to do to insure that these ends be reached, is hindered by the presence of the other, the contre-homme, who is seeking to appropriate from the world what he deems necessary to guarantee his existence. In a completely disorganized state, it could be assumed that man is pitted against his fellows
in a never-ending struggle to insure sustenance, just as a pack of starving dogs might fight over a single bone that each needs to survive. But, man has seen that in order to overcome scarcity he must work with others. To that end, he forms social structures and, in so doing, consents to having limits placed on his freedom by relinquishing part of it to the interests of the group that is assumedly engaged in the fight to overcome scarcity. For the violence that could erupt in a state where each exercises his freedom in an absolute sense, in which case his logical line of action is the destruction of all men, he substitutes or interiorizes this negative pursuit, either directly or by proxy, by agreeing that an equitable threat of violence be imposed on each member of the group. Stated in simple terms, if I propose to kill my neighbor in order to steal something from him, then I must do so knowing that the group may terminate my existence or incarcerate me for transgressing the rules of the social covenant. The group-in-fusion and the Pledged group are examples of this sort of social contract whereby one consents to live under the perpetual threat (Terreur) of violence if ever one should dare violate the freedom of others. Thus is the reign of terror and violence the fundamental link that binds each member of the group and is the essential meaning of the term "fraternal ties." From a metaphysical standpoint, therefore, each member of the group has given his consent that his absolute freedom be violated by the necessary exigencies of the whole in order to struggle
jointly against scarcity. Through his assent to collaborate with others he negates what would otherwise be his negative projects in an individualistic context. This produces a contradictory situation in which collaboration and conflict, whose principle underpinning is provided by terror and violence, exist simultaneously.

The essence of what Sartre is positing is that social groups are conceived initially as a response to violence perpetrated against a seriality—a disorganized collection of oppressed farmers, for instance—which suddenly surges forth in the world to become a group-in-fusion so that it may counter the violence to which it is being subjected, keeping in mind that the categorical imperative is the fight against scarcity. The dynamics of violence closely resemble a physical law of nature in the sense that to respond to real or impending violence posed by a competing group (between nations or social classes) a theory of counter-violence must be developed. A revolutionary movement, for instance, must impose an iron discipline on each of its adherents if it is to effectively combat the threat to its existence. This is the rule of Terror and Violence invoked for all members of a group-in-fusion.

What happens when the threat from the exterior is overcome? The Pledge comes into being to guarantee the survival of the collective in its constant struggle to ward off scarcity. Again, this means violence. This explains Sartre's comments on the success of Castro's revolution to the effect
that to preserve it might require recourse to violent tactics even on some of the revolutionaries themselves. With the passage of time, however, a heretofore vital Pledge group may fall victim to massive institutionalization and rigid bureaucracy. The freedom of each becomes absolute object to the state apparatus. It may no longer be responsive, for example, to the cries of those who are still alienated by the crushing imperative of survival. Scarcity, for them, still has the immediacy of the wolf at the door. Their plight is the result of an inequitable distribution of what the machinery of the group is producing to overcome scarcity. Their work is no longer reciprocal in nature because they, as workers, have become dispensable tools in the eyes of the social class that controls the means of production. The product of their labors is used to overcome scarcity for others and not for them.

Thus, because of stratification that occurs in what used to be a group-in-fusion and later a Pledged group, the now ossified structure begins to crumble under the weight of its contradictions. When this happens, individuals may choose to detach themselves from this social collective, posit it as a threat, and then form a new group-in-fusion. Thus, to use the Marxist term, a new thesis is put forth but which may eventually become ossified itself, fail to foster an equitable distribution of goods, and, as a consequence, end up being challenged by a new group anti-thetical to the ends of the original structure. Be that as it may, violence
must be comprehended within the context of the flux of forming and dissolving groups instigated by the problem of scarcity.

One of the most imposing aspects of violence in Sartre's fiction is that the multitude of attitudes with respect to its genesis, use or non-use and ethical, political or moral implications, are generally a function of the social class of each particular character in any given situation. There is a qualitative difference in the way each of these personages reacts to violence both in relation to themselves and to the collective. By and large, violence as it is either experienced, perpetrated or both by Sartre's bourgeois characters must be understood within the framework of the futile pursuit of Being of each, while violence associated with the working classes and their spokesmen must be understood within the context of the ethics of Doing. Loosely speaking, those who belong to the first category originate from a seriality and have overcome the problem of scarcity. The second category is that of a group-in-fusion that is committed to destroying the structures created by the first. The ethical frame of reference is provided by the revolutionary goals of the socialist rebel.

In his treatment of the bourgeoisie, threat of, exposure to, or use of violence takes on many characteristics, most of which are soundly condemned by the author. It is a world of metaphysical violence, empty gestures, blindness to the plight of others, sadism, masochism, cowardice, pacifism
but, worst of all, egomania, unbridled freedom and anarchism.

In their search for Being, Roquentin, Daniel, Mathieu, and Goetz inflict wounds on themselves. In the case of the first two, Sartre has gone so far as to have them describe their encounters with the contingency of existence using the most violent of images: rape.

There are those who choose to incarnate their Beings by identifying themselves with absolute principles. Pacifism, that is, the total rejection of violence as a possible course of action in human affairs, is given a rather diversified treatment. Two despicable examples of bourgeois pacifism are the would-be poet visionary Philippe in Le Sursis and Garcin in Huis Clos, both of whom are cowards at bottom. Sarah's principles vanish in La Mort dans l'âme as she is suddenly overwhelmed by the crush of refugees in which she and her son Pablo find themselves. There is Lucien in L'Engrenage who, in a very pathetic but disturbing way, chooses to follow his pacifist convictions to the grave. Finally, there is Zézette's brief encounter with Suzanne Tailleur in Le Sursis who, as a mother for peace, provides another example of those bourgeois characters who adhere to what Sartre has denounced as an untenable position. The philosophy of non-violence is a luxury that the world can ill afford because it is tantamount to condoning all of the atrocities that man has and is committing.

Perhaps the most terrifying posture vis-à-vis violence in the gallery of Sartre's bourgeois characters is one which
is characterized by the unbridled exercise of freedom. This is the world which begins with Lucien Fleurier in *L'Enfance d'un chef*, is followed by the deportment of Fred in *La Putain respectueuse* and ends with Léni, old von Gerlach and Frantz in *Les Séquestrés d'Altona*. The blind pursuit of power and authority over other men, whether it be motivated by anti-Semitism, racism or Lutheran pride, leads to violence on a massive scale. In Sartre's fiction it culminates in the suicidal *prise de conscience* in *Les Séquestrés d'Altona*, provoked by the realization that in this age of industrial conglomerates, those who heretofore based their actions on the grounds that all is permitted of a member of the ruling class are objectively impotent with respect to the vast economic systems they have either engendered or embraced. But whether they recognize their impotency or not, it is they who, as members of the ruling class, pose a threat to oppressed peoples everywhere.

When members of the *bourgeoisie* choose to commit themselves in the fight against oppression, they suffer terribly from egotism, unwillingness to compromise and their seeming desire to destroy their doubt-ridden consciences by resorting to acts of anarchism. The killing of others, under the guise of revolutionary activity or war, becomes a symbolic suicide: they hate themselves so that in destroying the humanity that resides in others, they are really doing away with their own humanity. This, in effect, is what Mathieu does in *La Mort dans l'âme*. Impossible pursuit of Being and
self-hatred prompted Hugo to choose suicide in Les Mains sales. In other cases pride, stubbornness and ego are the determining factors in the bourgeois response to violence. It was Ibietta's mulish attitude in Le Mur that kept him from speaking out. Initially, Lucie's pride and Henri's personal anxiety underscored their reluctance to choose to go on living. And, it can be argued that Orestes's violent act in Les Mouches takes place within the context of the morals of personal salvation. He is concerned more with liberating himself than with fighting to free all men.

Violence as seen through the eyes of the Sartrean revolutionary who has risen from the ranks of the oppressed is quite different from the various attitudes expressed by the author's bourgeois creations. The revolutionary or rebel defines himself as a member of a revolutionary movement (group-in-fusion) and identifies with the plight of his constituents. He is not a violent man by nature but, rather, his freedom, as it surges forth in the world, is nurtured in violence. Every spokesman for this group posits violence as an integral part of his situation. Brunet is described in L'Age de raison as having the look of violence about him. Maurice at the very start of the same novel equates the hard work of his comrades with war. Nasty in Le Diable et le bon Dieu attributes the death of a poor child to the violence perpetrated upon the poor by the warring rich. Canoris in Morts sans sépulture, unlike the rest of the characters in the play, has already been exposed to torture. Pierre in
Les Jeux sont faits tells Eve of the violence to which he and his fellow workers have been subjected. Jean Aguerra in L'Engrenage provides the most elaborate portrait of the rebel whose very childhood was permeated with violence. All of the above are committed to a theory of counter-violence. But these men are not engaged in the pursuit of Being as were their bourgeois counterparts. It is their job first to invent a course of action and then to submerge their individual ego in the common struggle. It will be remembered that Sartre crushes Brunet in Drôle d'amitié for having blindly embraced the dictates of the Party line. He too had been involved in the pursuit of absolutes and not the ambiguous task of bettering the lot of the proletariat.

While it is unfortunate that Sartre chose to leave Brunet in the dark pit of despair after having made him realize that "tout les hommes sont seuls" the author has provided two examples of what is, in all likelihood, the ideal revolutionary. They are Hoederer in Les Mains sales and, to a lesser extent, Goetz in Le Diable et le bon Dieu.

Hoederer is the kind of revolutionary leader that Schnieder in La Mort dans l'âme and Drôle d'amitié would have liked Brunet to be. In the first place, Hoederer is at once the theoretician of the Party's violent course of action and the party activist. As opposed to Hugo, he places utmost importance on the value of human life, regardless of class provenance. In addition, he has experienced existential anguish with each of his decisions because he knows that man
is always the initiator of any human endeavor and that because of this, he can never be sure as to the correctness of his choices.

Goetz's statement "nous serons seuls ensemble" is the epitome of the situation in which the true revolutionary finds himself. Whether he be a social outcast like Goetz or a member of the working class like Hoederer, he recognizes that from an existential standpoint he is alone, but he realizes too, that through constant action to promote the cause he will achieve a modicum of solidarity with other men. The contradiction that he must experience is really the microcosm of what each member of a revolutionary group-in-fusion must swear allegiance to: the subordination of the absolute freedom of each to the designated goal through praxis.

Violence is to be used by the revolutionary movement only as a tactical means to counter the violence to which it is being subjected. And, most important of all, revolutionary violence is directed against structures—institutions, bureaucracies, economic systems—and not men per se. Those who do stand in the way must be disposed of, but only after all else has failed. Finally, if violence must be employed, then the destruction of human lives must be kept at a minimum.

If, as Sartre claims, scarcity is the common denominator in any effort to explain the genesis of violence amongst men, then who can say that it will ever end? What is scarcity? In some societies it is lack of food but in
others, not many to be sure, it may be an insufficient number of television sets or automobiles! The truth of the matter is that scarcity is a relative term and, given this fact, it would seem that man will always be plagued with conflict and violence. In the final analysis, Sartre has attempted to explain the rationality of violence which the human condition has and is experiencing and, it is a reasonable and commendable effort. But, he has not given us a panacea. Socialism does not put an end to the violence or the threat of violence man must live with; it only insures, in a very limited sense, that each will suffer equitably in the face of scarcity. Perhaps this is the best man can do.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


_____. "Portrait du colonisé," Situations V.

_____. "Une Victoire," Situations V.

_____. "Vous êtes formidables," Situations V.


VITA

Bernard John Quinn, son of Mr. and Mrs. Bernard W. Quinn of Sarasota, Florida, was born in Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada, on June 15, 1945. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of South Florida in 1966, and was awarded the Master of Arts degree from Louisiana State University in 1968. At present he is a dissertation year research fellow with the Department of Foreign Languages at Louisiana State University.
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: Bernard John Quinn

Major Field: French

Title of Thesis: Sartre on Violence: A Political, Philosophical and Literary Study.

Approved:

[Signatures and titles of approving officials]

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures of committee members]

Date of Examination:

April 23, 1970