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Sartre--in struggle with god : an examination of selected plays

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Barefoot, Sybil, M.A.

San Jose State University, 1990

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SARTRE--IN STRUGGLE WITH GOD
An Examination of Selected Plays

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Theatre Arts

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By
Sybil Barefoot
November, 1990

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ABSTRACT

SARTRE--IN STRUGGLE WITH GOD: An Examination of Selected Plays

by Sybil Barefoot

Before he reached his teenage years, Jean-Paul Sartre was a self-proclaimed atheist. The authoritarian figures in his life had proven to be disappointing to the young boy. His father had died when Sartre was less than two years old. Raised by his mother and his domineering grandfather, Charles Schweitzer, the young boy felt that he was nothing more than a love object. His autobiographical sketch of himself, The Words, reveals a lonely child, longing to be accepted. He stresses the need for God, but declares that this Superior Being, due to the influences of his family, vegetated and died within him.

This thesis addresses the conflicting theme of Sartre's work. Through four of his plays, Bariona, The Devil and the Good Lord, The Flies, and No Exit, it is evident that, rather than truly disbelieving in God, Sartre was in a life-long, intense struggle with God.

This work is dedicated to

My mother
Della Clark

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My special thanks to my husband and my daughters, Michele and Sandi, my mother and my sister, Sandy, for their encouragement, patience and faith in me. Also to my special friend, Fran Gladding, for her assistance and her untiring belief in me.

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INTRODUCTION

The struggle for an understanding of spirituality frequently finds its way onto the dramatic stage via the playwright's pen. Jean-Paul Sartre for one used the stage to present his personal search for the meaning of life. The existence versus the non-existence of God, the idea of human freedom, and good versus evil, were subjects contained in most of his philosophical and dramatic works. And even though he claimed to be an atheist throughout his life, there is evidence in much of his work that he could not fully dismiss God from his mind. Four of his plays will be discussed as a means to show that his spiritual quest was a life-long journey. Before his death, in his interview with his companion, Simone De Beauvoir, he was asked if it worried him that he was, with his atheistic beliefs, in opposition with his family. He answered that he had built up his own positive arsenal of "little private thoughts which were in direct opposition to those of my family." He also told her that: "Even if one does not believe in God, there are elements of the idea of God that remain in us that cause us to see the world with some divine aspects."¹

The following points will be discussed in four of Sartre's plays in order to point out his preoccupation with

¹Simone De Beauvoir, ADIEUX, A Farewell to Sartre, trans. Patrick O'Brian (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 438.

the spiritual, and to show that the idea of God was also in the mind of the playwright.

A. **Symbolism** - as it relates to certain aspects of the Judeo-Christian belief, as well as certain factors (such as characters) in the plays which are pertinent to the study. Symbols transcend the rational world and go beyond that which can be fully explained. Both the rational world and the irrational world in which we exist, i.e., the outward manifestation of who we are, as well as the world of our subconscious, are involved in, and influenced by, symbols.

First, the objects used [as symbols] have been given meaning beyond the literal meaning of the object ...
Second...the objects are simplified through stylization. This simplification helps the viewer not to consider the object as an end in itself. The viewer is led through the image to the deeper associated meaning...²

Theologian and author, Paul Tillich, speaks of the characteristics of symbols. "A symbol participates in that to which it points," and also, symbol "opens up levels of reality which otherwise are closed for us."³ He continues, "The fundamental symbol of our ultimate concern is God. It

²Wendell Mathews, Basic Symbols and Terms of the Church, (Copyright Fortress Press, 1971), 3.

³Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 42.

is always present in any act of faith, even if the act of faith includes the denial of God" (p. 45). The symbol serves to remind us of the object to which it points. The cross is, for the Christian, a symbol of the death and resurrection of Christ.

B. **Hierophany** is a term used to denote the interruption of a profane moment in time by something that is of a sacred nature.

Man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane. To designate the act of manifestation of the sacred [as interpreted through the Christian faith], we have proposed the term **hierophany**.⁴

There are those moments for the Christian when, in prayer, there is communion with the Holy Spirit, thus creating for the believer a hierophanic experience. "God listens not to your words save when He Himself utters them through your lips."⁵

In the Bible prayer is worship that includes all the attitudes of the human spirit in its approach to God...This highest activity of which the human spirit is capable may also be thought of

⁴Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1959), 11.

⁵Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 68.

as communion with God...⁶

Moses had another type of hierophanic experience which was reported in the Old Testament. In the account, he was tending the sheep of his father-in-law, Jethro. "The angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush" (Exodus iii:2). And God, when he saw that Moses had responded by turning to see the cause of the flame, spoke to him through his experience and proceeded to give him instructions to go into Egypt and lead the Jewish people out of exile.

Another sacred moment is reported in the Bible when the angel appears to Mary announcing that she is to become the mother of Christ (St. Luke i:26-28).

C. A review of his autobiography will examine the idea of the sacred permeating Sartre's thinking from childhood through adulthood. There are in The Words approximately thirty-two references to 'God,' and at least ten to the 'Holy Ghost.' "I was taught Sacred History, the Gospel, and the catechism without being given the means for believing. The result was a disorder which became my particular order."⁷ Lucien, the protagonist in Sartre's

⁶"Prayer", Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Part 3, (Ohio: Tyndale House Pub., 1980), 1257.

⁷Jean-Paul Sartre, The Words, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964), 249.

Childhood of a Leader, discovered himself in his hatred for the Jews. "I am Lucien!" he declared, "Somebody who can't stand Jews."⁸ Is it possible that Sartre felt that he found himself in a similar way by denying the existence of God? Or, at least, that he found subject matter about which to write.

I would recharge myself with the sacred every day, at times absentmindedly. It was enough to prostrate myself and turn the pages. My friends' works frequently served as prayer mills.⁹

His grandparents and his mother, as well as the early death of his father, were to play a vital part in shaping Sartre's lack of a relationship with God, but one that he admittedly desired.

God would have managed things for me. I would have been a signed masterpiece. Assured of playing my part in the universal concert, I would have patiently waited for Him to reveal His purposes and my necessity....But later, I did not recognize in the fashionable God in whom I was taught to believe the one whom my soul was awaiting. I needed a Creator; I was given a Big Boss.¹⁰

D. An evaluation of some of the characters in Sartre's plays, as well as settings and dialogue, will

⁸Sartre, Jean-Paul. The Wall and Other Stories, "Childhood of a Leader", trans. Lloyd Alexander (New Directions Book, 1948) 54.

⁹Sartre, The Words, 72.

¹⁰Sartre, The Words, 97.

show his preoccupation with God whose presence he chose to deny, yet who played a major role in many of Sartre's works. Further, many of the characters in his plays will mirror reflections of character traits of Sartre himself. Several Sartrean characters will assume the role that is needed at the moment.

Virtuous for the fun of it, never do I
force or constrain myself: I invent. I
have the lordly freedom of the act who
holds his audience spellbound and keeps
refining his role. I am adored, hence I
am adorable.¹¹

By refining his role(s) or inventing new ones, Sartre demanded to be center stage.

And in this spirit, I have evolved a
concept of 'Protean man'--named, of
course, after that intriguing figure of
Greek mythology renowned for his shape-
shifting....Indeed, Protean man requires
freedom from precisely that kind of
superego--he requires a symbolic form of
fatherlessness--in order to carry out
his explorations.¹²

Lifton further suggests that in the Protean man (Sartre), a clearly defined criteria of right and wrong is missing; this comes about, he elaborates, from transmission onto the child by his parents.

Sartre would refer to himself in his autobiography as a

¹¹Sartre, The Words, 97.

¹²Robert J. Lifton, Boundaries-Psychological Man in Revolution, (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1969), 37.

'waif' and a 'stray.' "I escaped into the family play-acting, twisting and turning, running, flying from imposture to imposture."¹³ A friend of Sartre's made a comment relative to Sartrean characters making decisions in an abrupt manner. The author responded by saying, "Of course! Because I create them in my own image; not as I am, no doubt, but as I wanted to be."¹⁴

The chapters will be divided as follows:

Chapter I gives a review of western theater history as it relates to drama as a means of presenting man's desire to understand his relationship with the supernatural.

Chapter II presents an overview of Sartre's childhood and the influence that his grandparents, his mother and the death of his father had, as they related to his spiritual quest and subsequent denial of God.

Chapters III through VI discuss the four plays of this study. They are:

A. Bariona - The theme of this play is the hierophanic birth of Christ, which to the Christian world is God manifesting Himself in human form.

B. The Devil and the Good Lord - This is the story of a man who struggles between the concept of good and

¹³Sartre, The Words, 93.

¹⁴Sartre, The Words, 238.

evil.

C. The Flies - This is a derivation of the Greek story of Orestes who is seeking some purpose by avenging the death of his father. Zeus is the powerful force to which Orestes relates in the play. The tutor who has seemingly shaped the life of his young pupil, seems to mirror Karl Schweitzer and the influence he had on Sartre as a child.

D. No Exit - This play deals with the concept of life after death, in hell with no way out.

Symbolism, hierophanic experiences, a review of Sartre's autobiography, and an evaluation of characters, settings and dialogue created in the above referenced dramas will be addressed.

CHAPTER I

"Drama as an art form emerged at a comparatively late stage in man's cultural evolution, but it is generally believed to have had its roots in primitive religious ritual...."¹⁵ From its inception, drama has provided an arena in which man has struggled to understand his relationship with God (or the gods). Primitive man, in an attempt to influence or appease the supernatural, used his creative energy in ritualistic songs and dance. Many tribal communities throughout the world still use this method of calling on the preternatural forces which they presuppose to be in control of crops, weather, health, as well as life and death.

Faced with the terrors of the supernatural...primitive communities the world over have turned their own instinctive response to rhythm and melody to use as a channel of communication between themselves and the mysterious intangible forces in nature whose help and protection they strive to enlist and whose ill-will and anger they fear and hope to deflect.¹⁶

Kenneth MacGowan and William Melnitz speak of the Hopi Indians and their famous Snake Dance which was supposed to bring rain. The Indians, the authors said, "went beyond the

¹⁵The Origins of Western Theater, Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia, 1981, 18, 218.

¹⁶Glynne Wickham, A History of the Theatre, (New York: Press Syndicate Univ. of Cambridge, 1985), 16.

primitive drama of hunters...they have found religion and are developing theater."¹⁷

For purposes of this paper, European theater will be briefly researched since this is the theater from which Sartre would later emerge as a playwright. It had its beginnings in Greece. Theater began at the festivals honoring Dionysia, God of the vine, the bull and the goat. "Furthermore, the story of Dionysus was the story of fertile nature dying each year and being reborn,...."¹⁸ Zeus, Athena and Prometheus, as well as other gods and goddesses, were given major roles in the plays of the Greek playwrights. These writers began to question the role of these supernatural forces in the fate of the human race and presented these ideas through dramatic presentations. The theater, as we know it in western culture, was born during this period and has continued to provide a means of presenting, within the confines of time (the length of the play) and space (the stage area) an affinity with or aversion to the supernatural power(s) which is outside the boundaries of time and space.

Following the Greek era, the Roman theater became decadent. The public began to demand the grotesque and the

¹⁷Kenneth Macgowan and William Melnitz, The Living Stage, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1955), 8.

¹⁸MacGowan & Melnitz, The Living Stage, 24.

crude, rather than artistic dramatic presentations. For example, entertainment was in the form of mock sea battles, wild animals tearing each other apart, and Christians being persecuted as they were covered with pitch and burned as human torches. "Tacitus provides a chilling description of Christians tarred, crucified and set alight like grotesque fireworks as a spectacular amusement...."¹⁹

With the advent of Christianity and the subsequent power held by the Church, the theater was virtually eradicated for approximately five hundred years.

Through four or five hundred years after that, [the Greek theater era] the Roman theater decayed like an overripe fruit into putrescence and desiccation. From a hundred years after the fall of Rome in 476 A.D. to the end of the Dark Ages--somewhere in the eleventh or twelfth century--there were no theaters....Then the Catholic Church that had condemned the Roman theater--and rightly--brought the drama to life again.²⁰

Tertullian, an early Church father and author, referred to theater as "The Church of Satan." During the first part of the Middle Ages, actors were forbidden to receive communion, Christians shunned the theater, and theater lay dormant with the exception of a few wandering troupes and mimes.

¹⁹Wickham, A History of the Theater, 23.

²⁰MacGowan and Melnitz, The Living Stage, 52-53.

In the last half of the Middle Ages, drama once again found its place in the High Mass of the Church by way of the trope. These were Latin words or chants added to the celebration of the Mass. In this dramatic presentation one priest would act the part of the angel announcing to the women who came to the tomb seeking the crucified Jesus that, "he [Jesus] is not here, he is risen." This liturgical drama was readily accepted by the people and new scenes were soon offered relating to the life of Christ. Drama was resurrected.

Morality plays followed and drama was, for the most part, built around stories from the Bible. "Abstract personifications of virtues and vices such as mercy, humility, good deeds, lust, gluttony, and covetousness struggled for the soul of man."²¹ As the audiences grew in size, the presentations were moved outside the church building and later into the courtyards and the village squares.

During the Renaissance an early form of humanism began to gain a stronghold. Theologian and author Dr. Francis Schaeffer, in How Should We Then Live, traces the progression of "key moments in history which have formed our present culture, and the thinking of men who brought those

²¹MacGowan & Melnitz, The Living Stage, 64.

moments to pass."²² Not least among those creative men who have helped to bring about these changes are the playwrights, and through their creativity, they brought to the stage a search for the meaning to life. Dr. Schaeffer says: "The concept of autonomous man [during the period of the Renaissance] was growing."²³ Moving through history to the Reformation and into the Enlightenment, man's need to be independent of an omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient Being continued to manifest itself in art, literature, music and drama. Men were questioning the existence of God as never before. While some denied his presence, others contended that if he existed, he no longer cared for his creation.

...Renaissance humanism steadily evolved toward modern humanism--a value system rooted in the belief that man is his own measure, that man is autonomous, totally independent.²⁴

Sartre was to be among those who would use the stage to voice his opinion that there is no distinction between good and evil; that man is free to do as he chooses. This freedom, however, leaves man alone and forlorn according to Sartre. He attempts to explain his idea of freedom to his

²²Francis A. Schaeffer, How Should We Then Live?, (Illinois: Crossway Books,), 15.

²³Schaeffer, How Should We Then Live?, 62.

²⁴Schaeffer, How Should We Then Live?, 16.

companion, De Beauvoir.

Sartre: ...I was working on **Being and Nothingness** at that time. It was about 1943. **Being and Nothingness** is a book about freedom. I then, like the old Stoics, believed that one was always free, even in exceedingly disagreeable circumstances that might end in death. On this point I've changed very much. I think that in fact there are situations in which one cannot be free....

De Beauvoir: How did you move from the idea that one was free in all circumstances to the idea that death was not a liberating issue, but on the contrary one that did away with freedom?²⁵

It is a laborious task to understand Sartre's idea of freedom. His philosophy was that one is free when one concludes that there is no God; that man is free to make his own choices, yet he makes statements that situations exist in which one is not free.

There are things I approve of and others I look upon with a feeling of shame...I wrote in 1945 or thereabouts to the effect that, no matter what the situation might be, one is always free...And all that strikes me as absurd today. There's no question that there is some basic change in the notion of freedom, but I can see what can modify its results in any given person.²⁶

²⁵Simone De Beauvoir, ADIEUX, A Farewell to Sartre, 358-359.

²⁶Alexandre Astruc and Michel Contat, dir. Sartre by himself, Cannes Festival, France, May 27, 1976. (participants include De Beauvoir, Bos, Gorz, Pouillon), 58.

The concept of freedom will be contained in the characters he creates in the four plays to be discussed.

But first, an overview of his life will reveal many of the events and people that shaped his life. Speaking of his beginnings Sartre said that he was not given the means for believing. "...the sacred was deposited in belles-lettres and the penman appeared, an ersatz of the Christian that I was unable to be: his sole concern was salvation,...."²⁷ He continued by saying that the only purpose for his sojourn was to merit posthumous bliss through his writing. Sartre's lonely childhood is evident in statements such as the following: "Such were my beginnings: I fled; external forces shaped my flight and made me."²⁸

²⁷Sartre, The Words, 249.

²⁸Sartre, The Words, 248.

CHAPTER II

CHILDHOOD INFLUENCES ON SARTRE'S LIFE

Jean-Paul Sartre was born in Paris in 1905. His struggle to understand himself, as well as his relationship to God, began at a very early age. His father, Jean-Baptiste Sartre, died when the boy was only fifteen months old forcing him and his mother, Anne Marie, to move back to the home of her parents, Charles and Louise Schweitzer. Sartre felt that being without a father was similar to being a bastard or an orphan; the death of this parent gave him, what he called, "freedom." Had he lived, "he would have lain on me at full length and would have crushed me."²⁹ He had no one to emulate, and declared that he owed his freedom to a timely death. His grandfather, who had lived to be elderly, was disrespectful to the memory of Jean-Baptiste Sartre because of his early demise. No one made the boy curious about his father. "Nobody remembered whether he loved me, whether he took me in his arms, whether he looked at his son with his limpid eyes, now eaten by worms."³⁰ Consequently, Sartre had no idea as to whom he should obey and commented that he was not taught obedience. Anne Marie and Louise were influential in his life, but no one compared

²⁹Sartre, The Words, 19.

³⁰Sartre, The Words, 20.

to the aging patriarch who shaped his life.

Charles Schweitzer was the uncle of the renown medical missionary, Albert Schweitzer. When asked by his friend, Simone De Beauvoir, if his grandfather held his nephew, Albert, in great esteem, Sartre replied, "Yes, but he didn't understand him very well. He didn't have the same problems and tended to make fun of him."³¹ In a biographical sketch of Albert Schweitzer, James Brabazon wrote that Schweitzer remembered Sartre's visits with his family in Alsace. The other children, he said, recalled Jean-Paul "sitting with his ironic smile, absorbing but taking no part."³²

Charles' disrespectful attitude toward theological matters was obvious as shown by the following: Charles, Brabazon said, was the most ebullient, much to the dismay of Albert's mother. In her guest book was a quote from Hebrews xiii:2, "...Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unaware," Charles added: "Others have found the devil slipping in." The added comment, "Mrs Schweitzer did her utmost to erase."³³

...and Sartre's own work exhibits so many features of the Protestant conscience as exemplified by Albert

³¹De Beauvoir, ADIEUX, A Farewell to Sartre, 219.

³²James Brabazon, Albert Schweitzer, A Biography, (New York: Putnam, 1975). 33.

³³Brabazon, Albert Schweitzer, A Biography, 33.

Schweitzer of Lambarene that it is tempting to attribute them to a kind of intellectual or spiritual heredity...it could even be maintained that the very titles of some of his works--**Le Diable et le Bon Dieu** [The Devil and the Good Lord] 1951--reflect an obsession with theological questions...³⁴

His grandfather was the patriarch. Tall and commanding with a long white beard, Sartre was aware of the feeling of synonymy between Schweitzer and God.

He so resembled God the Father that he was often taken for Him. One day he entered a Church by way of the vestry. The priest was threatening the infirm of purpose with the lightning of heaven; 'a God is here! He sees you!' Suddenly the faithful perceived beneath the pulpit a tall, bearded old man who was looking at them. They fled. At other times, my grandfather would say that they had flung themselves at his knees.³⁵

Sartre felt that, had his grandfather begotten him, he would have been oppressed, as were Schweitzer's sons. However with Sartre becoming a part of Karl's (as Schweitzer was affectionately called) world during his latter years, Jean-Paul felt that to the older man, he was just a toy, an object. "I was a fief of the sun, my grandfather could enjoy me without possessing me. I was his 'wonder' because

³⁴Philip Thody, Sartre, a biographical introduction, (London: Studio Vista, 1971), 7-8.

³⁵Sartre, The Words, 22.

he wanted to finish his life as a wonderstruck old man."³⁶ Sartre's mother and grandmother would delight Schweitzer by having the boy play games to please the aging gentleman. For instance, they would hide Sartre, the grandfather would enter the room, tired from a long day. Sartre would leap out and surprise him. "I do him the favor of being born...I filled him to overflowing with my presence....In a word, I give myself; I give myself always and everywhere; I give everything."³⁷ "My only function in life," Sartre commented further, "was to please." But in return he required only that he be idolized and adored. Sartre seemed to be devoid of emotions that are common to the human psyche.

...I add: and like Good without Evil, like my life from 1905 to 1914. If one is defined by opposition, I was the undefined in person...I loved nothing and nobody.³⁸

Sartre began to feel that nothing was to be done, not even his natural body functions, unless "one grown-up must go into raptures over my products."³⁹ Could this feeling of frustration have been influential in his rejection of

³⁶Sartre, The Words, 23.

³⁷Sartre, The Words, 32.

³⁸Sartre, The Words, 39-40.

³⁹Sartre, The Words, 40.

God?

It was because of Schweitzer that Sartre was to find what he called his "salvation." He developed a love for the books that lined the shelves of his grandfather's library. "Though I did not yet know how to read, I already revered those standing stones...."⁴⁰ Sartre was to consider books as sacred objects. And he would demand to have his own volumes. Further tension resulted as his grandfather and his mother were in disagreement as to what reading material the boy should be exposed. The library contained the classics--Anne Marie would go to the local newsstands and buy for him adventure stories such as Captain Grant's Children and The Last of the Mohicans. He would read them while hiding under the table so that his grandfather would not see. The influence of Schweitzer was evident in Sartre's statement, "No sooner did I open the door of the library than I was again in the belly of an inert old man: the desk, the pink blotter with its red and black ink spots,...the stale smell of tobacco...it was Karl [as Charles was sometimes called] in person, reified."⁴¹ And with this, Sartre would put on an act. He would place a book in front of himself with a glass of wine-tinted water

⁴⁰Sartre, The Words, 40.

⁴¹Sartre, The Words, 70-71.

at his side and pretend. His need to escape the influence that the grownups had on him was evidenced by his statement, "To escape from the grown-ups into reading was the best way of communing with them."⁴² The library was to Sartre, "the world caught in a mirror."⁴³ The mirror image was to be symbolic in Sartre's life as will be shown in the discussion of the plays reviewed.

Schweitzer was also instrumental in inspiring Sartre to write. While the boy was away on holidays with his mother, his grandfather would send letters in verse to him. His mother taught him the rules of prosody and he delighted in sending back responses to Charles. With this he said, "The habit was formed; the grandfather and the grandson were united by a new bond."⁴⁴ But later this was to cause more tension as Sartre began to write adventure stories; to create his characters he borrowed from stories by other authors. "I loved plagiarism, out of pretentiousness, be it added, and I deliberately carried it to an extreme...."⁴⁵

The tension came when Karl began to read his stories.

Karl had never approved of what he
called my 'unwholesome reading-matter.'

⁴²Sartre, The Words, 70.

⁴³Sartre, The Words, 94.

⁴⁴Sartre, The Words, 140.

⁴⁵Sartre, The Words, 143.

When my mother informed him that I had begun to write, he was at first delighted, expecting, I suppose, an account of our family life with pungent observations and adorably naive remarks. He took my notebook, leafed through it, scowled, and left the dining-room, furious at finding a repetition of the 'nonsense' of my favorite gazettes. Eventually, he ignored my writings.⁴⁶

The influence of Schweitzer would remain with Sartre throughout his years of writing. He could not dismiss himself from the sway that his grandfather held over him.

...I sometimes wonder, when I am in a bad mood, whether I have not consumed so many days and nights, covered so many pages with ink, thrown on the market so many books that nobody wanted, solely in the mad hope of pleasing my grandfather. That would be a farce. At the age of more than fifty, I would find myself engaged, in order to carry out the will of a man long dead, in an undertaking which he would not have failed to repudiate.⁴⁷

Eventually Sartre would stop hearing the voice of Schweitzer when he declared how much he loved the boy. He would pretend to hear the adoration coming from Karl, but it had, Sartre said, "become dried and hardened, and I took it for that of the absent father who had begotten me."⁴⁸ He doubted that his grandfather's love was sincere and stated

⁴⁶Sartre, The Words, 145.

⁴⁷Sartre, The Words, 163.

⁴⁸Sartre, The Words, 157.

that it was difficult to distinguish sincerity from trickery.

Anne Marie was the second most influential person in Sartre's life.

In 1904, at Cherbourg, the young naval officer, who was already wasting away with the fevers of Cochin-China, made the acquaintance of Anne Marie Schweitzer, took possession of the big, forlorn girl, married her, begot a child in quick time, me, and sought refuge in death.⁴⁹

The Schweitzers never forgave her for marrying a man who "had not worn well." After returning to her parents' home following her husband's death, she allowed herself to be treated as a child. Anne Marie shared a room with her son and they were both called "the children" by Charles and Louise. She took over the household duties, was not given spending money; nor did she have her wardrobe replaced when it was worn out. Her social activities were so controlled that eventually they were virtually non-existent. She found all of her joy in the young baby. She coddled him and treated him as if were a doll. She did not give him orders but considered him a miracle child. "My little darling will be very nice, very reasonable. He'll sit still so I can put drops into his nose.' I let myself be caught in the trap of

⁴⁹Sartre, The Words, 15.

these coddling prophecies."⁵⁰ He desired to respect her but found it difficult when no one else did.

Tossed amidst the confusing tension between these two influential people (his grandfather and his mother), Sartre would accuse his family of play-acting. Karl wanted him to be exposed only to classical works, Anne Marie loved taking him to the corner newsstands to buy for him children's adventure books. She loved his vivid imagination in the stories he created; Schweitzer refused to read them.

I keep creating myself; I am the giver
and the gift. If my father were alive,
I would know my rights and my duties.
He is dead, and I am unaware of them. I
have no rights, since love heaps
blessings upon me; I have no duties,
since I give out of love. Only one
mandate: to please; everything to show.
What a riot of generosity in our
family.⁵¹

It was Mamie (pet name for Louise) who did not seem to admire Sartre as much as the others. This bothered him. He felt that she had seen through him. She would order him to "stop smirking and smiling." He called her "the Spirit that always negates." More tension would arise when Sartre and Karl would intimidate her by opposing her and she would sulk and go to her room.

My mother would repeat to me a hundred

⁵⁰Sartre, The Words, 22.

⁵¹Sartre, The Words, 32.

times a day, not without a purpose:
'Karlemami [combining the names of his
grandparents] are waiting for us;
Karlemami will be pleased;
Karlemami....,' conjuring up, by the
intimate union of those four syllables,
the perfect harmony of the persons. I
was only half taken in, but I managed to
seem to be entirely: first of all, to
myself.⁵²

Sartre was small in stature, like his father. He was delicate and his small size was of constant concern to the family. Lucien, the main character in the Sartre novel, Childhood of a Leader, secretly laughed at his friend, Barataud, when someone wrote on the bathroom walls that Barataud was a louse. "Lucien smiled: it was true, Barataud was a louse, he was small and they said he'd grow a little but not much because his father was little, almost a dwarf" (pp. 175-176). It is possible that Sartre remembered the words between his grandparents when they would argue over whether or not he would grow. Karl would often remark that he was growing; Louise would counter with "he'll be small like the Sartres." Anne Marie kept his hair long with blond, flowing curls. She sometimes dressed him as a girl. Cute and adorable, he was the center of attention as he performed for the family and friends. His life of pretense continued. The inevitable happened; Schweitzer secretly took Sartre to the barber and had the long curls sheared.

⁵²Sartre, The Words, 35.

Anne Marie, upon seeing him, locked herself in her room to cry. "He [Karl] had been entrusted with her little wonder and had brought back a toad."⁵³ This exaggerated Sartre's defective, crossed eye which had been brought about by a childhood disease called *leucoma*, a white opacity in the cornea of the eye. Center stage was becoming difficult for him to occupy.

...I would often catch friends of the family looking at me with a worried or puzzled expression. My audience was getting more and more difficult. I had to exert myself. I overplayed and sounded false. I knew the anguish of an aging actress.⁵⁴

With this also, Sartre would realize his own ugliness. No longer the adorable and precocious child, he felt he had become a object. He felt rejected and his remorse was obvious. The image reflected in the mirror proved that he was horribly natural. From this, Sartre said, he never fully recovered.

Idolized by all, rejected by each, I was left out of things, and my sole recourse, at the age of seven, was within myself, who did not yet exist, a glass palace in which the budding century beheld its boredom...I became the Proud One. Since nobody laid claim to me seriously, I laid claim to being

⁵³Sartre, The Words, 104.

⁵⁴Sartre, The Words, 104-105.

indispensable to the Universe.⁵⁵

Schweitzer was also in control of young Sartre's schooling. Keeping him out of school until he was eight years of age, Karl finally enrolled him in Lycee Montaigne. Once again Sartre was put in a strained position. His grandfather informed the principal that Jean-Paul was ready for an advanced grade--beyond his years. After a few days, Schweitzer was called to the office and told that his grandson was not ready for the higher grade. Schweitzer became angry and withdrew him from school. Anne Marie, upon hearing this and seeing her son's work with all of the misspelled words, "had a fit of giggles." Karl, for the first time, scolded Sartre, but later placed the blame on the school. Sartre's response was "...I didn't mind returning to my solitude: I liked what was wrong with me. I had lost, without even noticing it, the opportunity to become real."⁵⁶ As Sartre was taken from one school to another--one tutor to another--he felt alone "between the old man and two women." He felt that his character, his truth, as well as his name were in the hands of these adults. "Play-acting robbed me of the world and of human

⁵⁵Sartre, The Words, 110.

⁵⁶Sartre, The Words, 78.

beings. I saw only roles and props."⁵⁷

It is not difficult to see that conflicts were inevitable in Sartre's life. Alienation from children his own age further added to his loneliness. He was not allowed to go to school for over two years following the incident in Lycee Montaigne.

...he [Schweitzer] should have accepted either that Sartre had the intelligence to recover from his initial inability to spell, or that he would, in a democratic meritocracy, take the place assigned to him whatever talents he possessed.⁵⁸

Feeling objectified, Sartre found his defense by means of his imagination. He gave himself a role in his fantasies. "I was saved by my grandfather. He drove me, without meaning to, into a new imposture that changed my life."⁵⁹

The liar was finding his truth in the elaboration of his lies. I was born of writing. Before that, there was only a play of mirrors. With the first novel I knew that a child had got into the hall of mirrors. By writing I was existing, I was escaping from the grown-ups...⁶⁰

Later when he was enrolled permanently in school, he gave up writing for a time. Finally able to have friends

⁵⁷Sartre, The Words, 84.

⁵⁸Thody, Sartre, a bio. intro., 12.

⁵⁹Sartre, The Words, 135.

⁶⁰Sartre, The Words, 153.

his own age, they became the most important part of his life. In his early years he had been shunned and pushed aside by his peers, much to the dismay of his mother. His descriptive passages of his longing to be included are poignant. When he finally reached the point of being accepted, nothing was more important.

I was waiting for some schoolmates....They were late. After a while, not knowing what else to do to occupy my mind, I decided to think of the Almighty. Immediately He tumbled into the blue and disappeared without giving an explanation. He doesn't exist, I said to myself with polite surprise, and I thought the matter was settled. In a way, it was, since never have I had the slightest temptation to bring Him back to life. But the Other One remained, the Invisible One, the Holy Ghost, the one who guaranteed my mandate and who ran my life with his great anonymous and sacred powers.⁶¹

But the mandate that he felt he had been given by the Holy Ghost would later be revived. Although Sartre denied the existence of God, there is no clear obvious reference to his denial relative to the existence of the Holy Ghost, which is the Spirit of God that indwells the believer, according to the Christian faith. Sartre stated later that he threw the Holy Ghost out, but did not deny that it existed.

Sartre seemed to struggle with the idea of faith. It

⁶¹Sartre, The Words, 250-251.

appears that he had a conflict within himself as he said, "my double religious affiliation [Protestant and Catholic] kept me from believing in the Saints, the Virgin, and finally in God Himself as long as they were called by their names."⁶² And he continued by saying that the humblest believer in himself was to be the evidence of his own predestination. It would seem, in his own mind, that he considered himself to be predestined to become a saviour. He could then dismiss the authoritative God from his life.

In the midst of all the turmoil of his life, Sartre speaks of his need for God. He blamed his family for his lack of faith. His mother and his grandmother attended church for social reasons, his grandfather ridiculed the clergy and Sartre declared that "I was led to disbelief not by the conflict of dogmas, but by my grandparents' indifference. Nevertheless, I believed...but I thought of God less and less often."⁶³ He would add that he was not aware of the search at the time, so God failed to take root in his heart, vegetated and died. He simply announced when he was eleven years of age, that God was dead! His theory was that everything is permissible if God doesn't exist. Only through this declaration could he maintain his idea of

⁶²Sartre, The Words, 250.

⁶³Sartre, The Words, 100-101.

the freedom of man. Man is responsible for himself and his actions. And he attempts to set man apart as the "being whose project is to be God."⁶⁴ However, if there is no God, how can man aspire to be Him?

His novels, plays and voluminous philosophical works would again place him center stage, and make him one of the most studied and well-known authors of the century. The thematic material would deal, for the most part, with his existential philosophy that man is alone, God does not exist, and consequently man is free. The four protagonists of the referenced plays, Bariona in Bariona, Goetz in The Devil and the Good Lord, Orestes in The Flies and Garcin in No Exit, show facets of Sartre's personality developed in this chapter: self-depreciation and defensiveness, resignation and frustration, alienation and loneliness. These characters are alone and they all mirror a reflection of the image of a search going on within themselves.

"The writings of Sartre are left with an overriding theological character that often seems to be unaffected by the atheism that he professes."⁶⁵ King addresses the idea that Sartre, like other contemporary philosophers, feels

⁶⁴Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions, (New Jersey: Citadel Press, Inc., 1957), 63.

⁶⁵Thomas M. King, S.J., Sartre and the Sacred, (Illinois: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1974), xi.

that childhood is the key to understanding the adult psyche. However, he feels that Sartre is unique in interpreting the mind of the child in religious terms.

Relevant to this work is the fact that Sartre's autobiographical work was focused on his childhood years. His preoccupation with the existence versus non-existence of God began at a very early age; it was to shape not only his life, but his writing as well.

The main characters in the four plays to be discussed are placed in settings and situations that have themes which are symbolically Christian in nature.

Two additionally important symbols which are used frequently by Sartre in many of his works, are the **mirror** and **bronze**. The contrast between these two images, i.e., reflective and non-reflective will be explored in the four plays.

CHAPTER III

BARIONA CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

In 1940 Sartre wrote his first play, Bariona, or The Son of Thunder, while being held captive in a German prison camp. He developed a close friendship with some of his fellow prisoners who were priests. "Sartre feels at ease with the priests despite the interminable arguments about faith."⁶⁶ He formed an especially close bond with Father Espit and discussed theological matters with him. Sartre argued with the Jesuits regarding the divinity of Christ. However, Sartre's attitude toward the priests differed from his grandfather's disdainful view of the clergy.

...but his [Schweitzer] anti-clericalism was so outspoken that I would go through the doorway with the feeling of entering enemy territory. As for myself, I did not hate priests. When they spoke to me, their faces took on a gentle expression, as if they were being massaged with spirituality, a look of wonderstruck kindness...⁶⁷

In the film, Sartre by himself, Sartre speaks of his need to be of the elite; he says the priests represented the elite. He spoke of the priests as his best friends. "...they were people who dealt with men's souls, who

⁶⁶Annie Cohen Solal, Sartre A Life, ed. Normal Macafee, trans. Anna Cancogni, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), 154.

⁶⁷Sartre, The Words, 101.

conceived of what was happening in 'soul terms'...and had an influence even on the prisoners in the camp who didn't believe in God."⁶⁸

"It was after these discussions with the priests, and to arouse his fellow captives' spirit of resistance to the Germans, that Sartre agreed to write a 'mystery play' about the birth of Christ."⁶⁹ Ronald Hayman reported that it was Sartre who suggested that the play be done.⁷⁰ According to Solal, the play was written in six weeks and rehearsals began even before Sartre had finished writing the drama.⁷¹ Sartre decided that he would cast several of the priests in the lead roles, and he himself would play the part of the Wise Man, Balthazar. According to Sartre, the play was meant to assure the prisoners that their freedom would be forthcoming, and they should not give up hope.

In Bariona, "he [Sartre] introduced many of his own preoccupations--both philosophical and private."⁷² Hayman

⁶⁸Astruc and Contat, Sartre by himself, 62.

⁶⁹The Writings of Jean-Paul Sartre, Vol. I, A Bibliographical Life, Compiled by Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka, trans. Richard C. McCleary, (Illinois: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1974), 410.

⁷⁰Ronald Hayman, Sartre a biography, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987, 174.

⁷¹Solal, Sartre A Life, 156.

⁷²Hayman, Sartre a biography, 181.

suggests that Bariona was a man with strong feelings about liberty. For Sartre, this liberty was realized when one was free of God. The author also reports that Sartre offered to join the prison choir and sing hymns and carols, and offered a suggestion that "they should return to the old custom of complementing midnight Mass with a mystery play" (p. 174).

Indeed, it might be argued that it was from his experience with this play and the overwhelming effect it had in performance, that Sartre was impelled towards using drama as a vehicle for his thought, and for involving human beings in a collective, shared experience of his view of life.⁷³

In a speech in 1946, Sartre spoke of Bariona.

Nevertheless, on this occasion, as I addressed my comrades across the footlights, speaking to them of their state as prisoners, when I suddenly saw them so remarkably silent and attentive, I realized what theatre ought to be--a great collective, religious phenomenon.⁷⁴

However, if the play was to be only a vehicle for speaking about political freedom for the prisoners, as well as to encourage resistance, given Sartre's own feelings regarding this area, why did he refuse for several years to have the play revived? Written in 1940, it was 1962 before

⁷³Esslin, ADAM, International Review, 36.

⁷⁴Forgers of Myth: The Young Playwrights of France, Theater Arts, XXX (July 1946), 324-35, quoted in Dorothy McCall, The Theatre of Jean-Paul Sartre (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1969), 1.

Sartre would authorize publication of the drama. I can find no other reference to works being suppressed by the author, although he naturally felt that some were better than others. Sartre stated that the play was neither a good play --nor was it well acted, yet the audience was silent and attentive.⁷⁵ It would seem unusual for a drama to so deeply affect the audience if it did not have some merit. He denied that his direction of thought had changed with this play regarding his faith in Christ. He explained, "...it was so intimately addressed to the special circumstances of its performance that it could not be properly understood apart from them."⁷⁶ Sartre's fears of adverse reaction from readers was unfounded. "Granted the play acclaims the divinity of Christ and portrays a religious conversion, the essential message is conveyed under very thin symbolic disguises." (p. 31) If symbolically the birth of the Messiah was merely to show the French prisoners that freedom from imprisonment could, or would be theirs before long, the play was to have other results as well.

According to a report picked up by Remy Roure in an article in the *Figaro litteraire* ('Jean-Paul Sartre Saved a

⁷⁵Contat and Rybalka, 314.

⁷⁶Hazel E. Barnes, *Sartre*, (New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1973), 31.

Soul'), (March 26, 1960), **BARIONA** was a great success with the prisoners and allegedly even led to the conversion of one of them who was especially overwhelmed by the acting of Balthazar-Sartre, which was 'sincere, passionate, and inflamed with faith'⁷⁷

Hayman says that the prisoner who was converted to Christianity did so due to a misunderstanding of the play's meaning.⁷⁸

⁷⁷Contat and Rybalka, 412.

⁷⁸Hayman, Sartre A biography, 182.

BARIONA
PLOT SYNOPSIS

It is Christmas Eve in Bethaur, a village of eight hundred people, which is approximately twenty-five leagues from Bethlehem. Lelius, a Roman civil servant has come to town to announce a tax increase. He stops at the house of the Jewish tax-collector where he is invited to spend the night. The village is under the leadership of Bariona. When the tax-collector is asked by Lelius as to the nature of Bariona's personality, he responds by saying, "Not very amenable." (I.i.) Lelius is informed that Bariona wants nothing from Rome, while at the same time, he is aware that the people cannot refuse the demands that are imposed upon them by the Roman government.

When Bariona hears of the tax increase, he calls an emergency meeting of the Council of Elders. He requests that, as a retaliatory tactic, his people not allow the birth of any more children. In this way, the Romans would, in the future, have no people to suppress.

Just as Bariona requests that the men refrain from having sex with their wives, his wife, Sarah, announces that she is pregnant with the child they have so long desired. He demands that she have an abortion but she refuses to do so.

The announcement that the Christ child is born in

Bethlehem brings about a mass exodus of the people of the village to visit the holy child. The wise man, Balthazar, tries to convince Bariona of the legitimacy of the babe's identity. Bariona rejects the idea that God would come to a world such as this. He seeks the child, but with the intention of killing, rather than worshipping him. Upon his arrival in Bethlehem, his heart is changed and he is convinced that the child is the Messiah. He implores the men of his village, who have started to reject the child, to march with him to protect the baby against the ensuing Romans. He knows that he will die in defending the child. He says, "But I want to prevent anyone from killing our Messiah and I know that I have no choice; I can defend him only by giving my life." (VII.ii.).

He leaves as he tells Sarah to "hold onto life" for the sake of their own child that is to be born.

BARIONA
SETTING/CHARACTERS

The play is set a few miles from Bethlehem and as the action progresses, the people travel to that city where the Christ child is to be born.

The names of several characters are names also found in the Bible. **Sarah** was the wife of Abraham. According to Scripture, it was God who blessed her with a child in her old age. "And God said unto Abraham,...And I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations...." (Genesis xvii:15-16) God also promised to bless the Virgin Mary with the child who would be the Messiah. The angel who visited Mary with the news said, "...Blessed are thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb..." (Luke i.42) The wife of Bariona is Sarah. In an ironic twist, Sarah accuses Bariona of cursing the fruit of her womb. (I.iii.)

One of the shepherds is given the name of **Caiphus**. He will seek the Christ child to worship him. Caiphus in Scripture was the high priest at the trial of Jesus. Other names of characters, such as **Peter, Paul and Simon**, are also found in Scripture.

The two most powerful characters are Bariona and the wise man, Balthazar. In these are embodied the traits of the author himself. Bariona struggles with believing versus rejecting the legitimacy of the Child. He is, like other

protagonists in Sartrean drama, set apart.

Lucien or Roquentin,
Orestes,...Goetz...[Sartrean
characters]...these fine bastards,...are
all merely 'lucid' consciousnesses
concerned to escape contingency. Yet,
they cast themselves into contingency
all the more in pretending to coincide
with themselves and their freedom.⁷⁹

Sartre struggled with his feelings of nonessentiality.

Belief in God eliminates the sense of
meaninglessness which the
Existentialists [Sartre] posit as
central to human experience. Unwilling
volunteers 'enrolled' without their
knowledge, [characters created by
Sartre] they each play an unchosen role.
Once these unfortunates notice their
roles, they immediately play others,
losing themselves in their new roles
more effectively. This is all because
they seek Salvation; they have chosen to
turn to God in order to escape the
Devil, Hell, and all the other ratmen
that overpopulate the world.⁸⁰

Balthazar, who was played by Sartre, seems to
understand, if not penetrate, the inner feelings of Bariona.
He tells the protagonist, "I can see from your face that
you've suffered, and I can also see that you've enjoyed
it...."(IV.i.) He contradicts Bariona's refusal to hope by
telling him that it is man's duty to be hopeful. It is the

⁷⁹Francis Jeanson, Sartre and the Problem of Morality,
trans. Robert V. Stone (Indiana: Indiana Univ. Press, 1980),
247.

⁸⁰James Hitchcock, What is Secular Humanism?, (Michigan:
Servant Books, 1982), 127.

wise man who explains that Christ came for Bariona more than anyone else, as he is the one who has suffered the most. Balthazar continues by telling him "...that's what your despair is:..."looking down stubbornly at your feet like a dumb jackass, cutting your soul off from the future and locking it up in the present." (IV.i.) Sartre's own life mirrored these words. "I chose as my future the past of a great immortal and I tried to live backwards. I became completely posthumous."⁸¹

Bariona, when he is alone, talks of his heart which is clenched tight with denial of the Child. "I ought to go into that stable and get down on my knees. It would be the first time in my life." (VI.vii.) He again says that if he did this he would be free against God and for God, against himself and for himself. And ends by saying "Ah, how hard it is!"

When the people begin to turn away and betray the Messiah Bariona rebukes them. He has a change of heart and decides to save the Child against ensuing death by the Romans, even though he knows that he will be killed. "I'm free; I hold my fate in my hands. I'm marching against Herod's soldiers and God is marching at my side." (VII.ii) He implores the prisoners to take heart; he calls them

⁸¹Sartre, The Words, 199.

"soldiers of Christ." He speaks to them of the experience of symbolically tasting the bitter gall, but joy will be coming.

There is something forlorn in most of the characters Sartre develops. The protagonists are set apart, and they remain so. This is certainly true of Bariona. Perhaps this is the idea of Sartrean freedom. Is this the concept of the isolated existence of the free man? Is this the despair of which Sartre speaks? He struggled with his own feelings of nonessentiality. "Belief in God eliminates the sense of meaninglessness which the existentialists [Sartre] posit as central to human experience."⁸²

Sartre places himself in the role of God, or the desire to be God. To be man means to reach toward being God. Or if you prefer, man fundamentally is the desire to be God."⁸³ Bariona mirrors this role. He says to Sarah, "...I'm lord of the village and master of life and death. I've decided that my family will become extinct with me...."(II.iii) Bariona changes his role as is typical of Sartrean characters. Is this freedom or is this compromise?

⁸²James Hitchcock, What is Secular Humanism?, 127.

⁸³Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions, 63.

BARIONA
SYMBOLISM

The name, Bariona, is a derivation of the name given to two of Christ's disciples. The New Testament states, "And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Bo-an-er'-ges, which is, The sons of thunder:" (Mark iii:17) "...[they] were nicknamed by him [Christ] Boanerges,...probably because they were high-spirited, impetuous Galileans, whose zeal was undisciplined and sometimes misdirected. (Luke ix:49)⁸⁴ Rather than being a follower of Christ, Sartre presents the impetuous Bariona (as seen through the eyes of Sarah) as being like the rebel angel. This is symbolic of Lucifer who, according to the Bible, revolted against God and as a result, was thrown out of Heaven.

Bariona was intended, according to Sartre, to symbolize the idea of freedom that would be forthcoming for himself and his fellow prisoners. And, in the play, "he [Sartre] introduced many of his own preoccupations--both philosophical and private."⁸⁵ That Sartre was preoccupied with the idea of hope and despair is evidenced in most of his work. Bariona frequently refers to the fact that in

⁸⁴Illinois: The Illustrated Bible Dictionary (part 2 Goliath-Papyri), (Tyndale House Publishers, 1980), 794.

⁸⁵Hayman, Sartre a biography, 174.

despair the people will find their dignity. Symbolically, hope will be found through the birth of the Messiah. It is a complicated plot meant to encourage Sartre's fellow prisoners of their forthcoming freedom. Sartre intricately involved his philosophy of freedom from God as Bariona says: "I am free, I hold my destiny in my hands." (VII.ii) Yet he continues by saying that he will march against the armies of Herod and God will be at his side.

When the elders are called to a special meeting by Bariona, it is here that we see the first mention of **bronze** as the elders put on their festival garments and pass through "**bronze** gates." This would seem like an obscure point, but research shows that Sartre uses the idea of this alloy in many of his works. In addition to describing the elements in bronze, Webster's dictionary reminds us that it also means "to make hard or unfeeling." The Council again refers to the "**bronze**" silence as they consider spending the rest of their days without children. The idea of **bronze** seems to carry with it a feeling of impenetrability. Bariona tells Lelius that, "I am only a village chief...;" yet he declares to his wife, Sarah, "I am the lord of the village and master of life and death." He refers to himself as a "brazen pillar, an inflexible column." In denying the fact that the baby is the Christ child, Bariona stubbornly states: "God will show his face between the clouds and I

would still refuse to understand it, for I am a free man; and against a free man, even God can do nothing." (IV.i.)

The **bronze** symbol is also referenced by Balthazar. He refers to the birth of Christ as a "bronze column." This will symbolize a "new free-will," according to the wise man, which will spring toward Heaven. And this will bring joy to all. The crucifixion of Christ is foretold by the sorcerer. Bariona tells Lelius that the people had been waiting for a soldier and, that they were given a weak lamb who would allow himself to be killed. Symbolically, this passage is a subtle way to express to the prisoners not to give up hope, as Bariona says, "I am proud,...for I have never accepted slavery...I'd rather have it [village] wiped out than fall under the yoke of the Romans." (V.iii.) Further, he adds, "Who would have thought that my own people would willingly lead themselves to the cross! What has become of you, Jehovah, God of Vengeance?" (V.iii.)

The characters of Mary and Joseph seem to be symbolically linked to Sartre's parents. He describes the relationship between Mary and the child as loving and gentle. "She [Mary] looks at him and thinks 'This God is my child, this divine flesh is my flesh. He is made of me, he has my eyes'..." (V.iv.) He further describes Joseph as a shadow at the back of the barn. The narrator states that he doesn't know how to describe Joseph. He continues that

Joseph feels like an outsider when compared to Mary's relationship with God. "For God has burst like a bombshell into the privacy of this family. Joseph and Mary are separated forever by this blaze of light." (V.iii.)

BARIONA
HIEROPHANIES

Bariona requires a hierophanic sign from God before he will abandon his request that there be no more children.

"There must be a sign to his servants, but he must hurry.

(II.iii.) The narrator relates that Bariona's request is not good. Sartre's conflict regarding the aloneness of man (without God), coupled with his feeling that man is free, emerges as the narrator speaks. "When God is silent, we do have to shift for ourselves, but we're still among men, we get by, we work it out with each other...." (II.iv.)

The narrator continues by saying that when God stirs, it is like an earthquake, and "men fall backwards or flat on their faces." (II.iv.) Caiphus and Simon sense a presence. Caiphus says that he feels they are not alone. The sacred penetrates the profane space as an angel appears to the shepherds. This heavenly being announces the ultimate hierophany of the Christian faith, the birth of the Christ child. "There it is. He is born! His infinite and sacred spirit is prisoner in the body of an infant, sullied, wondering at suffering and now knowing of it." (III.ii.)

After an unsuccessful attempt by the wise man, Balthazar, to convince Bariona of the need for hope which is to be found in the child, Bariona is left alone. He meets with the Lord in a hierophanic prayer.

Bariona:...They're gone Lord. You and me, we're alone. I've known a lot of suffering, but I had to live to this day to taste the bitter taste of being left alone. Oh how alone I am! But you won't hear a word of complaint from my lips, God of the Jews. I want to live a long time here on this barren rock they've left me on, me who never asked to be born; and I want to be your remorse." (IV.i.)

When Bariona reaches the stable, he encounters Mark. Not realizing that Mark is an angel, he lies as he tells him that he is seeking his cousin, Mary. He does not reveal that he is intent on killing the child. Mark begins to describe the mother and child. He tells Bariona that the baby is a precious little boy, and the mother that he was similar to this child.

And in Sartrean fashion, he relates to Bariona that the child will go through suffering. He asks Bariona of his own children, to which the protagonist answers that he has none. Mark responds by saying that he pities him. "You will never have the look of a man made to feel ill at ease by his large body and regretting that he has not endured the sufferings of giving birth to his son...." (V.i.) Bariona is intimidated and orders Mark to leave. Mark leaves as he reminds Bariona that angels have no power over man's freedom of choice. But further, he informs Bariona that he should consider the look on the face of Joseph.

But before he slays the baby, he has another meeting

with the Lord in prayer. "I'd give my right hand to be able to believe it even for a second. It is my fault Lord, that you have made me like a night creature and cut into my flesh that terrible secret: It will never come morning...." (V.i) Sartre then uses Bariona in a politically tinged speech. "You're going toward vile resignation, toward the death of your own courage...I don't have the heart to take away their blessed confidence in the power of the morning." (V.i.) This could have been successful in building up the confidence of the prisoners. However, the powerful speech that Balthazar then gives, keeping in mind that this is Sartre playing the part of the wise man, tells of the suffering of Christ. "However, since he is God, he is beyond the suffering. And we men made in the image of God are beyond all our own suffering to the extent that we are like God." (VI.i)

Sartre's struggle with his faith in God seemed to be mirrored in Bariona. "I ought to go into that stable and get down on my knees. It would be the first time in my life." (VI.vii) Bariona speaks of human pride being similar to war. And again, the freedom theme emerges. Bariona says if he could do this, he would be free against God and for God, against himself and for himself. Sartre experienced this conflict in his personal life.

But the Other One remained, the

Invisible One, the Holy Ghost, the one who guaranteed my mandate and who ran my life with his great anonymous and sacred powers. I had all the more difficulty getting rid of him in that he had installed himself at the back of my head in the doctored notions which I used in my effort to understand, situate, and justify myself.⁸⁶

⁸⁶Sartre, The Words, 252.

CHAPTER IV

DEVIL AND THE GOOD LORD PLOT SYNOPSIS

The Devil and the Good Lord is a long and difficult drama. In an interview with *Le Matin* (Antwerp), June 7, 1951 Sartre said of this work, "The play deals entirely with man's relations to God, or, if you prefer, to the absolute." And with *Samedi-Soir*, June 2-8, 1951: "Man is but a paltry thing when one believes in God: God must be lost that man may arise from His ruins." It was, according to De Beauvoir, Sartre's favorite of his works. The story takes place in Germany around the time of the Peasants' Revolt of 1524. The city of Worms is under siege. The Archbishop is concerned that he will be defeated, and complains that his faithful town has revolted against him. He receives news however, that Conrad, his enemy, has been defeated and Worms once again is under his rule.

Meanwhile the peasants feel trapped when they learn that their saviour, Conrad, is dead. The Archbishop is still angry that the peasants would revolt against him. Fucré, the banker, attempts to convince him that his revenues come from Worms, and if he massacres the people of the town he will be the loser. The Archbishop then tells

Fucre that it is Goetz, the finest Captain in all of Germany, and also the brother of Conrad, who is besieging Worms. Goetz, the protagonist, is working as a mercenary, and plays at his role of being sympathetic to the Archbishop. He plans with him to attack the city. He finds himself in the dilemmatic position of being detested in doing either good or evil. The voices of the people call him a bastard and ask for God's punishment upon him.

The Archbishop admits that he discovered that Conrad and Goetz were having a disagreement, and he secretly made an offer to Goetz that if he will join with him, he will assure that Goetz will take possession of Conrad's lands. He tells the banker that he cannot control Goetz, as he will not obey any orders. The priest says of him, "To tell the truth, I don't really know what he is....He has a changing humor, which is the least one can say of him." (I.ii.) The battles continue between the clergy and the peasants, with Goetz set apart from the other characters, as is typical of Sartrean characters. Nasti, a peasant, informs one of the bishops that Goetz does not serve God or the Archbishop; rather, he serves only the Devil.

More powerful than the political theme of the story is the spiritual battle between Goetz and God. Heinrich, a priest who is struggling with his own faith, sets the scene for this battle. He tells Goetz that good is impossible.

Goetz makes a bet with him that for a year and a day he will do good, and after that time, the priest can find him and if evil triumphs, Heinrich will win the bet. They agree. And again, as in *Bariona*, the Sartrean protagonist becomes a chameleon as he attempts through the remainder of the play to render only that which is good.

DEVIL AND THE GOOD LORD
SETTING/CHARACTERS

The opening scene for this battle between good and evil is placed "between heaven and hell, a hall in the Archbishop's palace."

In this play, Sartre allows us to see changing reflections in several of his characters. Chameleons will include, among others, the Archbishop, Heinrich, Nasti (a peasant), as well as Goetz. Some of these characters embody the conflicting questions of faith and what one is supposed to believe. Early on we are introduced to the idea of the war, but as the power of Bariona is focused on the Messianic claims of Christ, the power of this drama is of a spiritual nature. As this play opens, the Archbishop reveals that is not entirely true to his position. "Should the end of this day bring news of my defeat, I shall be so worn down that I shall be transparent; and what, Oh Lord, canst Thou do with an archbishop that can be seen through?" (I.ii.)

Goetz tells his lover, Catherine, that he will capture the city of Worms because the deed will be evil. When Catherine questions his reasons for doing evil, he responds by saying that good has already been done by God the Father. He adds, "Me, I invent." This is the antithesis of Sartre's description of himself in this autobiography. "Wicked desires and wicked thoughts, when there are any, come from

the outside; no sooner do they enter me that they wilt and fade: I am bad soil for evil."⁸⁷ Heinrich is supposed to love God and the people. Yet when he is questioned by a woman who has lost her child he explains that, "Nothing on earth occurs without the will of God" (I.i.) He becomes frustrated in his attempt to explain and finally admits that he understands nothing. "I neither can nor want to understand." (I.i.) He is torn between belonging to the Church and belonging to himself. He tells Goetz that God has allowed him to be affected by the suffering of others without suffering himself. He also says that he was chosen by God, but doesn't understand why. Sartre questioned the Holy Spirit as to why he had been given the mandate to write. "What is there about me, Lord, that has made you choose me?"⁸⁸

Heinrich and Goetz attempt to manipulate each other. The former has the key to the city of Worms. Goetz wants it. They accuse each other of being a bastard. This theme is used in much of Sartre's work.

Though Sartre was legitimate, his father's early death and his consequent upbringing by his mother and grandparents gave him the sense of being fatherless, a circumstance which he viewed as an advantage, since the basic

⁸⁷Sartre, The Words, 32.

⁸⁸Sartre, The Words, 186.

paternal role is to exercise authority over the child's freedom.⁸⁹

Brosman continues by discussing the fact that Sartre feels through this so-called illegitimacy, the child considers himself absolutely free. "Being nobody's son," Sartre said, "I was my own cause and was filled with both pride and wretchedness."⁹⁰ Brosman suggests that treachery occurs in Sartre's works, and concludes that this idea "is very close to Sartre's own apprehension of himself."⁹¹ He says in The Words, "I was faithful to nothing but the royal commitment that was leading me to glory by way of torment."

Another facet of Sartre's personality is seen in Heinrich's reaction to those people who are poor. Relative to his own life, Sartre stated, "I became a traitor and have remained one."⁹² He related that he would slip coins into the hands of these impoverished ones as he smiled at them. "I find they look stupid, and I do not like to touch them, but I force myself to...they must love me, that love will beautify their lives."⁹³ The priest, having similar

⁸⁹Catharine Savage Brosman, Jean-Paul Sartre, (Massachusetts: Twayne Pub., 1983), 85.

⁹⁰Sartre, The Words, 112.

⁹¹Brosman, Jean-Paul Sartre, 86.

⁹²Sartre, The Words, 238.

⁹³Sartre, The Words, 34.

feelings towards the destitute, tells Goetz that he would have all of the poor exterminated if he had his way. "Oh Lord," he says, "why have you allowed poor people to exist?" Goetz says to Heinrich: "All we need to know now is which one of the two is living in the dream of the other."

Nasti is a peasant who also struggles with believing in God and being free of God. He assures the peasants that they should not doubt God's presence. Yet he embodies the Sartrean idea of freedom. He says, "I recognize but one Church: the community of men." (I.i.) That man is alone, without God, is evident in the following statement. "...I carry the weight of the world by myself alone without anything or any person being able to lighten it."⁹⁴

In the changing personalities, the characters seem to become what is needed at the moment. That is to say, they profess Christianity if they need to, they are for the people or against them, whatever the situation calls for they will do. Sartre would also change as circumstances required. "Everywhere I went, I dragged about my false good nature...on the alert for a new opportunity."⁹⁵

There is another mirror image of Sartre in Goetz as he tells Heinrich: "I have been two people all my life; and I

⁹⁴Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions, 57.

⁹⁵Sartre, The Words, 98.

am composed of two halves which do not fit together; each of those halves shrinks in horror from the other." (I.ii)
Sartre spoke of his difficulty with the duality of his life. "Things would have been fine if my body and I had got on well together. But the fact is that we were an odd couple."⁹⁶

Goetz carries the idea of his small size further as he explains to Heinrich why he betrayed his brother, Conrad. He says that he is a "self-made man," a bastard by birth, and he is responsible for the "title of fratricide" that he has imposed upon himself. He explains that the house of Heidenstamm is now his. "I contain them all in myself, from Alberic the founder of the family, down to Conrad, the last male heir of the line." Alberic, according to Norse mythology, was the king of gnomes, who were dwarfs believed to live underground as guardians of treasures. Goetz's struggle with God is evidenced further when he explains to Heinrich that he doesn't give a damn for the Devil, that he refuses to deal with anyone but God. It is God, he says, who damned him fifteen years ago. Killing Conrad is his way of committing the worst of crimes, and he is free since God is powerless to do anything. In response to Heinrich's statement that Goetz truly hates himself, the protagonist

⁹⁶Sartre, The Words, 157.

admits that it is true. Heinrich and Goetz share personality traits. Goetz says: "Don't worry: you resemble me so closely that I mistook you for myself." (I.ii.)

In Act II Karl makes his appearance. He seems to relate to Goetz in ways that are reminiscent of Sartre and his relationship with his grandfather. One of the peasants refers to him (Karl) as a "real man," and the other responds by saying: "They say he knows how to read too?" Karl and Goetz argue as to which of them is the real prophet. Goetz says that the former is there only to serve him. He then tells Karl, "ingrate! It was for love of you...that I despoiled myself of my belongings." (III.viii) Schweitzer was concerned with physical features of his grandson. Karl mirrors this anxiety as he says to Goetz, "Every day I dress you and undress you. I see your navel, your toes, your behind, and you expect me to love you! Ho! I'll show you what love is!" (III.viii)

When Goetz enters the city, he is met by the peasants. He attempts to win their confidence. They explain to him that the monks have come to sell indulgences. The peasants are told to get out of their purses in order to avoid hell. Again, reminiscent of Schweitzer's attitude of the clergy, the monks are portrayed as con-men. One of them, Tetzl, speaks of death and what is to happen afterwards. Goetz, in his new role of doing good, offers that love is the answer,

not money.

When Heinrich appears again, he is accompanied by an invisible devil who speaks through him denouncing God. He tells Goetz he has been dismissed from the Church for his betrayal of the priests. The intertwining of difficult spiritual aspects in the story continues as Heinrich accuses Goetz of deserting Catherine, and tells him that she is dying. Goetz asks for Heinrich's forgiveness, telling him that he will deliver him from evil as well as rid him of the Devil. They speak of expiating Heinrich's sins, but both agree it is not possible. The idea of the Christian belief of dying to sin is addressed. Goetz tells Heinrich that there are two men named "Goetz." One now lives by good; and the other, who lived by evil, is dead. Heinrich then asks Nasti for forgiveness, and Nasti refuses. Heinrich says he would rather have his pardon than to be forgiven by God. Heinrich says: "...I should be renouncing the forgiveness of Heaven for the forgiveness of earth." (II.iii.) Nasti says that he also, has formed an alliance with the Devil. Sartre, in his autobiography says: "I was a Catholic and a Protestant; I united the critical spirit of submission." His grandfather at one point committed Sartre to the care of an abbe, who was a friend.

...but he would gaze anxiously at the little Catholic who was brought back to him on Thursday afternoon. He would

seek in my eyes the progress of papery
and did not abstain from twitting me.
This false situation did not last more
than six months....For several more
years I maintained public relations with
the Almighty. But privately, I ceased
to associate with Him.⁹⁷

Goetz proceeds to set up his utopia and attempts to perform his miracles. Sartre, by allowing Goetz to call on God, yet not hearing from the supernatural, is saying that only man is capable of action, as there is no God. It seems that this is spiritual warfare.

Karl approaches the City of the Sun that Goetz has established. He questions the villagers as to whether or not Goetz can perform miracles. It is he who deals with the despair of others caused by the happiness in Goetz's world. Karl is informed that, because of the protagonist, their world is now sacred, and Goetz has been declared to be holy. Interestingly, it is Karl who will contradict him. He calls him a false prophet. As Sartre questioned his grandfather's love, Goetz says to Karl, do you hate me so much?"

(III.vii.) When Karl answers "yes," we are again reminded of the play acting of young Sartre, as Goetz responds by saying: "Then it is because I haven't known how to make myself loved." With all of the love heaped upon him by the people, Goetz still feels alone.

⁹⁷Sartre, The Words, 101-102.

With the peasants ready to revolt, there is another battle waged between Karl and Goetz. It is Karl who will cause the peasants to rebel against Goetz. When the protagonist attempts to express his love for Karl, the latter responds by mockingly praying and then assuming the role of God in response to the peasants. And such was the conflict between Schweitzer and Sartre, and those times when the former, in the eyes of his grandson, assumed the same role, i.e., God. Karl tells them that he too can bleed, as he is a prophet like Goetz. The latter then refers to Karl as his lackey which is quite a switch from the patriarchal position of the grandfather over young Sartre.

When Heinrich reappears to remind Goetz of the bet, Goetz is in a state of despair. He says: "I cannot see my soul any longer, because it is under my nose." (III.x) And he tells Heinrich: "Half of myself is your accomplice against the other half." Then the idea of the despair of freedom, for which Sartre is so famous, is contained in Goetz. "Each minute I wondered what I could be in the eyes of God. Now I know the answer: nothing. God does not see me, God does not hear me, God does not know me." (III.x) He continues by allowing us to see his loneliness. "Silence is God. Absence is God. God is the loneliness of man." Goetz, after his avowal that God is silent, says: "...Thirty-six years of loneliness are enough." Sartre was

born in 1905; this play was written in 1951--he was forty-six at the time. Subtract the thirty-six years and it was at about the age of ten or eleven that Sartre chose to deny God's existence!

Goetz begins alone and ends alone without God. He states: "...I have no other way of being among men."

Indeed there is a negative element in Goetz's reliance on God; yet Sartre does not leave a great deal of hope for peace or fulfillment without God. It is a relentless protagonist who declares: "The kingdom of man is beginning. A fine start! Nasti, I told you I would be hangman and butcher." And then he has a final moment of weakness before he accepts his position to fight alone.

DEVIL AND THE GOOD LORD
SYMBOLISM

Symbolic references to passages in scripture are numerous in the play. It is evident that Sartre was knowledgeable of the Bible as several stories overlap to fit the situation in the drama. For example, in I.i., Nasti tells the woman whose son has died that God will give her back her child. She responds by saying that she will have him back in Heaven; Nasti says no, it will be on earth. He then proceeds to tell her that she must pass through the eye of a needle and endure seven years of misfortune. In St. Luke xviii:25, Christ says: "...it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Seven years is symbolic in Scripture, including the story found in Genesis wherein Joseph interprets the Pharaoh's dreams. He informs him that there will be seven years of famine in the land of Egypt. Nasti continues as he tells the woman that she will carry the child for seven years at which time she will have brought him into the world a second time. Christ explains the idea of being born again to Nicodemus: "...Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (St. John iii:3)

Karl ridicules Goetz and in response to the question as

to who he is, Karl replies: "I am the One who is." This is symbolic of the reply to Moses when he asked God, who should I say sent me? "...I AM THAT I AM:...." (Exodus iii:14)

Symbolic of Christ, who touched the leper to heal him (Matthew viii:2.), Goetz proves his love by kissing the leper. But rather mockingly, when Tetzl offers a shiny new indulgence to the leper, the leper chooses it over the kiss. Later Goetz places himself in the role of Christ as he rolls away the table from which the monks are working, and cites the Biblical reference to Christ driving the money changers from the Temple. (Matthew xxi:12)

He finds Catherine and as she is dying, Heinrich and Nasti carry her to the "feet of Christ," i.e., the foot of the cross. Goetz asks Heinrich to sign her forehead with the cross in order to save her from hell. When neither he nor Nasti will do this, Goetz tells her that he will ask Christ to allow him to take Catherine's sins upon himself. He then implores Christ to give him a sign that Catherine's sins are forgiven. He says: "Didst Thou die for mankind, yes or no? Look down on us: mankind is suffering. Thou must begin to die again." (II.vi.) Goetz proceeds to question why man cannot suffer for sins. He asks God to inflict him with the wounds of Christ. When this doesn't happen, he yells at God and questions Him. In essence, Goetz then attempts to become God. He inflicts himself with

the stigmata. Suffering is again evident in Goetz's life. In the Christian faith, it is the blood of Christ that is symbolic to salvation. Goetz has shed his blood and become the saviour for Catherine.

The symbolic **mirror** image is powerful as Goetz describes the reflective image(s) of God. "...the soul of the Lord is a hall of mirrors, the fire [that will destroy Worms] will be reflected in a thousand mirrors." (I.iii.)

DEVIL AND THE GOOD LORD
HIEROPHANIES

Goetz seeks a hierophanic communication with God several times. For example, he prays the following prayer.

Thou didst permit me to wind up outside the world because Thou didst desire to keep me for Thyself. Here I am, my God, here we are face to face again....Tell me: art Thou, indeed, the night? For Thou are the One who is present in the universal absence, whom we hear when all is silence, whom we see when we can see no more....The dawn is breaking. I have come through thy night (III.vii.).

It would be interesting to know if Sartre was familiar with the work of St. John of the Cross when he has Goetz speaking to the Lord regarding coming through "Thy night." It is, according to the Dark Night of the Soul, when St. John has emptied his soul except for his concentration of God, that he enters the true union with God. When Goetz finds some of the men have been killed, he prays to be given back his night.

This dark night is an inflowing of God into the soul, which purges it from its ignorances and imperfections, habitual, natural and spiritual....Herein God secretly teaches the soul and instructs it in perfection of love...He prepares it for the union of love with God.⁹⁸

Hilda, who has fallen in love with Goetz, brings in the

⁹⁸Saint John of the Cross, Dark Night of the Soul, ed. and trans. Allison Peers (New York: Doubleday, 1959), 100.

humanistic element as she says it is the human communion that makes up the dark night. The spiritual war between the soul and the flesh, which is symbolic of the Christian faith, is evidenced when Hilda tempts Goetz to make love to her. Goetz tells her that Beauty is Evil. She vehemently tells him that the filth is in his soul.

When Catherine is dying, she seeks repentance. She asks for a priest and instead Goetz arrives. He calls for Heinrich who informs him that he is no longer of the Church. Goetz says that it was through his sin that she was damned, but also through himself that she will be saved. He prays:

Lord, these sins are mine--Thou knowest
it. Render to me what rightfully
belongs to me. Thou hast no right to
condemn this woman since I alone am
guilty. Give me a sign! My arms are
ready--my face and my breast are
prepared....Canst hear me, God, or art
Thou deaf?....Didst thou die for
mankind? (II.vi.)

He then feels that he has received a sign from God, as those who help themselves, God also helps. This is the point that he inflicts upon himself the stigmata.

When Goetz is attempting to capture Worms, he tells God, "What power! God, this city is mine and I give it to Thee. In a moment I will make it blaze to Thy glory" (I.i)

Continually struggling, Goetz remarks that God hears him, that he is in tune with God as it is this Being that he is deafening. Continuing, he remarks that God is the only

enemy worth his talents. "It is God I shall crucify this night...because His suffering is infinite, and renders infinite those whom He causes to suffer." (I.iii)

It is a complex maze that Sartre presents in the changing faces of the characters. A spiritual battle rages in The Devil and the Good Lord. It is not warfare between the Lord and the Devil, but rather between Goetz and the Lord. The other characters reflect the same spiritual confusion. Is man free of God, or is Sartre in a life-long quest to attempt to find this freedom? Goetz's closing statement, "There is this war to fight, and I will fight it." To what war does he refer? If indeed it is the war referred to as the Peasants' Revolt, why does Goetz say, "I" will fight, rather than "we"? Obviously it is a personal battle, and I would offer that it is a spiritual battle.

CHAPTER V

THE FLIES PLOT SYNOPSIS

The Flies was written in 1942. Sartre admitted to this play being wordy. Patterned after the Greek tragedy, this story begins in a public square in Argos. Orestes arrives with his tutor. He complains to his tutor that, even though he was born in this place, he still feels as if he were a stranger. He seeks his stepfather, Aegistheus, who is now King of Argos, having killed Orestes' father. The young man arrives with the intent of avenging his father's death.

The tutor informs Orestes that they are being watched by a bearded fellow who has followed them from town to town. The pursuer relates to the travelers the story of Queen Clytemnestra, mother of Orestes, and her lover, Aegistheus. Orestes questions the tutor as to the identity of the one who is following them. The idea of the existence of God is addressed: "But is he [the bearded one] a man?" The tutor replies: "You grieve me, my young master. Have all my lessons, all my precepts, the smiling skepticism I taught you, been wasted on your ears?" He continues by saying that there are only men. The retort by Orestes is sharp: "A truce to your philosophy! It's done me too much harm already." The tutor questions Zeus as to his true identity.

He gives his name as Demetrius, when actually he is the god, Zeus. Orestes claims that the gods are unjust. He further maintains that they are the ones responsible for the untimely death of his father. Zeus instructs him not to sit in judgment against the gods. He says that the gods "have their secrets--and their sorrows." And Sartre inserts at this point a moment of **reflective silence** in the stage direction.

There is a curse on the city because of the crime against the former King. Zeus advises Orestes to leave rather than encounter the plague of the flies. Orestes meets his sister, Electra. He pretends to be someone else. She tells him that she is waiting for her brother who will avenge the death of her father. She describes the annual rite in which the High Priest rolls away the stone of a cavern. This releases the dead who roam the city. At this time the people of the city beg forgiveness for the wrongs they have committed against the dead. The deceased then return and the stone is put back in place for another year.

Electra informs Orestes that she is mistreated by her mother and stepfather. She does the chores and is without friends. She is also antagonistic towards Zeus. Through conversations with her, Orestes addresses the idea of freedom without God. He prays, "O Zeus, our Lord and King of Heaven, not often have I called on you for help, and you

have shown me little favor;...But now I am weary and my mind is dark;...." (II.i)

He asks for God for a sign as to whether or not he should accept banishment. And then the Sartrean theme of man alone, free to make his own choices, without God, is presented. Orestes speaks: "...from now on I'll take on no one's orders, neither man's nor god's." And he denounces the presence of God. "Until now I felt something warm and living round me, like a friendly presence. [Zeus has been constantly following him.] That something has just died. What emptiness!" (II.i). As the scene ends, Zeus sneaks out of his hiding place and "creeps out on tiptoe."

Zeus, in following Orestes, encounters an old woman. The battle of the flesh is addressed as he tells her that she must repent of her sins. He accuses her of having pleasurable sex with her husband on the night of the King's death. He charges her as well with peeking from behind the curtains and enjoying the death, and implores her to repent of her sins.

In II.ii, again the statue of Zeus "occupies a prominent position." As Clytemnestra and Aegistheus converse, the ambivalent Zeus approaches them. He informs them that Orestes is planning the death of the King. Aegistheus accuses him of plotting for the young man; Zeus tells him that he loves no one. And he continues by saying

that his crime was making men mortal. The curse of the King, he says, is the same as is--the agony of knowing that men are free. Hayman observes, "but Sartre could reiterate in his play, [The Flies], the point he had made in Bariona: even the gods are powerless to interfere with human freedom."⁹⁹ Sartre struggles with this theme over and over. The god continues, "...For a hundred thousand years I have been dancing a slow, dark ritual dance before men's eyes. Their eyes are so intent on me that they forget to look into themselves." (II.ii) Zeus continues to tell Aegistheus that he has no power over man. After Orestes has killed Aegistheus and Clytemnestra he faces Electra. The plague of the flies overcomes her.

Orestes and Zeus meet for a final confrontation as Orestes comes down from his assumed position on the throne. The walls of the palace open revealing the firmament. Orestes moves into the bright light, but with a Sartrean twist of fate, he is still not free of the furies.

⁹⁹Hayman, Sartre, a Biography, 186.

THE FLIES
SETTING/CHARACTERS

The action begins in a public square in Argos. The status of Zeus, representing the god of flies and death, dominates the scene.

Orestes, concealing his true identity, arrives with the intent of avenging the death of his father, Agamemnon. He was slain years before by the mother and stepfather of Orestes, and the latter was sent into exile for several years.

The tutor, who accompanies Orestes, refers frequently to the fact that he has been responsible for teaching the young pupil everything he knows, as well as being influential in all the beliefs that the young man holds.

Electra, the sister of Orestes, is present, reminding the reader of Sartre's mother as she relates to her brother that she is without friends, and takes care of the palace chores.

Always present, whether following behind, or conversing with Orestes, is the commanding figure of Zeus. Again, it is the confrontation between these two characters which brings the power to the drama.

THE FLIES SYMBOLISM

The **bronze** image is used several times. When the tutor spies Zeus, he says that he has never seen such a beard other than the **bronze** beard on the chin of Zeus at Palermo. Sartre made several references to the beard of his grandfather, again referring to him as God: "When his beard had been black, he had been Jehovah,...." Another time, he added, "But I appeared at the end of his long life; his beard had turned white,...." If God and Schweitzer were somehow interchangeable in Sartre's mind, a power-presence of which he was always aware, could it be possible that the **bronze** image was symbolic of this presence?

In III.ii. again the bronze image is used. "At the back is a huge bronze door." Zeus informs Orestes that the townspeople are waiting outside the bronze door to stone him. He refers to the young man as being a lonely leper.

The tutor, who approaches Orestes with food, is ordered by his young pupil, to open the bronze doors where destruction awaits. The doors are opened. The ethereal presence of Orestes is presented as the stage is flooded with light. The protagonist is beyond the power of the bronze doors, he is again alone and says: "As for me, too, a new life is beginning. A strange life..." He goes into

the light, but the furies are in pursuit! A strange life-- and a strange freedom!

There are numerous passages in which it seems that Sartre is symbolically referring to his grandfather. The tutor, in addition to telling Orestes that "there are only men," i.e., no gods, also says, "All that wise lore I culled for you...matching the fruits of my knowledge with the finest flowers of my experience." And, he tells his young pupil that he instilled in him the love of books, "so as to make clear to you the infinite diversity of men's opinions." Further, he tells Orestes "...you have the wisdom of far riper years, your mind is free from prejudice and superstition; you have no family ties, no religion, and no calling; you are free to turn your hand to anything." (I.i.) Orestes, in Sartrean manner, responds by saying that at seven years of age, he had no home and no roots, and this made him "as free as the air."

Zeus symbolizes the Christian God as he declares his omnipotence. He declares: "Orestes, I created you, and I created all things." He paraphrases the Old Testament account of creation as given in Genesis i:1-31, as he tells the young man that he set the planets on their course, was responsible for music, and was responsible for the tides, etc. And again, St. Luke xix:40 speaks of the stones and how they will cry out against those who do not revere God.

According to Zeus, Orestes has done evil and "the very rocks and stones cry out against you." (III.i.)

The mirror image is used as Zeus tells Orestes, "And that of which you are so vain, the Evil that you think is your creation, what is it but a reflection in a mocking mirror, a phantom thing that would have no being but for Goodness." (III.i.) Orestes acknowledges the fact that Zeus made him, and that Zeus is indeed the king of the whole universe. He says the god blundered by making him free. "...I am my freedom. No sooner had you created me that I ceased to be yours." (III.i.) Orestes says, "Suddenly, out of the blue, freedom crashed down on me and swept me off my feet...I knew myself...utterly alone in this little universe of yours..." there was nothing left in heaven, no right or wrong, nor anyone to give me orders." (III.i.)

In the Bible there are numerous references to Christ as the good Shepherd. For example, in Hebrews xiii:20 Jesus is referred to as "that great shepherd." Zeus uses the analogy of the shepherd to entice Orestes to return to the fold. "Remember, Orestes, you once were of my flock, you fed in my pastures among my sheep." (III.i.) Zeus implores him to return to the flock by telling Orestes that he is "forgetfulness and peace." In a poignant statement, Orestes responds by saying, "As for me, I do not hate you. We shall glide past each other, like ships in a river, without

touching. You are God and I am free; each of us is alone,
and our anguish is akin." (III.i.)

To the absolute forlornness of one who
feels 'in the way' he [Sartre] could
only oppose another absolute, that of
his own necessity, which must ultimately
be recognized by everyone.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰Jeanson, Sartre and The Problem of Morality, 260.

CHAPTER VI

NO EXIT PLOT SYNOPSIS

No Exit was written in 1944. The play opens as three people arrive in hell. In an article in Le Express, October 11-17, 1965, Sartre explained that he wished to write a play for three of his friends; and to put them on stage together at the same time. He said: "If one of them goes off he'll think the others are getting a better role...So I wanted to keep them together." He stated that his comment relative to "hell being others" was misconstrued in meaning, and he further explained. ... "If our relations with others are twisted or corrupted, then others have to be hell.... Fundamentally, others are what is most important in us for our understanding of ourselves."¹⁰¹

With this idea he created three characters who seemingly have nothing in common. Garcin arrives first and is greeted by the Valet.

The two women, Inez and Estelle, arrive; they are to share "hell" with Garcin. Realizing that they are strangers, Estelle voices her concern. She says she had hoped to be with friends or family. She comments that it is absurd to be with people she does not know. Inez responds

¹⁰¹Jean-Paul Sartre, Le Express, Paris, Oct., 11-17, 1965.

by saying that nothing was left to chance. This was planned, and she adds, so was the statue on the mantelpiece (the **bronze** figure) deliberately placed.

Garcin had been a "man of letters," which is defined by Webster as "a learned man;...now more usually an author of litterateur." Is Garcin a reflective image of Sartre? Garcin and the two women are able to observe the living, i.e., those outside of this hell, without being seen. He is struggling to hear the conversation that is being held by his former employees; he feels that these discussions may be relative to their judgement of him following his death. He vehemently requests that the women be silent to enable him to hear more clearly. Would his writing grant him immortality, as Sartre desired for himself--through his works?

Garcin becomes agitated that he cannot hear the people in his former office talking about him. He says to the women: "Couldn't you have held your tongues? Now it's over, he's [Gomez, a fellow-worker] stopped talking, and what he thinks of me has gone back into his head." As Sartre seemed to be concerned with his own eternal life being dependent on what others thought of his writing, Garcin, commented that he is not concerned with the wife he left behind, but rather what Gomez, who represents the living, will think.

The three confined ones start the process of judging. Garcin suggests that they each bare their souls, to determine why they are there. He says that it is because he treated his wife so badly. The women begin telling their personal stories. When Garcin informs Estelle that he knows her lover killed himself because of her, she attempts to escape. She cannot face her sin. "Leave me alone!...I want to go! I want to go!" she screams. And then she admits that she killed the baby she was carrying. Inez informs Garcin that the hearing is over, and there is no need for him to "look like a hanging judge." His response is: "A hanging judge?....I'd give a lot to be able to see myself in a glass." After Sartre's personal use of the mirror, it would seem that he, through these three characters, feels it should be better to be one's own judge, rather than to be judged by others. Is this the idea of the freedom of which the author speaks? This play seems to be more painful for the characters than those in the other plays discussed. The hell created by others leaves the "no-exit" idea much more stressful than the freedom experienced by Bariona, Goetz and Orestes.

Inez has been fairly calm; Garcin attempts to convince her that the three of them are in this together. He says: "Alone, none of us can save himself or herself...." And then she is allowed to look back on the living. A couple is

occupying her room--she panics; and then she realizes that she "is done with the earth...No more alibis for me!" She, obviously having romantic feelings towards Estelle, is told by Garcin that "this young woman's [Estelle] fated to be your torturer." And as all three of them, Garcin, Estelle and Inez, observe those they left on earth, none of them seem content with what they see. And neither are they content with each other. Estelle wants the attention of Garcin; he responds to her by saying: "...I shan't love you; I know you too well." Inez is upset because Estelle wants the attention and affection of Garcin rather than her. Intermittently, Garcin retreats into himself as he strains to hear Gomez. He becomes irate when he finally hears what is being said. "Talk away, talk away, you swine. I'm not there to defend myself."

In ADIEUX A Farewell to Sartre, De Beauvoir said to him: "...There was an important notion, one that you also spoke of in The Words...and that was the idea that literature brought a certain salvation." Sartre responded by saying: "Certainly, ...my understanding of literary survival was obviously a kind of transfer from the Christian religion."¹⁰² If we can relate Garcin's attempt to scrutinize that which is being said about him on earth; and

¹⁰²De Beauvoir, ADIEUX, A Farewell to Sartre, 203.

if we can recall that he is a writer---is it possible then, to consider the idea that Sartre was concerned with the idea of his own prospects for eternal life?

Garcin then relates to the two women as to why he was shot twelve times. He had refused to fight in the war. "I---I didn't exactly refuse." With this statement, Garcin reflects back to Gomez. "I must say he talks well, he makes out a good case against me, but he never says what I should have done instead." He tells Estelle that he was escaping in order to launch a pacifist newspaper. Inez says that he wants Estelle to admire what he did-- "For 'bolt' is what he did," she continued, "and that's what's biting him." Sartre met with criticism regarding his escape from the German prison camp.

Subsequently the Communists would try to discredit Sartre by alleging that the escape had been staged: The Germans had made a bargain to release him because he had promised to work for them....After Bariona they could hardly have failed to realize he was the Sartre who had written *La Nausea*, and if they had wanted to recapture him in Paris after his escape, it would not have been difficult.¹⁰³

For a man of Sartre's intellect, talent and ego, the idea of being manipulated could have proven extremely embarrassing.

Sartre was involved in several political movements

¹⁰³Hayman, Sartre, a biography, 178.

which do not seem far removed from the idea of the pacifist newspaper that Garcin had planned. He asks Estelle if she thinks he is a coward. Sartre's idea of freedom of choice is brought out as she answers: "I can't put myself in your skin. You must decide that for yourself." But he can't decide. He says: "I'd thought it all out, and I wanted to make a stand. But was that my real motive?....Finally, I thought: My death will settle it. If I face death courageously, I'll prove I am no coward." With this he continues in his agony over the legacy he has left behind; and he realizes that the idea of his immortality is left in their hands. Sartre described to De Beauvoir his thought. "I still retain the idea that freedom also consists of being able to die...if tomorrow some threat or other menaces my freedom, death is a way of preserving it."¹⁰⁴

Inez attempts to convince Garcin that Estelle only cares for his body; she has no concern for his feelings. Finally Estelle admits to this and Garcin, in agony, wants to escape this hell of what others think. The door opens, but he is unable to go; those left on earth, he says, think only of him as a coward. It is important that the two women think more highly of him. Interestingly, he has a chance to escape, but his ego will keep him confined. "If you have

¹⁰⁴De Beauvoir, ADIEUX, A Farewell to Sartre, 379.

faith in me I'm saved." Inez becomes his judge. "Coward! Coward! Coward!" she yells at him.

Garcin's famous line, "Hell is---other people," appears to have an extremely lonely connotation.

It seems that Sartre deviates from the feeling of man choosing and being responsible for himself. He seems to voice concern, through Garcin, Estelle and Inez, that what others think is more important. It seems that free choice would become confining, rather than freeing. Barnes continues: "As they chose themselves in life, so they are fixed in eternity."

Garcin's closing words, 'Let's go on with it...' indicate that everything is about to continue as before. Nobody will change, for this is Hell.¹⁰⁵

The curtain falls as Garcin strokes the bronze figure. He says, "They knew I'd stand at the fireplace stroking this thing of bronze, with all those eyes intent on me. Devouring me." (I.i.) According to Sartre's stage directions, peals of laughter from the three characters are followed by silence as they blankly stare at each other.

¹⁰⁵Barnes, Sartre, 101.

NO EXIT
SYMBOLISM

The mirror image is used extensively by all three characters. Shortly after, as Garcin is looking around, one of the first things he notices is the absence of mirrors. Here, in this place, one is not able to look reflectively at himself. He says: "And why should one want to see oneself in a looking-glass?" In Sartre's book, Nausea, Roquentin says:

There is a white hole in the wall, a mirror. It is a trap. I know I am going to let myself get caught in it. I have. The grey thing appears in the mirror. I go over and look at it, I can no longer get away. It is the reflection of my face. Often in the lost days I study it. I can understand nothing of this face. The faces of others have some sense, some direction. Not mine.¹⁰⁶

Lucien, in Childhood of a Leader, also uses a mirror for self-reflection. He, unlike his creator (Sartre), is tall in stature. This is painful for him. "That evening he [Lucien] asked his father if a person could shrink if he wanted to with all his might." When his father responded that he could not, that all of the Fleurier family was big and he would yet grow, Lucien was disappointed. "...he got up and went to look at himself in the mirror. 'I'm big.'

¹⁰⁶Sartre, Nausea, 16.

But he looked in vain, he could not see it, he seemed neither big nor little." Lucien also felt, as Sartre suggested about himself as well, that he was not happy with his self-image. "Lucien did not know what to do with his body, no matter what he did, he felt this body existing on all sides at once, without consulting him."¹⁰⁷ Sartre would use the mirror, he said, as a means of protection.

A friend of the family, Mme. Picard, often visited the Sartres. She praised Jean-Paul and felt that he was a child prodigy. She presented him with a booklet which, when he opened it, had questions to be answered. One of them was: "What is your favorite wish?" He answered that he wanted to be "a soldier and avenge the dead." When both Mme. Picard, as well as his mother, showed their chagrin, Sartre ran to the mirror and began to make faces. "I rushed into humility in order to evade humiliation....The mirror was of great help to me: I made it teach me that I was a monster."¹⁰⁸

Estelle begins to look for a glass, "any sort of glass," she says, "a pocket-mirror will do." (I.i.). Inez becomes agitated when she offers hers, only to find it has been removed by "them." The judging idea is again presented in the following dialogue:

¹⁰⁷Sartre, Lucien, Childhood of a Leader, 177-179.

¹⁰⁸Sartre, The Words, 108-109.

Estelle: I feel so queer....When I can't see myself I begin to wonder if I really and truly exist...

Inez: You're lucky. I'm always conscious of myself--in my mind. Painfully conscious...

Estelle: Ah yes, in your mind. But everything that goes on in one's head is so vague, isn't it? It makes one want to sleep....I've six big mirrors in my bedroom...I can see them. But they don't see me...but how empty it is, a glass in which I'm absent....¹⁰⁹

Estelle then becomes concerned that her lipstick is not straight and Inez offers to be her glass. Estelle is skeptical when Inez tells her to "Look into my eyes. What do you see?"

Estelle: Oh, I'm there! But so tiny I can't see myself properly.

Inez: But I can. Every inch of you. Now ask me questions. I'll be as candid as any looking glass....

Estelle:...You scare me rather. My reflection in the glass never did that; of course, I knew it so well. (pp. 19-20)

Another powerful symbol in No Exit is the bronze image. Garcin seems concerned that there are no mirrors. But he voices another concern, "But that bronze contraption on the mantelpiece, that's another story. I suppose there will be times when I stare my eyes out at it."

What is this presence that Sartre always seems to find in the bronze? In Nausea, Roquentin walks to the square to

¹⁰⁹Jean-Paul Sartre, No Exit, (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 19-20.

smoke his pipe. He tells the women in black:

They rarely come out into the full light, but they cast ingenué glances from the corner of their eyes, on the statue of Gustave Impetraz. They don't know the name of this bronze giant...it is a little as though their grandfather were there on a pedestal, cast in bronze. At the service of their obstinately narrow, small ideas he has placed the authority and immense erudition drawn from the papers crushed in his hands.¹¹⁰

It seems as though there is some judging presence in the bronze figure. After Garcin has voiced his acknowledgement of its presence he says to the Valet: "A collector's piece. As in a nightmare. That's their idea, isn't it....No, I suppose you're under orders not to answer questions....But don't forget my man, I've a good notion of what's coming to me, so don't you boast you've caught me off my guard. I'm facing the situation...." When the Valet leaves, (according to Sartre's stage directions), Garcin goes over to the figure and "strokes it reflectively...."

And he returns to the bronze figure. And, as before, he "strokes it thoughtfully." "I'm looking at this thing on the mantelpiece, and I understand that I'm in hell. I tell you, everything's been thought out beforehand." One statement that Garcin makes could be crucial to understanding this bronze statue. He says: "They knew I'd

¹¹⁰Sartre, Nausea, 27-28.

stand at the fireplace stroking this thing of bronze, with all those eyes intent on me. Devouring me." To De Beauvoir he said: "In The Words I've told how, even as early as eight or nine, I had only neighborly relations with God, not really those of subservience or of understanding." He continued: "He was there, and now and then he appeared,....He was an eye that rested on me from time to time." It seems conceivable that the bronze figure could be symbolic of the ultimate judge, that which the three of them seem to be unable to ignore, especially Garcin. "There is no escape from the Other, for the Look is not tied to a pair of eyes which are physically present."¹¹¹ Sartre, in The Words, stated: "But the Other One remained, the Invisible One, the Holy Ghost, the one who guaranteed my mandate and who ran my life with his great anonymous and sacred powers."¹¹² In many of Sartre's works, the bronze, anonymous presence is there!

¹¹¹Barnes, Sartre, 103.

¹¹²Sartre, The Words, 251

NO EXIT
HIEROPHANIES

No Exit is set in hell. It is in this play, of the four plays discussed, that the characters are most concerned with judging one another. There are no hierophanic prayers, no appearance of angels, and no mention of God. It is the opinions of the "ones" who are still living that concern Garcin, Estelle and Inez.

The three characters are constantly aware of a bronze figure which seems to symbolize a powerful presence. Rather than resenting the figure, it is stroked reflectively, from time to time, by Garcin.

CONCLUSION

Jean-Paul Sartre was a philosopher, man of letters, as well as a dramatist. He was a highly complex--sometimes difficult to understand--individual. The most influential person in his life was his grandfather, Charles Schweitzer. Sartre accused him of playing at being God. On one occasion, after being reprimanded by him for stealing money from his mother, Sartre dismissed this authoritarian figure from his life. Poulou (as Sartre was called by his family) seemed to have difficulty with any superior authority. It seems logical that most of this stemmed from his relationship with Schweitzer. "In his [Charles] terror that his grandson might escape from his tutelage and transfer his affection elsewhere, he effectively prevented the infant Sartre from becoming a normal child."¹¹³ He attempted to dismiss any authoritarian figure from his life. He renounced his grandfather, his mother, his stepfather, as well as God.

Thody further suggests that given the accomplishments of the most famous member of the family, Albert Schweitzer (the renown medical missionary), coupled with the theological overtones of Sartre's works, it would not have been surprising if Sartre had followed in his footsteps,

¹¹³Thody, Sartre, a biographical introduction, 14.

rather than becoming the atheistic existentialist that he did. However, as Sartre dismissed his grandfather, he also denied that God existed.

In Sartre's fiction, theatre and essays, it is the characters who behave in an unusual or excessive manner whose experience is presented as important and interesting, while those who follow any kind of traditional pattern of behaviour are depicted unsympathetically.¹¹⁴

Sartre declared that men are free to choose. There are no rules or governing forces. He spent his life wrestling with his own identity.

...To be a man means to reach toward being God. Or if you prefer, man fundamentally is the desire to be God...it is by pursuing transcendent goals that he[man] is able to exist;....There is no universe other than a human universe, the universe of human subjectivity.¹¹⁵

Yet conclusive evidence proves that his mind was preoccupied with the existence of a spiritual Being. Sartre's attempt to convince readers of the non-existence of God, if one looks deeply into his works, fails to prove that he, himself, truly disbelieved in a supernatural Being. Bariona was resuscitated to prove that, in his heart of hearts, Sartre was a crypto-Christian.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴Thody, Sartre, a biographical introduction, 15.

¹¹⁵Sartre, Existentialism and Human Emotions, 632.

¹¹⁶Solal, Sartre, A Life, 522.

Contat: Sartre, today your work consists of some thirty volumes. Does it ever happen that you take a retrospective look to try and seize what unifying thread there is throughout?

Sartre: ...And as for the question of unity, I think there is one, but I can't say I've ever tried to look for it...I think that's a task for other people.¹¹⁷

In Bariona, Devil and the Good Lord, and The Flies, the supernatural Being is present. There is a battle between the protagonist and God. In No Exit, when one is in hell, there is no god present, but the powerful bronze figure somehow seems to symbolize a spiritual presence.

In each of the plays the four protagonists set themselves apart from those around them. They attempt to find meaning in their lives as they seek self-transcendence above the situations in which they find themselves.

Being fatherless, he [Sartre] was, in his own view, a nothing. Others inhabited him, to be sure, but in the form of 'uneasiness' rather than solid assurance. he did not need to struggle against misery and hunger, which could have given a meaning to his life. All he could really do was ask himself who he was and suspect that he was not--that his fluid existence was beyond justification.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷Sartre by Himself, (A film directed by Alexandre Astruc and Michel Contat), (Participants: De Beauvoir, Bost, Gorz, Pouillon), (New York: Urizen Books, 1978), 57.

¹¹⁸Jeanson, Sartre and the Problem of Morality, 253.

As he attempted to convince that he was responsible for himself, he seemed always to be alone and forlorn. This seems to be part of the scenario that Sartre created for himself in dismissing anyone or anything which could be considered as an authority figure in his life. He stated in The Words that he hated his childhood. It seems that he would spend the rest of his life attempting to convince those around him that authority was a negative concept.

In attempting to foster the idea of freedom, Sartre considered himself to be a genius who would convince the world of his ideas. And, he would be granted immortality through his writing. Ironically, he found it indeed laborious to accept the position he had created for himself. Thody says: "Yet this career, as a novelist, playwright ...now seems to be one which Sartre wishes he had never adopted (p. 7)." He had difficulty in friendships with older men; he chose to surround himself with young and impressionable males. And in answer to a Catholic priest (Roger Troisfontaines), who accused him of drifting aimlessly through life with "no normal contacts," Sartre responded that he did spend many of his days writing in cafes. Alone, he would ignore conversations going on around him. He would, he said, occasionally look up as an attractive girl passed.

His companion and mistress, De Beauvoir, in an attempt

to give a deeper insight into this complex man, interviewed him in his later years. She seemed to lead him into many of his answers. She discussed with him the concept of his immortality through his works. He had remarked, she said, that "literature hid the idea of death..."¹¹⁹ This was to be a "transfer from the [idea of] Christian religion." She brings out in this interview that during his laborious philosophical writings, he was under the influence of an amphetamine.

De Beauvoir: ...And you wrote under the effect of Corydrane.

Sartre: All the time.

De Beauvoir: Whereas with literature you never used Corydrane.

Sartre: Literature wouldn't have gone with Corydrane.¹²⁰

Sartre's life is mirrored in his works. Many of the plays he completed, as well as some of those he left unfinished, speak of certain aspects of his own life. One unfinished work of which he spoke, was of a pregnant mother who sees her son's life as he goes through all of the scenes that were foretold; and in the end he is a great hero.

Goetz in The Devil and the Good Lord is, like Bariona, a man who acts alone. He, too, would struggle with acceptance. "Whether I live by Evil or by Righteousness,"

¹¹⁹De Beauvoir, ADIEUX, a Farewell to Sartre, 170.

¹²⁰De Beauvoir, ADIEUX, a Farewell to Sartre, 174.

he said, "I always find myself detested." He cares nothing for mankind, he says, and further states that God is the only enemy worth his talents. He felt the presence of God--felt "His eyes on my hands, His breath on my hair,...."

(I.iii.) Sartre felt that the Holy Ghost--the "Other"--ran his life. As Goetz struggled to crucify God, Sartre would attempt to rid himself of the Holy Ghost.

The influence of Karl, as discussed in Chapter IV, is a major influence in the life of Goetz. It is this character in the play who will assume the role of God; Charles Schweitzer was also affectionately called "Karl." Goetz's personal battle is not over with the end of the play, rather, he just begins to fight. And he will fight in an attempt to declare the kingdom of man; and we are left with the feeling of Goetz still being alone.

In The Flies, Orestes, like Bariona and Goetz, acts alone. However, again we see the influence of the tutor. He is the one who, in essence, says to Orestes, "I've taught you all you know, including being responsible for your disbelief in God (or religion)." The struggle to be free of major influences in his life is again the theme. And even with the freedom of Orestes, the flies (furies) are still in pursuit. The protagonist, like Goetz and Bariona, never seem to totally experience the freedom they seek.

In No Exit Garcin seeks solitude. He attempts to be

free of the women, but in the end he succumbs to becoming a part of them. A man of letters, like Sartre, he agonizes over the legacy that he has left behind. What will the people think of him now that he is dead? This was the essence of Sartre's concern for his own immortality. This play, however, offers no hope for freedom. The three characters are sequestered, and miserable together. Hell offers no way out--and Garcin is preoccupied with the reputation that he has left behind.

The physical aspects of Sartre's body were also to prove very painful for him. he spoke to De Beauvoir of the *coenesthetic* feeling, i.e., the internal feeling of bodily awareness. Balance was of grave concern to him. When he skied, he told her, he felt that he was going to fall; when he swam, he feared fatigue; and he always felt tired when the two of them went for walks. De Beauvoir questioned at length regarding this situation. She asked why he felt this way; and inquired as to whether it could be something from childhood. "Is it," she inquired, "perhaps a mental refusal to let yourself go? Is it a sort of contradiction--that's why I spoke of letting go..."¹²¹

His writing career included stimulants to wake himself in order to write, and pills at night to counteract those

¹²¹De Beauvoir, ADIEUX, a Farewell to Sartre, 312.

taken in the morning.¹²² He cared little for fruits and vegetables; and his body would suffer from the lack thereof.

Sartre presents two intriguing themes in much of his work. The **bronze** motif is a commanding one. Bronze is non-reflective. It is an impenetrable substance. Yet the **mirror** is reflective. One is able to stand before it with a self-searching and self-revealing concept. And both of these ideas, in many ways, have distressing consequences for not only the characters, but at times, for Sartre himself. The mirror can become self-revealing; the impenetrable bronze seems to have some judging presence.

That Sartre struggles with the questions of God and/or spirituality is manifested in his conversations with De Beauvoir. He told her that even in his atheism, he felt that there were "elements of God that remain in us and that cause us to see the world with some divine aspects." He continued that he did not see himself as dust, but as a prefigured being, a being that was called forth.¹²³ From where was he called forth?

In The Words, Sartre seemed to lay open his inner-most thoughts of existence, of his fear of death; and from his incredible imagination, he let us look in on the reflective

¹²²De Beauvoir, ADIEUX, a Farewell to Sartre, 329.

¹²³De Beauvoir, ADIEUX, a Farewell to Sartre, 438.

image of himself.

Death was my vertigo because I had no desire to live. That is why it filled me with such terror. By identifying it with glory, I made it my destination. I wanted to die. Horror sometimes froze my impatience, but never for long. My sacred joy would spring up again...Our deeper intentions are plans and evasions which are inseparably linked. I can see that, despite the bluffing and lying, the mad enterprise of writing in order to be forgiven for my existence had a certain reality.¹²⁴

He related in his autobiography that friends from school would be discussing the fear of dying. "They understood each other without having to go into detail. I would listen to them; I liked them enough to wish eagerly that I could be like them, but to no avail."¹²⁵ They questioned as to what he thought; he would answer them, after hesitation, that he was immortal--and he would add to himself that, "Nothing was more false....the Holy Ghost had commissioned me to do a long and exacting job, he had to leave me time enough to carry it out." Ironically, this job that he had been given was to prove that God did not exist; that man was free; that man was responsible for himself; and that man, in this free state, was miserable.

Critically ill, Sartre died April 15, 1980.

¹²⁴Sartre, The Words, 193.

¹²⁵Sartre, The Words, 196.

In the morning when she [De Beauvoir] went in to wake him at nine, he was sitting on the edge of the bed, gasping....De Beauvoir tried to telephone for help, but the line had been cut because of an unpaid bill.¹²⁶

Sartre asked De Beauvoir, "How will we pay for the funeral?"¹²⁷

Press releases announcing Sartre's death were sent around the world.

And yet a huge void: no funeral ode such as he had so often himself made for his comrades, Camus...Nizaaan, Gide...No one to speak...Perpetually elusive, active to the point of vertigo, Sartre might well have managed, to the day of his death, to avoid all such traps in weathered bronze and marble.¹²⁸

A New York Times article by Alden Whitman, April 16, 1980 reports:

...With his increasing erudition, the young Sartre grew in cynicism about all religion, but he clung to one of his grandfather's Lutheran concepts, the Holy Spirit. This was a divine muse that inspired a literary 'elect' of whom he once thought himself one.

Flora Lewis wrote on June 14, 1980:

Manent (influential writer of history and philosophy in the 30's): "Sartre didn't adjust his ideas to facts. It was just the opposite: he only accepted facts that fit his ideas. He had no

¹²⁶Hayman, Sartre, a biography, 472.

¹²⁷Hayman, Sartre a biography, 473.

¹²⁸Hayman, Sartre a biography, 524.

tolerance for anyone who disagreed, no sense of measure."

McCarthy (an American writer in Paris):
"Still, everyone turned out for the funeral."

Neuveglise (who nursed the talents as they pass through the lively publishing house of Gallimard): "The French love funerals. It was curiosity."

Neuveglise: "For the last six or seven years Sartre has been unsellable. Nobody reads him anymore, not even his classics."

He would say of himself:

I've again become the traveler without a ticket that I was at the age of seven: the ticket-collector has entered my compartment; he looks at me, less severely than in the past; in fact, all he wants is to go away, to let me finish the trip in peace; he'll be satisfied with a valid excuse, any excuse. Unfortunately I can't think of any; and besides, I don't even feel like trying to find one. We remain there looking at each other, feeling uncomfortable, until the train gets to Dijon where I know very well that no one is waiting for me.¹²⁹

¹²⁹Sartre, The Words, 253.

I have changed...I shall tell when and how I served my apprenticeship to violence and discovered by ugliness---I shall also explain the reason why I came to think systematically against myself, to the extent of measuring the obvious truth of an idea by the displeasure it caused me. The retrospective illusion has been smashed to bits; martyrdom, salvation, and immortality are falling to pieces;...I've given up the office but not the frock: I still write. What else can I do?...Culture doesn't save anything or anyone, it doesn't justify. But it's a product of man: he projects himself into it, he recognizes himself in it; that critical mirror alone offers him his image.

Sartre

POSTSCRIPT

Although the following passage is lengthy, it is quoted due to its descriptive image of the subject of this study--Jean-Paul Sartre. The author of this passage captures the dual personality of a man who obviously attempted to escape his existence by always claiming freedom, while he continued throughout his life to be in an intense struggle with God.

A man tries to escape his own existence, which appears to him unjustifiable--in the eyes of others as well as in his own. He does so because he feels threatened in his being by the look of others. I gather from this, first, that he already has a being, and, thus, that he will ultimately need to be; secondly since this being has been 'palmed off' on him by others, he will henceforth never rest until he has given himself a being that depends only on himself. He thereby comes to grips with the ideal form, the veritable archetype, of the 'bad bet,' for he must obviously also pass through others in order to confirm his own autonomy. His talent for obliviousness is weak, and he quickly realized this. Moreover, rendered indifferent to God by varying sorts of religious tepidity in those around him, he is only slightly touched by the temptation to short-circuit his relations with creature by claiming direct relations with the Creator. His remaining alternative is therefore to create himself by starting with others, supporting his being on the being others would recognize in him but decreeing in advance that his true being will always be beyond this image of him. This is to choose--if I'm not mistaken--absolute trickery, since it involves using others to feign a self-image that could remain just as inaccessible to oneself as to

others. One asserts: I know what I am worth and you too will have to know it; at the same time, however, you will never know it any more than I will, for I shall always be worth something more. The only way to ~~be~~ consists in always aiming tangentially at the being one wants. Neither the sun nor death can be looked at steadily, La Rochefoucauld noted. Nor, consequently, can being itself be looked at directly, since being is the vertigo of existence, its death and its sun all at once. The shortest road from oneself to oneself is the escape route: if you do want to be yourself, continue always to be another.¹³⁰

¹³⁰Jeanson, Sartre and the Problem of Morality, 263.

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