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IMAGES OF DESPAIR AND HOPE
IN THREE PLAYS BY
JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

BY

PHILIP LEWIS PRESTON

A THESIS
IITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
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PREFACE

Jean-Paul Sartre has altered his outlook on life and his intellectual involvement in society several times during the last forty-five years, and further changes are certainly possible. Nevertheless, through his pro-communist stance during the years of French Occupation, his denouncement of the Communists after the 1956 Hungarian revolt, and his more recent position of anti-intellectualism, Sartre has endeavored to define how a man can achieve freedom and hope.

From his philosophical ontology, his essays, his novel, and his plays there come close examinations of the cause and nature of man's suffering. However, contained in his often bleak and pessimistic writings is his assertion that hope, freedom, and essential dignity are always possible. Rarely does this statement of hope surface in Sartre's plays. More often, the crucial issue of despair, anguish, and the causes of despair are his scope of subject matter. He feels that through a clearer understanding of despair one can realize one's full potentialities as a free human being.

It is for this reason that this writer has dealt primarily with the images of despair Sartre uses to define the modern situation. Comparatively, despair is the subject of over eighty-five percent of this thesis, while hope takes up less

than fifteen. Sartre, certainly, would find even a ninety-five to five ratio an optimistic one since he feels that few men have the courage to accept self-responsibility and thereby gain any hope of freedom. To Sartre, any man who is able to qualify in the rare five percent has transcended the world of material objects and stands alone, free of the physical world which Sartre's images of despair represents.

CHAPTER I

The images which Jean-Paul Sartre employs in his plays serve to present various comments on the essentials of existence and freedom. As a playwright, he illustrates his literary examination of the existential philosophy with imagery that fills, shades, and gives depth to his message.

The factor common to all Sartre's images is their reference to the specific quality of an individual's approach to situations and decisions in life. These images evoke associations between, on the one hand, physical states of objects, animals, masks, light and shade, and , on the other, Sartre's view of existence, essence, and self-responsibility.

The use of images, however, is not a factor common to all Sartre's plays. One standard of this thesis was to reject those plays which do not rely on evocative imagery. The omitted plays have plots which consist primarily of lengthy oratorical presentations of philosophical conflicts. No Exit, The Flies, and The Respectful Prostitute have both the philosophical conflict and the imagery that Sartre felt would enhance the ideas involved in a particular play.[1]

The images used in the plays fall into two broad cate-

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[1]These three plays are found in Jean-Paul Sartre's "No Exit" and Three Other Plays, New York: Vantage Books, 1949.

gories. Within each category there are a number of "sets" of associated images which are best understood when arranged by their similarity of physical condition or by their family.[2] The order of presentation of the sets is determined by the immediacy of recognition of the particular set's images and is presented in the order from the least connotative set to the most connotative set.

The first category, the larger of the two categories mentioned in this thesis, involves those images which characterize the despair of a non-existential life. It is important to Sartre to establish firmly what he considers to be the typical human predicament in living without commitment and in bad faith. To establish an immediate feeling of despair, Sartre chooses images he feels will have an instantaneous impact. Although the images of this category are not complex or abstruse, they have a sensory immediacy that allows them to be successful communicative tools.

The first set of images in this first category characterize a life lived in despair in its reference to slime and sheer physical repulsion. As he wrote in Being and Nothingness, slime is a "symbol which abruptly discloses itself."[3]

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[2]Sets is a variation of the image "clusters" noted by Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), p. 187. The term "sets" implies for this writer a deliberate choice of images by Sartre rather than the more subconscious choices, according to Spurgeon, made by Shakespeare. (p. 4).

[3]Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness (New York: Philosophical Library), p. 609.

The physical ugliness of oozing, slimy matter implies a spiritual decay brought about by humbling oneself to the demands, moralities, and unreasonable expectations of others. "Slime" implies an evasive quality of character, or as Sartre says, "sliminess is revealed suddenly as a symbol of an antivalue."[4] "It is docile."[5]

The second set of images in this category also possess an immediacy of connotation in their reference to the animal-like existence most people subject themselves to in refusing to accept the responsibility for their own destiny. These beasts of the land and sea are referred to as they exist in their worst, most degrading states. Fish, insects, swine, horses, cattle, snakes, and dogs have at some point before their death a dependence that Sartre feels exemplifies the characteristic of humans to desire strong, willful, and often wrong-headed leadership, even if the leadership leads directly to a demeaning death.

In the third set of images, Sartre demonstrates his ability to use the dramatic masks of the Greek drama translated into modern terms, specifically in the revelation that most humans hide their true selves behind a mask which they think best fits what others would like to see. As an image, the mask provides Sartre with a device to show the cosmetic quality of

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[4] Ibid., p. 611.

[5] Ibid., p. 608.

a life which has been carried on in the pursuit of bankrupt spirituality or superficial designs that are found in many social institutions. For Sartre, the mask is the protector of the frail, terrified human beneath.

The images of decay and slime possess the immediacy of recognition that is so important to Sartre in his definition of a life which is based on false hope, illusion, and pretense. In drawing an analogy between slime and a certain way of facing life, Sartre characterizes slime in its physical sense as "...the agony of water." This ignoble, purgatory-like state of matter represents an annihilation of matter "...stopped halfway." This slimy quality can be found anywhere that decay is taking place. Rotten fruit, decayed flesh, foul breath, and fetid air share a common characteristic in that they are impure and poisioned by the process of degeneration.[6]

People's lives can also be characterized by this slimy quality, according to Sartre. Any life which has somehow become arrested in its development is like solid matter which has decayed and become putrid. That life which allows itself to be manipulated by other people has become as useless as dross. Spiritually, that life is suspended in a lifeless state of decay. It is this helpless degeneration which Sartre examines in _The Flies_.[7]

The Flies concerns the dilemma of Orestes who must avenge

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[6] _Ibid._, p. 608.

[7] _Ibid._, p. 610.

his father's death, but who must kill his mother to do so. The murder of his mother and her new husband, Aegistheus, promises more than simple retribution for Agamemnon, the dead king; when the queen and her king can be murdered. the town of Argos will be free of the corporate guilt it feels for silent compliance in Agamemnon's slaughter, a guilt which is nourished and encouraged by Aegistheus and Zeus.

It is essential to the eventual triumph of Orestes that he overcome the false expectations and illustion he encounters in Argos. Illustrated in terms of slime and decay, the lives of the subservient Argonians is a type of existence against which Orestes is pitted. As the play progresses, Orestes gains ground slowly in his battle with the primary objective of Dead Men's Day, the "miasma" of guilt which is everywhere in the town. Because Orestes in the end has fought his fight alone, he is able to escape the images of despairing decay, while Electra, and anyone else not strong enough to join him, remains in the world of slime.

As the play opens, Orestes and his tutor are entering Argos, unannounced, on Dead Men's Day, the annual festival during which Aegistheus, with the aid of Zeus, releases the souls of the dead. The first person they notice is a beggar who is diseased, blind, demented, and whose physical condition is the equivalent of the inner condition of all the people of the city.

The Tutor: These flies in Argos are much

> more sociable than its townsfolk. Just look at them. (Points to the idiot boy). There must be a round dozen pumping away at each of his eyes, and yet he's smiling quite contentedly; probably likes having his eyes sucked. That's not suprising; look at the yellow muck oozing out of them.[8]

As Sartre sees it, everyone in the town is living a life of illusion, the illusion of the guilt they do not actually share with Aegistheus. The quality of their lives Sartre characterizes in manifestations of slime, disease and pestilence. The ever-present images, of course, are the clammy-footed flies who, as Zeus says, were drawn to Argos fifteen years earlier when, "...a mighty stench of carrion drew them to this city, and since then they've been getting fatter and fatter."

The carrion on which these flies feed is the spiritual decay in the Argonians. The idiot boy, who seems not only to endure but even to enjoy his condition, is an illustration of the spiritual decay of the entire community. The growth of the townspeople has been arrested and is diseased, just like the beggar's body.

The townspeople are passive in the face of the pestilence, refelcting in their inertia what Sartre believes is typical of human nature. By refusing to act, the Argonians become prisoners in their own town. At one point in the play, an old woman asks Zeus for forgiveness. She begs to be given

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[8]Jean-Paul Sartre, "_No Exit_" _and Three Other Plays_, I. 53. All subsequent quotations from Sartre are from this edition.

a way out of her suffering which she seems unable to escape. In Zeus's reply to her plea, one can see that the old lady has no chance of being forgiven:

> Good, you old bitch, that's as it should be--and be sure you die in a nice bitchy odor of repentance. It's your one hope of salvation. (I. 56-57)

Like the beggar, the old lady seems destined to be a prisoner of the state of life in Argos; she is doomed to feed the flies forever.

Sartre does indicate through his images that escaping this slimy quality in life is a difficult task. To avoid lying to oneself would be as hard, in Argos, as avoiding the air one breathes. On Dead Men's Day, the foul air chokes the air the Argonians breathe. The dead come out once a year and scatter, "like a dark miasma" (II. 78). According to the two soldiers on Dead Men's Day there is spread everywhere a foul air from dead men's throats. According to Electra, reminders of the dead are everywhere. She says the presence of the dead is so persistent that it is as if "your hand suddenly went through a patch of clammy mist, and it was your grandmother's ghost" (II.ii.83). The foul air is the remorseless reminder to the Argonians that they are never to be forgiven for their sins against the dead.

The constant reminders of guilt have led to a petrification of the sins of the townspeople. Their sins have become fixed, inescapable, and eternal. The people want to be forgiven for

their sins, but they can never fully repent. When Zeus tests the identity of Orestes, he says of the townspeople that their sins have "hardened like cold fat" (I. 59). Trapped in what has become an eternally sinful state, the lives of the Argonians are as repulsive as the feel of the fingers as they drag across sticky, solidified fat.

As the subjects of the town are shown to be in a bad situation, the rulers are also depicted in images of solidification. Both Aegistheus and the dead Agamemnon are referred to as being, or having been, fat men. According to the two soldiers, Agamemnon was admirably well fed and fat. Electra pictures Aegistheus as a "fat, pale King with the slack mouth and that absurd beard like a regiment of spiders running round his chin" (II.i.86). Even the statue of Zeus has a "fat face" (I. 64). These rulers are in a similar situation to that of the townspeople. In order to retain the ruler-subject relationship, they must erect certain barriers between themselves and their subjects. The result is that they are not able to escape from their pretense of power. They, like the people of the town, have become prisoners to a ritual. Wrapped inside their shifts at night are, as Electra says "their rotting bodies" (I. 65).

Orestes and Electra want to break away from the domination of the dead spirits. In the gift Electra brings to Zeus's statue, one can see that she, unlike her fellow townspeople

wants to change her situation enough to risk punishment by the ruling authorities. Her ironic "offering" to Zeus consists of "ashes from our hearth, peelings, scraps of offal crawling with maggots, a chunk of bread too filthy even for our pigs" (I. 64). She delights in remembering that "The other day, when the High Priest came here to make his usual bows and scrapings, he fould himself treading on cabbage-stumps and rotten turnips and mussel-shells. He looked startled" (I. 66).

Yet when Electra asks of Orestes, "You won't tell on me, will you" (I. 66), she reveals that she does not have the courage to bring her defiance out in the open. As she says to the statue of Zeus: "I'm not strong enough to pull you down" (I. 64). She has just enough courage to mock the statue, but she needs Orestes, the man of action, to kill the queen and king.

Orestes is the only one who is brave enough and who values freedom enough to be the hero, to act with sincere, self-responsive motives. What he feels he must do will be an ugly, brutal act. Orestes says that he must "turn into an ax and hew those walls asunder, I'll rip open the bellies of those stolid houses and there will stem up from the gashes a stench of rotting food and incense" (II.ii.93). As Electra says, Orestes can "never rest again until they (Clytemnestra and Aegistheus) both are lying on their backs, with faces like

crushed mulberries. In a pool of blood" (II.ii.59). To free the town of guilt, to Orestes, would be like splitting open a rotten piece of fruit and letting the rancid vapors float away.

Orestes finally becomes sure of himself enough to act. He feels he must act to free the people who, as Electra says, "nurse their disease; they've gotten to like their sores so much that they scratch them with their dirty nails to keep them festering" (II.i.87).

Once he has murdered the king and queen, Orestes is a free man. Electra, however, becomes repulsed by the killing when she hears the Furies' hints of the actual murder. To her, what Orestes did "dragged me into carnage: I am red as a flayed ox, these loathsome flies are swarming after me, and my heart is buzzing like an angry hive" (III. 124).

The Furies present an awesome obstacle for Orestes to cross. To be a free man, he must not allow the promises of the Furies to scare him:

> We shall settle on your rotten hearst like flies on butter; Rotten hearts, juicy, luscious hearts. Like bees we'll suck the pus and matter from your hearts (III. 111).

Orestes in the end must leave Electra and his Argos in order to free the town of guilt. Like the flute-player who was able to rid the town of Scyros of its "foul disease" (III. 127), Orestes opened the doors to the awaiting Furies, and with his guilt"vanished forever" (III. 127).

Another set of images recognized by immediacy of identification and association is that of animals. To Sartre, people who attempt to define themselves through the judgments of others are like creatures being led to slaughter or ignominious servitude.

The animal references in The Flies and The Respectful Prostitute can be best grouped according to their family or similarity of physical condition. Such classification is necessary in The Flies since a presentation of each animal image as it appears chronologically in the play would result in a confusing matrix of cross-references. Every character in the play is at some time described in animal terminology; more specifically, every character in The Flies at some point possesses characteristics of helplessly ravaged or brutally rapacious animals.

These references, as Sartre created them, come either as interpersonal judgments or as personal self-criticisms. The king complains to Zeus that Orestes seems to get all the help, whereas he himself was merely a pawn of Zeus, a "poor creature" (II.ii.101). Aegistheus, according to Orestes, deserves to be stamped out like a "foul brute" (II.ii.105). Electra, waiting for Orestes to complete the murder, fears that her mother will be "screaming like an animal in pain" (II.ii.106). Orestes, once he has killed his mother and step-father, notices that Electra has changed. She has become afraid of the crime,

and, as Orestes notices, she looks af if "some wild beast had clawed your face" (III. 113). Although she denies that any animal had scratched her, she does personify his crime as an animal "tearing off my cheeks and eyelids" (III. 112). Even Zeus, the trickster god, seems like the snake which, instead of being charmed, charms men in his "slow, dark ritual dance before men's eyes" (II.ii.103).

More specifically, within this animal set of images, sea creatures are used briefly as images of isolation and imprisonment. Garcin, for instance, is caught by the octopus-like clutches of Estelle.

Estelle is a thoroughly detestable baby killer who needs a man's strong love and approval. Garcin, however, a weak individual, a coward in life, cannot give her the love she craves. He has to settle his own conscience first, but to do so he must approach Estelle, but on a different level than what she wants. He hates her for what she is, but he needs her approval. He tells her that she is "like an octopus" (I. 42). Estelle is irresistible to Garcin, but the prospect of being captured by such irresistible power is hideous to him.

Aegistheus, in <u>The Flies</u>, is the king of Argos, but he is actually as much of a slave as his stepdaughter is. He has not gained the full power that he wanted, and he realizes he has only served someone else's purposes in slaughtering Agamemnon and terrorizing the town with Dead Men's Day. He asks Zeus:

> Have you in me, Lord Zeus, the king you wished for Argos? I come and go among my people, I speak in trumpet tones, I parade the terror of my frown, and all who see me cringe in an agony of repentance. But I--what am I but an empty shell? Some creature has devoured me unawares, gnawed out my inner self. And now looking within, I see I am more dead than Agamemnon. (II.ii.98-99)

His isolation is like that of a sea shell. The substance of the spirit has been slowly stolen away by some "creature," and Aegistheus is left no better than a broken piece of shell.

Insects, as "creature" images, are used as the central image of oppression in The Flies. The flies themselves had been sent to Argos to torment the townspeople for the crime they witnessed. Soon the townspeople became like insects, crawling about under the burden and shame of their sin. Like Kafka's Gregor Samsa, the people had slowly evolved into bugs. Orestes and the tutor are told by Zeus early in the play that the flies are a "symbol" (I. 55) and that the townspeople have become victims of what the gods did to them:

> See that old creature over there, creeping away like a beetle on her little black feet, and hugging the walls. Well, she's a good specimen of the squat black vermin that teem in every cranny of the town. (I. 55)

The presence of the insects are hinted at even when Electra describes Aegistheus' face as "slack" with "that absurd beard like a regiment of spiders running round his chin" (II.i.86).

In one instance, however, insect imagery is used in a context that is not immediately recognizable as being disgusting or trodden down. When Orestes discusses his life with the tutor, he admits that aimless irresponsibility is not the type of freedom that he wants. He says to the tutor, "You

have left me free as the strands torn by the wind from spiders' webs that one sees floating ten feet above the ground. I'm light as gossamer and walk on air" (I. 61). At first such freedom of movement seems desirable, but to Orestes the freedom of the spider's web to float implies a useless, helpless state, dependent upon a shift of wind for motivation. The image of the spider here is not used because of the immediate reaction one has to the ugliness of the spider. Here the image is used to help explain the despair Orestes feels in his rootlessness. Even though Zeus can turn the flies into caterpillars in order to fool the people, and even though Orestes, it appears, is as free as a web, the essential problem remains behind the illusion. Behind the illusion lurks the ugly reality which here Sartre illustrates by his use of insects.

Most of the animal imagery, however, is more obvious than the one just mentioned because the majority of animal imagery refers either to repugnant animals or to animals in repugnant situations. For instance, Zeus claims to Aegistheus that "for one man dead (Agamemnon) twenty thousand living men (are) wallowing in patience" (II.ii.102). Pigs are mostly closely associated with the king and queen who have grown into middle age as fat, disgusting people. As Electra pulls the mantle off her dead step-father, she admits, "I'm glad, glad to see that swine lying at my feet" (II.ii.107).

Sartre used swine as an image because, like a spider, pigs are immediately recognizable as loathsome creatures, just

as to Zeus and Electra, the king and queen are obviously disgusting people for their habit of making others serve them as they rest amid the filth of their sin.

On the ohter hand, an animal image might not refer to a repugnant animal, but to some animal in a repugnant situation. Fish are used, but they are used only in a state of their helpless death. When Zeus explains the town to Orestes, he points to the old lady and tells Orestes to "Watch her wiggle, like a hooked fish" (I. 55). And, when Electra gloats over the dead body of Aegistheus she notices his "dead-fish eyes goggling up at nothing" (II.ii.107). The helplessness of those animals to Sartre is the repugnant dependency which so many people in actual situations create for themselves, just as Aegistheus and the old woman helped create their own dependency.

Similarly, birds are used only in a helpless, doomed situation to connote not only that the humans are stupid, but they might soon be killed in an ignoble situation. When Orestes tells Electra that he is interested in killing the king and queen for his own sake and not for the sake of the people, he claims that he "did not say what I'd do with all those cackling fowls; maybe I'll cring their necks" (II.i.94). Later, when Zeus attempts to caution Aegistheus against Orestes, he says, "Yes, that nice-minded young man will kill you as he'd kill a chicken" (II.ii.102). In either case, the bird image implies that the people are in as much danger as an offensively loud, stupid bird in a barnyard.

Cattle are also used as images to denote this senseless progression into slaughter. A shepherd, picked for his loud "bellowing," is responsible for announcing the annual event of Dead Men's Day to the people who, like cows, come obediently. Cattle imagery is suggested also as Electra sees Orestes in her dreams as someone who has lost his human characteristics, although not in the same servile sense in which the towns-people have lost their identity. She sees Orestes full of justice and vengeance, "coming, with lowered head, sullen with pain" (II.i.97). He is non-human to her, and she would like to drive him away. She sees, perhaps, the vicious threat carried through in gory truth in his ox-like stubborness to complete his job of revenge. In effect, then, cattle are used in two contexts. Orestes is stubborn, willful, and frightening to Electra, even though it is Orestes' very stubbornness that will help him carry through. On the other hand, by being stubborn and doing his job, he will kill the king who, as Zeus suggests, will be "slaughtered like a dumb ox" (II.ii.100).

Electra dreams of such slaughter as she tried to imagine the death of the king and queen. The image of butchered animals, perhaps of a deer, comes to mind as Electra imagines the king and queen murdered with "a wisp of steam, like one's breath on a cold morning, rising from their split bellies" (p. 86). Orestes, who is to become the actual butcher, rhetorically asks Electra, "Shall I not lie as much at home within your red walls as the red-aproned butcher in his shop, among carcasses of flayed sheep and cattle" (II.ii.94). In effect,

the crimes committed by instituting Dead Men's Day have placed Clytemnestra and Aegistheus on the level of animals which have been sold for slaughter. Their past deeds have sealed their fate.

Another animal image Sartre uses to imply docile submission is dogs. His frequent use of dog imagery implies that dogs are subservient and at the capricious will of their masters as are the people of Argos subservient to Aegistheus and Zeus. The derogatory tone of the image does vary somewhat when Orestes, dreaming of his future self, discusses freedom with his tutor: "Why, an old, mangy dog, warming himself at the hearth, and struggling to his feet with a little whimper to welcome his master home--why, that dog has more memories than I! At least he recognizes his master. His master. But what can I call mine?" (I. 61). Orestes' future role, in reality, becomes much more militant than the passivity of the hearth dog.

What is implied in the comparison Orestes uses is made more explicit in the other references Sartre makes regarding dogs. Sartre sees dogs and their human counterparts as passive recipients of abuse from cruel masters. In No Exit, Garcin, in his outrageous relationship with Estelle is, as Inez says, "like a well-trained dog who comes when his mistress calls" (I. 46). The people of Argos are also like dogs who come obediently, even to the cruel master who sums them all up in his general condemnation, "Dogs!" (II.i.78).at the beginning of the celebration of Dead Men's Day.

Orestes questions the status quo throughout The Flies. Before he has committed himself to Electra, revealing his identity, he feels helpless perhaps awed, by the enormity of the problem facing him. He prays to Zeus, "Tell me, Zeus, is it truly your will that a king's son, hounded from his city, should meekly school himself to banishment and slink away from his ancestral home like a whipped cur?" When Orestes then adds, "I cannot think of it" (II.i.91), he reflects what Electra has felt all along about her brother's role in Argos. Before Orestes reveals who he is to Electra, he asks what she would think of a brother who would not be interested in killing the king and queen. She responds, "Then I'd spit in his face, and I'd say: 'Go away, you cur; go and keep company where you belong, with women'" (II.i.88). Finally, when Orestes does kill the king and queen, he demonstrates that he is stronger than the townspeople, his sister, and even the gods. The gods have sent the Furies to torment Orestes, but Orestes is able to keep them at bay for the night he spends in the temple. As the Furies gloat over how they will persecute Electra, Orestes drives them away saying, "Keep quiet. Back to your kennel, bitches!" (III. 113). Orestes, by his commitment to action, has become master of his own destiny.

Horses also serve as a docile animal image. Sartre consistently pictures horses as sometimes dramatically hysterical, sometimes brutishly stupid beasts. Although there is a certain majesty implied by the horse image, that majesty makes the

horse, unlike any other animal, that much more of a tragic figure when he falls, or is destroyed, or is humiliated. Early in the development of The Flies, Electra conjectures what her brother will be like and what he will do to Clytemnestra. She seems to realize that if he does what she wants him to do, he will bring even more tragedy to her family. She feels resigned to the blind justice she and her family has experienced. In fact, justice, to her, is as unpredictable as a frenzied horse:

> He, too, is doomed; tangled up in his destiny, like a horse whose belly is ripped open and his legs are caught up in his guts, And now at every step he tears his bowels out. (II.i.87)

Orestes also sees himself as fated to an enormous, burdensome enterprise. He must "take on a burden on my shoulders, a load of guilt so heavy as to drag me down, right down into the abyss of Argos" (II.i.93). But he realizes that if he does not kill Aegistheus, whom Zeus says is "majestically stupid, like a horse" (II.ii.100), he will live without purpose and without any goals. Life without commitment would be, as Garcin describes his own hell, a "vicious circle, like the horses on a roundabout" (No Exit, I. 31).

Orestes, however, escapes the circle which Sartre portrays in terms of a horse performing a meaningless and endless chore. His decision to act created a new human being. To Sartre, individuals who act in accordance with their own set of values are unstoppable. The image Sartre uses to describe such power of will is that of an unbridled horse. When a man allows

himself to be directed by other men, he becomes like a horse in harness which other men throttle. But when a man decides on his own what he shall do, then other men must "let him go his gait" (II.ii.105). "Once freedom lights a beacon in man's heart, the gods are powerless against him" (II.ii.104). When Orestes admits to Electra what he intends to do, he mentions a series of searches he has carried on in looking for his true self, and each search is described in terms of a determined, although misdirected, labor familiar to work horses:

> Only yesterday I walked the earth haphazard; thousands of roads I tramped that brought me nowhere, for they were other men's roads. Yes, I tried them all; the hauler's tracks along the riverside, the mule-paths, in the mountains, and the broad flagged highways of the charioteers. (II.ii.108)

Like any of the Sartrean characters who emerge as masters of their own fate, Orestes emerges triumphant in the tragic majesty of a hardworked but enduring horse.

The key image in The Respectful Prositiute is a snake bracelet which Lizzie, the prostitute, wears. Sartre uses the snake as a reminder, like the flies in Argos, that people often devote themselves to unattractive and false responsibilities. Lizzie sees her bracelet as a symbol of evil, the evil she believes broods over and constantly affects her life. She feels fated to her position of demeaning prostitution and to selling out to the corrupt authority in the southern town.

She does attempt to break the hold of the evil charm of the snake bracelet. It is obvious to her that she has done nothing, and she is certain that the Negro is innocent, yet

she finds she is asked to defend the honor of Thomas, the white man. As soon as she understands the choice Fred offers her, she throws the beacelet on the floor. "God damn you, can't you pick on anyone else" (I.i.263). The situation is obviously unfair, and for the moment she wants to fight her way out of the predicament. When the police knock, however, Lizzie suddenly becomes resigned to her fate, picks the bracelet up, and assumes that the trouble she is in is the way things have to be. "I knew it had to happen. _She exhibits the bracelet._ It's this thing's fault. _She kisses it and puts it back on her arm._ I guess I'd better keep it on me" (I.i.264). Later, when she decides to live according to her own rules and protect the Negro, she again throws the bracelet away, seemingly immune to the snake's old hypnotic power of evil. But Lizzie is not strong enough to correct the situation herself, in other words, to completely escape the influence of the snake. She wants the Negro to do the shooting. Since she won't fully commit herself, and since the Negro won's shoot a white man, Lizzie's attempt to be free fails. Although she throws her bracelet away, calls it a "pig of a snake" (I.i.267), she allows herself to be Fred's mistress at the end. The evil power of the snake prevails.

A consistency of attitude towards animals is preserved throughout the three plays mentioned here. To Sartre, people who live in accordance with the desires and commands of other people have about them the helpless air simple animals have

before their masters. By the association of animals and people, Sartre is able to demonstrate the blind helplessness experienced by those who live their lives under the will of others.

By his extensive use of the mask, Sartre is able to demonstrate another type of helplessness: the inability and, often, fear to communicate with others. In the ancient Greek theatre, the mask was used to give the audience an instant identification device, a convention that served to reveal the inner nature of a particular individual. Sartre uses the mask, on the other hand, to demonstrate that the true nature of an individual is sometimes partially and, often, wholly concealed.

The mask image is best explicated by explaining why, to Sartre, masks exist, and by explaining where these masks appear in their general categories in relation to the attitudes Sartre wishes to communicate. The point Sartre makes through his mask images is that as long as a man interacts with other men, that one man will, in part, judge himself as other men see him. Therefore, that one man will often adopt a mask with which he hopes he will be identified. It follows that the other men are all doing the same thing with each other. The result, of course, is that these individuals are not living life on their own terms, and they are creating a mask as a spectacle for other eyes to see. Sartre's use of masks, therefore, demonstrates that there is a continual search for the real person beneath the mask. It is a search not only

by the "other", but also it is a search by the individual into his own nature.

In the final analysis, however, only the individual in question is in the position to make a responsibly accurate evaluation of his true nature. Estelle, in No Exit, states this idea when she looks at Garcin and Inez and says, "There are some faces that tell me everything at once. Yours don't convey anything" (I. 15). In this microcosm of life on earth, in the light of reality apparent to Sartre, the artificiality of life has been stripped away, and Estelle no longer feels secure making superficial deductions about people. One lover she dismisses from her mind, evidently once attracted by his physical features, but now, in hell, repulsed by "his long eyelashes, his pretty girlish face" (I. 34).

Electra, in the second act of The Flies, agrees that we often fail when we try, as she did, to read faces. She had a dream of what she hoped her brother would be and of what he would do. However, when Orestes did, in fact, appear, she admits, his eyes "made a fool of me" (II.ii.86). "You came here with your kind, girlish face and your eager eyes--and you made me forget my hatred" (II.ii.86). Beneath what Electra thought to be a "girlish face," lurked the hatred and intensifying rage Orestes felt at his own irresponsible freedom and at the plight of Argos. What she thought she had seen in her brother's face was certainly not reflective of Orestes' true feelings.

Although there is no general consensus that effeminate looking males is a pet concern of Sartre's, it is interesting to note the number of times in Sartre's plays that delicate males are not the frail sisters they appear to be. Estelle makes the same error of judgment in No Exit when she reveals what in her own mind constitutes a coward. A virile face should belong to a brave, aggressive male, and Garcin, the real coward, has that aggressive face. "You haven't a coward's chin, or a coward's mouth, or a coward's voice, or a coward's hair. And its for your mouth, your hair, your voice, I love you" (I. 41).

What Estelle never can accept is the fact that the individual's genuine worth is found not by examining the cosmetic nature of human beauty, but by looking inwards to the essential concerns of the spirit. However, one of the discouragements of such a personal, inner gaze is, of course, isolation. Another, and more important discouragement as Sartre sees it, is, one, the initial shock of finding little at the center and, two, the abandonment of any further meaningful search by the discouraged individual. A mask image Sartre uses to describe this inward, isolated and often fruitless gaze, is in his personification of the town of Argos and of the "faces" of the houses. According to Zeus, on the day of Agamemnon's return, Argos was a simple country town, "basking in the sun, yawning the years away" (I. 54). By the time Orestes and his tutor arrived in the town years later,

the town, because of its inactivity and passivity, had been besieged by the flies. The effect which the king's murder and Dead Men's Day have had is that the townspeople, like their houses, have turned inward, oblivious to the outside world. enveloped in their roles as accomplices. Therefore, when Orestes and his tutor enter the town expecting to be entertained, traditionally, as guests, they are ignored and avoided.

> Only look at those houses and tell me how they strike you. You will boserve there's not a window anywhere. They open on closed courtyards, I suppose, and turn their backsides to the street Orestes makes a fretful gesture very good, sir. I'll knock--but nothing will come of it. (I. 52)

When the door, opened a "cautious inch" (I. 52), slams in his face, it becomes obvious to them both that the town is dormant in its isolation, with windows opening on "closed courtyards" (I. 52). The people, like the houses they live in, are introspective, and their lives are as confined as is their vision of the closed courtyard.

Insofar as being able or not being able to change the artificiality of the mask is concerned, Garcin, Inez, and Estelle no longer have an opportunity to change. The choice to do what they should have done has passed by the time they are gathered in their Second Empire room. The mask image in this case is absolute, unable to effectively portray human nature, and is therefore, imprisoning. The face has become a lifeless facade. One image of the lifeless mask is that of

eyes which are incapable of tears. Because the eyes have lost their power to reflect any genuine emotion, they cannot produce tears of genuine grief. In _No Exit_, both Garcin and Estelle catch glimpses of the people they left behind, noticing that their loved ones cannot cry. Garcin mentions his wife's "big tragic eyes. . .with that martyred look they always had" (I. 12), yet "she never did cry" (I. 12). Estelle notices that, at the funeral, her sister is trying to cry but cannot. And, when Estelle breaks down later when her true former self is revealed, she cannot cry either:

> Estelle: _A Pause._ Oh, how I loathe you! _She sobs tearlessly._
> Garcin: Nothing doing. Tears don't flow in this place. (I. 29)

Estelle points out the cosmetic quality of the mask when she attempts to reconcile the absence of tears. Her sister. she says, should not cry at the funeral anyway. "Tears always mess up one's face, don't they?" (I. 12).

Another manner which Sartre uses to describe the artificiality of the mask is his portrayal of people who feel they must cover their faces with their hands as if to keep away from all eyes the real secret of their lives or to hide from all eyes the secret of some other person's mask. The mask becomes, at times, too terrible to behold. Electra, in _The Flies_, admits she would not mind being thrown into jail. At least, she says about the king and queen, she "wouldn't have to see their faces" (I. 66). Yet when she has vicariously had her revenge, and the corrupt king and queen are slaughtered by

Orestes, she is repulsed by the situation she has helped create. She becomes aware of a part of her nature which disgusts her. As if to block her real self from view, she attempts to cover her face with her hands.

Through Estelle in No Exit, Sartre demonstrates another example of this dread that the mask might not block out what is ugly. Estelle, while she was alive, worshipped superficially beautiful men, one of whom shot himself. When she enters hell, she suddenly becomes aware of the consequences of the hollow love she pursued and subjected others to all her life. Hell becomes a lack of physical beauty and a reminder of her past evil deeds. When she enters and sees Garcin covering his face with his hands, she fears he is her suicidal lover and that he holds a grotesquely disfigured face in his lands. Later it is seen, however, that Garcin has his reasons for covering his face. He wishes he were a hero, yet he is not one. And, even though Estelle wishes he were virile and claims he looks like a hero, Garcin hides his face to avoid a direct confrontation between his false hero-mask and the two prying women who might reveal his cowardice.

Because the masks in No Exit are purposely inaccurate portrayals of the persons behind them, the hidden person is, in effect, faceless. Each of the three people long for an ideal identity which others woyld immediately recognize, yet each person must act as the tormentor and the tormented. The "hell", each discovers, is the process of revealing the true

character of everyone in the room. Estelle breaks from Inez's hypnotic suggestion that she use Inez as a mirror. Estelle suddenly cries, "You haven't any eyes!" (I. 35). In effect, she is correct, since the eyes she would have reflecting her face must be masculine and full of praise as a male's eyes would. Garcin, hands in face, has no eyes for her either. Like Estelle, he would also like to see s certain reflection, but he wants reflected in Estelle's eyes the image of a hero. Inez is faceless, and Garcin, to avoid discovery by others in the room, buries his face and also becomes faceless.

Another illustration of the faceless man image is the fact that there are no mirrors in <u>No Exit</u>. Inez first notices that, for some reason, mirrors are not a part of the Second Empire drawing room furniture. She, like the others, soon realizes that a mirror reflects only what the viewer wishes to see. Because only a false facade is reflected, the absence of mirrors implies that all reflections are illusions and that the three people in the room have no true faces to reflect. Part of the agony of their hell is that they cannot have the solace of peering at their false mask and being strengthened by what they would like to be genuine.

The relationship between Estelle and Inez best illustrates the facelessness implied by the absence of mirrors. Without her mirror, Estelle cannot accurately apply cosmetics to her face. Inez recognizes Estelle's predicament and offers her eyes as mirrors and advice on how to apply and where to apply

cosmetics. Inez's ultimate goal, of course, is to seduce Estelle with her hypnotic stare. Therefore, what Inez returns is not the reflection of virile worship of feminine beauty that Estelle believes in and wants to see reflected in the lesbian's eyes. Finally, the attempts Inez makes to "be your glass" (I. 20) become too frank and her advances become too obvious for Estelle to ignore. Without proper mirrors, Estelle cannot sustain the false, cosmetic mask of superficial beauty which she has sustained all her life. Without mirrors, she is stripped of the pretense of her false face. She cannot see herself as she would like to, she will not see herself as Inez would like to, and she does become, in her own terms, faceless.

The essential difference in the mask imagery used in The Flies and No Exit is that in The Flies masks are not fixed or absolute. And, whereas in No Exit, the three people are doomed to an everlasting expose and coverup of one another's false masks, in The Flies, all the major characters are aware of the hypocrisy of their own masks. The Flies, therefore, uses a more obvious reference to masks because the characters never deny the existence of a false or broken facade behind which they live and attempt to sway other people. Throughout the play there exists a constant conscious analysis of various people and how their lives have affected the way they want to appear.

Orestes, in several instances, reflects on the face of his mother, the queen, who, at her death, had "great sad eyes,

lakes of lambent darkness in the pallor of her face" (III. 15). The pretensions of power cannot hide the strain of how she and her husband used that power. Her face, he remarks to Electra, "is like a pleasant garden that hail and storms have ravaged" (I. 70). As Lizzie was unable to commit herself in The Respectful Prostitute, Clytemnestra apparently did not ever feel totally committed to the murder of her first husband, and the subsequent strain of personal doubt shows. Orestes seems to vent more fury on Aegistheus than on his mother, and his description of her shows a subdued sympathy for an old woman whose mask belies great tragedy. Electra has no sympathy, however. To her, Clytemnestra is festooned with a mockery of a mask. She is a "stout lady with dyed hair, with thick lips... Every evening I have to feel that woman slobbering on my face. Ugh! Like a piece of raw meat on my forehead" (I. 66). In Electra's description of her mother, one can see the mask of a heavily painted, antique madam who presides over the private brothel of Aegistheus.

The mask, in The Flies, serves as a constant awareness of the roles being played and the disguises being used to manipulate others in the various references made about the facial features of the power hierarchy, Zeus and Aegistheus. If one is to believe Zeus when he says to the king, "I told you you were in my image" (II.ii.103), then one can surmise the extent to which the entire power structure is corrupt. Aegistheus admits, "For fifteen years I've been playing a part to mask

their power from them" (II.ii.103). However, the mask which he created for himself in order to keep the people suppressed has turned on him, and what he sees, finally, is what the people see as repulsive, unapproachable, and cruel.

The scorn Zeus receives is also directed at his mask because it is behind the benign appearing, cold, immovable mask on the statue's face that the real trickster god hides. The tutor describes Zeus in terms of the god's "great beard" (I. 53) as if the beard had been added merely to gain respect, regardless as to Zeus' actual features. Electra portrays literally the putrefaction and corruption visible in the face of Zeus' statue:

> Yes you old swine, scowl away at me
> with your goggle eyes and your fat face
> all smeared with raspberry juice--scowl
> away, but you won't scare me, not you! (I. 64)

To Electra, Zeus is only a meaningless lump of white wood, decorated with painted green eyes and smeared blood. She is fully conscious of the sham and pretense involved in the rule of the wooden god and of Aegistheus. She is not growing in awareness of the falsity of her father in the same sense that the characters in No Exit discover each other. Electra is trying to belittle the opposition and thereby find the will to over-throw the corruption she knows exists.

The eyes of the mask serve as the focal point of the study of Sartre's employment of the mask image. It was mentioned earlier that tears would not come to the eyes of Garcin's wife or to Estelle. The fact that these two could not cry

implied that their masks had lost all power to communicate meaning because the character behind the mask had become lock-ed into a situation where there would never be another chance to change the decision he had made in life. In such a case, the face had lost all opportunities of communication, and the eyes no longer could "see" the outside world. In hell, the eyelids of the three are paralyzed open. As the light cannot be shut off, neither can life in hell be relieved of its eternal suffering. As Garcin discovers, "I'm to live without eyelids" (I. 6). His torture will be his constant awareness of his cowardice. The face simply does not work. Their eyes cannot shut out the dust which they are "trying to throw (dust) in each other's eyes" (I. 17).

Whereas in No Exit the face is bereft of expression, in The Flies the mask takes on a more theatrically realistic approach to the appearance of the mask.. In The Flies the characters often are mentioned as having masks covering their faces. Although the mask largely obscures the true inner nature of the characters, the actual eyes of the person be-neath the mask can be seen and do impart a certain degree of honesty to those who have the courage to look closely and carefully. It is on this isolated spot of the face that Sartre's references to the mask concentrate because, to Sartre, the eyes are the only authentic indicators of the individual's struggle with himself and with the values of people around him.

It is evident early in The Flies that the eyes beneath the mask serve as a striking insight into the spiritual decay

of the townspeople. The idiot boy's eyes "ooze" (I. 53). The townspeople whose suffering is not as immediately evident as that of the boy's, have "sunken eyes" (II.i.77). Their day-to-day existence, burdened by guilt, has taken a toll which is visible in the gaunt expression seen in their eyes. Even the eyes of the statue of Zeus communicate a message that the cold white wood of the statue cannot.[9] The trickster god, as Electra sees him, has "gogle eyes" (I. 64), like some hideous insect.

As The Flies progresses toward the murder of the king, the eyes of various individuals change in appearance as the individuals modulate in their commitment to act or not to act. There is a hard, sparkling strength about the eyes of those who appear as if they are consigned to doing something about their situation. Electra muses at one point about how her father would react if he could see her defiance of Aegistheus. "No, his eyes are sparkling in the havoc of his face, he's twisting his blood-stained lips in the shadow of a smile" (II. ii.82). When Clytemnestra instructs Electra to smile, she notes that, earlier, while looking out her window, she noticed "a very different Electra, a girl with flashing eyes, bold gestures..." (I. 69). The queen had been correct. Electra's

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[9]There is a contradiction in the stage directions to Act I and the dialogue of Act I regarding the statue's eye color:
Directions; Act I: The image has white eyes and blood-smeared cheeks; (I. 51)
Act I; Electra: And all that frightfulness, the blood on his face, his dark green eyes. (I. 64)

eyes had been sparkling because she was, at that moment, discussing the possibility of the murder of her mother and stepfather. Clytemnestra also once had eyes that were full of life, or "smoldering" (I. 69), as she puts it when she warns Electra to avoid self-ruin. By the time of the action of The Flies, of course, the queen had become a docile pawn of the king, but there was a time, she tells her daughter, when she burned and "smoldered," a term implying for Sartre a sign of vitality that enables people to act in accordance with what they feel they want out of life.

On the other hand, those who refuse to take action into their own hands in The Flies, are characterized by dead eyes. Like the paralyzed eyelids in No Exit, Clytemnestra's eyes have lost their smoldering look, and Orestes admits, "But I hadn't counted on those dead eyes" (I. 68). Electra also mentions the queen's "dead face" (II.i.86), but the quality of Electra's eyes change also, and in the same pattern as Clytemnestra's. Whereas Electra dreams of a brother who will have "bloodshot eyes like our father's, always smoldering with rage" (II.i.87), she is too weak to comply with the murder Orestes commits. Orestes tells her, "Where, how, have I seen dead eyes like those? Electra--you are like her. Like Clytemnestra" (III. 113). He can see his "crime in those eyes" (III. 113) as she listens to the torments of the Furies and is, unlike Orestes, terrified by the implications of his crime.

An interesting, and complex, study of the change which takes

place in the eyes of those who decide to act, can be seen in Orestes whose commitment to act, and, hence, to find his identity, is complicated by his use of a pseudonym early in the play. At first, Orestes is not convinced he should murder the king and queen. He is not even sure he should reveal who he really is. When Electra first sees the timid Philebus and talks with him, she admits that she pictures _her_ savior as one who has "bloodshot eyes" (II.i.87), and Philebus does not appear to be the raging bull she expects, and at that point, he is not. He does encourage her to forget her hatred, and she momentarily is lured away from her constant brooding over her fate. When she has a confrontation with Aegistheus and loses, she realizes that the false look in Philebus' eyes was encouraging her to run away from her destiny. "Let me look at your eyes. Yes, it was your eyes that made a fool of me" (II.i.86). And, soon afterwards, she adds, "You came here with your kind, girlish face and your eager eyes..." (II.i.86). Philebus had attempted to spirit Electra away to another city where she could forget the travails of Argos. Electra, however, feels fated to her situation, finding, perhaps, some degree of authenticity in her struggle against the king and queen.

As Electra repudiates Philebus, however, Orestes has just admitted his true identity to Zeus, and the dedicated avenger begins to emerge, and the eyes of Orestes begin to grow bold. At this point of transition, there are two conflicting emotions

reflected in Orestes' eyes, and these emotions confuse Electra. She notices the girlish face and mementarily finds it attractive, yet she is puzzled, at the same time, by a different look uncharacteristic of Philebus. "I don't know what you're after, but this I know: that I musn't believe you. Your eyes are too bold for my liking" (II.i.86). As Orestes weighs whether to escape with Electra or to kill his mother, he appears determined to do something, but Electra is wary of the stranger's motives because she is not sure of his true identity.

It is consistent with human nature and the nature of hope that Electra suddenly finds an interpretation of the look in Orestes' eyes when he finally reveals his true identity. When Orestes swears to her, "I am Orestes" (II.i.88), she eagerly clutches to the new image in half-conviction, half-hope. "So those shining eyes, that noble forehead, are--my brother's! Orestes..." (II.i.88).

Once Orestes assumes the task of retribution for the house of Atreus, Electra pales in the sight of blood, and, once again, this movement either toward or away form commitment can be seen in Sartre's reference to the eyes. Electra has become steadily terrified of the implication of the murders. Although Orestes declares that he "must open their eyes" (III. 123) in Argos, the eyes of Electra have become like those dead eyes of her mother. Orestes, on the other hand, grows more and more fierce looking. To Electra, Orestes' eyes have become threatening. They have "lost their glow; they're dull and smoldering"

(II.i.93). The "bloodshot eyes" she had dreamed of had, in reality, appeared too awesome. The dedication to butchery burning in those eyes reduced the small and insignificant rebellion in Electra to an hysterical revulsion from the responsibilities of commitment.

CHAPTER II

The second category of images that Sartre uses characterizes the hope which can be derived from an existential existence. These hope images reveal that an existential life cannot be defined by ordinary images, but is seen as a life free of the material world which the images of despair represent. Images of hope do not comment on what hope directly resembles. Instead, they demonstrate how hope can be understood by altering one's way of looking at life. The images of hope, therefore, do not refer to a relationship between a man and material things as do the images of despair. In addition, hope is the opposite of despair because it is paradoxical and often discoverable after long examination. It follows that the images Sartre uses to define the nature of hope must illustrate this paradoxical quality by being paradoxical themselves. Paradox is the most important characteristic of Sartre's images primarily because the implications of such imagery are more vast than that of the direct, head-on connotations of the first category.

The basis for such imagery lies in the fact that Sartre feels that at any given point in life a human being has the option to take all that oppresses him in life, all the symbols and images of those things which oppress him, and turn the

signs of oppression and despair into signs of hope and independence. There is, for instance, an examination of the typical connotations of the color black and its opposite, and a subsequent re-evaluation of the symbolic value of black emerges. There is also an examination of the connotative values associated with the properties of light and darkness. The subsequent realization to be derived from such a presentation of contradictory notions about these properties again encourages one to redefine and to create a new methodology for interpreting images. The same is true in Sartre's images which refer to the contradictory implications of the light or heavy properties of weight. In presenting these two properties as they would appear in relation to human freedom, it is apparent that Sartre asks for a total re-examination of deeply ingrained associations of spiritual freedom and images which have been often used to characterize the spiritual qualities of freedom.

Images referred to in this second category require constant analysis in terms of the progression of the ideas in each play. It should be noted, in addition, that any Sartrean image must be examined in specific context; Sartre's images do not have a consistent connotative value, even within one play. As Sartre remarked in <u>Being and Nothingness</u>:

> ...nor could we constitute a universal symbolism. Rather the psychoanalyst will have to rediscover at each step a symbol functioning in the particular case which he is considering... we must always be ready to consider that symbols change meaning and to abandon the symbol used hitherto ...Our concern here is to understand what is

individual and often even instantaneous.[10]

These images which refute our established ideas of typical image associations are presented here in an order determined by this writer's personal choice. Sartre does not demonstrate in his plays that an understanding of the true nature of light leads one to a greater understanding of the nature of weight and then to the true nature of force. Instead, the three image sets of light, weight, and force are separate catalogues of closely related images, and are examined here as they appear chronologically in the plays. Even though examples of different image sets often appear side by side in a scene, each image has a unique meaning and does not bring about by its appearence a heightened or lessened awareness of any neighboring image.

The order of presentation, therefore, is based on what this writer feels to be the order of importance to what Sartre is trying to say. The properties of light and darkness are judged less demanding and influential as the properties of weight, and the properties of passive, physical weight less influential than the properties of active force. The decision to present the images in this order rests on the knowledge that Sartre's choice of images is based on the immediacy and power the image can evoke. It is logical, therefore that his images be presented according to their potential to communicate

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[10]Being and Nothingness, p. 573.

what he is trying to say. The least powerful image is presented first, and the most powerful presented last.

The idea of paradox can be seen in the growing awareness Orestes has of the paradoxical images of hope which, he finally understands, surround him in Argos. His preconceptions of life had demanded what the tutor suggested: detachment and escape from worldly duties. Trained to search for philosophical truths, Orestes met with frustration and rootlessness everywhere he turned on the journeys with his tutor. At the moment he declares to Electra and to the world that he is the avenging Orestes, the blinders are removed from his eyes, and he begins to realize the contradictory nature of freedom. In effect, the many characteristics of suffering in Argos contain clues which point toward freedom and toward a more realistic definition of hope than that Orestes had been trained to comprehend.

With Orestes' remark that "Everyone wears black in Argos" (I. 56), Sartre proposes that hope can be seen in a contradictory comparison of light and dark. The tutor is also repulsed by the people who, like "black beetles" (I. 55) scurry from their path. Orestes, however, is curious about the rationality of the black-draped Argonians, the "black vermin" (I. 55) who creep on "black feet" (I. 56) according to Zeus. What is baffling to Orestes is that here, surrounded by signs of depression, he thinks he might find the hope he is looking for.

The very repulsiveness of people clothed "in black from head to foot. In mourning..." (I. 56) indicates to Orestes that he might find some sense of commitment. He is drawn by the attraction of feeling genuine, although painful, dedication to an idea as the black robed townspeople do. It is not until later that he fully comprehends that the Argonians only use their black remorse, and, even then, only once a year, and he consequently rejects their insincerity.

With Electra's encouragement, Orestes begins to understand the paradoxes of freedom and learns that the acceptance of such paradoxes makes a man free. Freedom, Orestes declares, did not appear in books or in quiet meditative thought. Instead, "freedom has crashed down on me like a thunderbolt" (II.ii.109). This freedom is, as Zeus implies, the "freedom of a prisoner languishing in fetters, or a slave nailed to the cross" (III. 116). Although the prisoner be uncomfortable or were tortured, he is still a free individual as long as he believes in himself. As Aegistheus admits, when he questions Zeus, "He knows he's free? Then, to lay hands on him, to put him in irons, is not enought. A free man in a city acts like a plague-spot" (II.ii.104).

Sartre's references to the paradoxical properties of light and darkness also illustrate his contention that freedom is illuminated in least expected ways. Whereas the sun in the normal sense would serve to make things grow and allow man to see, in Argos, as the tutor says, there is nothing "deadlier

than the sun" (I. 51). To Orestes, however, the grilling sun is, like the black robed townspeople, strangely attractive. He realizes that by living in Argos, the sun's "furnace heat singeing my hair would be mine" (I. 62). Once the heat of the sun has become his, and he has killed his mother and step-father, Electra becomes frightened and curiously loses her ability to distinguish the dark night from the light of day. Orestes knows that, at dawn, the Furies will stop their taunts and disappear because the "world of dawn" will "cut through them like swords" (III. 114). Yet, although Orestes says that "It is not night" (II.ii.107), Electra can only notice "How dark the night is. I never knew such darkness; those torches have no effect on it" (II.ii.107). Orestes, through his own action, has become aware of a unique kind of light, the light of freedom, which Electra cannot reconcile, or "see". By rejecting what her brother did, she begins to lose sight metaphorically of him completely. She claims, "it's getting so dark that I can hardly see you; when I stop seeing you. I'm afraid of you" (II.ii.108). "Will it always be as dark as this--always, even in the daytime?" (II.ii.108).

The sun is beneficient to the shadowy ghosts of the dead. At the ~~stone~~ rolling ceremony, Electra tells those gathered that on this day "The sun is shining" (II.i.83).and everywhere people are happy, except in Argos. In Argos, the people are "more dead than alive" (II.i.83), yet the "sorrowing shades" on Dead Men's Day "still like sunlight, shadows though they

are. Last year, when it rained, they were fierce..." Even in the terrible heat and light of the sun, the shadows have dominion, and though only shadows the spirits have a hard unconquerable quality even in the sunlight. Aegistheus describes the dead soul of Nicias' mother as "like a sultry, windless noon, in which nothing stirs, nothing changes, nothing lives." These souls are angry, Aegistheus admits, because "their grievances are timeproof, adamant; rancor without end" (III.i.80), and their hate can "gnaw" the living "to the bone" (II.i.79). Orestes realizes that he must avoid the pitfalls of the insincere black cloaks and must, instead, accept the grilling of the sun. Without commitment, without the sun's "furnace," "I'm a mere shadow of a man; of all the ghosts haunting this town today, none is ghostlier than I" (II.i.90).

In a similar way, the qualities of weight are applied to the concept of freedom in a paradoxical manner. Any light. carefree concept is seen as being either useless or decadent. It has been noted earlier that the freedom which is "light as gossamer" implies uselessness to Orestes. Orestes realizes that without full commitment towards killing his parents, he is "still too--too light" (II.i.93). However, Orestes does not fit Zeus's description of a carefree murderer whose crime "Lies as thistledown on the murderer's conscience" (II. ii. 103). In effect, he does not want to become like the dead men who, as one soldier surmises, are "light as air" (II.ii.96). The acceptance of his responsibility, he realizes,

brings freedom, but steadily throughout the play he grows in awareness of exactly how heavy the burden of that responsibility is.

The paradoxical nature of hope can also be seen when Orestes admits that to gain freedom "I must take a burden on my shoulders, a load of guilt so heavy as to drag me down..." (II.i.93). Freedom can be an awesomely difficult load if that freedom is genuine and not in bad faith. As Orestes begins to comprehend what his sister means by her reference to her "one and only treasure" (II.i.86), he realizes that everywhere around him in Argos there are signs pointing the way he must go. When Orestes has finally faced his destiny and has killed Aegistheus and Clytemnestra, he admits about his crime that

> I shall bear it on my shoulders as a carrier at a ferry carries the traveler to the farther bank...the heavier it is to carry, the better pleased I shall be, for that burden is my freedom. (II.ii.108)

In another sense, however, a heavy object is not used in a consistently positive sense. Just as the black robes were only annual attempts to atone for sins, the large stone covering the cave, although heavy, is an absued symbol which is merely used by Zeus. The stone is a reminder to all the people that their guilt will be reinforced one day a year. Although Orestes begins to grasp the local significance of the annual removal of the stone, he is aware that the ceremony itself is a futile attempt to reconcile past misdeeds. When, in prayer, Orestes asks for divine guidance from Zeus, Zeus creates an-

other of his theatrics by electrifying the stone, an indication that Orestes should serve obeisance like the Argonians. Suddenly he understands that to serve the stone's, and Zeus's, purpose would be to live as others would have him live and to do "Their Right Thing" (II.i.92).

Orestes' "burden" of freedom "weighs on my heart like lead" (III. 124), yet Orestes becomes a free man, rising above his weakening sister and all the other townspeople of Argos. Electra, like her mother,held her evil forever "just at arm's length, glowing darkly like a black crystal" (I. 72). Orestes, however, refuses to allow the stone of Dead Men's cave or the "black crystal" of his mother to hinder him as had the ancient stones of the "Palaces, statues, pillars," and the "stones, stones, stones" (I. 60), weighed down his earlier development. His weight is not in his head but is, instead a literal metaphor of the burden of his spiritual responsibility.

His freedom is a heavy responsibility, yet in its burdensome state, his true freedom is a hard, steel-like weapon against all men who live in bad faith. Electra predicts that the conspiracy to kill the king and queen will be successful because, "From now on, all the moments will link up, like the cogs in a machine, and we shall never rest again until they both are lying on their backs..." (II.i.95). However, when Electra loses her will to accept the brutal slaughter of her mother, the Furies taunt that their "iron talons will be ribboning the flesh" (III. 111) of Electra. It is against those who

abandon the quest that the "cool and hard and gemlike" (III. 110) Furies will roll, "like a torrent over stones" (III. 110).

Because Orestes does not cringe at the magnitude of his crime, he has turned "into an ax and hew those walls asunder, I'll rip open the bellies of those stolid houses..." (II.i. 93). Although he claims he will "be an iron wedge driven into the city, like a wedge rammed into the heart of an oak tree" (II.i.93), the people feel more threatened by the spiritual power radiating around Orestes as the doors to the temple are thrust open and the moving sun flows in. At the doors the screaming people stop, knowing that though their city "fends" Orestes off "with its high walls, red roofs, locked doors" (II.i.93). Argos belongs to Orestes who claims that the town is "mine for the taking" (II.i.93).

As Orestes walks out through the crowd with his heavy, steel-like burden of freedom, he reflects the Sartrean doctrine that "If an object which I hold in my hands is solid, I can let it go when I please; its inertia symbolizes for me my total power; I give it its foundation." [11] So we have the Sartrean hero under the stress of responsibility but free at last, free to take up the awful weight of living a responsible life.

It is evident in The Flies that few people are able to master their own lives. The same is true in No Exit and The

[11] Being and Nothingness, p. 608.

Respectful Prostitute, yet in The Flies there is victory for Orestes. With his victory, Sartre demonstrates his need to have two separate types of images to communicate his ideas.

In order to describe people who lack the courage to take the matters of existence into their own hands, Sartre uses a type of image which has an immediately recognizable connotation. What Sartre attempts to describe with these images is a situation where grief is the uniform state of mind. To Sartre, this uniformity is best described by images which have an immediate, powerful impact. The despair of mankind is obvious, and this despair, as far as Sartre is concerned, should be described by graphic associations.

On the other hand, how one is to achieve hope and possible freedom requires a more complex, less obvious answer. What Sartre has done to illustrate this complexity has been to show through paradoxical, unconventional images that hope itself is paradoxical and found in ways which are not usually considered conventional. While it is easy to succumb to the status quo of despair, one must search, act, and assume self-responsibility if one is to have hope. Hope, for Sartre, is not a state of mind that one can find objectified, that one can point to as an example of freedom. True freedom confounds our attempts to reduce it to easily assimilated terms. Sartre's images of hope demonstrate that freedom implies a total re-examination of life and a total commitment to change.

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