

AN ANALYSIS OF LES SEQUESTRES D'ALTONA

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by

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: The aim of this study has been to analyse the play Les Séquestrés d'Altona and to situate it in the context of Sartre's thought with specific reference to Critique de la Raison Dialectique.

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INTRODUCTION

Sartre's conception of freedom, that is, "l'affirmation indéfiniment répétée que la conscience n'est pas une chose, que le propre de la réalité humaine est de se dépasser toujours vers ses fins, qu'elle est donc irréductible au déterminisme"¹, unifies his work from beginning to end. In L'Être et le Néant, Sartre states that "L'essence de l'homme est en suspens dans sa liberté."² For Sartre the "pour-soi" and freedom are not distinguishable. Freedom is not man's essence; rather, it is that which renders it possible for man to try to realize his essence, to define himself gradually by his acts, in a definition "qui demeure toujours ouverte"³.

The "pour-soi" or consciousness, which is "la réalité humaine", is not first a mode of knowledge; it is the very being of the knowing subject. Like Husserl, Sartre defines consciousness as "conscience de quelque chose"; this (the object) is precisely what gives all being to the knowing subject. The "pour-soi" therefore, is not "something" which observes; rather, it is itself "un mode d'être".⁴ "Elle est déjà

¹Colette Audry, Sartre et la Réalité Humaine, (Paris: Seghers, 1966), p. 110.

²J.-P. Sartre, L'Être et le Néant, (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), p. 61.

³J.-P. Sartre, "Mise au Point", Action, (Dec. 1944), cited by Colette Audry, Op. cit., p. 33.

⁴J.-P. Sartre, L'Être et le Néant, (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), p. 222.

prise dans l'aventure"⁵; it is "praxis", the action which gives it being.

Consciousness, which is characterized by a lack of Being and a continuous negation of Being, gives rise to "Le Néant", or nothingness. The "pour-soi" is not, it exists and, in existing, its essence is ahead of it, its essence is to be realized. Thus existence precedes essence. "Exister" means this "jaillissement", this "dépassement", this tension of consciousness which wrenches itself from its object in order to project itself on to it, and beyond it. The word project has to be understood, at one and the same time, in both its meanings: the project is "élan" towards the object"; it organizes the object for the future. At the same time, "L'homme se définit par son projet".⁶ The project is a "néant" which is projected into the future, and which reflects back in order to shape "l'en-soi", gives meaning to existence, and defines man. Only through the "pour-soi" does the "en-soi", the very stuff of things, receive the structure "world". Without it, the "en-soi" would remain "an undifferentiated plenitude of Being"⁷; there would be no change, evolution or "becoming".

Consciousness is not only "conscience-thétique", consciousness of some exterior thing which is not itself; at the same time, consciousness is also "conscience non-thétique", that is "conscience de soi".

⁵Colette Audry, Sartre et la Réalité Humaine, (Paris: Seghers, 1966), p. 26.

⁶J-P. Sartre, Critique de la Raison Dialectique, (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p. 95.

⁷J-P. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1968), p. 807.

Consciousness can therefore be defined as ". . .un être pour lequel il est, dans son être, question de son être, en tant que cet être implique un autre que lui".⁸ This does not mean that consciousness becomes the object of its own investigation; "conscience de soi" remains marginal. Here there is no knowledge, but an implicit consciousness of being consciousness of an object. It also follows that it is consciousness of this freedom which it is. "C'est-à-dire, qu'il doit exister un certain mode de conscience qui correspond très exactement à la liberté éprouvée et qui ne correspond qu'à elle. Ce type de conscience est l'angoisse".⁹ Anguish is "the reflective apprehension of the Self [consciousness] as freedom, the realization that a nothingness [néant] slips in between my Self and my past and future so that nothing relieves me from the necessity of continually choosing myself and nothing guarantees the validity of the values which I choose."¹⁰ Anguish is not to be confused with fear: "La peur est peur des êtres du monde. . .l'angoisse est angoisse devant moi".¹¹ Fear consists in dreading a certain object in the world which constitutes a threat to the situation or the "pour-

⁸J.-P. Sartre, L'Être et le Néant, (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), p. 29.

⁹Colette Audrey, Sartre et la Réalité Humaine, (Paris: Seghers, 1966), p. 34.

¹⁰J.-P. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1968), pp. 799-800.

¹¹J.-P. Sartre, L'Être et le Néant, (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), p. 66.

soi". In "angoisse", the "pour-soi" is the source of the threat, that is, "la conscience s'angoisse elle-même, de sa liberté".¹²

For Sartre, the individual chooses his own norms. These norms get their value only from this choice. In an essay in the publication Action, Sartre succinctly describes this "angoisse du choix".¹³:

Si l'homme n'est pas mais se fait et si en se faisant il assume la responsabilité de l'espèce entière, s'il n'y a pas de valeur ni de morale qui soient donnés a priori, mais si, en chaque cas, nous devons décider seuls, sans points d'appui, sans guides et cependant pour tous, comment pourrions-nous ne pas nous sentir anxieux lorsqu'il nous faut agir? Chacun de nos actes met en jeu le sens du monde et la place de l'homme dans l'univers; par chacun d'eux, quand bien même nous ne le voudrions pas, nous constituons une échelle de valeurs universelles et l'on voudrait que nous ne soyons pas saisis de crainte devant une responsabilité si entière?

Anguish is inscribed in the human condition for it is the "prise de conscience" of our freedom.

If "angoisse" is the lot of "la réalité humaine", which is one with consciousness of freedom, why does "angoisse" occupy only moments in our existence? "La conscience spontanée" or "la conscience irréfléchie" is always "conscience de quelque chose", perpetually engaged in the world by its projects. As explained above, the "pour-soi" is not a spectator, rather it is engaged in action structuring the "en-

¹¹J.-P. Sartre, L'Être et le Néant, (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), p. 66.

¹²Colette Audry, Sartre et la Réalité Humaine, (Paris: Seghers, 1966), p. 35.

¹³J.-P. Sartre, "Mise au Point", Action, (Dec. 1944), cited by Paul Foulquié, L'Existentialisme, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1947), p. 66.

soi". Even though there are no absolute beginnings, we chose ourselves continuously, and at any time can revoke our choice; but, this choice that we make, we believe is inscribed in things, that is, that a thing requires us to act in such and such a way. We tend to think that the value, the meaning, that we give to certain ends, resides in the world outside of us. This faith in things, this "esprit de sérieux", prevents "angoisse" from forming and conceals our responsibility. In order to have "angoisse" it is necessary that "la conscience irréfléchie" become "conscience réflexive", that is, the attempt on the part of consciousness to become its own object. With reflection, the social exigencies of the world break down and we find ourselves in the presence of freedom. "Angoisse" supposes reflection; it is "la saisie réflexive de la liberté".¹⁴ I know that my essence is in the past, that it determines the present only in so far as I choose to let it, such that:

. . . j'émerge seul et dans l'angoisse en face du projet unique et premier qui constitue mon être; toutes les barrières, tous les garde-fous s'écroulent, néantisés par la conscience de ma liberté: je n'ai ni ne puis avoir recours à aucune valeur contre le fait que c'est moi qui maintiens à l'être les valeurs, rien ne peut m'assurer contre moi-même, coupé du monde et de mon essence par ce néant que je suis, j'ai à réaliser le sens du monde et de mon essence: j'en décide seul, injustifiable et sans excuses.¹⁵

The characters in *Huis Clos* are in a hell of their own making; similar to us, they are in this "mort vivante"¹⁶ because they disavow

¹⁴J.-P. Sartre, L'Être et le Néant, (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), p. 77.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 77.

¹⁶Francis Jeanson, Sartre par lui-même, (Paris: du Seuil, 1955), p. 26.

their own freedom and deny that of others. Each one of them finds himself disarmed when confronted by "le regard d'autrui". Garcin's comrades in arms on earth speak of him as "Garcin le lâche"; Inès also decides the essence of Garcin:

Tu es un lâche, Garcin, un lâche parce que je le veux. Je le veux, tu entends, je le veux. Et pourtant, vois comme je suis faible, un souffle; je ne suis rien que cette pensée incolore qui te pense. (Il marche sur elle, les mains ouvertes). Ha. Elles s'ouvrent ces grosses mains d'homme. Mais qu'espères-tu? On n'attrape pas les pensées avec les mains. Allons, tu n'as pas le choix: il faut me convaincre. Je te tiens.¹⁷

The existence of the Other, "le regard d'autrui", constitutes for Sartre "ma chute originelle", the revelation of my object-ness ("objectité") and the impossibility of not assuming it. It is through the look of the Other that our contingency¹⁸ becomes "un malheur de notre condition".¹⁹ "Le regard d'autrui" makes me aware that I can be seen just as I see things around me and, in a way in which I can never see myself. This "regard", a consciousness always exterior to myself, considers me part of the inert

¹⁷J.-P. Sartre, Huis Clos, (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1964), p. 44.

¹⁸"...la contingence originelle (le fait d'être né, d'être déjà là par rapport à la conscience que nous pouvons prendre de nous-mêmes". Francis Jeanson, "Le Théâtre de Sartre ou les hommes en proie à l'homme", Biblio, (Jan. 1966), p. 8. "In the For-itself this equals facticity, the brute fact of being this For-itself in the world. The contingency of freedom is the fact that freedom is not able not to exist." Hazel E. Barnes in her "Key to Special Terminology" in J-P Sartre, Being and Nothingness, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1968), p. 801.

¹⁹Francis Jeanson, "Le Théâtre de Sartre ou les hommes en proie à l'homme", Biblio, (Jan. 1966), p. 8.

"en-soi":

Me saisir méchant, par exemple, ce ne pourrait-être me référer à ce que je suis pour moi-même, car je ne suis pas plus méchant pour moi-même que je ne "suis" fonctionnaire ou médecin. Je suis, en effet, sur le mode de n'être pas ce que je suis et d'être ce que je ne suis pas. La qualification de méchant, au contraire, me caractérise comme un en-soi. Ensuite, parce que si je devais être méchant pour moi, il faudrait que je le fusse sur le mode d'avoir à l'être, c'est-à-dire que je devrais me saisir et me vouloir comme méchant. Mais cela signifierait que je dois me découvrir comme voulant ce qui m'apparaît à moi-même le contraire de mon Bien, et précisément parce que c'est le Mal ou contraire de mon Bien. Il faut donc expressément que je veuille le contraire de ce que je veux dans un même moment et sous le même rapport, que je me haïsse moi-même en tant précisément que je suis moi-même. Et, pour réaliser pleinement sur le terrain du pour-soi cette essence de méchanceté, il faudrait que je m'assume comme méchant, que je m'approuve par le même acte qui me fait me blâmer. On voit assez que cette notion de méchanceté ne saurait aucunement tirer son origine de moi en tant que je suis moi.²⁰

Yet, in order to see my essence, I need "le regard d'autrui" which "fixes" me, gives me certain qualities, and, turns my action into a "geste" for, ". . . la substance du geste, c'est le regard des autres."²¹

Thus the Other plays a necessary rôle in the constitution of my "character":

C'est par la conscience de l'opprimeur blanc qu'un homme dont la peau est noire peut devenir un Nègre; ce sont les manoeuvres du bourreau qui risquent de contraindre la victime à s'humilier dans ce corps pantelant; bien plus que par sa naissance, enfin, c'est par l'enfance que ses parents et le milieu lui auront faite, qu'un homme risque tôt ou tard de découvrir qu'il a été "refait".²²

²⁰J.-P. Sartre, L'Être et le Néant, (Paris: Gallimard, 1943) pp. 332-333.

²¹J.-P. Sartre, Saint Genet: Comédien et Martyr, (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), p. 301.

²²Francis Jeanson, "Le Théâtre de Sartre ou les hommes en proie à l'homme", Biblio, (Jan. 1966), pp. 8-9.

As "pour-soi", I have to take into account the Other's judgements, either contesting them or agreeing with them. There is a "lutte des libertés": I prove myself in my freedom and spontaneity, I am at each instant all the possibilities that my situation affords; therefore, I cannot be "lâche" or "méchant" in the way that the Other sees me. At the same time, this passion of the "pour-soi" to become "en-soi" man's "passion inutile" to become "en-soi-pour-soi", or God, renders me an accomplice to the "character" that the Other gives me and, leads me to participate in it even by opposing it with other qualities or acts which call into question the "character" constituted by "le regard d'autrui".²³ "L'enfer c'est les autres" because we are all caught in this infernal cycle of simultaneously being possessor and possessed, torturer and victim.

The fundamental question to ask at this time is, why should there be a "lutte des libertés"? "Si l'être de la réalité humaine est la liberté, comment peut-elle nier ou haïr sa liberté et celle des autres?"²⁴ Why does man choose "mauvaise foi"²⁵ instead of authenticity?

²³Colette Audry, Sartre et la Réalité Humaine, (Paris: Seghers, 1966), p. 57.

²⁴André Gorz, "De la Conscience à la Praxis", Biblio, (Jan. 1966), p. 4.

²⁵"...celle-ci est nostalgie de l'Être, fuite de la liberté (ou responsabilité), tentative pour s'affecter d'être, par exemple en jouant à être ce qu'on est (le "sérieux") ou en prétendant, dans la foi fanatique, être le dépositaire ou l'instrument sacré d'une cause absolue justifiant tout ce qui est fait en son nom." André Gorz, "De la Conscience à la Praxis", Biblio, (Jan. 1966), p. 4.

Is it enough to say that we choose "inauthenticité" basically because of our fundamental project to become "en-soi-pour-soi"? In L'Être et le Néant Sartre is concerned only with founding "la possibilité formelle de l'existence aliénée."²⁶ To be sure, he does not consider this adequate in explaining historical circumstances in which freedom has no other choice than to exist in alienation. A worker cannot live a philosophy which posits, "la liberté à la source de toute conduite, et la possibilité permanente que la liberté se prenne sur soi, renonce au projet d'être et se choisisse elle-même pour fin suprême, dans le faire",²⁷ and still remain a worker. Only if a radical change in the world is brought about can a worker cease to be "un manoeuvre". As André Gorz points out:

. . . si la réflexion liquide l'acceptation de l'aliénation, elle ne liquide pas l'aliénation elle-même; si elle révèle la liberté à elle-même comme exigence de supprimer l'aliénation, elle ne permet pas encore de supprimer un monde qui voue les individus à une existence aliénée.²⁸

In L'Être et le Néant, "the material world remains . . . a kind of neutral backcloth against which human activity is carried on."²⁹

²⁶ André Gorz, "De la Conscience à la Praxis", Biblio, (Jan. 1966), p. 5.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

²⁹ Anthony Manser, Sartre: A Philosophic Study, (London: The Athone Press University of London, 1966), p. 209.

It is in the Critique de la Raison Dialectique where Sartre makes real existence intelligible, where he gives reasons for the real existence of alienation.³⁰ Human relations are never pure relations between individual "consciences"; they are always mediated by matter that is, by nature and by man's products briefly, by the world of the "pratico-inerte"; they are relations of "socialité". In this sense "l'enfer c'est le pratico-inerte." To what extent is man the products of his own products? To what extent does man make History? Is a Human History possible?

In the Critique de la Raison Dialectique, one of the central themes is that of scarcity: "Le scandale n'est donc pas, comme l'a cru Hegel, dans la simple existence de l'Autre, ce qui nous renverrait à un statut d'inielligibilité. Il est dans la violence subie (ou menaçante) c'est-à-dire dans la rareté intériorisée"³¹. It is no longer the simple "regard d'autrui" which reveals the existence of another person, it is the possibility that the other person will take what I want. In what way does "scarcity" effect freedom?

30" . . . the reasons why bad faith is infinitely more widespread than authenticity were a matter, in Being and Nothingness, of pure contingency. That work only indicated the ontological reasons why human reality may--or is given to--be misled about itself. If you prefer, Being and Nothingness allows one to understand how it is possible that a being who is free praxis may take himself for a statue, a machine or a thing, how it is possible that he may not gain an explicit and thematic awareness of his nature as praxis." André Gorz, "Sartre and Marx", New Left Review, No 37 (May/June, 1966), pp. 9-10.

31J.-P. Sartre, Critique de la Raison Dialectique, (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p. 752.

Qu'on n'aille pas nous faire dire, surtout que l'homme est libre dans toutes les situations, comme le prétendaient les stoïciens. Nous voulons dire exactement le contraire; à savoir que les hommes sont tous esclaves en tant que leur expérience vitale se déroule dans le champ pratico-inerte et dans la mesure expresse ou ce champ est originellement conditionné par la rareté.³²

Man's freedom is alienated to the extent that men are bound by their own and their ancestors' actions, to the extent to which previous free actions restrict present behaviour within the "pratico-inerte". It is in the Critique de la Raison Dialectique that "Le primat de 'l'in-authenticité' s'éclaire à partir du statut inerte qu'a d'emblée la praxis dans le règne de la pratico-inertie, par l'aliénation comme nécessité."³³ Sartre analyses the reality of alienation as necessity, "practical necessity in this world."³⁴ It is necessity which forges our chains:

. . .le règne de la nécessité c'est ce domaine-réel mais encore abstrait de l'Histoire - où la matérialité inorganique se referme sur la multiplicité humaine et transforme les producteurs en son produit. La nécessité, comme limite au sein de la liberté. . .

C'est l'ensemble tournant de la matérialité malheureuse en tant qu'elle est affirmée et dérobée à la fois, pour tous et dans tous les actes libres, par tous les actes libres comme Autres, c'est-à-dire comme forgeant nos chaînes.³⁵

³²J-P. Sartre, Critique de la Raison Dialectique, (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p. 369.

³³André Gorz, "De la Conscience à la Praxis", Biblio, (Jan. 1966), p. 7.

³⁴André Gorz, "Sartre and Marx", New Left Review, No 37 (May/June, 1966) p. 10.

³⁵J-P. Sartre, Critique de la Raison Dialectique, (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), pp. 375-376.

It should be emphasized that alienation does not present itself as necessity except in a world in which each is for himself and for others an Other than himself that is, in a world of serial dispersion and of scarcity.

It is not a mere coincidence that the play, Les Séquestrés d'Altona, echoes the Critique de la Raison Dialectique. Frantz's last speech contains the words, "le siècle eût été bon si l'homme n'eût été guetté par son ennemi cruel, immémorial par l'espèce carnassière qui avait juré sa perte, par la bête sans poil et maligne, par l'homme."³⁶

A very similar passage appears in the Critique:

Rien en effet--ni les grands fauves ni les microbes--ne peut être plus terrible pour l'homme qu'une espèce intelligente, carnassière cruelle, qui saurait comprendre et déjouer l'intelligence humaine et dont la fin serait précisément la destruction de l'homme. Cette espèce, c'est évidemment la nôtre se saisissant par tout homme chez les autres dans le milieu de la rareté.³⁷

Nor is it mere coincidence that scarcity underlies the theme of guilt in Les Séquestrés d'Altona. Sartre wishes to understand and bring other men to understand the fact that men in their relations with other men, both as individuals and in groups, seem to involve conflict. He wants to learn the reason for violence in human affairs. Les Séquestrés

³⁶J.-P. Sartre, Les Séquestrés d'Altona, (Paris: Gallimard, Le Livre de Poche, 1960) V, iii, p. 381. This edition will be used throughout this study.

³⁷J.-P. Sartre, Critique de la Raison Dialectique, (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p. 208.

d'Altona is a dramatic presentation of violence while the Critique offers its dialectical intelligibility. We can understand the reasons for Frantz's actions, (and those of the rest of the characters), by trying to see his reasons for his actions that is, by trying to understand the rationality of his individual praxis:

Ce qui compte, en effet, pour la compréhension dialectique de l'Autre, c'est la rationalité de sa praxis. Or, cette rationalité apparaît dans la violence même en tant que celle-ci n'est pas férocité contingente de l'homme mais réintériorisation compréhensible en chacun du fait contingent de rareté: la violence humaine est signifiante.³⁸

The characteristic of the Dialectic, or of dialectical reasoning, is its "circularity"³⁹ that is, we can grasp in experience the individual as the practical basis for an ensemble and the ensemble as producing the individual in his reality as an historical agent. The characters in Les Séquestrés d'Altona form the basis for capitalist society. At the same time, it is capitalist society which produces them. It is "le traître" who becomes aware of this dialectical movement. In our study of Les Séquestrés d'Altona, through its characters, we will try to understand this circularity.

³⁸J-P. Sartre, Critique de la Raison Dialectique, (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p. 752.

³⁹"De fait, nous atteindrons par ce procédé formel à une circularité dialectique: soit que nous considérons formellement les rapports du groupe et de la série en tant que chacun des deux ensembles peut produire l'autre, soit que nous saisissons dans l'expérience l'individu comme fondement pratique d'un ensemble et l'ensemble envisagé comme produisant l'individu dans sa réalité d'agent historique." J-P. Sartre, Critique de la Raison Dialectique, (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p. 155.

CHAPTER I

After Nekrassov, in 1955, Sartre had declared that, "Pour moi, maintenant, je n'ai plus rien à dire aux bourgeois",¹ and hence he would not write anymore for the theatre under its present conditions; since it was a major agency of the bourgeoisie. But the Algerian situation broke his resolution. There was an apparatus of repression developing in France which was not necessitated by the situation. "Car le développement du système capitaliste n'est pas lié aux tortures pratiquées en Algérie."² In fact, as the more lucid bourgeois admit, it compromises the capitalist cause. When Les Séquestrés d'Altona was first presented, September 23, 1959, at the "Théâtre de la Renaissance", the audience and the critics understood that Frantz did not only represent a former S.S. lieutenant but also French torture in Algeria:

. . . aucun d'entre eux n'a pris au pied de la lettre l'Allemagne que je montre, aucun n'a cru que je voulais réellement parler de ce qui arrive à un ex-soldat allemand en 1959. Derrière cette Allemagne, tous ont lu Algérie--tous, même les critiques.³

Les Séquestrés d'Altona is a dense construction which can be considered

¹Bernard Dort, "Jean Paul Sartre nous parle de théâtre", Théâtre Populaire, (Sept.-Oct., 1955). p. 6.

²Bernard Dort, "Les Séquestrés d'Altona nous concernent tous", Théâtre Populaire, No. 36 (1959) p. 1.

³Ibid., p. 4.

on several levels, one clearly being the question of the use of torture by the French in Algeria, and which necessitates more than a bare summary in order not to distort the complex relationships of the characters.

Frantz von Gerlach is a Nazi war hero who has been living in voluntary confinement in his father's house since 1947. He returned from the Polish front in 1947. His battalion was wiped out. He alone escaped. Six months after his return, disturbed by his country's defeat and what appeared to him to be the injustice of the Nuremberg trials, he shut himself away in his room and has lived there for the last thirteen years. Supposedly, he cannot bear to witness the systematic destruction of the German nation by the Allies. For the past thirteen years, he has not communicated with the rest of his family except for his sister, Leni, who is incestuously in love with him. Through Leni's complicity, Frantz is unaware that Germany is thriving under the reconstruction and is again on its way to becoming a great power. Officially Frantz died in Argentina.

In reality, the reason for Frantz's "self-sequestration" is one of a very different nature. Frantz is himself a war criminal, as guilty as any sentenced at Nuremberg. His crime is the crime of torture. He has chosen to "sequester" himself in his "madness" in order to confront the judgement of future centuries on the twentieth century.⁴ Consequently, the dramatic interest of the play revolves about Frantz's

⁴To understand Frantz's "self-sequestration" only on the basis of his guilt is clearly erroneous. We will demonstrate this in our discussion of Frantz.

confinement and the forces that will bring it to an end.

Johanna, Frantz's sister-in-law and wife of his brother, Werner, is introduced into the closed circle of his universe by Frantz's father, old von Gerlach, "the prototype of the great German industrialist who all his life has believed only in his own power and who has ruled his family through fear."⁵ For the last thirteen years von Gerlach, through Leni, has been trying to establish contact with his favorite son. As he suspects, Leni has not been carrying his messages to Frantz for she realizes that her brother's confinement is the ideal climate in which her incestuous love can thrive. Old von Gerlach therefore persuades Johanna to use the secret signal by which Leni gains admission to her brother's room and pay Frantz a visit. Her purpose will be to tell Frantz that his father has contracted cancer of the throat and has only six months more to live. Johanna accepts because von Gerlach has offered in exchange to free her husband, Werner, from an oath which he had extracted from the latter: namely, that Werner would succeed him as head of the family business and live the rest of his life in Altona with the mission of caring for Frantz. The news that Germany is again a great industrial power, that the von Gerlach's are the leading industrialists, linked with Johanna's rejection because he has tortured, collapses Frantz's mental world and thus, there is no longer any reason for him to remain in his room. In Act V Father and son meet and, in

⁵Oreste Pucciani, "Les Séquestrés d'Altona of Jean Paul Sartre", *Tulane Drama Review*, Vol. 5, (March, 1961), p. 20.

a final act of mutual awareness, commit suicide together. Leni locks herself up in Frantz's room. The future of Johanna and Werner is left suspended.

Leni was "sequestered" from birth because she was born a woman in a great family of industrialists still committed to nineteenth century ideologies. Born into a society that required women, above all, to love and admire, born the younger sister in the Gerlach family which considers "a woman's place is in the home" and where "les femmes se taisent,"⁶ her possibilities of action have been objectively very few. Yet, it is Leni who accepts this rôle imposed on her and follows it to its logical conclusion. Leni, just as the other characters in Les Séquestrés d'Altona, is perfectly aware that she is in "mauvaise-foi", but, consciously chooses to remain so. In this sense Leni, (as well as the other characters), chooses to "sequester" herself. "Bad faith consists in the substitution of a persona for personality; it results in the refusal to examine one's reasons for acting in a certain way."⁷ In Leni's words: "Les principes s'en vont, les habitudes restent."⁸ The characters consciously refuse to change their attitudes to life. They are quite aware that the reasons they profess for their actions are deprived of meaning, but rather than build a new set, they prefer to admit their lack of meaning and live their lives as lucid

⁶J-P. Sartre, Les Séquestrés d'Altona, (Paris: Gallimard, Livre de Poche, 1960), I, 2, p. 39. Hereafter SA will be used.

⁷Jeremy Palmer, "Les Séquestrés d'Altona: Sartre's Black Tragedy", French Studies, XXIV, No. 2, (April 1970), pp. 150-151.

⁸J-P. Sartre, Op. cit., I, 1, p. 16.

witnesses of their failure, of their "impuissance". As Leni states:

"Ici, vous savez, nous jouons à qui perd gagne".⁹

This refusal to change one's attitude to life, to assume reality by taking into account the most number of facts available, is seen at its clearest in Leni. She tries to make Frantz face up to his past:

LENI: Je te l'interdis! Je mourrai, je suis déjà morte et je t'interdis de plaider ma cause. Je n'ai qu'un seul juge: moi, et je m'acquitte. O témoin à décharge, témoin devant toi-même. Tu serais invulnérable, si tu oses déclarer: "J'ai fait ce que j'ai voulu et je veux ce que j'ai fait"

FRANTZ: (son visage se pétrifie brusquement, il a l'air froid, haineux et menaçant. D'une voix dure et méfiante):
Qu'est-ce que j'ai fait, Leni?¹⁰

Leni gives way before Frantz's attack because she has no interest in effecting any change in the situation:

LENI: Bon. J'ai perdu: oublie cela. Je te protégerai sans ton aide: j'ai l'habitude.

LENI: . . .Ce soir, je t'apporterai le dîner.

FRANTZ: Inutile: je n'ouvrirai pas.

LENI: C'est ton affaire. La mienne est de te l'apporter.¹¹

Leni merely wants to act out her chosen rôle which is one with failure; she is actively avoiding success.

The reason for the choice of failure lies in her attitude to-

⁹SA, I, 2, p. 95.

¹⁰Ibid., II, 1, p. 152.

¹¹Ibid., II, 1, pp. 153-154.

wards her family. Her attitude towards the code of the Gerlach family, eventhough she refuses to take seriously the standards by which the family lives,¹² is summarized by her incestuous relationship with Frantz. In Leni, through the autistic and solipsistic character of her incestuous love which fails to create a bond with the world, "the implicit incest of the Gerlach family becomes explicit."¹³ It is latent even in the other members. Old Gerlach exhibits an exaggerated sort of physical repulsion for his younger son, Werner: ". . .(Werner lui prend le bras. Le Père se dégage presque brutalement.) J'ai dit: pas de cérémonies."¹⁴ At the end of this scene Werner, having pledged to stay in Altona and care for Frantz, says to his father:

Eh bien, . . .eh bien, . . .(Il s'arrête brusquement. Il s'approche du Père, lui touche le bras timidement et le regarde avec une tendresse inquiète.) Est-ce que vous êtes content?

LE PERE: (horrifié) Ne me touche pas! (Un temps).
Le conseil est terminé, va rejoindre ta femme.¹⁵

Moreover, Johanna, in her relationship with Frantz, notices a strange sort of communion between the two brothers: "Mais si. Deux Gerlach,

¹²SA, I, 1 & 2.

¹³Oreste Pucciani, "Les Séquestrés d'Altona of Jean Paul Sartre", Tulane Drama Review, V, No. 3 (Spring, 1961), p. 23.

¹⁴SA, I, 2, p. 25.

¹⁵Ibid., I, 2, p. 100.

deux abstraits, deux frères visionnaires! Qu'est-ce que je suis, moi? Rien: un instrument de supplice. Chacun cherche sur moi les caresses de l'autre."¹⁶ Mad with Gerlach pride, Leni can only bear, without humiliation, the caresses of a Gerlach and, she realizes that her love for her brother is part of her espousal of the Gerlach family code: "L'inceste, c'est ma loi, c'est mon destin. En un mot, c'est mon façon de reserrer les liens de famille."¹⁷ In fact, Leni lives according to the code: she does not adopt Johanna's moral attitude towards any of the events which led up to Frantz's "self-sequestration"; she never seriously intended to set fire to the house and she takes the oath her father demands from her and Werner without protest. For form's sake, she reminds her father that "Honnêtement, je vous rappelle que les serments ne m'engagent pas"¹⁸; but her father is unconcerned by her flippant attitude for he realizes that it is for form's sake only, "Ris, mon enfant: je ne te demande que de jurer."¹⁹ Leni's rebellion, eventhough she lays claim to her incest which is the negation of all that the family traditonally stands for, only takes the form of cruel reminders to her father of his separation from Frantz.

Leni has chosen to be an unsuccessful rebel:

LENI: (. . .) Savez-vous ce qui me rend invulnérable? Je suis heureuse.

¹⁶Ibid., IV, 2, p. 267.

¹⁷SA, II, 6, p. 189.

¹⁸Ibid., I, 2, p. 33.

¹⁹Ibid., I, 2, p. 34.

- LE PERE: Toi? Que peux-tu savoir du bonheur?
- LENI: Et vous? Qu'en savez-vous?
- LE PERE: Je te vois: s'il t'a donné ces yeux, c'est la plus raffiné des supplices.
- LENI: (presque égarée). Mais oui! Le plus raffiné, le plus raffiné! Je tourne! Si je m'arrêtais, je me casserais. Voilà! le bonheur, le bonheur fou. (Triomphalement et méchamment). Je vois Frantz, moi! J'ai tout ce que je veux.²⁰

Failure has only to be desired in order to be transmuted into success. Her attitude towards Frantz's games of guilt and witness is this "bonheur fou": she attacks his imaginary world in order that he will defend it, for only thus can she be sure that he will not leave it of his own accord; and, only if he maintains his "self-sequestration" can she use him as a weapon against her father, in her nominal rebellion against all that the family stands for. Leni will lie to Frantz as long as the latter cannot say, "Moi, j'ai fait cela et je l'assume."²¹ At the same time, Leni knows that Frantz will never say this. Leni's interest is to maintain the fragile status quo, that is, Frantz's sequestration, which Gerlach's manipulation of Johanna threatens. She has put herself in her father's place and, as her father did when Frantz was a child, she now wants to create happiness for Frantz on the only terms which he cannot accept. Being her father's daughter, she believes that Frantz is her property: "mort ou vif, il est juste que tu m'appartiennes puisque je suis la seule à t'aimer tel que tu es."²²

²⁰SA, I, 3, p. 108.

²¹Alain Koehler, "Entretiens avec J.-P. Sartre", p. 19.

²²SA, IV, 8, p. 327.

Being the only one who can move freely from the "rez-de-chaussée" to the "premier étage", she thinks that she is free yet she is the most "sequestered" of them all. At the moment of the suicide she takes Frantz's place in the room for "Il faut un séquestré, là-haut."²³ and "we know that in one of its members at least the Gerlach code has achieved perfect success"²⁴.

Just as Frantz and Leni have been "sequestered" by their father, so has Werner. Born to the rôle of younger son, as Leni was born to the rôle of younger daughter, Werner has grown up among the myths of the Gerlach family which have proclaimed him "faible" whereas Frantz is "fort", giving him an "inferiority complex". Thus, when his father is astonished at his lack of pride, Werner reminds him: "Pour façonner Frantz à votre image, vous n'avez rien épargné. Est-ce ma faute si vous ne m'avez enseigné que l'obéissance passive?"²⁵ We therefore sense that his "sequestration" began in childhood and that the meaning of his "sequestration" was from the beginning neglect.²⁶ But the secret of Werner, like Leni's, like Frantz's, is that he agrees to his father's world. The Gerlach family, whose essentialist code required a second son, who by definition was "faible", created Werner. Yet, it is Werner who interiorizes the "inferiority complex"

²³SA, V, p. 380.

²⁴Oreste Pucciani, "Les Séquestrés d'Altona of J-P. Sartre", Tulane Drama Review, (March, 1961), p. 24.

²⁵SA, I, 2, p. 30.

²⁶Oreste Pucciani, Op. cit., p. 24.

imposed on him by the family, he plays the rôle that the Other expects of him. Werner's projet fondamental is one of bitterness and jealousy with respect to Frantz. When Johanna refuses to persuade Werner to stay in Altona and direct "l'Entreprise", the father entreats them to stay, if not for their interests, for Werner's childrens' future.

Werner at this point betrays his resentment:

(. . .) Vous avez bien dit: pour les fils de Werner? . . .
 Werner et ses enfants, père, vous vous en foutez.
 Même si vous viviez asses longtemps pour voir mon premier
 fils, il vous répugnerait parce que ce serait la chair
 de ma chair et que je vous ai répugné dans ma chair
 du jour où je suis né! (A Johanna) Pauvre père! Quel
 gâchis! Les enfants de Frantz, il les aurait adorés.²⁷

A little later, Johanna tells him that the father will release them from his oath and give them their freedom if Frantz agrees to meet with his father. Far from rejoicing, Werner sees in this only another humiliation, another way to dispossess him, another way to insist on the insignificance of his rôle. The father never considers the younger son's feelings and dignity:

A part cela, qui songeait à moi? Est-ce que je compte? (. . .) On brise ma carrière d'avocat pour me mettre en résidence surveillée dans cette affreuse bâtisse, au milieu de mes chers souvenirs d'enfance; un beau jour, le fils prodigue consent à quitter sa chambre, on tue le veau gras, on me fout dehors et tout le monde est content, à commencer par ma femme.²⁸

Werner's projet fondamental of bitterness and jealousy is of decisive importance with respect to his relationship with his wife,

²⁷SA, I, 2, p. 54.

²⁸SA, III, 4, pp. 242-243.

Johanna; the latter's comment on his reaction to being told of her relationship with Frantz is sufficient indication of this: "Il reste ici par jalousie. . .). Il m'enverra chez vous tous les jours, même le dimanche. Il se martyrisera aux chantiers, dans son grand bureau de ministre. Et le soir, je paierai."²⁹ Johanna's relationship to Frantz is for Werner the final indignity. His jealousy is not primarily sexual; for, he remains jealous after discovering that Johanna's preference for Frantz has been given no physical expression. Johanna's preference for Frantz is for Werner the final indignity because of the relationship of the two brothers to each other and to their father. Since childhood, Werner has been highly respectful towards the family hierarchy; on the command of his father, he abandons his successful legal practice in Hamburg and immures himself in the family business and the family mansion. His only reason for obeying his father is because "C'est le père."³⁰; and, Werner's function in the household is to obey. As the family counsel scene in Act I demonstrates, he wants nothing better than to please his father: rejected by his father in favor of Frantz, "Werner cannot give himself to any relationship unless it be an attitude of permanent courtship which he has adopted towards his father"³¹. Jealousy of Frantz is the real meaning of Werner's love for Johanna as well as of his material ambitions in the world.

As a young dynamic lawyer in Hamburg, in love with the former

²⁹SA, IV, 2, pp. 262-263.

³⁰SA, I, 2, p. 43.

³¹Oreste Pucciani, "Les Séquestrés d'Altona of J-P. Sartre", Tulane Drama Review, (March, 1961), p. 24.

movie star, Johanna Thies, Werner had achieved a degree of independence from the vicious triangle of his relationship with his brother and his father. As soon as he came on the Gerlach property, he donned the rôle of the "younger son", which Johanna had no knowledge of, thus losing his independence. But Werner has ample opportunity to free himself; he is in a position to do so but pretends that he is not. The fact is he obeys his father in order to have a reason for his bitterness. He chooses to fail in his search for independence. He chooses to play the game of "qui perd gagne" in directing all his energies towards his father's love and esteem, a goal he knows to be unattainable. Similar to Leni, Werner opts for the status quo.

Johanna, the wife of Werner, takes issue with the other characters' voluntary "sequestration". She immediately understands that the father confines Werner and Leni so that they will be Frantz's slaves. Moreover, she is not fooled by the lies of the father, she always seems to be able to get at the truth. However, she has a real kinship with Leni and Old Gerlach. The father realizes this and says to her, "nous sommes de la même espèce: vous, Frantz et moi"³²; she was the wife for Frantz.³³ Leni, according to the essentialist code of the Gerlach family, classifies her as "un fort" for, "vous ne faites rien et vous pensez à la mort."³⁴ The "strong" do not act, they are. Thus Johanna is herself a "séquestrée" and Frantz is immediately aware

³²SA, I, 2, p. 60.

³³Ibid., I, 2, p. 91.

³⁴Ibid., I, 2, p. 58.

of Johanna's "sequestration" as she enters his room. She says: "Je suis une séquestrée? Je n'aurais pas cru". He answers: "Les séquestrés disposent de lumières spéciales qui leur permettent de se reconnaître entre eux."³⁵ Before her marriage to Werner, Johanna was a film star who had begun to enjoy a certain degree of fame. As "Johanna Thies", celebrated for her beauty, she used to go into neighborhood theatres in order to watch the effect she made on the screen. Her ambition was to incarnate the essence of beauty, to achieve that state of being which is "en-soi-pour-soi", that is, she wants to be: "son propre fondement non en tant que néant mais en tant qu'être et garderait en lui la translucidité nécessaire de la conscience en même temps que la coïncidence avec soi de l'être en soi".³⁶ The state of being of "en-soi-pour-soi" is the common factor uniting all forms of bad faith. Johanna has failed in her aim and is fully aware of it:

FRANTZ: Vous vous guettiez, hein? Vous cherchiez à vous surprendre?

JOHANNA: Pensez-vous! (Elle se regarde dans la glace avec complaisance). Je voyais ça. (Elle désigne son reflet. Un temps). J'aillais dans les salles de quartier. Quand la star Johanna Thies glissait sur le mur du fond, j'entendais une petite rumeur. Ils étaient émus, chacun par l'émotion de l'autre. Je regardais. . .

FRANTZ: Et puis?

JOHANNA: Et puis rien. Je n'ai jamais vu ce qu'ils voyaient.³⁷

³⁵Ibid., II, 8, pp. 195-196.

³⁶J.-P. Sartre, L'être et le Néant, (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), p. 133.

³⁷SA, II, 8, p. 199.

Similar to Frantz's "grandeur", Johanna's beauty is "un vide" for it requires public recognition, "l'opinion d'autrui". As soon as the public no longer recognized her as "beautiful", there remained nothing left but "un vide". Johanna could never see herself as "beautiful", in the manner that the public saw her. In looking into the mirror, she could only see "une matière à travailler."

Johanna's wedding was the funeral of her quintessential beauty. As Leni, recognizing her marriage to be a sham, astutely remarks: "Il y a des mariages qui sont des enterrements."³⁸ To a large degree, her marriage represented an attempt to compensate for something she had lost. She had lost an audience, thus she chose Werner. It is for this reason that Werner eventually has cause to accuse her: "Et Comment t'aurais-je perdue, Johanna? Je ne t'ai jamais eue. . . Tu m'as trompé sur la marchandise! Je voulais une femme, je n'ai possédé que son cadavre."³⁹ When Werner accepts his father's request Johanna is in danger of losing her audience; she therefore makes a bargain with his father, agreeing to deliver a message to Frantz, in exchange for Werner's release. But Gerlach's strategy has been based on the potential fascination that Frantz's "world" will have for Johanna; in it, she is tempted to exist as the incarnation of Beauty, thereby achieving her original ambition. She says to Frantz who offers himself as her accomplice: "C'est un marché: 'Entrez dans ma folie,

³⁸SA, I, 2, p. 59.

³⁹SA, III, 4, p. 248.

j'entrerai dans la vôtre".⁴⁰ Frantz compels Johanna to this "délire à deux".⁴¹: by telling him that Germany is in ruins she serves his "grandeur"; in return he tells her that she is beautiful. Johanna considers Frantz an individual who is exceptional enough to convince her of her beauty. But as soon as Leni speaks of torture, Johanna immediately rejects Frantz. The fact now public, Frantz no longer wants to convince her, he no longer wants anything to do with her. Johanna has been prevented from finding the stability she sought in the game of "qui perd gagne" because Frantz is "un traître":

Un traître. Inspiré. Convaincant. Il parle, on l'écoute. Et puis, tout à coup, il s'aperçoit dans la glace; un écriteau lui barre la poitrine, avec ce seul mot, qu'on lira s'il se tait: trahison. Voilà le cauchemar qui m'attend chaque jour dans la chambre de votre fils.⁴²

By being such a perfect counterfeit of a defeated patriot, an imitation of a shattered titan, Frantz reveals to Johanna "the theatricality of her own imitation of a rejected star."⁴³ Yet, Johanna, in her marriage to Werner, had rejected her former world of the absolute, It is because of Werner's incomprehension coupled with Old Gerlach's manoeuvring that she returns to Frantz in Act IV. She is torn between the "upstairs" and the "downstairs" worlds because she can identify

⁴⁰Ibid., II, 8, p. 200.

⁴¹Ibid., II, 8, p. 204.

⁴²SA, III, 2, p. 228.

⁴³J. Palmer, "Les Séquestrés d'Altona: Sartre's Black Tragedy", French Studies, XXIV, No. 2 (April, 1970), p. 155.

with both. To this extent, she is more "conscious" and has progressed in some way towards personal liberation.

In an attack against contemporary Marxist writing, Sartre has protested:

Les marxistes d'aujourd'hui n'ont souci que des adultes: on croirait à les lire que nous naissons à l'âge où nous gagnons notre premier salaire; ils ont oublié leur propre enfance et tout se passe, à les lire, comme si les hommes éprouvaient leur aliénation et leur réification dans leur propre travail d'abord, alors que chacun la vit d'abord, comme enfant, dans le travail de ses parents.⁴⁴

Frantz, in fighting Hitler's war, becomes completely assimilated to his designated rôle, he is what his father has made of him. As he admits to Frantz at the end of the play, Old Gerlach is the author of his children's "sequestration":

. . . Les parents sont des cons: ils arrêtent le soleil. Je croyais que le monde ne changerait plus. Il a changé. Te rappelles-tu cet avenir que je t'avais donné? (. . .). Je t'en parlais sans cesse et, toi, tu le voyais(. . .)Eh bien, ce n'était que mon passé.

FRANTZ: J'étais voué?

LE PERE: Oui.

FRANTZ: A l'impuissance?

LE PERE: Oui.

FRANTZ: Au crime?

LE PERE: Oui.

FRANTZ: Par vous?

LE PERE: Par mes passions, que j'ai mises en toi. Dis à ton tribunal de Crabes que je suis seul

⁴⁴J. P. Sartre, Critique de la Raison Dialectique, (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p. 47. Hereafter CRD will be used.

coupable--et de tout.⁴⁵

Childhood plays a primordial role in the life of each person." It is the donné which we go beyond at each instant yet, it is always Present:

Celle-ci, qui fut à la fois une appréhension obscure de notre classe, de notre conditionnement social à travers le groupe familial et un dépassement aveugle, un effort maladroit pour nous en arracher, finit par s'inscrire en nous sous forme de caractère. C'est à ce niveau que se trouvent les gestes appris et les rôles contradictoires qui nous compriment et nous déchirent. A ce niveau aussi, les traces qu'ont laissées nos premières révoltes, nos tentatives désespérées pour dépasser une réalité qui étouffe, et les déviations, les torsions qui en résultent(. . .)En nous projetant vers notre possible pour échapper aux contradictions de notre existence, nous les dévoilons et elles se révèlent dans notre action même.⁴⁶

Sartre seems to have formed his conception of the von Gerlach's from his studies of Flaubert. In the Questions de Méthode, he alludes to Flaubert's father who "terrorisait tout le monde par son mérite, sa notoriété, son ironie voltairienne, ses terribles colères ou ses accès de mélancolie."⁴⁷ The family "retardait un peu sur les familles industrielles que le père Flaubert soignait ou fréquentait."⁴⁸; von Gerlach, also behind his times, is described by Leni and Frantz as "Le vieil Hindenburg".⁴⁹ Flaubert's mother had little influence on the

⁴⁵SA, V, i, pp. 368-370.

⁴⁶CRD, pp. 68-69.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 47.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 47.

⁴⁹SA, V, i, p. 351, and I, i, p. 15.

family; in Les Séquestrés d'Altona, the mother is dead. Werner's relationship to Frantz and his father clearly duplicates Gustave's relationship to Achille and to his father. Werner the "younger son", decreed "faible" a priori and inferior to Frantz, suffers from his father's aversion to him just as the child Flaubert "se sent frustré par son frère aîné de la tendresse paternelle."⁵⁰ Just as Flaubert decides to be inferior to Achille in order to distinguish himself more readily from his brother and "détestera sa future carrière comme la preuve de cette infériorité",⁵¹ Werner bears the taint of "faiblesse", which has stamped him since birth, which constitutes "la coloration interne"⁵² of his project, and which he claims, (of course in mauvaise foi), is responsible for his subsequent baseness. Similarly, Leni, reduced to the rôle of the "younger sister" by the code imposed by Gerlach on the household, assumes this pre-fabricated rôle or "sequestration" by her incestuous love for her brother.

The family is a mediation between the life of a particular individual, his class, and the social and economic forces of history. In a fragment entitled "Père et fils", part of his work on Flaubert, Sartre describes father, son, and their house:

. . .l'enfant possède doublement la Maison. C'est d'abord que le Propriétaire l'a dévoré, digéré, assimilé à sa propre substance. Mais c'est aussi que la Maison

⁵⁰CRD, pp. 71-72.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 72.

⁵²Ibid., p. 71.

le contient et l'enferme. En ce sens, elle devient l'image figée du Père. La puissance paternelle s'y fait voir partout: qu'on la visite de fond en comble, on n'y trouvera rien qu'il n'est voulu ou toléré. Entre les murs, l'espace est sillonné des chemins qu'il a frayés: Gustave se promène dans une volonté matérialisée, omniprésente; c'est elle qu'il aime en cet appartement, elle qui lui en dissimule la sinistre laideur.⁵³

As the father tries to explain to Johanna, a house is also a family and vice versa: "Une famille, c'est une maison. Je vous demande à VOUS d'habiter cette maison parce que vous êtes entrée dans notre famille".⁵⁴ The Gerlach family had chosen a rôle for Frantz before he was born; the latter imparts this to Johanna: "Moi? Mais je ne choisis jamais, ma pauvre amie! Je suis choisi. Neuf mois avant ma naissance, on a fait choix de mon nom, de mon office, de mon caractère et de mon destin. Je vous dis qu'on me l'impose ce régime cellulaire".⁵⁵ Thus Frantz has been deeply marked by his childhood. The older son of a leading industrialist of Germany, he had been in some "sense "pre-destined" by his situation in the world. Just as the father of Lucien Fleurier admits that his son will become "un chef", that he has made Lucien precisely so that the latter will become the "patron" of the factory as soon as the former dies, similarly, Gerlach has "sequestered" his son from tender childhood: he has imposed his past on Frantz and has made it the latter's future; decreed

⁵³J.-P. Sartre, "Père et fils", Libres de France, XVIII, No. 1 (Jan. 1966), p. 22.

⁵⁴SA, I, 2, pp. 43-44.

⁵⁵Ibid., II, 5, p. 181.

"un fort", Frantz has been raised on the cult of money and omnipotence. Gerlach has made him a monarch, formed him to rule "l'Entreprise" and, has given him "tous les mérites et [son] âpre goût du pouvoir."⁵⁶

It is in the midst of this "sequestration" that Frantz experiences the most abject impotence. Gerlach had sold a piece of unused family land to Himmler for the construction of a concentration camp. Frantz, then in his twenties, saw the Jewish prisoners, huddled in terror behind the barbed wire, and was disgusted by their sordidness more than revolted by their plight. He does not feel with them as a man witnessing the suffering of the men; what shocks him is "leur crasse, leur vermine, leur plaies."⁵⁷ For Sartre this was the first sign that Frantz was really guilty of torture, that he was actually the first to torture⁵⁸ for, Frantz believed in such abstractions as "la dignité humaine".⁵⁹ The prisoners have been transformed in his eyes from fellow human beings into repulsive objects which he despises, eventhough his Protestant conscience tells him such emotions are wrong. When a Polish rabbi managed to escape, Frantz hid him in his room.

⁵⁶SA, V, i, p. 369.

⁵⁷Ibid., I, 2, p. 74.

⁵⁸Oreste Pucciani, "An Interview with Jean Paul Sartre", Tulane Drama Review, (March, 1961), p. 14.

⁵⁹SA, I, 2, p. 78.

In order to save his son from the consequences of his act, Gerlach called Goebbels. Shortly thereafter Frantz, held by SS troops, witnessed in lucid impotence the murder of the prisoner, helpless to intervene. Frantz cannot escape from the objective contradiction that he is "un homme voué à l'impuissance par la puissance de son père".⁶⁰ Owing to his father's power, Frantz is left unpunished for what he has done. In not letting Frantz assume the responsibility for his act, Gerlach annuls all its value; Johanna, "qui est à la base de la vérité", recognizes this: "C'était un petit puritain, une victime de Luther, qui voulait payer de son sang les terrains que vous aviez vendus(. . .) Vous avez tout annulé. Il n'est resté qu'un jeu pour gosse de riches(. . .)il a compris qu'on lui permettait tout parce qu'il ne comptait pour rien."⁶¹ The dangerous risk he thought he was taking existed in fact only for the rabbi. As always, the father "arrangea tout". It was at that moment that he pledged to never fall back into impotence. He might have rejected his father's world at that point, but, as he says to Gerlach at the end of the play: "le rabbi saignait et je découvrais, au cœur de mon impuissance, je ne sais quel assentiment."⁶² Caught in the trap

⁶⁰Bernard Dort, "Les Séquestrés d'Altona nous concernent tous", Théâtre Populaire, No. 36, (1959), p. 8.

⁶¹SA, I, 2, pp. 90-91.

⁶²Ibid., V, p. 352.

of Nazi Germany, Frantz chose to be "un chef", to accept his father's world, its complicity with the Nazi cause, its concentration camps which the Nazi world required as means to a justifiable end. Frantz's "self-sequestration" begins from this moment of essential choice. He wanted to secure absolute power at any price, the price was torture. He became "la femme de Hitler"⁶³ and became "le boucher de Smolensk". Although completely responsible for his choice, Frantz was marked by this donné of his childhood whose author was Old Gerlach: "Vous aurez été ma cause et mon destin jusqu'au bout"⁶⁴; "Je suis tortionnaire parce que vous êtes dénonciateur".⁶⁵

Old Gerlach, recognizing the "sequestration" involved in being born into a certain group, or family, wants to perpetuate this "sequestration" beyond his death by imposing "le serment" on all the members of the family. He makes them all swear on the Bible that they will never abandon the family home. Sartre defines the pledge as a "garantie contre l'avenir, inertie produite dans l'immanence et par la liberté, fondement de toute différenciation".⁶⁶ It is the means used to ensure the survival of a certain group or system. It

⁶³SA, V, i, p. 352.

⁶⁴Ibid., V, i, p. 374.

⁶⁵Ibid., V, p. 348.

⁶⁶CRD, p. 439.

is the "détermination de l'avenir"⁶⁷ and as such, it limits our field of choice. Johanna, in her opposition of "le serment", recognizes the "sequestration" that it implies: "S'il jure sous la contrainte, s'il s'enferme dans cette maison pour rester fidèle à son serment, il aura décidé sans moi et contre moi."⁶⁸

Old Gerlach had "sequestered" his children from birth but he in turn is a victim. The capitalist is alienated by his own system:

(. . .)le capital s'oppose à la société(. . .) Et pourtant c'est une puissance sociale. La contradiction s'explique par le fait qu'il est devenu objet. Mais cet objet qui n'est pas "moyenne sociale" mais "réalité anti-sociale" ne se maintient comme tel que dans la mesure où il est soutenu et dirigé par la puissance, réelle et active du capitaliste (lequel, à son tour, est entièrement possédé par l'objectivation aliénée de sa propre puissance: car celle-ci fait l'objet d'autres dépassements par d'autres capitalistes). Ces rapports sont moléculaires parce qu'il n'y a que des individus et des relations singulières entre eux (opposition, alliance, dépendance, etc.); mais ils ne sont pas mécaniques parce qu'il ne s'agit en aucun cas du heurt de simples inerties: dans l'unité même de sa propre entreprise, chacun dépasse l'autre et l'incorpore à titre de moyen (et vice versa), chaque couple de relations unificatrices est à son tour dépassé par l'entreprise d'un tiers.⁶⁹

Eventhough powerful enough to oppose them, Gerlach served the Nazis because they provided markets for his factories. Man creates "l'Entreprise" in order to escape "la rareté"; it in turn takes on a separate existence, a life of its own, and dominates man as "destiny". As the father admits, "Il y a beau temps que je ne décide plus de rien".⁷⁰

⁶⁷CRD, p. 440.

⁶⁸SA, I, 2, p. 36.

⁶⁹CRD, p. 101.

⁷⁰SA, I, 2, p. 31.

He only signs letters and pays employees like Gelber to tell him what orders to give. He is now nothing more than "un pot de fleurs" or "un chapeau au bout d'un mât"⁷¹. As Gerlach admits to Frantz at their meeting, the directors, the technocrats not the owners, now command the factories: "Mon pauvre petit! Je voulais que tu mènes d'Entreprise après moi. C'est celle qui mène. Elle choisit ses hommes. Moi, elle m'a éliminé: je possède mais je ne commande plus."⁷²

The von Gerlach family, exemplifying a certain segment of the German bourgeoisie, contains inherently both Frantz the individual case and Hitler's Germany, France's Algeria, America's Vietnam, with their systematic atrocities. Sartre's theatre is not bourgeois to the extent that he speaks ill of the bourgeois not as a man, but as a bourgeois. Les Séquestrés d'Altona is an indictment of the bourgeoisie as a "vision du monde" that makes the von Gerlachs, Leni's incest, Werner's jealousy and Frantz's torture, possible. Frantz's obsession with "grandeur", power for its own sake at any price, implies Hitler's power. What made Hitler successful was not the minority of dedicated Nazis, but the much larger number of Germans who, like the Gerlachs, in order to protect their interests and power, were willing to collaborate with Hitler. "Ils pensent contre et ils agissent pour."⁷³

The central fact about Frantz and Les Séquestrés d'Altona is

⁷¹Ibid., I, 2, p. 32.

⁷²Ibid., V, i, p. 369.

⁷³Bernard Dort, "Les Séquestrés d'Altona nous concernent tous", Théâtre Populaire, XXXVI, (1959), p. 4.

torture. What does it mean for a man of both conscience and intelligence to torture and to have to remember that he has tortured? What does a Vietnam veteran face when he returns to his home after the trauma of fighting in a dirty war? Frantz came home after having done everything for the Nazis whom he despised, just as his father did, as "la plèbe au pouvoir". Frantz tortured in the name of his country, for the future of his country. Having returned home he finds Germany in ruins. For Frantz, Germany has been reduced to this condition because not everyone during the war did what was necessary, that is, torture; if everyone had done their duty, the country would not be in such a state. Germany will never be reborn. But what if Germany, from her defeat, can develop rapidly--then, his life would not have any possible justification, all the compromises which he made with his demanding conscience, (he is a protestant, a puritan), would have been for nothing. For Frantz and for those who committed similar acts, there are two possibilities:

. . . admettre qu'ils s'étaient trompés, que la défaite n'est pas une catastrophe, que la vie continue, que leurs actes ont été objectivement criminels, quelle qu'ait été la raison psychologique et historique par laquelle ils croyaient les justifier; ou bien fermer les yeux devant la réalité et affirmer, malgré et contre les évidences, que la défaite est une catastrophe irrémédiable et irréparable et que leur comportement était la seule tentative possible de sauver les valeurs historiques.⁷⁴

Each situation is a "souricière" and it is up to each man to invent his particular way out.⁷⁵ Frantz chooses the second "solution". Having staked everything on "la grandeur" which he thought demanded

⁷⁴Lucien Goldmann, Structures mentales et création culturelle, (Paris: Anthropos, 1970), p. 258.

⁷⁵J-P. Sartre, Situations II, (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p. 313.

that he go as far as torture, he cannot now admit that it was "la fausse grandeur", "un vide", that his actions have been useless. In order to justify what he did, it is necessary that he negate reality around him. Thus he shuts himself up in his room, walls up the windows trying to keep reality out.

The assassination of Germany constitutes the fundamental prop that Frantz uses in order to play his games of "t moignage" and "sensiblerie": "Les villes ras es, les machines bris es, l'industrie saccag e, (. . .)le plus beau m tre de l'Histoire, j'ai toutes les preuves."⁷⁶ This is the price of defeat and the pretext for Frantz's "sequestration": ". . . puisque le peuple allemand accepte l'abjecte agonie qu'on lui impose, j'ai d cid  de garder une bouche pour crier non. (Il s' nerve brusquement). Non! Non coupable!"⁷⁷ The only way to have avoided this devastation of Germany would have been to have won the war at any price. Therefore, he argues, all means, including torture, were justified and, those who used these means were also justified. To recognize Germany's present economic prosperity would undermine his reasons for torturing; his act of torture, in all its gratuity, would be unjustified. Frantz needs the orphans of D sseldorf, he needs the ruins of Germany in order to sustain his illusion, in order to justify torture. He admits this recognizes his "mauvaise foi" in the scene with his father:

⁷⁶ SA, II, 5, p. 184.

⁷⁷ Ibid., II, 5, p. 185.

Les ruines me justifiaient: j'aimais nos maisons saccagées, nos enfants mutilés. J'ai prétendu que je m'enfermais pour ne pas assister à l'agonie de l'Allemagne; c'est faux. J'ai souhaité la mort de mon pays et je me séquestrais pour n'être pas témoin de sa résurrection.⁷⁸

For thirteen years, Frantz has lived imprisoned in his upstairs room, defending himself, Nazi Germany and twentieth century man who, according to him, had been unjustly condemned in Nuremberg, before his thirtieth-century judges, the "Habitants masqués des plafonds."⁷⁹ His presence in that room controls the "destiny" of all the von Gerlachs; all find themselves "sequestered", dependent on Frantz.⁸⁰ While they look upstairs to him, constantly aware of the bolted⁸¹ door above them, Frantz thinks only of the "Crabs" who in turn are above him, looking at him with the eyes of history. In the crabs' imagined look, Frantz tries to discover how he might appear to an entirely alien species, to History. We have this "conscience historique"; just as we judge the past according to our principles, we know that we will be judged by future centuries, by people who we do not comprehend, according to principles which are foreign to us. In as much as the mentality of future generations escapes us, they are "inhuman" or "crabs".

⁷⁸Ibid., V, 1, p. 354.

⁷⁹SA, II, 1, p. 127.

⁸⁰We must also remember that the members of the family voluntarily "sequester" themselves.

⁸¹It is essential to notice that the door is bolted from the inside. ". . . tous les séquestrés sont des séquestrés volontaires. Ce qu'on lit sur les familles qui enferment l'un des leurs, non, l'enfermé s'y prête, l'invité." Maria Craipeau, "Jean Paul Sartre: "Le Silence de ceux qui reviennent", France Observateur, (Sept 1959), p. 12.

Just as Frantz "sequesters" his family, similarly, his family imprisons him. In Johanna's opinion, the responsibility of Frantz's "sequestration" rests on the father and Leni, who by their lying,⁸² nurse Frantz's illusions: "Il y a bien des façons de séquestrer un homme. La meilleure est de s'arranger pour qu'il se séquestre lui-même".⁸³ She realizes that Frantz "cherche à se fuir et que nous l'y aidons par nos mensonges", and that one word, "Opulence",⁸⁴ would suffice to kill him.

Unlike Leni, Johanna exists for Frantz with frightening reality; her very presence challenges the "reality" of his imaginary world. She is going to break his illusions by putting him into contact with outside reality where, he will choose death as the only way out of his contradictions. Frantz has an inkling of this as soon as Johanna enters into his room: "On en veut à ma vie, Madame, je le sais; vous êtes l'outil d'un assassin."⁸⁵ With Johanna's entry into the room, Frantz must fight for his "madness" which will survive only if he can persuade her to submit to it. Frantz, having recognized Johanna as a "séquestrée" like himself, obsessed with an impossible beauty as he was

⁸²Leni reads him made-up newspaper stories, tells him what he wants to hear about Germany and talks to his crabs. In return for protecting his madness, he allows her to take care of him and occasionally makes love to her.

⁸³SA, I, 2, p. 50.

⁸⁴Ibid., III, 2, p. 230.

⁸⁵Ibid., II, 5, p. 171.

with an impossible "grandeur", tries to draw her into his "madness". Having come to Frantz determined to tell him the truth, Johanna finds herself almost believing his lies, almost ready to join with him to protect his "madness" in "un délire à deux".⁸⁶ While Johanna is drawn into Frantz's "madness", Frantz, by her presence, is pulled away from it and cast into the world, this "fourmillante verroterie", this "pacotille d'iniquité".⁸⁷ Her very presence, her sumptuous dress, adds another fact that Frantz must take into account in trying to structure reality. When Johanna brings the watch into the room, Frantz uses it to count impatiently the minutes she is late. As Frantz's "madness" begins to disintegrate, we see the real meaning of the crabs. To Johanna's question about the truth he supposedly tells his crabs, Frantz retorts:

Quels crabs? Etes-vous folle? Quels crabs? (Un temps, Il se détourne) Ah! oui. Eh bien, oui. . . (D'un trait, brusquement). Les crabs sont des hommes. (Un temps). Hein, quoi? (Il s'assied). . . Où ai-je été chercher cela? (Un temps). Je le savais. . . autrefois. . . Oui, oui, oui. Mais j'ai tant de soucis. (Un temps. D'un ton décidé). De vrais hommes, bons et beaux, à tous les balcons des siècles. Moi, je rampais dans la cour; je croyais les entendre: "Frère, qu'est-ce que c'est que ça?" Ca, c'était moi. . . (il se lève. Salut militaire, garde à vous. D'une voix forte). Moi, le Crabe.⁸⁸

Frantz now acknowledges that the crabs of the 30th century will be men.

⁸⁶SA, II, 8, p. 204. They now have a choice between the "real" world and an imaginary world where they will do their utmost to deny objective facts.

⁸⁷SA, IV, 2, pp. 271-272.

⁸⁸SA, IV, 2, p. 282.

He does not fear their judgement as long as Johanna accepts to take their place, to judge him, accept him and absolve him.

Frantz asks Johanna to judge him only when he is convinced that she may pronounce the favorable verdict he has been trying for years to elicit from his crabs. He knows that Johanna's love will assure a more favorable judgement from her than from any other human being yet, he cannot bring himself to tell her the whole truth. His admissions are merely further evasions. In the two flashbacks that he lives before Johanna,⁸⁹ Frantz accuses himself of a false guilt, so that she will acquit him. In the first flashback (IV, 3), Frantz sees an old woman lying on the ground; her legs have been blown off. She blames him and all those like him who did not go far enough into the hell of war, who kept their principles at the cost of Germany's defeat. In spite of its hideousness, the memory of that woman has been reassuring to Frantz; for, it vindicates his crimes. He at least has gone all the way. With Johanna, Frantz uses the story for the opposite purpose of making himself appear guilty of the old woman's accusation; as he confesses: "j'ai tué l'Allemagne par sensiblerie."⁹⁰ The second flashback⁹¹ concerns Smolensk where, cut off by the partisans and with hardly any rations left, Frantz's men find two Russian peasants. Frantz almost tells Johanna the truth but, sensing

⁸⁹SA, IV, 3-7.

⁹⁰SA, IV, 4, p. 302.

⁹¹Ibid., IV, 5.

her reaction, he pulls back. His guilt, he says, lies in his innocence: he did not torture.

The arrival of Leni breaks down Frantz's lies and his "madness" as well. She has brought with her a newspaper which she forces him to read. His father, he learns, is one of "Les géants qui ont reconstruit l'Allemagne".⁹² With the realization that his martyred Germany is actually a rich and powerful nation, Frantz's "madness" falls in ruin. When Leni tells Johanna the end of his story about the two partisans she, as well as the audience, learns that Frantz, the witness of man before history, is a torturer, a common criminal. To be sure, Frantz "n'a fait rien",⁹³ "il a laissé faire".⁹⁴ As he had foreseen,⁹⁵ Johanna's horror, indignation, is "le jugement dernier". If the woman who loves him cannot accept him, an impartial judge could only find him guilty. He has staked everything on an acquittal from his chosen judge and he has lost.

Frantz registers his defense of man into a tape recorder. He is not concerned with facts; these he leaves to the "faux témoins".⁹⁶

⁹²Ibid., IV, 8, p. 328,

⁹³Ibid., IV, 7, p. 315.

⁹⁴Ibid., IV, 9, p. 337.

⁹⁵JOHANNA: Je ne suis pas votre juge. Ceux qu'on aime, on ne le juge pas.

FRANTZ: Et si vous cessiez de m'aimer? Est-ce que ce ne serait pas le jugement? Le jugement dernier?"
SA, IV, 2, p. 286.

⁹⁶SA, II, 1, p. 127.

An able lawyer, he knows that his job is to acquit his client. But when Frantz plays back what he has said, the words seem to belong to someone else: "Je n'ai pas voulu dire cela. Mais qui parle? Pas un mot de vrai."⁹⁷ Frantz listening to his tapes wants to hear the truth but he knows that the Frantz talking into the recorder has been telling lies. He will never find the right words without condemning himself. Also as a "writer", he never managed to find exactly the words which would convince the "Crabs" of his innocence. He believed that a writer writes not because he has something to say but because he must, that it is his nature to be a writer. Frantz believes in inspiration; as he says to Leni: "Un jour les mots me viendront d'eux-mêmes et je dirai ce que je veux".⁹⁸ Hoping that his truth will somehow become the truth, Frantz continues his endless conversation with posterity. When Leni points out that his tapes can be stolen, he invents a new device: "Imagine une vitre noire. Plus fine que l'éther. Ultrasensible. Un souffle s'y inscrit. Le moindre souffle. Toute l'Histoire y est gravée, depuis le commencement des temps jusqu'à ce claquement de doigts".⁹⁹ No longer believing in God, Frantz's omnipresent "vitre", like his tapes, replaces an absent God. They are Frantz's attempt to guarantee that his life will not end without significance. What he fears most is not death but meaninglessness: some-

⁹⁷Ibid., II, 1, p. 130.

⁹⁸Ibid., II, 1, p. 131.

⁹⁹Ibid., II, 1, p. 139.

where, something must register that he, "Frantz von Gerlach, ici, dans cette chambre, [a]pris le siècle sur [ses] épaules et [a] dit: j'en répondrai. En ce jour et pour toujours".¹⁰⁰ Meaninglessness is the link to the deeper signification of Frantz's "sequestration".

To understand Frantz's "self-sequestration" only on the basis of his guilt is clearly erroneous. Sartre has clearly defined Frantz's situation:

. . .c'est celui d'un homme voué à l'impuissance par la puissance de son père. Celui-ci a "arrangé" toutes les folies de jeunesse de Frantz. Ne l'eût-il pas fait qu'elle se seraient "arrangées" d'elles-mêmes-- parce que Frantz est un Gerlach, le fils d'un des plus gros industriels du monde. Ainsi Frantz ne peut échapper à cette contradiction objective: il est un futur chef et il est irresponsable.¹⁰¹

In hiding the Polish rabbi, Frantz had wanted to perform an action, an action he could really say was his own, an expression of his freedom. Old Gerlach, in rescuing Frantz from the consequences of his action, negated its value, transmuted his "praxis" into a gesture, for it had no effect; no effect, that is to say, other than precipitating the death of the rabbi. The father's all influencing power is the main reason for Frantz's "sequestration". This is made clear in the conversation between Gerlach and Johanna at the end of Act I:

LE PERE: Mon fils n'a qu'à prendre la peine de descendre: j'arrangerai tout sur l'heure.

JOHANNA: Ce sera le meilleur moyen qu'il remonte en courant dans sa chambre et qu'il s'y enferme pour toujours (Un silence. Le Père a baissé

¹⁰⁰SA, V, 3, p. 382.

¹⁰¹Bernard Dort, "Les Séquestrés d'Altona nous concernent tous", Théâtre Populaire, No. 36, (1959), p. 8.

la tête et regarde le tapis).¹⁰²

Undoubtedly, Frantz feels guilty about the murder and torture because of his conscience, a left over from his youth. What is more important is that Frantz is disgusted because he was in a sense "powerless" to do anything else; his dominant desire was for power:

Quatre bons Allemands m'écraseront contre le sol
et mes hommes à moi saigneront les prisonniers à blanc.
Non! Je ne retomberai jamais dans l'abjecte impuissance.
Je le jure. Il fait noire. L'horreur est encore enchaînée. . .
je les prendrai de vitesse: si quelqu'un la déchaîne, ce
sera moi. Je revendiquerai le mal, je manifesterai mon
pouvoir par la singularité d'un acte inoubliable.¹⁰³

Because of his upbringing, just as he had been "powerless" in everything else, he had been "powerless" to do anything else at Smolensk but use torture. Yet, in his "self-sequestration", Frantz has been trying to convince himself that he was responsible for the torture; if he was responsible, he must have been free to choose this course of action. Frantz wants to believe that the torture was a genuine action with real consequences and, that hence he is right to feel guilty, that he is a torturer. The guilt is the proof of his responsibility, of his freedom. Briefly, Frantz's "self-sequestration" is an attempt to escape from the realization of his "impuissance": the pratico-inerte, in the form of his upbringing, his sense of values, has trapped him.

His father had educated him to be "un chef" in the great von Gerlach shipyard, but, in fact, he never had any power over events.

¹⁰²SA, I, 4, p. 117.

¹⁰³Ibid., V, 1, p. 352.

"L'Entreprise"--the shipyard, Germany, the march of history---for it is all of these things, in fact had manipulated him. His father explains:

Je t'avais donné tous les mérites et mon âpre goût du pouvoir; cela n'a pas servi. Quel dommage! Pour agir, tu prenais les plus gros risques et, tu vois, elle transformait en gestes tous tes actes. Ton tournement a fini par te pousser au crime et jusque dans le crime elle t'annule: elle s'engraisse de ta défaite.¹⁰⁴

Frantz learns at the level of tragedy what Kean and George de Valera learn at the level of comedy: in history we are "refaits avant même d'avoir pu entreprendre de nous faire."¹⁰⁵ His last despairing cry, "J'ai été!"¹⁰⁶ is the final irony; for, he has never "been" anything but the agent of forces that he did not understand. He realizes that he was "voué à l'impuissance", that what he thought he had done could just as well have been done by anyone else.

Gerlach wanted to justify his way of life before he died, thus he manipulated the household in order to get an interview with Frantz:

Si je le revois, j'arrête le compte et je fais l'addition(. . .). Il faut que je tire le trait moi-même sinon tous s'effilochera(. . .). Après tout je l'ai vécue, cette vie: je ne veux pas la laisser se perdre.¹⁰⁷

During all his life, Gerlach has believed in the rectitude of capitalist

¹⁰⁴SA, V, i, p. 369.

¹⁰⁵Francis Jeanson, "Le Théâtre de Sartre ou les hommes en proie à l'homme", Biblio, (Jan. 1966), p. 13.

¹⁰⁶SA, V, 3, p. 382.

¹⁰⁷SA, I, 3, p. 106.

power; he has expediently disregarded all objections to the nature of Nazi power because "la plèbe au pouvoir" was playing his game for him, that is, strengthening the power of German big business. As an individual in capitalist society, Gerlach is a victim of serialization, the fate that Frantz is trying to escape by means of independent action, by means of fascism. If Frantz succeeds, Gerlach's basic premise and ultimate justification--that escape is impossible--will be undermined. It is therefore in Gerlach's interest to prove to Frantz that his actions never had the independence he claims: "Pour agir, tu prenais les plus gros risques et, tu vois, [l'Entreprise] transformait en gestes tous tes actes. . .elle s'engraisse de ta défaite."¹⁰⁸ Thus for Gerlach the justification of the capitalist way of life is that there are no viable alternatives. Frantz admits that his alternative, that is, individual action, was neither an alternative nor a viable one. To be sure, Frantz commits suicide because he realizes the meaning of torture as the absolute violation of human freedom, as "un acte inacceptable"; but also, because he realizes that since childhood he has been "possédé", that the war he thought he was making made him; and also, because he had tried to escape into an imaginary world instead of trying to assume the contradiction with other men and contribute to "l'invention de l'homme."¹⁰⁹

Although the play projects a certain historical pessimism,

¹⁰⁸SA, V, 1, p. 369.

¹⁰⁹Francis Jeanson, "Le Théâtre de Sartre ou les hommes en proie à l'homme", Biblio, (Jan. 1966), p. 13.

Sartre by no means is suggesting that freedom is lost: Frantz makes this quite clear:

(. . .)A Smolensk, une nuit, elle a eu. . .quoi?
Une minute d'indépendance. Et voilà: vous êtes
coupable de tout sauf de cela(. . .)

LE PERE: Frantz, il n'y a jamais en que moi.

FRANTZ: C'est vite dit: prouvez-le (Un temps).
Tant que nous vivrons, nous serons
deux.¹¹⁰

Given the pratico-inerte which circumscribes the freedom of the characters, Sartre is suggesting that individual action is no longer sufficient to attain authenticity. Frantz's argument is, basically: "On nous a eus"; the world is such that violence is endemic, and here he is echoing, on the level of an intuitive insight the relationship between economic scarcity and violence:

Pourtant, jusqu'à ce moment, du moins, de notre pré-histoire, la rareté, quelque forme qu'elle prenne, domine toute la praxis. Il faut donc comprendre à la fois que l'inhumanité de l'homme ne vient pas de sa nature, que, loin d'exclure son humanité, elle ne peut se comprendre que par elle mais que, tant que le règne de la rareté n'aura pris fin, il y aura dans chaque homme et dans tous une structure inerte d'inhumanité qui n'est rien d'autre en somme que la négation matérielle en tant qu'elle est intériorisée(. . .) Rien, en effet--ni les grands fauves ni les microbes-- ne peut être plus terrible pour l'homme qu'une espèce intelligente, carnassière, cruelle, qui saurait comprendre et déjouer l'intelligence humaine et dont la fin serait précisément la destruction de l'homme. Cette espèce, c'est évidemment la nôtre se saisissant par tout homme chez les autres dans le milieu de la rareté.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰SA, V, 1, pp. 371-372.

¹¹¹CRD, pp. 206-208.

Scarcity is the underlying theme of Les Séquestrés d'Altona: the reason why all the characters play the games that they play is that they are victims of serialization. The implication of Les Séquestrés d'Altona is clear: as long as we live under a capitalist system, life will be like that in the Gerlach mansion.

CHAPTER II

A play is a dramatic presentation of a "vision du monde".

Of course, it does not give any specific details. It is our contention that Les Séquestrés d'Altona should be understood with reference to this "vision du monde".

Man is mediated by things to the same extent as things are mediated by man. It is the individual who lies at the beginning of all historical dialectic for it is the individual who acts, and through his acts, totalizes. Of course, by the individual, we do not mean the solitary individual; rather, one who is always in the world of others. Need is at the origin of all human activity since it compels man to do something in order to overcome some lack. "Tout se découvre dans le besoin"¹: need is the original totalizing relation of a man, this material being, with the material world of which he is a part; it is an interiorization of a lack, of something which is missing or scarce and which I do not have. In order to gratify his needs, man, using both tools and his own body, looks to Nature. The body is perpetually in need so far as it functions at all. Organic function, need, and praxis are correlated:

Ainsi, dans la mesure où le corps est fonction, la fonction besoin et le besoin praxis, on peut dire que le travail humain, c'est-à-dire la praxis originelle par quoi il produit et reproduit sa vie, est entièrement dialectique.²

¹CRD, p. 166.

²Ibid., pp. 173-174.

When nature negates man through its menace, man offsets this threat by negating nature through his labor or praxis. Through his fundamental project, which is identical with need, toward the surrounding world, the individual "unifies and totalizes the surrounding plurality as future possibility."³ Man is always dominated by the ever present end; and, this end is dictated by the need, or project, such that there is a, "Détermination du présent par l'avenir, chassé-croisé de l'inerte et l'organique, négation, contradictions dépassées, négation de la négation, bref totalisation en cours."⁴

The bond between the individuals in our history and their surrounding materiality is characterized by "une lutte acharnée contre la rareté."⁵ Scarcity,⁶ basically, is the shortage of necessary elements for the reproduction of life. Scarcity in the material world is constituted by need. Each one of us encounters the other in an environment of scarcity such that the other competes with me for an insufficient quantity of food. This encounter endangers my life as well as the others'; for, man is a material being and, as such, lives by the

³Wilfrid Desan, The Marxism of Jean Paul Sartre, (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), p. 83.

⁴CRD, p. 174.

⁵Ibid., p. 201.

⁶Scarcity should not only be interpreted in economic terms; there is also scarcity of time, space, etc.

sacrifice of organic matter (animals and plants) and to the detriment of other men.

Human relations proceed on a background of scarcity because, up to and including the present, human praxis has not been able to suppress scarcity. "La rareté" determines that, for each, all the world exists as object of consumption. As such, it constitutes the "negative unity of the multiplicity of men".⁷ Each human being, each Other, is a risk of death for me by the simple fact that he presents himself in my field of action; he is seen as excess, as a future consumer. At the same time, I see myself as excess for him, as a risk of death for him. Man becomes, through matter, other than himself; he becomes the inhuman man. Each man is one-too-many; he exists as a strange species, as other than me. To be sure, there are "natural" hazards, such as accidents or sickness, which endanger my life; but, this risk cannot be confused with the one that comes from the Other. Natural hazards can bring about my death but, if I am able to foresee them, if I understand nature and its laws, I can modify the situation such that the number and gravity of the risks involved will be steadily reduced. Unlike the one from nature, the risk of death from the Other comes from an intentional will. It comes from an agent who, like myself, initiates projects, and is able to foresee my projects. Therefore he can set traps for me, preventing me from carrying them out; and, he

⁷Ronald Laing and David Cooper, Reason and Violence, (London: Tavistock Publications, 1964), p. 113.

can appropriate the goods which I had wanted to possess, thus he can knowingly drive me to starvation. Briefly, the Other can plot my death just as well as I can plot his. Now we can understand the meaning of Frantz's tape:

Siècles, voici mon siècle, solitaire et difforme,
l'accusé. Mon client s'éventre de ses propres
mains; ce que vous prenez pour une lymphé blanche,
c'est du sang: pas de globules rouges, l'accusé
meurt de faim. Mais je vous dirai le secret de
cette perforation multiple: le siècle eût été
bon si l'homme n'eût été guetté par son ennemi
cruel, immémorial, par l'espèce carnassière qui
avait juré sa perte, par la bête sans poil et maligne,
par l'homme.⁸

Alienated by scarcity, my relations with the Other take the form of my negative reciprocity. Each one, by recognizing his being as an objective means in the project of the Other as adversary, puts to profit his own instrumentality for the Other, to make of him an instrument for his own ends. Each may use his own materiality to act on that of the Other: each, by ruses, by manoeuvres of every kind, may allow himself to be constituted by the Other as a false object, deceiving means to his ends. Thus we can see why nothing, neither wild beasts nor microbes, can be more terrible for man than "le contre-homme", that intelligent flesh-eating species, who understands and thwarts human intelligence, and whose end is the destruction of man.

Interiorized scarcity gives way to relations of negative reciprocity: the Other is for me as I am for him, a risk of death.

⁸SA, V, 3, p. 381.

Need and scarcity determine the Manicheistic basis of action and morals. In interiorizing scarcity and the risk of death that the Other represents, each person, or group, justifies his violence against the Other by the necessity of defending oneself against the "méchanceté" of the Other. This Other, who is identical to me, and because he is identical to me pursues my death in order to assure his subsistence, becomes "le contre-homme", "le Méchant", who I have to destroy": "Nous considérons donc, au niveau même du besoin et par le besoin, que la rareté se vit pratiquement par l'action manichéiste et que l'éthique se manifeste comme impératif destructif: il faut détruire le mal".⁹ Violence and counterviolence are contingent necessities, and the consequence of any attempt to destroy this inhumanity is that in destroying in the adversary the inhumanity of "le contre-homme", I can only destroy in him the humanity of man, and realize in me his inhumanity. As Frantz's last speech reveals:

La bête se cachait, nous surprenions son regard, tout à coup, dans les yeux intimes de nos prochains; alors nous frappions: légitime défense préventive. J'ai surpris la bête, j'ai frappé, un homme est tombé, dans ses yeux mourants j'ai vu la bête, toujours vivante, moi. Un et un font un: quel malentendu!¹⁰

Whether I kill, torture, enslave, or simply mystify, my aim is to suppress the Other's freedom; for, it can make of me "un homme de trop"¹¹: c'est l'homme et rien d'autre que je hais chez l'ennemi, c'est-à-dire moi-même

⁹CRD, p. 209.

¹⁰SA, V, 3, pp. 381-382.

¹¹CRD, p. 209.

en tant qu'Autre et c'est bien moi que je veux détruire en lui pour l'empêcher de me détruire réellement dans mon corps."¹² As long as scarcity remains our destiny, evil is irremediable, and this must be the starting point of our ethic.

Sartre stresses that scarcity is "le moteur passif de l'Histoire",¹³ the foundation of all possibility of history. "It is the negative synthesis of human plurality, a negation imposed on man externally by nature, which is repeated as a negation of man by man."¹⁴ Thus, scarcity is the ultimate foundation of history as the struggle of classes. The development of techniques has allowed man to produce a large quantity of products. This has lessened scarcity in some "advanced" countries but has not alleviated it, both in these countries and in the world. The sum of goods at the disposal of a given society remains insufficient for the needs of the members of that society. Therefore, each society has a certain number of human beings which it treats as excess, and which it perpetually threatens with death. Laws, customs and institutions, the structure of society, are the means by which the ruling class designates certain human beings as excess and coerces them to accept such a condition. In order not to diminish their profits, the ruling classes organize

¹²CRD, p. 209.

¹³Ibid., p. 200.

¹⁴André Gorz, "Sartre and Marx", New Left Review, No. 37 (May/June, 1966), p. 13.

scarcity in the form of a dearth either of products or of men; that is, the law of supply and demand is not a "natural" law; the ruling classes control the supply and in many cases create the demand. Thus, scarcity accounts for the number of "poor" in "advanced" capitalist societies. In a global context, the partial victory that one country has in diminishing scarcity only serves to displace it to another country. This enables us to understand imperialist wars, colonialism, and rifts within the socialist camp. At the level of his primary needs, man has not been able to produce enough goods for consumption: three quarters of mankind is still under-nourished, two-thirds are actually starving, and the "abundant" societies also have their "poor". The struggle against scarcity is not hopeless yet, with the growth in population greatly outstripping the production of food, the defining truth of our century, "ce goût rance et fade dans ma gorge (. . .) ce goût du siècle,"¹⁵ remains famine and the struggle against famine.

Sartre does not pretend to have discovered the concept of scarcity as a means to explain "socialité". He recognizes that scarcity was included in the essential discovery of marxism:

(. . .)le travail comme réalité historique et comme utilisation d'outils déterminés dans un milieu social matériel déjà déterminé est le fondement réel de l'organisation des relations sociales. Cette découverte ne peut plus être remise en question.¹⁶

¹⁵SA, V, 3, p. 382.

¹⁶GRD, p. 224, footnote 1.

Sartre, by emphasizing scarcity, has rendered marxism's discovery fully intelligible: it is precisely because mankind lives and "becomes" in a milieu of scarcity that all the structures of a given society depend on its mode of production. With scarcity in the background, we can understand human relations such as slavery, the division of labour and the alienation of workers in industrial societies.

Individual praxis, because of organic need, is at first the negation of what is, that is scarcity. Through his work, man transforms inert matter either directly or by instrumentalizing it for human ends. Although collective work, tools and technology have been able to diminish scarcity, they have neither been able to suppress it nor alleviate the social tensions and conflicts resulting from interiorized scarcity. In this milieu of interiorized scarcity, man finds himself alienated for it is impossible for him to recognize his projects in the results of his work. Through work, man reduces himself to "une inertie dirigée",¹⁷; he makes his body an instrument in order to act on matter. But the "matière ouvrée" in turn affects the worker with inertia by returning on each individual the force of the work done by all the others. Sartre uses the example of the policy of deforestation as it was practiced in China for thousands of years. Each Chinese peasant cuts down the trees on his property in order to have the maximum amount of arable land. Through the centuries, these individual praxes made of China a treeless land at the mercy of floods. But, during the period of deforestation, the Chinese could only see: "(. . .)la plénitude

¹⁷CRD, p. 212.

que représente la moisson, ils n'avaient pas d'yeux pour ce manque [l'absence d'arbres] qui n'était pour eux, au plus, qu'une libération, que l'élimination d'un obstacle."¹⁸ Everything comes about as if some collective praxis wanted to expose China to disastrous floods. In fact, this processus, whose origin is millions of individual praxis, has not been wanted or foreseen and as such is the opposite of praxes; it is counterfinality or anti-praxis. All this results in a massive alienation, an alienation which constitutes a fatality for the worker: "Le travailleur devient sa propre fatalité matérielle; il produit les inondations qui le ruinent."¹⁹ What the praxis of man has produced and unified hits back at him; man is indeed produced by his own product.

Similarly, the tool or the machine, the product of human praxis, hits back at its maker in the form of exigencies, imposing its laws on men to such an extent that the machine commands its operator. The exigency of the machine is interiorized by the worker as an unconditional imperative: it wants to be operated in this way and in no other way. Gerlach realizes that he no longer commands; rather, all the commands reach him through matter for massive industrialization commands unconditionally the way he has to act. Similarly, the entire existence of the workers in his shipyards is caught in

¹⁸CRD, p. 232.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 234.

this network of exigencies, alienated totally by their work. The machine, "l'Entreprise", now chooses its men and prefabricates their future:

(. . .) nous comprenons tous la nécessité des transformations sociales à partir des complexes matériels et techniques. Il y a pour chacun de nous, aujourd'hui, une intelligibilité véritable dans le processus objectif (beaucoup plus complexe que le marxisme d'Engels ne l'a montré) qui préfigure l'esclave comme avenir de sous-homme pour des individus encore indéterminés à partir d'un progrès technique et d'un accroissement de bien-être qui arrachent certains groupes (y compris, dans beaucoup de cas, ceux qui seront réduits en servitude) à ce qu'Engels appelle la contrainte de l'animalité. Chacun comprend ou peut comprendre aujourd'hui que la machine, par sa structure et ses fonctions, détermine comme avenir rigide et subi d'individus indéterminés, le type de ses servants et, par là, crée des hommes.²⁰

While the machine is in the interest²¹ of the factory owner, it is not in the interest of the worker. Although it is through the machine that the worker makes his living, he remains a victim of industrialization. The machine requires an operator; it does not matter who in particular manipulates it; it makes workers interchangeable. Through air pollution,

²⁰CRD, p. 230.

²¹"L'intérêt, c'est l'être-tout-entier-hors-de-soi-dans-une-chose en tant qu'il conditionne la praxis comme impératif catégorique (. . .) l'intérêt se découvre dans le moment pratico-inerte de l'expérience en tant que l'homme se constitue dans le milieu extérieur comme cet ensemble pratico-inerte de matériaux ouvrés tout en installant dans sa personne réelle l'inertie pratique de l'ensemble". CRD, p. 261. It is in the interest of the owner of a factory to buy new machinery in order to compete with other industrialists. Of course, new machinery means a greater output at a lower running cost but it also means less jobs for the workers. With automation the owner makes the factory, (his being-outside-in-the-thing), its efficiency and expansion, more and more essential at the expense of the workers, who become more and more unessential.

the machine endangers the worker's health; and, through further automation, the worker is in danger of losing his job. Thus the machine, because of its exigencies, is for the worker his "destiny"; only through the socialization of the means of production can it become his interest.

For Sartre there are two forms of necessity, both types of alienation, given in the dialectical structure of human interaction: alteration and objectification. Necessity is not experienced under constraint:

(. . .)la première expérience pratique de la nécessité doit se faire dans l'activité sans contrainte de l'individu et dans la mesure où le résultat final, bien que conforme à celui qu'on escomptait, se révèle en même temps comme radicalement Autre, tel qu'il n'a jamais fait l'objet d'une intention chez l'agent.²²

One form of such action without constraint is the very simplest occasion when one does something in relation to another. In no case is the result ever identical with the intention of the agent. For an alteration occurs when my action passes from my-action-for-me to my-action-for-you. My action "escapes" me; from being mine-for-me it becomes other-for-the-other. Necessity is given in experience also, "quand la matière travaillée nous vole notre action non pas en tant qu'elle est matérialité pure mais en tant qu'elle est praxis matérialisée."²³ The bankruptcy of a Genovese businessman may appear to be the result of his own "praxis" but, it may actually have crashed upon him "du

²²CRD, p. 282.

²³Ibid., p. 283.

dehors"²⁴ to the extent that the Mediterranean basin is a material unity, and any events within its border affect the private business of the Genovese banker. Thus man acts on matter ("objectivation") and totalized matter acts on man("objectivité"):

Il faut saisir comment le résultat concerté d'une pratique peut en tant que fait nouveau introduire une modification universelle dans la quasi-totalité matérielle et comment il reçoit de cette totalité mouvante et inorganique une sorte de modification passive qui le fait Autre qu'il n'est.²⁵

Whether through alteration, or objectification into materialized praxis, the resultant is always other than the intention. Yet man is only encountered as his objectifications, and in his alterations, as other for another. When I assume full responsibility for my praxis, when I make the choice in the light of a full acquaintance with the facts, I discover this necessity (alienation), this "négation de la liberté au sein de la liberté plénière",²⁶ as unavoidable.

The alienation of one's praxis through alteration and objectification being other-for-other and "être-dehors-dans-la chose" is one's truth and reality. This "être-dehors" constitutes itself, or is constituted, as "matière pratico-inerte".²⁷ Human praxis, in so far as it is subject to matter, can fall into social impotence, into inertia.

²⁴CRD, p. 283.

²⁵Ibid., p. 284.

²⁶Ibid., p. 285.

²⁷Ibid., p. 286.

The "pratico-inerte" defines the individual man; also it classifies him in the social field where he is totalized by the mode of production. Thus he is caught in the "pratico-inerte" of his class:

L'être-de-classe comme être pratico-inerte vient aux hommes par les hommes à travers les synthèses passives de la matière ouvrée; c'est pour chacun de nous son être-hors-de-soi dans la matière, en tant qu'il nous produit et nous attend dès la naissance et en tant qu'il se constitue à travers nous comme un avenir-fatalité, c'est-à-dire comme un avenir qui se réalisera nécessairement par nous à travers les actions par ailleurs quelconques que nous choisirons. Il va de soi que cet être-de-classe ne nous empêche pas de réaliser un destin individuel (chaque vie est particulière) mais cette réalisation de notre expérience jusqu'à la mort n'est qu'une des manières possibles (c'est-à-dire déterminés par le champ structuré des possibles) de produire notre être de classe.²⁸

Frantz recognized that the "pratico-inerte" limited his field of choices. As he remarks to Johanna: "Je suis choisi. Neuf mois avant ma naissance, on a fait choix de mon nom, de mon office, de mon caractère et de mon destin. Je vous dis qu'on me l'impose, ce régime cellulaire."²⁹

One belongs to a certain class because of various factors: the passive synthesis of materiality which simultaneously represents the most immediate and brutal aspects of our objective reality and the general conditions of social activity; crystallized praxes of preceding generations through which an individual is assigned a class, social status, and personal rôle. To the extent to which her field of choice has been severely limited, the working woman who spends eight hours a day in a monotonous job, from which her needs are barely ful-

²⁸CRD, p. 294.

²⁹SA, II, 5, p. 181.

filled, has no other essence outside this frustrated self: she is nothing but her work such that "[elle] est dehors, dans son rapport au monde et visible à tous; [elle] Coïncide exactement avec sa réalité objective".³⁰ The life-course of a worker in Dop Shampoos is pre-determined in general. Yet the factory, the machine, does not do away with the freedom of individual praxis: it imposes a certain impotence on it, it alienates freedom.³¹ The factory girl, in order to avoid the birth of a child she could not afford to feed, makes a free decision to get an abortion; in so doing "elle réalise par elle-même ce qu'elle est déjà,"³² she passes against herself the sentence already passed by the socio-economic conditions of a society which refuses to give maternity leave. Her freedom has been caught in the trap of the "pratico-inerte": the impoverished peasant decides freely to leave his farm in order to find work in a factory in the city; in a time of unemployment a worker freely decides to accept lower wages. In so doing, each one accomplished exactly what was expected of him from the outside, thus serving production. Each one has performed according to the Other's wishes. Each one has freely decided to act in a certain way because any other course of action appeared "impossible". Eventhough the worker freely chooses to accept lower wages, there is a certain "necessity" in this choice. If he had not accepted lower

³⁰CRD, p. 289.

³¹Without freedom the concept of alienation would not exist.

³²CRD, p. 291.

wages, he would not be able to feed himself and his family. If this is so, what is the character of freedom in our society, in the "partico-inerte": "Dans le champ du pratico-inerte, [la liberté devient] le mode sur lequel l'homme aliéné doit vivre à perpétuité son bain et, finalement la seule manière qu'il ait de découvrir la nécessité de ses aliénations et de ses impuissances."³³ Because of the praxis of the others which continually sustains the meaning inscribed in matter, freedom has become the means by which we can become aware of our alienation and impotence. To transcend the conditions of one's class entails a fuller and fuller realization of them. It is through the "groupe-en-fusion" that freedom is "resurrected".³⁴

Serialization is the enemy of genuine grouping, of real contact between individuals. In order to understand the series we must distinguish it from the group: "Le groupe se définit par son entreprise et par ce mouvement constant d'intégration qui vise à en faire une praxis pure en tentant de supprimer en lui toutes les formes de l'inertie"³⁵; the series, on the contrary, is characterized by its passive, inert, inorganic quality and is made up of a "juxtaposition of individuals, all of whom are defined within the collective ensemble as Other, but have no further distinction."³⁶ In order to show more

³³CRD, p. 425.

³⁴Ibid., p. 425.

³⁵Ibid, p. 307.

³⁶Wilfrid Desan, The Marxism of Jean Paul Sartre, (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), p. 109.

clearly what he means by series, Sartre instances a crowd of people waiting for a bus at a stop along St. Germain-des-Prés.

Each individual member in this crowd is related to each other by their solitude; they are all in their own worlds. This solitude is the social product of the modern metropolis where men are interchangeable. Yet solitude, like "sequestration", is a project. A potential passenger uses a newspaper, (a collective), in order to separate himself from the ten persons who are in the same queue. Thus solitude is imposed on me and, at the same time, it is my project. The group of waiting people is unified in a loose way by the sign around which they gather and by the fact that they are all expecting the bus. This material object,³⁷ the Bus, determines the serial order: "C'est précisément à ce niveau que l'objet matériel va déterminer l'ordre sériel comme raison sociale de la séparation des individus. L'exigence pratico-inerte vient ici de la rareté: il n'y a pas assez de place pour tous."³⁸ Through the bus, the individual qualities of the potential passengers are negated, and the passengers simply become other among others. They are characterized by their interchangeability: "Ils sont identiques comme individus séparés"³⁹; in so far as all the members of the bus queue are waiting passengers with a future object in

³⁷In Les Séquestrés d'Altona, the material objects are the Gerlach mansion and "L'Entreprise".

³⁸CRD, p. 312.

³⁹Ibid., p. 311.

common, each is the same as the other. Furthermore, there is "identity as alterity"⁴⁰: the other that each is for the other is the same. Each is "excédentaire".⁴¹ No one possesses in himself the reason for his ordinal position in the serial order. In Paris, a machine, far from considering any intrinsic qualities of the individual, emits a number which dictates the person's position in the waiting line.

The bus⁴² objectifies the passengers as Other among Others, and at the same time joins them together or relates them. But seriality is not structured: the Other is never the subordinate or the superior, he is simply the Other. In this series gathered together by the approaching bus, the factory owner is equivalent to the worker. In order to understand this collective, we must understand that the material object--the bus--"(. . .) réalise l'unité d'interprétation des individus en tant qu'êtres-dans-le-monde-hors-de-soi."⁴³ and only on this basis; and, that it structures their relations according to the rule of seriality. Thus the series tries to find its unity in an object--in this case the "pratico-inerte" object, the bus--held in common by each member of the series. The primary characteristic of his unity is that it is "unification par l'extérieur",⁴⁴ that which makes the members of the waiting

⁴⁰Ronald Laing and David Cooper, Reason and Violence, (London: Tavistock Publications, 1964), p. 122.

⁴¹CRD, p. 312.

⁴²The object or the collective entity.

⁴³CRD, p. 308.

⁴⁴CRD, p. 308.

crowd Other among Others.

The relation of men in a series is not one of reciprocity; instead, the link between men is one of alterity--everyone is Other. In the series this alterity is in succession, and as such "the differentiation [is] determined according to the order of succession"⁴⁵:

(. . .) la sérialité vient de la matière pratico-inerte, c'est-à-dire de l'avenir comme ensemble de possibilités inertes et toutes équivalentes(. . .) [on] trouvera une place si dix ou plus de dix personnes peuvent monter dans l'autobus; il n'en trouvera pas si neuf y peuvent monter mais il sera le premier pour le prochain autobus. Et ce sont ces possibilités et elles seules qui, au sein du groupe, constituent le contenu réel de son altérité.⁴⁶

Eventhough the waiting crowd, this "rassemblement", forms a visible unity, it is only the result of circumstances. This unity--we all live in Westdale, we live in the same house--has no clear-cut limits. The unity made up of our plurality is "une unité fuyante". A section of town, an apartment building, a house are only containers in which one finds oneself Other among Others.

Seriality reduces us all to a certain impotence. By trying to understand why this is so, we can begin to understand why Frantz is "voué à l'impuissance".⁴⁷ Unlike housewives forming a queue at the shopping centre, the listeners to a radio programme can have only an

⁴⁵Wilfrid Desan, The Marxism of Jean Paul Sartre, (New York: Anchor Books, 1965), p. 111.

⁴⁶CRD, p. 314.

⁴⁷SA, V, 1, p. 369.

indirect presence to each other. This seriality is characterized by absence, by the impossibility of any easy intercommunication. If I am irritated at some phoney propaganda, I cannot contest it in the presence of all the listeners; if there is to be any common praxis, the listeners must be alerted one by one.⁴⁸ In absence, I can only turn off my radio in disgust. The multiplicity--the audience--finds in the voice on the radio its unity of exteriority; it produces me as an inert member of a series and as "Autre au milieu des Autres."⁴⁹ Because I am separated from the other members of the audience, I cannot act on the series of the Others. The result of this impotency is that the Others can become my "destiny" if the government propaganda succeeds in mystifying them. The experience of impotency is the real relationship between the members of a series⁵⁰:

Il n'en est pas moins clair que l'impuissance subie est le mastic de la sérialité: je sens mon impuissance en l'Autre puisque c'est l'Autre en tant qu'Autre qui décidera si mon acte restera une initiative individuelle et folle ou me rejettera dans la solitude abstraite ou deviendra l'acte commun d'un groupe; ainsi, chacun attend l'acte de l'Autre et chacun se fait l'impuissance de l'Autre en tant que l'Autre est son impuissance.⁵¹

⁴⁸If there is to be any organization into a group.

⁴⁹CRD, p. 323.

⁵⁰"(. . .)Les séries [sont] constituées par des termes isolés, dont l'altérité, comme impuissance, [est] la seule et fuyante unité".
CRD, p. 325.

⁵¹CRD, p. 325.

Old Gerlach, as Other, has condemned Frantz to impotence; through his power, the father "arrange tout sur l'heure",⁵² he changes Frantz's acts into gestures, he annuls their meaning such that: "Il n'est resté qu'un jeu pour gosse de riches."⁵³ It is the group that constitutes itself as the negation of this impotence, that is, of seriality.⁵⁴ Frantz had mistaken German Fascism for the "groupe-en-fusion" where each member is sovereign; he again experienced impotency for the power lay in the hands of one person, namely Hitler.

There are in fact two dialectics⁵⁵: firstly, that of individual praxis, and that of the group as praxis which negate the "pratico-inerte" social field; and, in the second place, the "pratico-inerte" field, the anti-dialectic, which negates individual action and the praxis of the group. Every objectification becomes other because it is an object in the free field of action of the Other: "C'est la liberté qui limite la liberté".⁵⁶ Sartre uses the example of merchandise showing how it effects both the buyer and the producer. The merchandise is the objectification of the producer's freedom; by the very fact that

⁵²SA, I, 4, p. 117.

⁵³Ibid., I, 2, p. 90.

⁵⁴CRD, p. 325.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 359.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 361.

it is bought by the Other, the merchandise retroactively affects the maker. At the same time, it imposes itself on the buyer. The object, materiality, has caught both the freedom of the buyer and the freedom of the maker such that:

(. . .)l'unité fuyante de l'objet qui s'affirme contre tous est en réalité la négation de tous et de chacun pour tous dans le champ pratique de chacun en tant qu'elle devient dans l'objet unité négative et inerte (impuissance, par exemple, de chacun découverte dans l'objet et à travers toute tentative pour en changer les structures).⁵⁷

Nevertheless, it is human praxis, "le moteur de tout",⁵⁸ that creates the "pratico-inerte" object; old Gerlach has built up "l'Entreprise". The "pratico-inerte" object, in turn, escapes its maker to limit his freedom. "L'Entreprise" has made of Frantz "un criminel de droit commun",⁵⁹ and of his acts "des meurtres individuels".⁶⁰ Furthermore, as Gerlach tells his son,⁶¹ "L'Entreprise" now commands, imposing itself on men: "Elle forme et recrute elle-même ses gérants".⁶²

To put this in another way, things impose themselves on man

⁵⁷CRD, p. 362.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 361.

⁵⁹SA, V, 1, p. 366.

⁶⁰Ibid., V, 1, p. 365.

⁶¹Ibid., V, 1, p. 369.

⁶²Ibid., V, 1, p. 369.

in the form of exigencies, for example, red and green traffic lights, the family and institutions. They are "impératifs", sustained by the praxis of others, which orient and manipulate us. This does not mean that man is not free; on the contrary, only through his praxis can man discover and interiorize "Les contraintes du besoin, les exigences de la Chose ouvrée, les impératifs de l'Autre [et] sa propre impuissance."⁶³ Yet, freedom or praxis has been qualified: in the case of the worker who freely engages himself, although he knows that the machine will be his prison and will alienate him, freedom "ne veut pas dire possibilité d'option mais nécessité de vivre la contrainte sous forme d'exigence à remplir par une praxis."⁶⁴ We are all born into families and societies torn by seriality. Freedom can only be the necessity of living the exigence by praxis. Through our praxis we become aware of our impotence as Other in the series; and, insofar as we do, we also become aware that this condition is only provisional and relative:

Mais dans la mesure où chacun saisit sa propre impossibilité (c'est-à-dire son impuissance à rien changer, à rien réorganiser) à travers sa praxis (qui se pose dans sa structure dialectique comme possibilité permanente de dépasser toutes les circonstances de fait) cette impossibilité dans la liberté lui paraît une impossibilité provisoire et relative.⁶⁵

⁶³CRD, p. 364.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 365.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 367.

By himself, the individual is powerless to bring about change; through the constitution of the revolutionary group, through collective action, he will be able to change a world.

CONCLUSION

We are at the stage where we are still overwhelmingly made by other people. The whole purpose of "le traître" is to get rid of these people who have turned him into a person he does not want to be. We are all "des rats" in a labyrinth and, we can be men only by turning around and looking at the situation that has made us such. We have been so manufactured by our family and by others such that we do not know what we are unless we get some perspective on ourselves. In so far as we are all "des rats", we are "(. . .)truqués, faits et refaits, falsifiés, manoeuvrés, possédés, mutilés, colonisés ou vampirisés."¹ In so far as we are men, we are "des traîtres et des imposteurs."

We ourselves, man, create and sustain the labyrinth that imprisons us: "l'homme est un rat pour l'homme, la ratomisation du ratome est l'oeuvre du ratome lui-même."² The simple fact is that man is made by man. Frantz's formula, "Un et un font un, voilà notre mystère"³ is quite appropriate. I am at one and the same time my freedom and what other people have made of me; in other words "un ratome". Frantz, similar to the other Sartrean heroes, has become conscious of the fact that he has been nothing but a succession of rôles,

¹Francis Jeanson, Le Problème Moral et la Pensée de Sartre, (Paris: du Seuil, 1965), p. 318.

²Ibid., p. 319.

³SA, V, 3, p. 381.

that the existence of "l'Entreprise" transformed beforehand his actions into gestures. Because of the praxis of his father, as soon as Frantz had begun to declare himself, he became "un autre".

How can we do something which has not been dictated, which does not escape us as soon as it is realized in the milieu of the Others:

"Il s'agit de savoir s'il existe un seul acte dans ce monde falsifié dont nous puissions dire tranquillement: je l'ai fait."⁴ The extent to which we live as a function of other people is the extent to which we are not human. "Le traître" is someone who insists on defining himself, who puts all his energies into "se faire" humain."⁵ Through his praxis, man makes it possible to recognize the "world": the "world" is not a given, it is our existence that sustains the existence of our "world". The extent to which we will not prefer to be the product of the other people is the extent to which we will try to "nous faire humains", the extent to which we will try to change the world. We might not know exactly what to replace this "world" with; yet, we must insist that something has to be done about it. Even though we are totally conditioned by our situation in the world, we are free to turn around in order to understand our situation to some extent and do something about it. For Sartre, you find yourself insofar as you act with others to create a society where people will have the greatest amount of freedom so that they can find themselves.

⁴J-P. Sartre, Situations IV, (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 48.

⁵Ibid., p. 60.

Insofar as anything is practicable, it is with others:

La conséquence immédiate: à l'instant même où il peut enfin dire je fais ceci, j'en suis responsable, il s'aperçoit qu'il s'adresse à nous. Car il n'y a, aujourd'hui, que deux manières de parler de soi, la troisième personne du singulier ou la première personne du pluriel. Il faut savoir dire "nous" pour dire "je": cela n'est pas contestable.⁶

Only by finding a common cause and by accomplishing it through collective action can you then say: "I" did it; this also includes the "we" experience.

The group is born the moment men experience the impossibility of changing their condition as "l'impossibilité de vivre": "le groupe se constitue à partir d'un besoin ou d'un danger commun et se définit par l'objectif commun qui détermine sa praxis commune."⁷ To demonstrate the birth of the "groupe-en-fusion" Sartre uses the example of Paris on July 12, 1789 where there is a state of insurrection. The Parisians are hungry, tired and have just lived through a very cold winter. Their pleas for a greater equality and a chance to alleviate their misery have gone unheeded by the government. Furthermore, the army has been called to the capital and has taken up position in the "quartier" Saint-Antoine. For each of the inhabitants, the troops represent a personal threat. In undergoing this threat, each becomes aware that it also endangers his neighbour. Yet my neighbour is no longer any Other whatever of seriality; rather, the Other is the same as myself

⁶J.-P. Sartre, Situations IV, (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 80.

⁷CRD, p. 385.

insofar as I see my future in his; the troops threaten all of us.

Under the influence of an external praxis; the crowd loots the arms depot. The "rassemblement" has acted, and in this free deed it has suddenly discovered that it was a group. Yet unity at this stage is still elsewhere, that is, in the past and in the future. In arming themselves the angry crowd had unified and had accomplished a revolutionary act. As for the future, the arms provide a possibility for resistance, a new act of self-assertion as a group. Having been duped by Flesselles who had promised them weapons, the "rassemblement" re-acted in a new way: "chacun réagit d'une manière nouvelle. Ni en tant qu'individu ni en tant qu'Autre mais comme incarnation singulière de la personne commune."⁸ The "groupe-en-fusion", the Apocalypse, signifies the dissolution of the series. This group is amorphous and no longer is it characterized by alterity. Contrary to the series where unity is always elsewhere, the synthetic unity of the "groupe-en-fusion" is always here such that, "en chaque lieu de la ville, à chaque moment, dans chaque moment, dans chaque processus partiel, la partie se joue tout entière et le mouvement de la ville y trouve son achèvement et sa signification".⁹

"Le tiers médiateur" plays a primordial rôle in the constitution of the "groupe-en-fusion". The common danger, the army, that totalizes the citizenry of Paris, draws everyone from his being merely Other and

⁸CRD, p. 391.

⁹CRD, p. 391.

makes him "un tiers" in relation to a certain constellation of reciprocities.¹⁰ Each person is "un tiers" and this becomes the most immediate human relation. Each third man totalizes for it is through him that the practical unity is revealed and asserted as the negation of an organized praxis--in this case the army--which threatens them all. The objective of "le tiers" becomes the common objective, and it is felt as such by him, he knows himself to be unified with all the others for "la pluralité des épïcètres se découvre à lui comme unifiée par une exigence commune (ou une praxis commune)".¹¹ His danger is my danger, and vice versa.

This triangle situation is not something new in Sartre's work. Huis Clos presents three characters, Estelle, Garcin and Inès, each is for the other both executioner and victim. To be sure, the triangle in this play is presented in its negative aspects. To some extent the relations of the characters in Les Séquestrés d'Altona are of the same type such that the play could be described as "un 'Huis Clos' à cinq personnages".¹² Just as Inez had made it impossible for Garcin and Estelle to make love, Leni, by revealing that Frantz has tortured, makes it impossible for the latter and Johanna to loose themselves in this "délire à deux". Yet, Les Séquestrés d'Altona, in the figure of Johanna, pre-

¹⁰CRD, p. 398.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Maria Craipeau, "Interview avec J-P. Sartre", France Observateur, (Sept., 1959), p. 12.

sents a more positive "tiers". It is through Johanna that the situation in the Gerlach household is revealed. She recognizes that "les chefs" like old Gerlach are now nothing more than "des patrons de paille".¹³ One is "sequestered" by external forces but, at the same time, "sequestration" is self-imposed: "Il y a un verrou intérieur. On a dû le tirer."¹⁴ She realizes one of the reasons for Frantz's sequestration: the latter wants to escape his father's influence which has made of his acts "des jeux pour gosse de riches".¹⁵ As we have stated previously, Johanna is torn between the "upstairs and the "downstairs" reality; she reflects the "déchirement" that each member of the audience feels. It is partly through her that the audience can "participate" in the character of Frantz; up to Act IV, scene 9, we are tempted to say "he is like one of us", no one is completely innocent, we have all been guilty of collusion in this or that. With the facts that she knows up to this point, Johanna structures reality. As "le tiers" she takes into account a new fact; Frantz has tortured. In rejecting Frantz, she expresses the common feeling of each member of the audience. We cannot accept such acts as those practised in Algeria, Vietnam or in the Stalinist concentration camps.

Frantz, by sequestering himself, has acted in a manner exactly

¹³SA, I, 2, p. 41.

¹⁴Ibid., I, 2, p. 49.

¹⁵Ibid., I, 2, p. 90.

opposite to "le tiers". "Sequestration" implies illusion, the refusal to take into account all the facts known in the structuring of reality. Prior to his "sequestration" Frantz had failed to get a perspective on his situation. Sequestered in his room, he had tried to deny objective facts: he needed the orphans of Düsseldorf and a devastated Germany. Yet absolute sequestration is impossible; for, human consciousness is always "conscience de quelque chose", always engaged in the world. No matter how much he tries to sustain his imaginary world, Frantz cannot suppress his awareness of what he has done. It is this awareness that keeps him awake at night. No longer does he blame Luther for what he has done:

J'ai envoyé Luther au diable et je suis parti. La guerre était mon destin et je l'ai voulue de toute mon âme. J'agissais, enfin! Je réinventais les ordres; j'étais d'accord avec moi.¹⁶

As he realizes in the final act, he has been completely conditioned yet, he had had "une minute d'indépendance"¹⁷ at Smolensk. Frantz reflects our common condition: we are all in unique situations which completely condition us; yet, we are responsible for what we do. We realize that we have been made by others; but, the important thing is what we do with what others have made of us.

The existence of "le traître" or "le tiers régulateur" provides the possibility for communal action. It is the "tiers régulateur" which is the creator of an objective for the group, or is the organizer

¹⁶SA, IV, 5, p. 308.

¹⁷Ibid., V, 1, p. 371.

of means for the group. In the midst of a running battle, he gives the signal to: "'Arretez!' tout le monde s'arrête; quelqu'un crie: 'Repartez' ou bien 'A gauche! A droite! A la Bastille!'" Tout le monde repart, suit le tiers régulateur."¹⁸ These "mots d'ordre" are immediately followed by the third man who did not give the orders. But it is not a matter of obeying orders:

Ce n'est rien d'autre que la praxis commune devenant en un tiers régulatrice d'elle-même chez moi et chez tous les autres tiers dans le mouvement d'une totalisation qui me totalise avec tous. Cette régulation totalisante, je ne peux la reconnaître pour telle que dans la mesure où mon action est la même chez le tiers totalisateur; à partir de l'avenir commun esquissé par le mouvement commun (fuite, charge, etc), c'est-à-dire à partir de mon avenir comme le sens commun de mon praxis régulatrice et totalisante, le mot d'ordre fait venir à moi ma possibilité commune et future. . .¹⁹

Each third man in the "groupe-en-fusion" is sovereign and can become a "tiers régulateur". The third man regulator is in the group but is able to transcend the group, totalize it, and orientate its activity. At this stage, (that of the "group-en-fusion"), there are no leaders; rather, "la foule en situation produit et dissout en elle ses propres chefs provisoires, les tiers régulateurs."²⁰ It is only in the "groupe-en-fusion" that my freedom recognizes itself in my action and simultaneously in the action of the Other. In serial activity, my freedom discovers its alienation and impotence and submits to the

¹⁸CRD, p. 408.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 408.

²⁰Ibid., p. 410.

reign of necessity. In the "groupe-en-fusion". ". . .le chef, c'est toujours moi, il n'y en a pas d'autres, je suis souverain et je découvre dans ma praxis les mots d'ordre qui viennent des autres tiers."²¹

No matter to what depths man degrades man, "il y a toujours quelque chose à faire." Frederick Douglas gathers the courage to resist the slave-breaker to whom he is sent for taming; the slave-breaker does not hit back, he stands trembling. "The abstract philosophical concept of freedom is not only the goal of liberation, it begins with liberation; it is there to be "practiced."²² It is there to be practiced in the factories, in the prisons and in the universities. In our society, the only viable means to fight against the existing social order is through collective action.

²¹CRD, p. 421.

²²Herbert Marcuse, "Dear Angela", Ramparts, (Feb., 1971), p. 22.

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