ILLUSION OF FREEDOM, AND THE INDIVIDUAL’S RELATIONSHIP WITH SOCIETY IN THE SELECT WORKS OF JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF Doctor of Philosophy IN ENGLISH

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Abstract

The topic of the proposed research is “Illusion of Freedom, and The Individual’s Relationship with Society in the Select Works of Jean-Paul Sartre”.

The idea of a man has been a subject of reflection and is equally a constant challenge to critical thinking. In the history of ideas, man has been a central subject of study and thus holds a very long history for this practice. Existentialism is one among many approaches, and is a profound concept for studying the philosophy of existence. Man being the most important and the central tenet of this philosophy, it seeks to explain and represent man in totality. Quite difficult from other philosophies, the idea of Existentialism is committed to the understanding of man in his basic primeval state whereby various approaches by different existentialists, have been devoted to this endeavour. The history of Existentialism as a phenomenon is not very old and starts with Kierkegaard who is also considered as the father of Existentialism who coined the word Existence. Kierkegaard is an official representative of the Theistic Existentialism and was a fervent Christian, who believed that faith can be counteracted by reason. On the other end of the spectrum Nietzsche equally represents the Atheistic approaches to Existentialism. Existentialism represented by Nietzsche is generally considered dark and pessimistic which is clearly reflected in his celebrated phrase “God is dead.” Heidegger and Sartre are the successors of the same Atheistic Existentialism represented by Nietzsche and are “brother in arms”. Thus it is seen that Existentialism has broadly been classified in two categories with a fundamental dispute on the idea of God and becomes a reason for their diversions.

Plato said one should take “care of one’s soul”. As an unrecorded and in the unofficial sense, the study of man is as old as humanity and thus it would be wrong to consider the idea of existence as a modern question. The pressing issue which remains a matter of intellectual concern is the rise of Existentialism in the modern times which has gained a lot of attention in the 20th century. The reason lies in the turmoil of the societies and the disintegration of the world which lead to two catastrophic world wars. During this crisis in Europe, Existentialism started germinating as a full movement and later gained a mammoth shape with plenty of writers, artist, thinkers and philosophers representing this mode of thought.
This is the background of Existentialism in a nutshell. Sartre being the prime subject of research in this thesis, his thoughts on freedom, individual and society has been the thrust points of this study.

Freedom has been very central and important to Sartre’s philosophy and his literary writings are the expression of the same. Sartre as an existentialist is more concerned with existence, freedom of man and therefore, his whole pursuit of philosophy is bringing the idea of freedom to its permanence and making it as an absolute ideal. In doing this, Sartre’s first attempt is philosophical and later literary and theoretical. Sartre differs widely in his approach, related to the issues of freedom, individual and society. As a result of this, he exhibits extreme diversity in his writings as well as approach. His fundamental thesis rests on two important poles and so his philosophy revolves around these positions. The first position is man and the second freedom. And so it is seen that his whole of life is an expression of the same belief. The research taken here is a representation of the same belief and tries to capture the central arguments related with freedom, individual and society.

Not going directly on Sartre’s literary writings in particular, the thesis starts with an Introduction titled “Existentialism and the Sartrean Thought: A Narrative of Freedom”, drawing the boundary of Existentialism and also mentioning some of the prominent existentialists of this movement. The Introduction tries to explore Existentialism at its best and the philosophy of Existence in relation to Freedom, Individual and Society. An overview has been provided to look into the reasons for the establishment of this philosophy and also shows that how this philosophy has been different from other schools of thought. The definition of ‘existentialism’ and ‘man’ by different existentialists give an idea for the diversity. Furthermore, in their approaches is also visible the richness available in existentialism from the most varied like the mathematician Pascal to writers like Kafka or Hemingway who are entirely different in their mode of expression. The chapter further discusses Sartre and his arguments of freedom. Sartre being the Cartesian child, his grounding is similar to that of the Cartesian method and so he begins with a doubt and his subject of doubt in his case turns out to be “consciousness”. To validate his thesis of freedom, Being and Nothingness has been discussed so that one can understand the theoretical framework for making his freedom as an absolute. Sartre’s attempt in reaching this feat is a result of the radical interpretation of consciousness and Husserlian concepts like
"intentionality" and *epoché*. This text serves in interpreting his reflections on freedom derived from the study of consciousness and finally reaching his absolute position on freedom. *Critique of Dialectical Reason* becomes the next important subject of discussion where the proposed ideal is practical freedom unlike phenomenological one as expressed in *Being and Nothingness*. It is a work of later period and Sartre takes entirely different position with respect to his earlier reference to individual, freedom and society. He envisions promotion for the fusion of society and individual for achieving the equality and justice and questions the idea of Capitalism. This book also serves as a critique of Capitalism. He acknowledges the idea of "situation" and "group in fusion" and also takes care for the limitation which can affect human freedom. His shift from Existentialism and Phenomenology to Existentialist Marxism called by Althusser as "epistemological break" also becomes a part of the chapter along with the criticism of Marcuse and Adorno. Finally after discussing the limitations of Sartrean freedom, the chapter concludes with the intention of the proposed research and the questions arising there from.

The chapters taken are centered on Sartre's literary writings. Taking the background of the study done, which is also an overview of Existentialism in general, Sartre's first novel *Nausea* is attempted for the study. As this is an early work of Sartre, it reflects the Sartrean Freedom at its best in the phenomenological pursuit. The chapter is titled as "Existence is a Misunderstanding: A Classic Case of Antoine Roquentin's Freedom". The position of freedom is explained with the help of the protagonist Roquentin and his presence as an individual who serves the other themes of society and his relationships with it. Roquentin falls into the illusion of freedom for he is facing the absurdity of existence and is unable to grasp this change which is highly existential, turns meaningless with similar effects on his relations with the society of Bouville, where the novel is set. 'Being' is the central subject and the freedom has been investigated in the context of Roquentin and his metamorphosis which is a result of existence. The freedom found after the investigation is quite nihilistic and absurd and reflects the state of an individual who in this veneer of revelation is full of disgust and viscosity for the very idea of being existent and thus shuns the outer world and his relations. This being the focus, the understanding of Roquentin in the light of existence sums up the chapter.
No Exit represents another dimension of Sartrean philosophy and has been dealt in a separate chapter. This play is a representation of Sartrean understanding of human relationships. The chapter is titled as "There is no other except the Other: A Study in Sartrean Relationships". The individual and the interpersonal relationships become the subject of interpretation and there has been an attempt to unravel the truth behind human relationships. This also being the early play by Sartre represents phenomenology and is seen that the idea of relationships turns to be a very negative affair similar to the thesis proposed in Being and Nothingness. "Hell is Other people", one of the very oft quoted statements by Garcin in the play, is a clear indication of his understanding on human relationships. Thus the chapter unravels the tension embedded in a relationship and shows the ugly face of this idea and also tries to look at the play through the phenomenological account of gaze, body, love, desire, hate and death as documented in Being and Nothingness.

The Flies becomes the subject of next chapter which talks about the absolutism of freedom but in a slightly different sense than the other two works taken earlier. The chapter is titled as "My Salvation is my Condemnation: Reflections on The Flies". Though Sartre starts with the phenomenological account of freedom but ends in endorsing practical freedom. As a resistance play, the treatment of freedom is a reaction to the German Occupation and therefore, one can see the need of such turn taken by Sartre. But this turn builds a contradiction in the understanding of freedom when the play ends. The end is suggestive of freedom as marker of condemnation for Orestes similar to Roquentin but with a positive note. The end condemns Orestes but on the other side, gives independence to the Greek town of Argos. As a result, it is seen that the society of Argos gets a hero. The people of Argos have gained freedom at the cost of the condemnation of Orestes. And so, they don’t seem authentic like the proposition suggested by Sartre for being authentic and also that one should act for oneself. Hence this contradiction is also summed up in the chapter and has reservations about the absolute freedom as stated by Sartre and also tries to question the belief of "authenticity" and "bad faith".

The next study is in the field of postcolonial understanding of the subject and is also a note on the sophistry of American elite culture. This is easily captured in the play The Respectable Prostitute which has been devoted as a separate chapter. The chapter is titled as "Sartrean Humanism and The Racial "Angst". Sartre here in this
play emphasizes on the idea of practical freedom and takes side with the marginalized and the downtrodden similar to his position for the Jews expressed in Anti Semite and The Jew. The freedom here is of great importance for in this play it has the power to give life and death. The two characters in the play named Lizzie, who is the prostitute and the Negro, are being hunted down by the rich American Whites and they are running for their life. Lizzie being a white has some compensation whereas the Negro is helpless. This idea of freedom turns very unjust for what is seen is that the only whites in America experience and prosper. In the case of Negro and Lizzie, freedom turns totally meaningless because they are not the equals in the society alongside the whites and they have to meet their fate either ways. The relation between white and the black is a question which specifically happens in the case of Negro when he sees the entire town hunting him so that he can be lynched and as it is known that lynching summons dark memory in the history of United States. The very idea of relation dies and it comes very close to the idea of conflict as proposed by Sartre in Being and Nothingness. The chapter basically tries to capture this tension and violence, rampant in the play. The position of freedom is looked into from the same background as proposed and so the relationships studied, give the very same sordid reflection. Though there is no reflection of phenomenological understanding of relationships and freedom but the effect meted out in terms of relationship carries the same phenomenological experience, like in No Exit. The Other too meets the same fate in the play and is almost like hell for the Others.

The last chapter of the thesis is the Conclusion. This chapter tries to sum up the arguments made in the preceding chapters and shows the diversity of freedom in Sartrean thought and attempts to answer the proposed questions taken in the research.

Note: I have used the masculine pronoun “his” for the “Individual’s” proposed in the topic.
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2015
Dedicated
To
My Parents
&
My Late Uncle K. Khan
ANNEXURE- I

CANDIDATES'S DECLARATION

I, Mohsin Hassan Khan, Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, certify that the work embodied in this Ph.D. thesis is my own bonafide work carried out by me under the supervision of Dr. Akbar J. A. Syed in the Department of English of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. The matter embodied in this Ph.D. thesis has not been submitted for the award of any other degree.

I declare that I have faithfully acknowledged, given credit to and referred to the research workers wherever their works have been cited in the text and the body of the thesis. I further certify that I have not willfully lifted up some other’s work, para, text, data, result, etc. reported in the journals, books, magazines, dissertations, thesis, etc., or available at web-sites and included them in this Ph.D. thesis and cited as my own work.

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This is to certify that the above statement made by the candidate is correct to the best of our knowledge.

Signature of the Supervisor
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(Signature of the Chairman of the Department with seal)

Officiating Chairman
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1. Completion of the course work
2. Presentation of pre-submission seminar
3. Published one paper based on the thesis

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(Mohsin Hassan Khan)
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Chapter I

Introduction

Existentialism and the Sartrean Thought: A Narrative of Freedom
Introduction

Existentialism and the Sartrean Thought: A Narrative of Freedom

Assuming then that a person is the victim of an illusion, and that in order to communicate the truth to him the first task...is to remove the illusion—if I do not begin by deceiving him, I must begin with direct communication...but an illusion stands in the way.... What then does it mean 'to deceive'? It means that one does not begin directly with the matter one wants to communicate, but begins by accepting the other man's illusion as good money — Kierkegaard

Existence is a term which holds immense significance in the philosophical thinking ranging across different geographies and cultures. According to the Oxford English Dictionary existence is "the state or fact of being alive as a person, animal or plant, shown by activities such as breathing, growing and reproducing; the state of being alive as a human being; an individual person's existence" ("Existentialism"). This is the complete definition of the existence as per the dictionary and to some extent it captures the nature and scope of existence, which is explored in this chapter. But it is the latter part of the meaning which is of importance here in defining the idea of existence. It also bridges the idea of existence and the philosophy associated with it.

Existence has always remained a central concern in various philosophical traditions and historical periods across the West as well as the East. The philosophy of existence or 'existentialism,' as it is popularly known, has a very long tradition on this particular thought, and the understanding of existence has been and is still a source of contemplation and thinking. Since the time of Plato and the early Greeks to the present date, the idea of existence is seen in the light of critical thinking and has been a significant philosophical occupation. The Western civilization and particularly the Western philosophy has been engaged for a long time with the philosophy of existence and hence it is not wrong to consider it as one of the most important schools of thought in the history of Western philosophy. Existence is basically the thought to which the whole of this philosophy is dedicated to.

The idea of existence is made of such broad canvas that it is not only limited to the Western tradition of philosophy but it is also a strong mode of thinking in the Eastern tradition as well. To locate more specifically, existence has been discussed by
almost all of the important oriental philosophers. Among the various philosophers from this civilization, Mulla Sadra from Iran is worth quoting in tradition of existentialism. Though associated with religion, his belief in existence was very primary. In order to understand Mulla Sadra’s position, it is worthwhile to quote Muhammad Kamal who expresses the exact position regarding the ontological nature of his ideas on existence:

In the post Ibn Sinan period, the primacy of essence (asalat al-mahiyah) was one of the prime philosophical issues for Muslim thinkers. The school of illumination, headed by Suhrawardi, held the view that ‘essence’ not ‘existence’ was the only reality. Nothing in the external world corresponded to ‘existence’, and hence ‘existence’ remained an empty concept and an intellectual property, whereas ‘essence’ was real and primary. “By contrast, Sadr al-Din Shirazi (1571–1640), known also as Mulla Sadra, spoke of the primacy of Being (asalat al-wujud) and promoted a new ontology. (Kamal 1)

When his philosophy is read in detail, one finds him very close to the Western school of existentialism. In his analysis of ‘being’ and ‘existence’, he reaches to similar conclusions like Heidegger does, who equally states the primacy of ‘being’. This similarity of interest in the same thought gives a hint towards the necessity of studying ‘being’ and its related philosophy. Heidegger in Being and Time (1927) clearly rejects the post-Aristotelian conception of being. According to Kamal, when we take a deeper look in his philosophy, we see that Sadra’s philosophy is very radical like the philosophy of Heidegger who too in his philosophy invests in the primacy of being, and, so a similarity of thought is found between them in the study of being:

Heidegger rejects the three presuppositions and argues against the post-Aristotelian thinkers that the universality of the concept of Being does not guarantee the clarity of its meaning, and that the meaning of
this concept is still the darkest of all. He also, like Mullá Sadra, says that Being is not an entity and is thus indefinable, and that Aristotle’s concept of definition ‘definitio fit per genus proximum et differentiam specificam’ is not applicable to it. Heidegger also believes that the indefinableness of Being does not invalidate the question of its meaning, and should not hinder us from investigating that meaning.

(Kamal 5)

Thus we see the importance of existentialism and some of the great existentialists like Sadra and Heidegger who explained ‘existence’ and ‘being’ despite belonging to two different traditions of philosophy. Though, Heidegger rejected the label very clearly denouncing the title of existentialist but after Being and Time he can never be taken out of the existentialist fold. “It might seem that Martin Heidegger constitutes an exception since, as already remarked, he sets out to develop an ontology; but in point of fact since he actually starts with man and ends with man, he falls into line with the other existentialists” (Copleston 21). In relation to this particular theme of thinking, Jean Paul Sartre too falls in the same line. He was quite influenced by Heidegger, and his philosophy and his idea of existence too talk about the primacy of ‘being’. His phrase “existence precedes essence” conveys the exact message which puts existence as a primary category similar to Heidegger and Mullá Sadra. Thus, the importance of ‘being’ remains central to Sartrean Philosophy too and we see him as an existentialist in the league of some prominent names who had similar idea on the subject like existence and being. Not going into the details of different traditions of existentialism, I will limit myself to the Western brand of existentialism and, therefore, will focus on the Western tradition of philosophy.

Existentialism could be better understood as an understanding of the condition of man, unlike as a set of disciplines like science and the classical philosophy. This philosophy in particular demands much attention to its unique nature, for it is a philosophy which brings man to the fore in a developed industrial modern society, as far as the case of European existentialism is concerned, where man is reduced to an
object. It tries to understand the man in its fullness from the interiority of existence. It has been defined by various existentialists as:

Existentialist philosophy is the explicit conceptual manifestation of an existential attitude—a spirit of "the present age." It is a philosophical realization of a self-consciousness living in a "broken world" (Marcel), an "ambiguous world" (de Beauvoir), a "dislocated world" (Merleau-Ponty), a world into which we are "thrown" and "condemned" yet "abandoned" and "free" (Heidegger and Sartre), a world which appears to be indifferent or even "absurd". (Camus) (Solomon xi)

These being the social conditions for addressing the issue of man, the idea of existence remains central to this philosophy, as mentioned earlier, and from here, the depth of this questioning increases to the maximum in understanding "being" or "existence" or what we say as "man". Hence existentialism is not an attempt to any set ideal and a purpose which is devoted to solve a problem but rather it is a consideration to understand being and existence in its own right, free from the rational dogma of a historically conditioned thinking. Commenting on existentialism, one of its prominent representatives, Jean Paul Sartre, says:

Existentialism is not a baroque harmony wrought out of conflicts and strains, like the poetry of the seventeenth-century mystics, the cry for a God who is already possessed. Rather, it is in the modern manner of Paul Klee, the skilful practical management of several dimensions, discontinuities, based on profound appreciation of the structural relations of certain formal elements, beginning with an act of free choice developed by assimilation of random elements of experience into an object that is also a sign, a strange encounter expressive and exploratory. Compare, for example, Sartre's break with the spirit of
seriousness which considers that bread is desirable because we must
live and it is nourishing, instead of attending to the simple materiality
of things knowing what one is about, for the sake of their symbolic
value for the ideal project of man. (qtd. in Blackham 161)

Existentialism holds multiple voices in explaining the conditions and meaning
of existence. There are people who use metaphors and dark similes to express their
angst whereas there are also people who are philosophers in the strict sense of the
word like Hegel and Kant. With different themes and a long genealogy, existentialism
can be considered a very rich philosophy in terms of difference and similarities which
it holds. Though there is diversity in the approach of different philosophers, thinkers
and writers, there is a distinct kind of tendency which reflects the similarities on the
issues and tendencies of the men of letters and their works. Ranging across the globe,
existence has been a much detailed thought in the domain of critical thinking. Man,
being the subject of this idea remains at the centre and this is seen in the whole of the
western civilisation from history to the present times. “In sum, it must be said that this
insistence on the primacy of the individual is undoubtedly the most powerful and
erginal aspect of the whole movement” (Gill and Sherman 16). So the idea of
learning and understanding man, not from any scientific approach, Existentialism
draws its inspirations from the normal, ordinary and mundane way of life in which
anxiety, alienation, dread, fear, death and many such other feelings form the major
characteristics of this philosophy. It is the inwardness which is sought after and so
“naked selfhood” remains “the unifying impulse behind the kaleidoscopic variation”
(Gill and Sherman 16).

In this process of understanding there also lies the ontological condition along
with the social, political and economic conditions of a man. Existence as a centre is
also the subject of this philosophy in which the question of being is dealt with. “For it
is astonished, meditative, measured preoccupation with the problem of existence
perceived in its magnitude, Schopenhauer says. Antoine Roquentin, hero of Sartre’s
first novel La Nausee, has no great expectations and therefore does not fall into
disillusionment and despair, but he is stunned with astonishment at this life which he
finds that he has for no reason, for nothing…” (Blackham 149). And so the
fundamental question of life is asked thus, “What is man to make of this Being which envelopes him, and which he is?” (Blackham 149).

This is at the heart of existentialism but before coming to this question one has to see in the history as to why the question of ‘being’ is so pressed up and assumes a pivotal position in the modern times. Without going into the details of this question, we can directly benefit from the wisdom of Alfred North Whitehead who remarks, and is “often-quoted” for instances like this. “Twenty-five hundred years of western philosophy is but a series of footnotes to Plato” (qtd. in Gill and Sherman 77). In the words of Whitehead, it is the extension of Plato and is also the extension of the philosophy which talks about existence, and thus existentialism in this process is grounded in the root of Western philosophy from the time of Plato or even earlier.

As this particular understanding of existence is diversified with different types of men who are not in harmony with their profession at least, they represent extreme diversity of reflections on the subject of existence. Thus the “linguistic ambivalence” in the words of Professor Paul Tillich speaks and states about this kind of diversity as:

The existential thinker needs special forms of expression, because personal Existence cannot be expressed in terms of objective experience. So Schelling uses the traditional religious symbols, Kierkegaard paradox, irony and the pseudonym, Nietzsche the Oracle, Bergson images and fluid concepts, Heidegger a mixture of psychological and ontological terms, Jaspers what he calls ‘ciphers’... They all wrestle with the problem of personal or ‘non-objective’ thinking and its expression – this is the calamity of the existential thinker. (qtd. in Rudich 95)

This personal and the objective expression is the point of tension in which every existentialist struggles to give an objective image of the personal anguish. In doing so it is the idea of feeling which becomes of vital importance.
Feeling is one of the important constituents of man and is understood from the subjectivity and not from rational, scientific objective world view. In view of this feeling, philosopher Miguel De Unamuno "... wryly speculates whether the opposite might not be just as valid. "Man", he observes, "is said to be a reasoning animal. I do not know why he has not been defined as an affective or feeling animal. Perhaps what differentiates him from other animals is feeling rather than reason" (qtd. in Gill and Sherman 17). Existentialism cannot be reduced to a set of beliefs and a particular kind of movement rather it is a culture which has its presence in different form of expressions centering man as the source of all values. This is the position of Unamuno who holds a central belief in feeling and centers his argument on feeling and uses it as the only available category in differentiating and defining man. But as existentialism is not a homogeneous movement promising a particular set of tenets. There is just another view in which the seriousness and diversity in understanding man is reflected. "Pascal, an acknowledged forerunner of the modern existentialists, resists any definition in terms of single faculty, declaring: "The nature of man is whole nature, omne animal" (qtd. in Gill and Sherman 17).

Truly opposed to scientific rationalism of 19th century, Existentialism became the anchor for the disillusioned world in the post - war years, and tried to restore belief in man unlike its other scientific and rational counterparts which involved much of objectivity, reason and rationality in understanding man. The men and women from this brand of philosophy were totally opposed to the so-called scientific and rational temperament which had invited two world wars and a solid bourgeoisie capitalist society. In the wake of this destruction, Existentialism came as a promise to all those depressed souls who were fed up and torn apart from the industrial and modern rationality. Keeping in view of this rationality, we have to understand the idea of rationality in the Existentialist perspective. It was not that the Existentialists completely denounced and abandoned the idea of reason and rationality. It was only the reason and rationality which called these brains to look into the problem arising from a set of classified and singular rationality, which caused the world wars and other catastrophes. This war and the suffering of men was the inspiration for their thought in challenging the so - called development of 19th century enlightenment. Due to this upheaval, the modern and universal rationality was questioned and a new kind of rationality was coined and justified which took the case of the single
individual directly. In this case, the supremacy of the individual was called upon and it was taken up so vigorously that it led to a complete set of thinking by different philosophers and thinkers. In differentiating the view points of the Existentialists and the Non-Existentialists, a classified reason and the existentialist reason, Dostoevsky’s *Underground Man* reflects this tension and says, “Reason ... is an excellent thing, there is no disputing that, but reason is only reason and can only satisfy man’s rational faculty... and human nature acts as a whole, with everything that is in it, consciously or unconsciously, and, even if it goes wrong, it lives” (qtd. in Gill and Sherman 17).

The reason for this refusal of rationality lies deep in the history of western thought. It is only now that it has been questioned and for a very long time had been the right and justified tradition of Western philosophy. Friedrich Nietzsche questioned this particular mode of thinking process vehemently in his *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872). Commenting on Socrates, he observes:

> Is the prototype of the theoretical optimist who with his belief in the explicability of the nature of things, attributes to knowledge and perception the power of a universal panacea, and in error sees evil itself... from the time of Socrates onwards the mechanism of making concepts, judgments, and inferences was prized above all other activities as the highest talent and the most admirable gift of nature.

(qtd. in Gill and Sherman 17)

This view is again neatly summed up by Helmut Kuhn in the introduction of his book, *Encounter With Nothingness* (1949). Here in the introduction he states the essence of the Nietzschean meaning and the story of the Western philosophy to be:

> The history of thought since the decline of philosophical idealism during the earliest part of the nineteenth century has been characterized by a succession of minds passionately one sided rather than richly harmonized, tragically suffering rather than matured through affliction,
keenly sensitive rather than wise. Those who do not simply play the
game of the time by preaching the Kingdom of Man as the tool —
making animal and salvation through industry were forced into
isolation and, as protesting outsiders and warners, they spoke with a
strident voice to make themselves heard by their complacent century.
They purchased power at the price of balance. Reverence for measure
and norm, the marks of classic achievement, were foreign to them.

(Kuhn xvi)

So, existentialism is very hard to be defined and is a call against many established notions of understanding man. John Shand defines existentialism in his book, *Philosophy and Philosophers: An Introduction to Western Philosophy* (1993) as, “It is difficult to give any general characterization of existentialism. Existentialism has been characterized as a form of anti-intellectualism, or irrationalism or subjectivism; ...” (Shand 246).

This tendency is also to be found in the father of Existentialism, Soren Kierkegaard, who poses similar questions to his other existentialist comrades. In doing so, he directly attacks the idea of intelligence and says, “It was intelligence,” Kierkegaard says, writing of himself and his task in his journals - “it was intelligence and nothing else that had to be opposed. Presumably that is why I, who had the job, was armed with an immense intelligence” (qtd. in Barrett 149). This confession and a “boast” by the Danish genius is not that he totally shuns intelligence and degrades it. “Kierkegaard does not disparage intelligence; quite the contrary, he speaks of it with respect and reverence” (Barrett 149), but he puts certain check and balance to this particular kind of intelligence. It is further said by Barrett, “But nonetheless, at a certain moment in the history this intelligence had to be opposed, and opposed with all the resources and powers of a man of brilliant intelligence. No better summation can be made of what Kierkegaard had to do and what he accomplished” (Barrett 149).

Thus we have got a picture and see the duel of reason and the existentialist passion, and also find the reason for this duel in the history of thought. With this
reason and the duel the outline of an existentialist is defined and is the one who
attacks the notion of scientific and objective rationality and puts the case of man as
the subjective being. Kuhn noting this tendency says about the present existentialism:

Contemporary Existentialism can be described as a renaissance of
Kierkegaard, one of the titanic sufferers of the anti classic age. The
emphasis on despair as a sickness unto death, on the un recoiled cleave
of the mind and spiritual death in the anguish of crisis, while peculiar
in form to Kierkegaard, marks him also as a brother to Marx, Carlyle,
Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Nietzsche”. (Kuhn xvi-xvii)

The amalgamation of various lifestyles and different kinds of intellect makes the
diverse existentialism as a single whole. The various themes which have been raised
against the normal and naturalised thinking are thus again summed up by Kuhn, who
shows the greatness of the thinkers in respect to their way of doing existentialism:

Faith counteracted by reason, as in Kierkegaard; man rebellious in an
estranged society, as in Marx; the heart given to lie by mocking
intellect, as in Dostoevsky; pride unable to come to terms with human
finitude, as in Nietzsche – of all these elements of spiritual anxiety the
aroma and quintessence is in Existentialism. (xvii)

With this view, the debate of ‘I’ further extends and one must also see some other
essential features of this unique philosophy. Broadly understood as an anti –
intellectual movement and an expression of Subjectivism, existentialism is something
more than this, and hence John Shand defines it as: "... existentialism is a philosophy
concerned to go back to what it regards as the logically prior description of what it is
like to be a human being in the world before the accretion of a world-view based on
supposedly detached or disinterested theorizing” (Shand 246).
Kierkegaard, in this sense, is the father of existentialism and is one of the most prominent thinkers in the history of existentialism. Severely alone and a fervent Christian, the idea of Kierkegaard for man lies in returning to Christianity. Barrett sums up the whole philosophy of Kierkegaard as, "Kierkegaard had recommended a rediscovery of the religious centre of the Self, which for European man had to mean a return to Christianity, but what he had in his mind was a radical return that went back beyond organised Christendom and its churches to a state of contemporaneity with the first disciples of Christ" (Barrett 177). He defines man, "Man is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? The self is a relation which relates itself to its own self.... Man is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity.... A man who has no will at all is no self" (qtd. in Golomb 37). Whether it is Plato or Socrates, the Greek masters, or the mathematician Blaise Pascal they all belong to the same fold of thinking. Pascal can be remembered for his Pensees (1669). The Pensees reflects various dimensions of existentialism. The English romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, with his poem "Dejection: An Ode" (1802) is also counted for the same understanding and is existentialist in nature. Even the great German poet, Friedrich Holderlin, the favourite of Heidegger and Nietzsche, is one of the representatives of German existentialism. Holderlin with his hymns is very clearly reflected in Heidegger’s new paganism and, thus, becomes the literary pillar of German Existentialism inspiring Heidegger and Nietzsche simultaneously.

The nineteenth century existentialism is dominated by the ideas of Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Existentialism remains a perennial theme in the history of ideas and it continues in the next century too. Even the twentieth century cannot be left out for the reason of the richness available in this tradition. Heidegger, Sartre and Camus dominate the twentieth century character of existentialism. Along with these names, which dominated the other centuries, it is not an end to the existing list of thinkers and writers. Poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) whose poetry is an expression of fierce Existentialism enwrapped in aesthetics, says that "there is much beauty here because there is much beauty everywhere" (Rilke 45); (The Fifth Letter in a collection called Letters To a Young Poet (2000). This reveals his power of writing and the deeply unfathomable nature of his personality. According to Gabriel Marcel, “The process which takes place in Rilke is not in the
least comparable with a discursive development, but rather with a progressive transformation of a vision – not only of interior vision, but just vision in the ordinary sense of the word – which takes place side by side with the perfecting of his poetic technique” (qtd. in Gill and Sherman 347). In relation to his idea of society and individual, Rilke is very different from other existentialists. A vagabond and a “restless wanderer” (348) with a reflection of Nietzsche “...whose heir he was in many ways” (Gill and Sherman 348), he had a very keen insight of the world, the individual and society. “For me,” he said, “the open world is the only possible one” (qtd. in Gill and Sherman 347). In this connection, it is interesting to know his views about an individual and society, a predominant thinking in the existentialist mode of ideas. This is what meant for Rilke, so: “... he discovered that in the modern world the quest for true selfhood and creative solitude brought an agonizing loss of community” (Grill and Sherman 347).

As mentioned earlier that there is no dearth of writers and thinkers in this tradition and so we find another great name Franz Kafka. Franz Kafka (1883-1924) was a literary genius and “Of all the imaginative writers associated with existentialism, Franz Kafka is in many ways the most original and overpowering ...” (Grill and Sherman 360). Kafka, being one of the masters of existential literature, is the centre of uncommon kind of writing, very different from the other existentialists. Kafka’s writing is replete with sordidness and horror of human existence. His writing has a huge impact on this movement. The Diaries and some great novels like The Metamorphosis (1915), The Trial (1998), The Castle (1926) and also his short stories, best represent the existential dilemma. Gill and Sherman writes: “In reading Kafka there is no “message” to be decoded, no “key” to unlock the riddle. Riddle, of course, there is, but it is the peculiar nature of Kafka’s kind of riddle – with its openness to a variety of interpretations, its refusal to yield anything but ambiguous or even contradictory meanings, its reluctance to allow us the very premises of solution – that is at the heart of our uneasiness. Ironically, exegesis – seemingly necessary, but never sufficient – may even become a way of circumventing the very sense of the absurd Kafka himself intended (Gill and Sherman 362). Thus Kafka remains an opaque writer who loves to bask in his own gloom and reclusiveness. To sum up his message of writing, Kafka seems very philosophical in the treatment of his characters and is a writer who hates coming to solutions like Sartre. He prefers the tension to be open
"...between the finite and the infinite, the secular, and the divine, the immanent and the transcendent. Some readers, in fact, have criticized Kafka’s irresolution" (Gill and Sherman 362). But for the other readers they may remember the observation on the “open wound” made by Kierkegaard himself in his Journals: “A healthy open wound; sometimes it is worse when it closes” (qtd. in Gill and Sherman 362).

The next writer, who is less philosophical, is Ernest Hemingway (1898-1961) who also needs to be mentioned when Existentialism is discussed. For Hemingway, not being philosophic does not mean a stop and a limitation. In fact, the “...intellectual limitation in Hemingway is precisely what gives his work relevance to his philosophy”. He is an existentialist to the core and his novels like, The Sun Also Rises (1926), A Farewell to Arms (1929) and his other works also reflect the sense of deep existential predicament at its best. Though an American, and not existentialist in the European sense, his writings and his life gives us a clear reflection of Existentialism, in which we happen to find his occupation with the idea. His short story, “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” shows his “encounter with nothingness” (Gill and Sherman 378). This particular work, though very small, is the style of Hemingway to deliver his best in the existential universe. Thus Walter Kaufmann says, “Hemingway, it is safe to conclude, did not depend upon the existentialists for his theme, yet no other story conveys their sense of man’s alienation in a meaningless universe in so few pages and with such suitable starkness” (Kaufmann 378).

In the philosophy of existence, the word ‘existential’ has a very important role to play and the first man to use this word was Soren Kierkegaard. Also considered as the father of Existentialism along with Nietzsche, he gave this term and is of the most important figures in the history of existentialism. Kierkegaard and Nietzsche represent two entirely different views of this radical philosophy. But they also echo the similarities within their own positions as existentialists. The corpus of existentialism between them is divided on the idea of God primarily, and hence to reflect on man, becomes necessary from both the positions irrespective of the dispute. In this division, which is a very significant one, there are two broad categories of Existentialism which they both represent. They are: Theistic Existentialism and Atheistic Existentialism. The lonely Dane Kierkegaard represents the theistic brand of Existentialism in which his whole pursuit is directed towards “... the singleness of the individual – singleness
in the threefold sense that each man is a unique, solitary, and thoroughly independent, self-conscious being compelled to choose and act completely on his own” (Grill and Sherman 6). Not only this, it is equally important to understand the Kierkegaardian “celebrated doctrine” “stages of life’s way.” Also known as “spheres of existence,” this doctrine talks of existence along the three dimensions which are aesthetic, the ethical and the religious. In The Fabric of Existentialism, they are explained as “... each of which, in his treatment, has a very specialized meaning, often at variance with conventional usage” (Grill and Sherman 7). On the other hand, the nihilist Nietzsche is completely opposite and is at odds in dealing with the subject and reflects the most important break in the existential thinking and its associated disputes. Nietzsche, an atheist, is the person behind the most scandalous statement of twentieth century- “God is dead”. Nietzsche’s philosophy on the idea of Existentialism goes in the most atheistic fashion very much like Sartre, and he denounces god to its extremes. Sartre too, a descendant of this type, pursues the atheistic trend of Existentialism and is “brother in arms” with Nietzsche within the philosophy of Existentialism. Hence the philosophy of Sartre in this regard is atheistic Existentialism. Grill and Sherman maintain:

Again, while Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus alike are unmistakably descendants of Friedrich Nietzsche, this relentless iconoclast himself displays remarkable affinities with Kierkegaard; indeed, as Jaspers has demonstrated, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard must be viewed together as the two great “exceptions” from nineteenth century thought, who – despite obvious differences – independently posed the same radical challenge to the main tradition of Western philosophy. (Grill and Sherman 5)

Hence, now, the existentialism can be best defined as:

Strictly speaking, existentialism is not at all a philosophy in the traditional sense, but a revolt, or a series of revolts, against the
The Existentialism which has been much criticized lately for being grey and pessimistic has also been defined as:

"Existentialism" today refers to faddism, decadentism, morbidity, the "philosophy of graveyard"; to words like fear, dread, anxiety, anguish, suffering, aloneness, death; to novelists such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Dostoevski, Camus, Kafka; to philosophers like Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Marcel, Jaspers, and Sartre – and because it refers to, and is concerned with, all of these ideas and persons, existentialism has lost any clear meaning it may have originally possessed. (Natanson 1)

Sartre (1905-1980), one of the prominent thinkers of this movement of the modern times, describes existentialism as:

Most people who use the word existentialism would be embarrassed if they had to explain it, since, now that the word is all the rage, even the work of a musician or painter is being called existentialist. A gossip columnist ... signs himself The Existentialist, so that by this time the word has been so stretched and has taken a broad meaning, that it no longer means anything at all. (qtd. in Natanson 1)

But this is not what Sartre actually means by Existentialism. In his lecture, *Existentialism Is a Humanism* (2007), he describes this idea and states the principle and constituents of existentialism. Introducing existentialism in complete details, it describes the idea of existentialism in relation to humanism in which he answers the accusations leveled by different ideologues like Communists or the Christians against
Existentialism. This being one of the reasons behind the lecture, the very first statement starts with “My purpose here is to defend existentialism against some charges that have been brought against it” (Sartre, Existentialism 17). From this position, the title has been drawn and there has been an attempt by Sartre to maintain that Existentialism like any other philosophy addresses human problems and hence be known as ‘humanism’. With this lens Sartre understands humanism and blends Existentialism with humanism. He argues in the first instance the idea of existentialism as:

In any case, let us begin by saying that what we mean by "existentialism" is a doctrine that makes human life possible and also affirms that every truth and every action imply an environment and a human subjectivity. (Sartre, Existentialism 18)

Sartre assiduously states the characteristics of Existentialism in the course of this lecture and tries to differentiate it from some other mundane way of thinking which is limited in understanding the human condition and situations. In doing this, he even comes up with anecdotes and some other examples to demonstrate this difference. Stating the primacy of individual for the Existentialism, he altogether accords a value of humanism to this particular philosophy. He also tries to separate it from the common notion associated with this philosophy. The opinions which hamper existentialism have been replied to the best and a complete defense has been created by Sartre in proposing his views on it. Any such opinion which carries the sense of negativity has also been challenged to extremes and thus Sartre says that existentialism is not a philosophy of despair but is a way of life. Hence he makes existentialism as an absolute kind, making it the best and the most befitting for a human to strive for and make human life possible.

Now, the topic of freedom and individual in Sartre’s world is to be discussed in details, and the idea of freedom especially in relation to the works of Sartre. Hence, an attempt has been made here to understand the idea of freedom from the Sartrean perspective. An attempt is also made to address his literary writings in accordance with the theoretical formulations laid by him in his philosophical writings which serve
as a radar to guide this thesis. Freedom thus addressed is not any common freedom, which includes anything in the name of the word and is devoid of responsibility but especially freedom as a tradition in Sartre and Existentialist critical thinking.

The word freedom holds and occupies a very significant position in the long line of existentialist tradition as well in other traditions too, irrespective of the positions they hold on this very important idea. This remains a central argument in the whole critical thinking across the cultures and civilisations, irrespective of time. The position may vary independently, according to needs of time, like the French revolution which shaped freedom as liberty and thus turning the nature of the subject as a political achievement, achieving the rights of man as fundamental rights, through which freedom gained currency as an idea and became a household virtue. And later, it assumed a shape in which it was to be appreciated as a triumph of freedom on oppression, defeating the dictatorial condition of a man. There are instances in the history which show freedom struggles and suggest the importance of freedom over non–freedom. Without going into the details of the history of the freedom struggle, there are numerous incidents in the history which show the rise and success of these struggles ranging from a simple society to the complex notions of gender and justice and the idea of freedom being central to the discourse. Thus from the past to the present which awaits a future is man, who will again confront the debate of freedom from the multiple views and positions of existing ideologies and knowledge, and will be in continuity and an ongoing process, shaping and reshaping the idea of freedom. There have been three major currents of thought in the post – world war era, Marxism, Existentialism and Post – Structuralism and they all express their commitment to freedom from their respective positions in approaching this ideal and belief.

In the process of this understanding, this concept of freedom as a virtue, an ideology, liberation, salvation or independence, undergoes some severe changes and rests in different institutions of thinking and thus building new premises for human knowledge. To the Existentialists, specially, and philosophers from any other schools, it remains a central idea of debate. Thus Kantian freedom in his Second Critique varies very differently from the idea of Hegel’s notion of freedom. According to, Kramer and Maza freedom by “Hegel calls spirit’s rational self-consciousness and its
embodiment the realization of freedom” (Kramer and Maza 156). The difference of
opinion and understanding coming out from this interpretation of freedom marks their
difference in respect to the positions of their philosophy and teachings on this idea.
Thus, this variation in the issue and understanding of this massive idea, freedom
always remains a key and foundational concept. In the Western tradition of ideas,
freedom, has been talked and debated to death, but unfortunately, there exists no
consensus in terms of one answer, only unified at the level as a challenge, to
understand it. In the Existentialist tradition, the freedom holds entirely different
conception and hence differs drastically with the popular conceptions of freedom or
liberty for that matter. So to say, the freedom which exists in existential manifesto can
be generally summed as: “The freedom to create a world of value, to choose a destiny,
to make man: for the first time such thoughts became conceivable, and the conception
alone should have excited, or terrorized us, depending upon our courage” (Cebik
395). This is a complete description by Cebik in which he allocates the free nature to
the most important and governing idea, freedom. But he also gives the brutal and
existential nature to this particular freedom which dominates almost the whole of the
existential field of study. The dread of freedom lingers almost everywhere in the
existential consciousness and this freedom is found by Sartre in anguish. Thus it
would be unwise to interpret the existential freedom without dread in which anguish
plays a key and a major role. “True, Sartre admits that “anguish has not appeared to us
as a proof of human freedom,” (qtd. in Detmer, Freedom 24) but in another work he
quotes with approval Descartes' declaration that freedom is “known without proof and
merely by our experience of it” (qtd. in Detmer, Freedom 24). “And, as we have seen,
Sartre finds this experience of freedom in the phenomenon of anguish” (Detmer,
Freedom 24). The last line clearly states the anguish and freedom entwined in the
Sartrean Dialectics to give the meaning of freedom.

So coming back to Sartre and his positions, we need to know more about his
philosophy with respect to freedom and individual. Geoffrey Wall describes him in
his chapter “Portrait of Sartre” as:

Sartre is our last humanist. His great argument is liberty. His writings
tell us what it was like to be born in the first decade of the twentieth
century, to wear the crisp sailor-suit of boyhood and then the shabby
conscript's uniform of 1939, to escape in disguise from Stalag XIID, 
to know the fiery delight of Liberation and the everlasting grey anguish 
of Cold war, and through it all to hold to an idea of liberty, damaged 
but undiminished. (Sartre, Modern Times vii)

Sartre remains a distinguished guest as a philosopher of freedom, when he is received 
in this domain of ideas and his obsession with freedom as an only goal to his 
philosophy. To Sartre, this idea is so important and central that it turned out to be his 
lifelong project and has been seen that his core philosophy is based on this whole 
system of freedom, related with his only one subject, and that is Man. It is so 
recurrent and abundant in his writings that it almost assumes a nature of critical 
cliché. Freedom for Sartre holds one of the most and important projects which he has 
projected tirelessly throughout his philosophy and literature. Freedom as seen in 
Sartre has an inclination towards phenomenology and is a complete blend of 
Phenomenological, Existentialist and Marxist flavour, a doctrine of total and absolute 
freedom, which asserts man as a complete freedom or 'man has absolute freedom'.
Sartrean Existentialism somewhere bears a charge also, that Sartre reduced the 
extistentialist philosophy and thinking to some emotive and radical quotes like "man is 
a useless passion," "god does not exist", or "existence precedes essence." Even 
though considered as a "Leader" and also a "personification of existentialism", some 
critics and commentators charged him as not a proper representative of this tradition, 
rather saying, that he misrepresented this tradition. Nonetheless, the idea of freedom 
and its relationship to man can never be ignored or rejected, in the Sartrean project. 
To Sartre, freedom is of immense importance and this very idea marks his position as 
a different kind in the tradition than the other existentialist thinkers and writers. In the 
introduction to his book, Freedom as a Value: A critical of the Ethical Theory of 
Jean-Paul Sartre, David Detmer, expresses the importance of freedom in the Sartrean 
world as, "... freedom is the "highest," or most important, value" (1). And he 
continues, "Perhaps it is fitting to begin a discussion of the nature of freedom by 
considering the contribution of Jean-Paul Sartre, a philosopher for whom "freedom is 
both starting point and ultimate goal" (5).
Sartre was an existentialist to the core and his writings, especially in the early years, where he was more focused on the individual, made an attempt to understand moral and human dilemmas and their solution. In the introduction of her book, *Jean Paul Sartre: On Literature, Freedom and Commitment*, Nabanita Roy writes, “His aim was to find a way of achieving freedom from the absurd position of human existence” (11). This constant flux of human living is attended by Sartre with an approach which is highly literary as well as philosophical in which freedom and responsibility act as a guide for his fictional characters.

**Sartre’s Arguments for Freedom**

Jean Paul Sartre’s project of freedom has its roots in the philosophical investigation of ‘consciousness’ and ‘negativity’ and ‘being and existence’ in the general sense, for which he laid some of his arguments before publishing *Being and Nothingness*, in his first official philosophical writing, which is an essay, *The Transcendence of Ego* (1936-37). This is his first work, which laid foundations for the ideas and especially the ideas of consciousness, which he later took up for complete description in *Being and Nothingness*. His first work is an important introduction to Sartre’s philosophy and with this work, he confirmed himself as a Phenomenologist. And also in this work, he rejected some ‘transcendental assumptions’ of Husserlian philosophy. In this work, he attacks the Husserlian notion of ‘transcendental ego’ and says “... that the postulation of the transcendental ego is phenomenologically illegitimate” (Priest 11).

The next work of Sartre is *The Psychology of Imagination* (1936), which is a treatise on ‘phenomenological psychology’. Though this book talks of the idea of psychological theories in details, but it is only in the last chapter that Sartre refutes the Husserlian Doctrine of *epoché* and Intentionality. Further extending the view which he offered in this book, he publishes another text, *The Imaginary* (1940) in which he debates the mental images not as any “psychic reality” but as an act. And so with this kind of endorsement and engagement with consciousness, Sartre comes closer to his old contemporary Heidegger and we see the position which reads as, “... departure from the phenomenological description of the interiority of consciousness and an endorsement of the neo-Heideggerian existentialist thesis that our being, including our psychological being, is ‘being-in-the-world’” (Priest 12).
Being and Nothingness is peppered with ambiguous language and examples, as more of opaque and 'mixed clarity', to which one of the critics remarked taking in account the difficulty of reading this work, which exhibits brilliant passages of literary and philosophical merit, that, "Sartre is in love with the language" (Catalano xv). Sartre in Being and Nothingness demonstrates his thesis on freedom in purely ontological and phenomenological terms, and so this work is a fine blend of two different modes of knowledge. The nature of this work is multi – dimensional and can be read in many ways. It can be perceived as a reaffirmation of Heidegger's ideas, and also in accordance with his much celebrated work, Being and Time, in relation to his rejection of some of the Husserlian ideas, a critique of the knowledge of twentieth century, which is largely dominated by 'positivism' and 'pseudo-science', as a study of 'imposition', of ontology and their constraints, in existentialism over phenomenological 'essentialism'. It is a treatise on 'godless metaphysics' and is also a profound document on sociological and psychological knowledge. Hence, we see that in this work Sartre engages himself along Hedieggaraian position and destroys the existing ideas of ontology similar to Heidegger in order to build one's own ontology. Hence the book is also subtitled as "An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology."

He introduces some basic concepts of his philosophy like 'being in itself', 'being for itself', 'nothingness', 'consciousness', 'nihilation'. Whereas 'bad faith', 'temporality', 'social relations', 'transcendence', become a part of the larger discourse on freedom and serve his literary writing bringing in his project of freedom. Being and Nothingness is an explanation of human reality in terms of ontological discourse and its structure. However, though this document and its ideas were the central tenets of Sartre's philosophy and were carried almost till the end of his life, only with an exception, when it's seen, that his last phase, which is purely Marxist, (later turning to be anarchist) echoes a different kind of freedom, rather a 'restricted freedom' in the Marxian manifesto, Critique of Dialectical Reason. But as it has been observed by critics, of which majority claim that it is a break, an 'epistemological break', in the progression of his thinking, where Sartre becomes more aware of the constraints of the given world and social conditions, related to mankind. So it would be wrong to assume and give a value judgment, that this is a break or a continuation in the thought of Sartre which is concerned with his main idea of freedom. Christina Howells remarks:
...in fact, however, Sartre's thought does not develop in a linear fashion: freedom is posited initially as both a fact and a goal, and from 1936 to his death in 1980 he was concerned both to define more closely the significance of the fact and to explore the conditions of possibility for the achievement of the goal. (Howells, *The Necessity* 1)

Coming back to *Being and Nothingness*, which is divided in four parts and which has a rigorous philosophical introduction like Heidegger's *Being and Time*, it is important to understand some of his basic ideas, from which we can see his development as a thinker, who used two different modes of thinking for grounding his theory of freedom in relation to 'being'. Here an attempt has been made to understand this work in relation to freedom.

Consciousness, purely phenomenological, is at the heart of this work, and being, which is ontological in nature, makes an important pivot to join many ideas related to the notion of freedom and individual – the “for itself” which Sartre means for human beings. By consciousness, Sartre means a “non substantial absolute” (Howells, *Sartre* 14). It means that consciousness is not an object, nor any kind of entity or any substance, and by negativity he means that it is the human reality alone that is capable of bringing negation. Thus to quote *Jean Paul Sartre: Basic Writings*, “I am myself a kind of nothingness at the heart of being” (Priest 13). His attempt in creating freedom is very intricate and is bundled with the interconnected concepts which are highly philosophical and ontological in nature, where he is more of a phenomenologist, like Husserl or Heidegger. Sartre’s argument of freedom primarily falls in two categories. The first argument is, “Consciousness is not what it is” (Detmer, *Freedom* 25), and the second, “Consciousness is what it is not” (qtd. in Detmer, *Freedom* 25). This is his start on the way to building the genealogy of freedom, and he further elaborated it in the fiction, and his other literary and socio-political works. But here I am concerned with his literary oeuvre; primarily the works like *Nausea*, *No Exit*, *The Flies*, *The Wall*, *The Roads To Freedom* which are almost all weaved in the philosophy laid in *Being and Nothingness*. 
In the first argument, Sartre lays his foundation in the phenomenological investigation, where he rejects some of the part of Husserl’s phenomenology and in return radicalises it to meet the demands of his new ontology like the way Heidegger does who also refuses Husserl and builds a new ontology by attacking the old ontology. In his second argument, he talks about the transcendence of ego, and in his last argument he discusses the roles, acts, psychic states and emotions.

**Explanation of the Arguments**

Sartre is indebted to Husserl for building his theory of freedom, from whom he borrowed concepts of Husserlian phenomenology and interpreted it radically. The doctrine of consciousness as explained by Sartre is that “consciousness is always consciousness of something” (Detmer, *Freedom 7*). And so, it “is not what it is and is what it is not” (qtd. in Detmer, *Freedom 6*). The other significant borrowing from Husserl was “intentionality” which seeks to explain that “consciousness is always the consciousness of something” (Detmer, *Freedom 7*). Explaining the idea of “intentionality” defined by ‘aboutness’ which became the major and most crucial tool of Sartre by which he could make consciousness empty, by “ejecting” everything from consciousness by intentionality, Sartre means, “necessity for consciousness to exist as consciousness of something other than itself” (qtd. in Detmer, *Freedom 7*).

The chief reason for taking this Husserlian doctrine was that this very idea was capable of making consciousness as empty, and thus to build the theory further, Sartre interpreted this idea radically to the extent that for him the very consciousness was intentionality. Consciousness, in Sartrean understanding was radicalised and refashioned, to the extent from where he could proceed to his desired goal. To understand the idea of consciousness, which has moorings in the philosophy of Husserl and phenomenology, and to get a better picture, it would be better to understand it from Husserlian doctrine of phenomenology, which reads as:

The force of the slogan of phenomenology "To the things themselves" 

*(Zu den Sachen selbst)* is that we must confront things just as

*experienced by consciousness*, independently of any theoretical or

metaphysical presuppositions, rather than as objects in any other sense-
as physical objects for example. We must return to experiences themselves, to "transcendental experience": a realm of "pure consciousness" or "pure subjectivity". That there is subjectivity or consciousness as such Husserl called "the wonder of all wonders". The wonder resides not in being or existence itself but in that there is a being that is aware of being." (Shand 238)

In attaining this position on consciousness, Sartre undergoes some serious philosophical alterations and rejections in opposition to Husserl in the domain of phenomenology. The radicalisation of his view is related to the idea of Husserl's 'epoche', which is "partly Cartesian and partly Kantian" (Priest 1). According to Husserl, "epoche" is a central phenomenological tenet, through which he expands his philosophy by the process of reduction which is methodologically called 'phenomenological reduction'. By this it means, "...that to suspend or 'put in abeyance' all claims about the reality of the world outside consciousness" (Priest 58). Contra Husserl, Sartre refuses this reductionist approach to the point where he encounters a threat to his theory proving a sufficient philosophical ground for his thesis, in which he argues for the "irreducibility" of this world and the "unbracketing" of the datum of experience and also the idea of 'the transcendence of ego', thus finally building a logic to support his thesis of freedom and making his claim that 'consciousness is free'.

The second explanation for the ideas which shaped this theory of freedom is 'the transcendence of ego'. The "Transcendence of Ego" is a long essay written in 1934, and published after three years. It talks about the concept of ego in Sartrean structures of phenomenology. To Sartre, ego is never a part of consciousness unlike Husserlian doctrine which takes ego as a part of consciousness. Unlike Husserl, Sartre insisted this in his long essay published in 1960 on the discourse of ego. To him, ego is purely an outside phenomenon. He thus states about the phenomenon of ego "that the ego is neither formally nor materially in consciousness: it is outside, in the world. It is a being of the world, like the ego of another" (Sartre, The Transcendence of the Ego 31). He made ego an object of the outside world and denied any and every
possibility for ego to be part of consciousness. On the contrary, Sartre never denies the transcendence of ego, for in his doctrine the ego must be there for the ‘individuation and the ‘unity’ of consciousness but not in the way Husserl speaks of it, as “in” or “behind”, ‘controlling’ or ‘directing’ the consciousness (31). The difference in relation to Husserl is not altogether strictly different and shares the same root. In the early years, Husserl too insisted and endorsed the same view but later, his views changed. To Sartre, it is Husserlian technique of placing ego outside and making his argument for freedom more feasible. The reason being that Sartre feared the mixing of ego with consciousness and as a result, if he would have done so than it won’t have been possible for him to qualify consciousness as a free entity.

In the last phase of his argument on consciousness, Sartre groups few pure elements related to human subjectivity, like their emotions, psychic state, roles and their acts. In this argument, we can see a shift of ontological freedom, though not completely to the freedom, of what an individual generally feels about this state of affairs. Like preceding two arguments, Sartre here too tries to make consciousness free from any category which can taint his idea of consciousness as free act. In order to demonstrate this hypothesis, he describes and divides the consciousness as “pre reflective” and “reflective” consciousness. He thus attempts in turning emotions and “psychic” acts as a transitory phenomenon with reference to reflection and the present state of the nature of an experience which one encounters. Thus, this creates a gap between emotions and consciousness. James Edie summarizes this attempt in this example:

Sartre shows that whenever and as soon as I can reflexively say to myself "I am sad, or "I hate, "I love, for instance, I am no longer sad or hateful or in love, because I have become the consciousness of a state of being sad, of a state of being in love, and so on. My consciousness cannot be sad, since sadness is a state that affects the being (in this case myself) of which I am conscious. (qtd. in Detmer; Freedom 22)

So we get a picture of the argument which he endorses in making this difference between emotions, when he calls consciousness in opposition to emotions
as great “clear wind” which passes by and leaves the things behind. In this very argument, the next level of his argument tries to distinguish consciousness from other states like “psychic” or acts. Sartre’s inalienable freedom is a subject in this regard. It is this freedom which one cannot escape. This idea marks another departure for Sartre with two major important positions in his philosophy. First being the ‘bad faith’ and the second ‘anguish’. By the help of an example, Sartre shows the incapability of freedom to be free when one faces it, and so in Sartrean famous statement, it means “condemned to be free.” The example which he gives is:

Is there doubtless but fixed, ineffectual, surpassed by the very fact that I am conscious of it. The resolution is still me to the extent that I realize constantly my identity with myself across the temporal flux, but it is no longer me due to the fact that it has become an object for my consciousness. I am not subject to it, it fails in the mission which I have given it I should have liked so much not to gamble anymore; yesterday I even had a synthetic apprehension of the situation (threatening ruin. disappointment of my relatives) as forbidding me to play. It seemed to me that I had established a real barrier between gambling and myself, and now I suddenly perceive that my former understanding of the situation is no more than a memory of an idea, a memory of a feeling. In order for it to come to my aid once more, I must remake it ex nihilo and freely. The not-gambling is only one of my possibilities, as the fact of gambling is another of them, neither more nor less. I must rediscover the fear of financial ruin or of disappointing my family, etc., I must re-create it as experienced fear. After having patiently built up barriers and walls, after enclosing myself in the magic circle of a resolution, I perceive with anguish that nothing prevents me from gambling. (qtd. in Detmer, Freedom 23)
Thus with this example, Sartre sums up his theory which is projected towards understanding the freedom and its inevitable nature.

**Second Argument**

The second part of the argument, lies in his paradoxical phrase, Consciousness is what it is not. In this paradoxical doctrine, of which a part is discussed above, forms a central argument in the Sartrean idea of freedom and consciousness. As mentioned earlier, the connection with nihilation or nihilating behaviour is a basic connection with consciousness and is a place where the beings' freedom is revealed in various acts, like those behaviours or acts which are actually nihilating behaviours. In Sartrean understanding, it is by these behaviours that we encounter the profound idea of nothingness. In this connection Sartre gives nihilism a very extraordinary position related to freedom. He says, “nihilation is precisely the being of freedom” (qtd. in Detmer 25).

In this labyrinth of negativities, the very first thing which is hammered is the idea of Imagination. Imagination is a key, to Sartre’s understanding of the negativity and nothingness when a consciousness interacts with the world. Sartre distinguishes imagination and perception, and holds the view that perception by its virtue of resistance never places the object in terms of absence to consciousness, whereas imagination, on the other hand, is beyond phenomenon, transcendent in nature, and conceives the object altogether freely in this regard. Sartre in contrast to perception remarks about imagination that it has to be as, “posited as non-existent or as absent or as existing elsewhere or not posited as existing” (qtd. in Detmer, Freedom 26). So the essential difference of imagination from perception is that “the image involves a certain nothingness.”(26). Sartre in this regard, holds the prerequisite for a consciousness to imagine this to be “For a consciousness to be able to imagine it must be able to escape from the world by its very nature, it must be able by its own efforts to withdraw from the world. In a word it must be free” (26). So this is what he means in arguing for the freedom of consciousness, claiming the individual and Cartesian ‘I’ as “transcendently free that [I] can imagine” (27).

The next area of inquiry for the establishment of nihilism is Doubt. To Sartre, it is the Cartesian scepticism to start, and thus he claims that this “...methodical
doubt', is "the very model of the free act" (27). To understand this position he compares the 'causal determinism' and act of free consciousness, as a reason to doubt the world which one inhabits. It means that in the process of doubt one has to bracket himself from the world, and as stated by Sartre, "doubt is a breaking of contact with being" (27). To accomplish this act, consciousness should be free from the causal determination. Crediting Descartes again, he praises him saying, "no one before Descartes had stressed the connection between free will and negativity. No one had shown that freedom does not come from man as he is, but rather from man as he is not" (27).

Destruction is another identification of a nihilating act, central to the corpus of Sartrean idea of free consciousness. Though in this claim, which is extremely negative Sartre follows Cartesian line again in making this boisterous claim but only on a conceptual basis of this understanding. His understanding of destruction is marked by the act of free consciousness, which actually understands the destruction as an act with reference to time where it can reflect on the past without any damage and can evaluate the present with the contrast that destruction has caused. In this sense, his argument explains that this is only possible in the presence of nihilating and free consciousness or else, any destruction would go unnoticed, if not observed by the free consciousness. The destruction caused by a tornado is just a simple fact of the matter in the natural cycle related to nature and its power. Unless it is observed by free consciousness, it remains nothing except a simple or a natural act. Thus, the availability of such a phenomenon of destruction is an evidence to Sartrean philosophy of freedom, for it is seen that destruction and free consciousness only make meaning when they meet each other.

Interrogation, addressed as a nihilating act, is of prime importance to Sartre, since it offers three kinds of negativities and three different levels of nihilation. In this regard the relationship drawn by Sartre is of a questioner and his related knowledge. In this process, as said, he identifies three kinds of negativities, "the nonbeing of knowledge in man" (qtd. in Detmer, Freedom 28) meaning the ignorance on the part of the questioner. The next is "the possibility of non-being in transcendent being" (29), to which he replies, "for the questioner the permanent objective possibility of a negative reply" (28) and the last one is, "the non-being of limitation" (29).
The next negativity is “The Experience of Absence”. In this idea of absence, it can be seen that almost all the negativities appear in the realm of absence. To understand this, we can look at the famous example quoted in *Being and Nothingness*. It is an example of Pierre’s absence through which Sartre shows the idea of negations. He says:

I have an appointment with Pierre at four o’clock. I arrive at the cafe a quarter of an hour late. Pierre is always punctual. Will he have waited for me? I look at the room, the patrons, and I say, "He is not here." Is there an intuition of Pierre's absence, or does negation indeed enter in only with judgment?... Popular consciousness, however, bears witness to this intuition. Do we not say, for example, "I suddenly saw that he was not there." Is this just a matter of misplacing the negation? Let us look a little closer... It is certain that the cafe by itself with its patrons, its tables, its booths, its mirrors, its light, its smoky atmosphere, ...

Similarly Pierre's actual presence in a place which I do not know is also a plenitude of being. We seem to have found fullness everywhere. But we must observe that in perception there is always the construction of a figure on a ground. ... When I enter this cafe to search for Pierre, there is formed a synthetic organization of all the objects in the cafe, on the ground of which Pierre is given as about to appear. This organization of the cafe as the ground is an original nihilation. (9)

*Critique of Dialectical Reason*

The next work which is equally very important like *Being and Nothingness* is *Critique of Dialectical Reason* to understand Sartrean freedom in his later phase, i.e., post-war years. It is also important to get a complete overview of his philosophy of freedom. This book remains very crucial to his idea of freedom, because *Critique of*
Dialectical Reason is altogether a different work which talks about freedom, not at all in the early Sartrean form or language, but rather it is more of a communist doctrine of freedom which includes men and society at large in the practical sense of the word. In post war years, Sartre got more preoccupied with Marxism and thought Marxism as the only philosophy for the liberation and salvation of mankind. So Sartre’s purpose in this text is summed as: “Critique of Dialectical Reason, insisted that the task of existentialism was to ‘reconquer man with Marxism’” (Flynn 116). After 1950 Sartre was more involved in exploring human conditions in relation to the external factors which affected human destiny. In this phase, we see Sartre’s commitment to freedom being more practical in contrast to his early years of thinking and commitment which was more phenomenological and ontological in nature. But in Critique of Dialectical Reason, the whole thesis of his freedom finally culminates in “praxis” and “counter finality”. It comes through a series of changes to finally culminate in the end as a commitment of action in the Marxist sense but only at the level of new interpretation of Marxism, retaining his subjective ideal of man and his free consciousness as transcendence for the making of history unlike the deterministic notion of Marxism.

Though we see at times that Sartre’s rhetoric surpasses his actual meaning, and considering the other subjects, more glorified and meaningful, however, here in this case, Marxism turns out to be more important than existentialism which he had carried throughout his life. We can see this when Sartre speaks of Marxism. “He claims that Marxism is the philosophy of our time, and that existentialism is a mere "ideology," a “parasitical system living on the margin of Knowledge, which at first it opposed but into which today it seeks to be integrated” (qtd in Detmer, Sartre 188).

Critique of Dialectical Reason written in new kind of language and vocabulary, which is missing in Being and Nothingness and the words like “practico inert”, “totalisation”, “serialization”, “collectives”, “counter finality” and so on mark this work, with thoughts dealing specially in Marxism and existentialism. It has been commented that his post war works, which include Critique of Dialectical Reason, the most important along with Search For a Method, are more concentrated on the “restricted freedom theory” or ‘practical freedom’. There is a difference of freedom theorised in the later years in contrast to the idea of freedom in the early years. It is also seen that the nature of concern is more focused on the idea of commune, and
holds a sociological and political view of freedom, whereas, in contrast, *Being and Nothingness* is entirely a different work, as seen above, and is radically invested with phenomenology and individualism and bears the impression of “Absolute freedom theory”, which is ‘ontological freedom’. But to see this difference in Sartrean perspective, it is a bit mysterious and complex. To some critics like Althusser, it is a break in Sartrean thinking, and to some, it emerges as continuation of his old thinking, only with a twist and some change but centrally, focusing on his old line of existential thinking. Here, in the passage below, we can see paradox of Sartre’s perspective:

After all, Sartre says both that we are free and unfree; he says that our freedom is both unlimited and limited; and, perhaps worst of all, he says both that we are *always* absolutely free and that we are *always* constrained. (Detmer, *Freedom* 57)

In an interview Sartre says, “I believe we are not free” (qtd. in Detmer, *Freedom* 39). This statement holds an immense complexity of the position of Sartre, when he denies the belief of absolute freedom and in a way has revised his position regarding the issue. It is now of an entirely different and changed kind, drastically changed from the position of yes to no. So in the later years, this change of opinion marks the difference in the understanding of his philosophy of freedom and demands to look in the reason, as said by Louis Althusser, of an “epistemological break.”

In reference to *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, and especially in the later years, as mentioned above, the freedom of Sartre appears more humane and practical. In this period we can see the connection of freedom directly with the human need and requirements. To quote Sartre himself, “...the right to have more than one pair of shoes and to eat when one is hungry” (qtd in Detmer, *Sartre* 197). Thus we can see the conception of freedom now, which is very touching and life like. The reason possibly is that this post-war period connects Sartre with mankind and their conditions of living, their hardships and their struggles. Ontological freedom would have no place in this kind of society, even if they exercised it with authenticity, for the choices itself were born out of struggle and the range of this choice was all marked in poverty and desperation. This kind of a notion only developed after Second World War and so
it was an insistence of Sartre to make better conditions where choices would be relatively easier and where everyone would be given an opportunity to live a life. The other aspect of understanding this whole problem in the domain of Existentialism and Marxism is to understand these few terminologies like “practico inert” and “counter finality” etc. Here, I try to understand these two concepts in relation to freedom and discuss the concepts offered by Sartre, when he marked the fusion of Existentialism with Marxism.

**Practico inert**

In this idea, there is a huge concern of Sartre, which is legitimately tied to his indispensable idea of freedom. By using this coinage Sartre investigates the essence of history and its effect on mankind in general. His insight is that it is humans who make history and in return it is the history which makes humans. This is again Sartrean approach of convoluted analysis, which sees human and history as a subject for each other. In this process, the idea of practico inert is achieved when the very institutions, or the ‘infrastructure’ or ‘super structure’, (Marxian definition), limit the possibility of human freedom which actually was created by the very humans as a free act of creation. This act had been ascribed meaning but now the creation itself has started to behave as opposite, give resistance and does not allow to reinterpret it further which is actually the human need for freedom and thus restricts the freedom of man. To further understand this, one can look at this practico inert in relation to praxis.

In *Critique of Dialectical Reason* Sartre ‘claims to’ “discover an equivalence between alienated *praxis* and worked inertia,” and hence ‘proposes to’ “call the domain of this equivalence the *practico-inert*”. Sartre defines praxis as “the activity of an individual or group in organising conditions in the light of some end” (qtd. in Detmer, *Freedom* 50). This praxis becomes “alienated” only when the worked over matter for an end starts to reflect back the past which has inscribed meaning and stops further working and thus, a whole process gives birth to inertia. And thus we have this “Practico inert.” To explain in a clear way, it can be sated as, “...we shape the world (praxis); and the world, on the basis of the manner in which we have shaped it, comes back to shape us (practico-inert)” (Detmer, *Freedom* 50-51).
Counter finality

Counter finality, defined by Sartre, is "contradiction which develops within an ensemble, in so far as it opposes the process which produces it" (qtd. in Detmer 52). By this, what Sartre means is the threat on freedom posed by the history and by the things, ‘worked matter’ which come back to restrict the freedom. In this relation of freedom, counter finality addresses the problem more radically and serves to understand the problem of freedom in terms of radical limitation. Sartre gives an example of Chinese peasants, in this work, where this restriction can be clearly understood. In this example, Chinese peasants go for deforestation for more cultivating land, but in the end flooding happens, marking a huge destruction and thus turning the whole meaning which was prosperity intended to loss and destruction and further erosion of the land. And thus Sartre clearly states after this is:

...if some enemy of mankind had wanted to persecute the peasants of China as a whole, he would have ordered mercenary troops to deforest the mountains systematically. The positive system of agriculture was transformed into an infernal machine. (qtd. in Detmer, Freedom 52)

To take a further note, Sartre responds here very interestingly on the human desired project, projecting the possibility of value, which turns into failure by the very human which undertook this project; the enemy here is "the peasant himself"(qtd. in Detmer, Freedom 52).

Thus we can see that these two concepts explain the Sartrean notion of freedom in the light of history and individuals, and also demonstrate the conditions of freedom, which dominates mankind, in relation to the practice of freedom. “Counter finality” can be taken as a more radical account of limiting freedom in comparison to practico inert, for practico inert gives the limitation only in terms of interpretation whereas counter finality completely eradicates the freedom and hence gives no space of any kind. Counter finality can also be seen as a reflection of Marx’s concept of alienation, where labor gets alienated from the human characteristics, whereas Sartre tries to reach this effect in terms of freedom, where freedom gets alienated from the being.
The next obstacle to freedom as expounded in *Critique of Dialectical Reason* is the availability of ‘material necessity’ which gives way to violence, and in Sartrean perspective, is held under the category of “totalisation” which operates in ‘dialectical fashion’. To understand ‘scarcity’, it just means the unavailability and lack of basic resources for the fulfillment of life. And so this lack creates a hindrance to freedom, when the very individual operates for his life under such stressful conditions for acquiring the basic needs. This process of continuous struggle employs the inhuman conditions, where the stiffness of competition reduces the individual to animal-like status and alienates him from everyday normal living and his freedom equally. Thus, we see that later Sartre in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason* is altogether changed in respect to his idea of freedom, though freedom remained the central project of his philosophy. To express exactly the essence of this work which Sartre undertook in this project with his lifelong idea of freedom, Flynn says, “In the *Critique*, he will go on to elaborate his understanding of how social groups and institutions can possess qualities that surpass their individual members without dissolving the latters’ freedom and responsibility, which are enriched, in the case of group activity, or compromised, in the case of institutional inertia, but never completely destroyed” (Flynn 102-03).

**Conditions and limitations to Sartrean Freedom**

Freedom and its constraints are serious issues when Sartrean idea of freedom is looked at in the perspective of any condition, when equally we are resounded with his famous declarations that freedom is absolute. So in this regard it is a bit complex to find the idea of limitation which binds and limits Sartre freedom. Though Sartre expressed freedom as an absolute ideal, he took care of these constraints, though not advocating it and writing about it, but only doing this in his later years, which we saw above in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason* assigning conditions for the limitation of freedom.

In Sartrean writing, which is of diverse and of different nature, there can be viewed a discontinuity in his treatment of freedom and therefore its effects are clearly visible in the works which he has written. This sense of difference arises in the nature of psychology, politics and social realm, which holds his ideas of freedom but barred by some or the other elements in this world. To understand this precisely, it is between man and his world, and his relation with his environment which surrounds
his freedom with the multiple constraints and gives way to different sense of failures and meaning. Those various constraints are listed below.

**Facticity:** (external facts) Facticity is an important condition in the existentialist tradition with regards to the condition or constraint assigned to freedom and this is more significant in the domain of Sartre and Beauvoir in relation to their study and interpretation of freedom. This term is not important only to Sartre but his predecessor, Heidegger, too was very much interested in this. To Heidegger, this term denotes a similar sense like Sartre but not identical and denotes “thrownness” of a being. He simply means “thrown into the world” and accounts as the background for the conditioning of the being.

Facticity here is to be understood in relation with contingency, which according to Sartre rests his philosophy on human terms thus refuting the religious and Cartesian philosophy, which, according to Sartre, were reductive of human experience. Referring back to *Being and Nothingness* in which we find the refusal of metaphysics to situate human being in the world, where with the help of contingency, Sartre installs this idea of superfluousness of things, even ‘being’ is placed in this category and also freedom. This web of relationships, which is posited primarily on being, in reference to his world, which is contingent and factitious, gives way to the birth of Sartrean freedom. The facticity for Sartre, defined in his own terms, is “The facticity of freedom is the given which [human-reality] has to be and which it illumines by its project” (qtd. in Detmer, *Freedom* 40). This is the notion ascribed by Sartre to facticity and by which it precisely means that freedom is not possible unless there is facticity. The meaning of freedom is only understood when freedom operates in the background of facticity, and hence freedom is dependent on the facticity.

**Coefficient of adversity:** This term was borrowed by Sartre from Gaston Bachelard and is also known as “coefficient of resistance”. This is a position which limits freedom and puts check on the absoluteness of freedom. By this concept, Sartre means the external factors which hamper the free projects and thus takes into consideration the external factors responsible for hampering freedom and limiting the freedom in the shadow of the threat which poses. Detmer explains the limitations as:
Thus, the coefficient of adversity of a thing limits me (a) in my manner of regarding it, (b) in the range of choices of action that I might undertake with respect to it, and (c) in my possibility of achieving success with respect to the action that I have chosen to undertake.

(Freedom, A6)

**Situation:** Situation marks an important anti-thesis to Sartrean concept of freedom and checks his notion of freedom. In the broadest sense, situation holds the sum of facticity and its results and the interpretation of the consciousness of facticity along with the related situation at the given time. This condition of situation in relation to freedom is explained by Sartre as, “the paradox of freedom; there is freedom only in a situation, and there is a situation only through freedom” (qtd. in Detmer, Freedom 47). This underlines the complimentary and contradictory nature as well as paradoxical sense of the freedom, which is easily barred by the situation and the vice versa.

**Human condition:** Human condition is the result of human situation, and for Sartre it poses a fundamental problem in elaborating his thesis on freedom. Though he rejects the idea of “human nature” but affirms “...the existence of a universal "human condition," which refers to the sum total of all elements which are found in every human situation” (Detmer 49). In his book Detmer quotes Sartre as:

> What men have in common is not a "nature" but a condition, that is, an ensemble of Limits and restrictions: the inevitability of death, the necessity of working for a living, of living in a world already inhabited by other men. Fundamentally this condition is nothing more than the basic human situation, or, if you prefer, the ensemble of abstract characteristics common to all situations. (qtd. in Detmer, Freedom 49)

Consciousness, being the primary subject of the discourse for the establishment of the ethics of freedom, broadly behaves as a limitation to the Sartrean freedom, with
reference to the elimination of this constituent (freedom). This happens in reference to the given boundaries of humanism, deduced from the man and for the very expansion of the meaning of 'man'. This connotes essence, with the reasoned tools of radicalism and marks the promise of the discourse where Sartre, declares his freedom and its necessity, both as an ontological default and also traversing it to human reality for making it as a recognisable ideal.

In addition to these constraints, we have important figures too who held different views, opposing the Sartrean nature of freedom and philosophy. Adorno, Marcuse, Maurice Merleau Ponty, Camus and some others had their reservations with the idea of freedom which Sartre endorsed. Without detailing each of the critiques of Sartre because of the limitations, it will be worth taking at least two of his critics who have furnished some creative criticisms of his theory of freedom. Herbert Marcuse, a Frankfurt school philosopher, has some serious reservations with Sartrean arguments placed in his work Being and Nothingness. Marcuse takes a very different notion of Sartrean Phenomenology explained in the text. In his article titled “Existentialism: Remarks on Jean-Paul Sartre’s L’Être et le Néant”, he explains and refuses some of the most important concepts of Sartre. His attack primarily on freedom is worth mentioning as well as interesting for the fact that, Marcuse represents two understandings of a society classified as Burgoise and Proletariat. Thus Marcuse attacks saying, “Sartre’s existential analysis is a strictly philosophical one in the sense that it abstracts from the historical factors which constitute the empirical consciousness. . . . It hyponatizes specific historical conditions of human existence into ontological and metaphysical characteristics” (qtd. in Sherman 79). Coming to the core of Sartre's philosophy, his sensational statement which treats slave as free even if he is in the hands of an executioner, Marcuse thus states, “... by emphasizing that humans beings are “free even in the hands of the executioner,” Sartre recapitulates “the innermost tendencies of bourgeois culture, ...” (qtd. in Sherman79). Sartre’s concept of freedom is attacked further in which Sartre freedom as undeniable when we hear “we are not free not to be free” (Priest 177). And so man even in the worst of situations is free to choose and exercise his choice. This is the background of Marcuse’s next attack. Marcuse says that Sartre’s notion of human freedom reaches the point of self abnegation: “free choice between death and enslavement is neither freedom nor choice because both alternatives destroy the ‘réalité humaine’ which is
supposed to be freedom” (qtd. in Sherman 81). “Thus, Marcuse concludes, Sartre’s idea of freedom is the essence of bourgeois ideology: through free competition and free choice each person is responsible for whether he has transcended his situation” (Sherman 81).

The next critic of Sartre is Adorno who criticises him again for his absolute nature of freedom. Coming from Frankfurt school like Marcuse, his criticism also deals with Sartre’s absolute understanding of freedom. In his essay “Commitment” he attacks Sartre’s idea of the committed writer explained by Sartre in his work What is Literature? Adorno’s next criticism is a subsection titled “Existentialism” in his work Negative Dialectics in which he talks about Sartre’s literature and says that “...Sartre philosophy dishonours his own literature” and “...honors an unreal freedom” (Sherman 75). He expresses his thoughts on the freedom and says, it “raises the inevitable, the sheer existence of men, to the status of a mentality in which the individual is to choose, without his choice being determined by any reason, and without there really being another choice” (qtd. in Sherman 75-76).

**Individual, Freedom and Society**

Now coming to the idea of individual and society, the understanding of these concepts have existed from a very long time in the history of mankind and it exists even today with the same degree of importance and necessity. When we see these concepts in the existential framework and more specifically in the Sartrean framework, they have a special importance and a new interpretation to the existing sense of these concepts which have been the outcome of some different set of ideologies and thinking. Society and individual, being a part of similar structure of social life, and both being a subject of equal importance, exhibit differences and similarities in understanding the contrastive and complementary nature of the things associated with them. In existentialism, these assume entirely different structure than the common notion of an individual and society. The sociology of Existentialism thus runs in the same fashion in defining the individual and society and most importantly explaining it with the most important string attached to it, freedom.

In existentialism, the sense of an individual dominates the philosophy in contrast to society, which is just taken as a backdrop to understand human existence
individually. Since individual is the centre of this philosophy, the idea of individual proceeds first and then society is understood in the latter stage. Freedom being a very important value and also one of the highest orders plays a key role in doing and understanding the relationship of an individual in a society. And to speak about this whole affair in the Sartrean understanding, it is very radical like his philosophy in which freedom and individual play the most significant part in the triad with society. Sartre, being the champion of “free will,” he equally emphasizes the primacy of man and existence. Thus we see his famous doctrine which reads as, “In history too, existence precedes essence” (qtd. in Flynn 81).

According to Sartre, the relationship between man and his society is governed by the multiplicity and diverse forces of oppression, and this allows Sartre to claim the idea of relationship between man and his society as a mischievous and negative one. In his world, we know now that the individual is the most important phenomenon, and so his philosophy of freedom governs and regulates an individual and his relation to society. The individual of Sartre thus reads as an individual who is alone in this contingent universe with no set ideals and belief. He is not even in a position to cling to faith, as he has been thrown in this world, and so the individual is a grave construct in the Sartrean realm of the things. And thus the concept of freedom in this milieu, where there is always contingency and negation, is redefined as, “... the concept of freedom receives new meaning when it is seen in the context of the concrete human situation- neither as God’s inexplicable gift to his Image nor as the self-delusion of a cluster of conditioned reflexes” (Greene 49).

Man is the centre and the beginning of Sartre’s philosophy and he thus calls and defines man as “man is what he makes himself” (qtd. in Greene 50). This is the definition of an individual in Sartre’s world who is utterly alone in the faceless universe similar to the condition laid by Camus in his fictions where Merseault in The Outsider (1970) falls prey to the absurdity of the things. Sisyphus, too, in The Myth of Sisyphus (1991), a different work by the same writer, is the subject of same absurdity. Thus, in these situations which are contingent and absurd, the course of the things turns absurd too and their relations with the world turn entirely meaningless. Roquentin of Nausea (1969), Garcin of No Exit or Merseault or even Kafka’s K, they all become very different, and turn to be highly existential characters in the wake of
these contingent and absurd situations and represent the same absurdity which is
common to the existential philosophy.

In nutshell, the man in Sartre’s world is a living contradiction bound by his
limits and ambiguities. And when it is associated with the sense of freedom, in the
words of Sartre, it reads as, “Whatever the circumstances, and wherever the site, a
man is always free to choose to be a traitor or not...” (qtd. in Howells 239).

So when seen in terms of relations between an individual and society, Sartre
thus has a very negative picture of the whole affair. To him, relationship is of no great
importance and in fact a source of conflict and annihilation. As conflict, according to
Sartre, is the nature of the relationship, the thesis of conflict can be understood across
his fictional works which mark it as an integral part of human relationship. And the
origin of this thesis, like freedom, lies in his magnum opus, Being and Nothingness.
This text is written for the ‘other’ and human interpersonal relationships. “The
essence of the relations between consciousnesses is not the Mitsein; it is conflict”
(Sartre, Being 429).

Taking into account the large corpus of Sartre’s work, the latter part of his
works, i.e. of the post-war years, do not share the view with the early Sartre in certain
regards as far as the idea of freedom and relationship is concerned. As mentioned by
Althusser, Sartre had an “epistemological break”, by which he means that the two
parts of his career are marked by a break with respect to the nature of his works and
commitments which he carried. Sartre in the beginning was a phenomenologist and in
the latter part he devotes himself to Marxism, thus becoming a Marxist. In the latter
part, Sartre is just different from his early position in respect to individual, freedom
and society. In the later period of his life, he gives more space to the external
conditions and the factors which affect an individual and his freedom. The freedom of
later works is more conditioned and restricted and it is also more of a practical kind of
freedom rather than the abstract and phenomenological freedom which had its roots in
the consciousness. He also grows responsible with the idea of society. He places
importance on society and holds a very respectable notion for the development of
mankind as he thinks that society is a medium for the change and society should work
together to free mankind from the Bourgeoisie clutches. The latter Sartre is more
interested and committed to the collective sense of living rather than being
individualist like his early years, and hence there is obviously a great difference in respect to his positions. Though Althusser find this change or conversion an “epistemological break” but in an interview Sartre never accepted this fact. But here we are more concerned with the early Sartre and his phenomenological account of freedom, and, especially, with the thesis as given in *Being and Nothingness*. There has been also an attempt to understand the reflection of conflict in relationships which hold important argument for the proposed thesis of conflict in some other works, for example in *The Words*.

*Les mots* or *(The Words)* is an uncomfortable account of the dominating class pressure which Sartre faced, making him very different and a rebel of his times. Regarding this particular work his mother remarks that Polou did not understand his childhood. Severely attacking the family and his father in particular Sartre even in his biography renders no space and promise to any relationship. Neither of this account is a justification for the celebration of his vision. His whole evolvement is credited to society in which he lived and in turn, the society lived on him, in the most natural sense and understanding of the word, conflict.

The individual, whom Sartre talks about, is actually Sartre himself, and we can see this personality in the manifestation of one of his characters, Roquentin in *Nausea*. This chapter is titled as, “Existence is a Misunderstanding: A Classic Case of Antoine Roquentin’s Freedom”. Employed at Le Havre, the town with a different name in the novel, Sartre at that point was more engaged with the phenomenology and hence we see *Nausea* as a phenomenological novel. As this novel has been taken up in a chapter of the thesis, there has been an attempt to explain the idea of phenomenological freedom, the role of society in the life of an individual, with respect to the contingency of existence. The contingent existence becomes the call in this particular work in which Sartre tries to unravel the idea of being existent without a purpose. Thus *Nausea* details a lot many things to understand the phenomenology in the literary sense and explains the idea of existence’ freedom and society. The society in this novel also plays a great role for the hero Roquentin, who is always in contrast of being an individual. The whole of the novel runs under the shadow of absurdity and phenomenology. The questioning of existence is very rampant by the protagonist himself and intensifies as the novel progresses. This questioning of existence gives
way to meaningless in general and in certain regard makes the idea of freedom meaningless too. Thus the attempt is on understanding the absence of freedom even though it is present like everything which is present for it is contingent.

In line with the existential philosophy, *No Exit or Huis Clos* is a study in Sartre's idea of 'Other' and thus the chapter is titled as "There is no other except the Other: A Study in Sartrean Relationships." As the title of the play goes, it is suggestive of the fact that the conditions and the content of this play are not going to be easy. And when we see the play, we happen to find out literally the meaning of the title when we see that the characters are in position devoid of any choice and alternative. They are in hell. Though this is the Sartrean Hell devoid of torture chambers, but does the function at its best in creating the effect of hell. The three characters, Garcin, Inez and Estelle are locked in a room and are the torturer of each other. Here we can definitely get the reflection of Hegel's idea of other, from where Sartre borrowed his idea of other and its related implications. Thus Daigle remarks "The epigraph of the novel is from Hegel, and reads: "Each consciousness pursues the death of the Other" (Daigle 76-77). Hence, we see that the state of things starts very normally and in the end, they turn to worse justifying the title, the idea of hell, and importantly Sartrean thesis about human interpersonal relationships. With regard to freedom the very existence of the other is a possibility for the annihilation of one's freedom, and so there is a loss of freedom at its maximum when all these three characters have to face each other, killing each other's freedom and turning the things to absurdity.

The next chapter titled, "My Salvation is my Condemnation: Reflections on The Flies" deals with the idea of freedom as explained in *Les Mouches* or *The Flies*. Here in this work, an attempt has been made to treat the freedom in its existential and phenomenological spirit. Relying on the text and its dialogue between the multiple characters, the protagonist Orestes has been talked in great detail for he is the individual of Sartrean thesis which tries to make him verify the idea of authenticity. In doing this an effort has been made to understand the concepts of Sartre in relation to freedom, individual and society. As the play is about a kingdom and its state of affairs, the idea of society, individual and condemned freedom finds itself nicely played with regard to the philosophy of the playwright. The characters in search of
authenticity undergo multiple changes in their way of thinking about the dilemmas of living and confront the absurdity of existence. Orestes is the one who faces these extremities the most and hence he struggles to get in grip with the Sartrean brand of an individual. There are passages in the play which show the sharp distinction and change of the departure of Orestes from a common individual to an authentic individual. Refusing everyone and accepting the fate of condemned freedom, he thus sums up completely the notion of an individual.

The next work taken for the study is The Respectable Prostitute and is titled as "Sartrean Humanism and The Racial "Angst." This is a work dedicated to the racial problem and also to marginalised society in the United States. In this play, the treatment of freedom largely varies with both the freedoms of Sartre. It starts with the phenomenological and ends in the Practical freedom. We see the tussle of powerful and powerless in claiming this freedom. The prostitute Lizzie is the central character and it is only through Lizzie that Sartre demonstrates his idea of practical freedom explaining the graveness of external conditions. As this play is centered on black problem, he succinctly sums up the tension of white and black giving his philosophy on the marginalized and the depressed class. This play, apart from a literary merit, also sums Sartre’s idea of resistance against America. And finally the last chapter is Conclusion which talks about the investigations in the thesis.

The chapters in the thesis are an attempt to understand the idea of freedom in the experience of consciousness, and also in the social life of an individual. The various characters are replica of these different strands of Sartrean freedom which exhibits a particular philosophy due to his engagement and the times. For example, Nausea is an expression of phenomenological freedom whereas The Respectable Prostitute deals with practical freedom at large. This contrast is the interest and the intersection of freedom in which Sartre is seen in great diversity with regard to his positions. The illusion of freedom then becomes a call for each of the positions in retrospect. Both of the positions then behave as a compliment as well as a refusal to each other in terms of validating the freedom which one can look in life. At times, the philosophical and the Cartesian is the centre, whereas at the other times we see Orestes in The Flies as a brilliant mixture of both the freedoms. These all projects are taken by Sartre in his prose as he believes writing as a manifesto of commitment. His
reply to his existing times is made by prose in which he holds literature as supreme and always a form of commitment. "So you believe literature is always committed?" When asked by one of the interviewers, Sartre expressed his faith in literature and commitment saying, "If literature is not everything, it is worth nothing. This is what I mean by 'commitment'. It wilts if it is reduced to innocence, or to songs. If a written sentence does not reverberate at every level of man and society, then it makes no sense. What is the literature of an epoch but the epoch appropriated by literature?" (Sartre, Between Existentialism and Marxism 13-14).

The present study is an attempt to investigate the literary works in the light of Sartrean philosophy of freedom, individual and society. The researcher has taken the literary works as a separate chapter each for the study. Sartre's philosophical texts also have been included so that the literary texts can be discussed in the philosophical framework of freedom and individual. The purpose of the research is basically to find the idea of freedom, individual and society and their interconnections. The emphasis made is on the study of freedom in Sartre's works including the two broad divisions of this idea which is also known as "epistemological break". The chapters here try to look in the issue off freedom and its treatment. The research question is about tracing the freedom which lends an illusionary nature in the literary works along with individual and society and also looking in the freedom which is more of a committed nature and demands physical action.
Works Cited


Chapter II

Existence is a Misunderstanding: A Classic Case of Antoine Roquentin’s Freedom
Existence is a Misunderstanding: A Classic Case of Antoine Roquentin’s Freedom

"It's nothing: I am the thing. Existence, liberated, released, surges over me. I exist. Existence is an imperfection. Existence is a repletion which man can never abandon" – Roquentin

"Sartre's first novel La Nausee remains one of the pinnacles of his achievement" (Cranston 13). Nausea is a strong and radical document of human predicament – a memoir of existential anguish and a rigorous method of philosophical salvation, wrapped in the traditions of Phenomenology and Existentialism. A master-piece of Sartre's philosophy, this novel reflects the early philosophy and the literary voice of Sartre at its best. The central subject of this philosophy is "being", and is a phenomenological dialogue of existence in the tradition of western Existentialism. Nausea can be read as a philosophy in the genre of literature, and can be seen as a manifesto of seamless marriage between philosophy and literature. This meticulous work contains Sartre's universe, "except the political ones" (Murdoch11), explaining every possible point and corners of his thought, a prefiguration of his subsequent systematic philosophical study, Being and Nothingness, subtitled "an essay on Phenomenological Ontology". This brilliant work displays Sartre's existential engagement which speaks on the behalf of existence. The understanding of this text rests in the understanding of existence, a belief which Sartre holds contingent. The novel is in fact the philosophy when we see Sartre visualising the existence in the clear daylight but is suddenly followed by the misty nebulous existence of Roquentin and his attempt to reflect on existence, as a useless phenomenon. Before going into the details of the novel we must see Sartre's commitment to his novel Nausea and his reflections over it. He comments on Nausea:

I did not see straight. As long as this condition lasted, I felt I was out of trouble. At the age of thirty, I executed the masterstroke of writing in Nausea – quite sincerely, believe me- about the brackish, unjustified existence of my fellow men and of exonerating my own. I was
Roquentin; I used him to show, without complacency, the texture of my life. At the same time, I was *I*, the elect, chronicler of Hell, a glass and steel photomicroscope peering at my own protoplasmic juices. Later [in *Being and Nothingness*], I gaily demonstrated that man is impossible; I was impossible myself and differed from the others only by the mandate to give expression to that impossibility, which was thereby transfigured and became my most personal possibility, the object of my mission, the springboard of my glory. I was a prisoner of that obvious contradiction, but I saw the world through it. Fake to the marrow of my bones and hoodwinked, I joyfully wrote about our unhappy state. Dogmatic though I was, I doubted everything except that I was the elect of doubt. I built with one hand what I destroyed with the other, and I regarded anxiety as the guarantee of my security; I was happy. (qtd. in LaCapra 95-96)

This is almost a complete picture of what is going to be dealt in the novel. These are the personal reflections of the novelist himself and his way of seeing life as an existentialist. But as the text has also a life of its own, the less accessible also in the novel has to be analysed in understanding the freedom of Roquentin and his relation with the society. Roland Barthes celebrated doctrine, “The Death of the Author”, thus states the primacy of reader,

Thus is revealed the total existence of writing: a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them
being lost; a text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. (qtd. in Rolls and Rechniewski 65)

With this liberty, we are to look in the whereabouts of Sartrean Roquentin who “…has travelled widely; he can do what he wants and live where he chooses. “Free” we may want to call him” (Cranston 14).

Published in the year 1938, this novel is a reflection of Sartre’s philosophy of his early years of study and practice, which were largely Phenomenological and Ontological in nature. The subject of this work is highly existentialist and horrific and discusses ‘freedom’ ‘Contingency’, ‘meaninglessness’, ‘absurdity’, ‘alienation’, ‘conflict’ and ‘anxiety’. This forms the core of the novel. Nausea is situated heavily in the traditions of western Metaphysics, Phenomenology and Existentialism and is not only a reflection of philosophy, but is the very nucleus of the novel. Its narrative is philosophy as the entire work bears this philosophical nature. Iris Murdoch remarks about Nausea that, “La Nausee is Sartre’s philosophical myth. Why, asks Gabriel Marcel, does Sartre find the contingent over-abundance of the world nauseating rather than glorious? What is, for him, the fundamental symbol?” (Mudroch 17). The answer to this contradiction lies in Sartre’s interest of studying existence with a distinct approach. This dates back to Sartre’s engagement with these traditions, when he was interested in understanding reality in its nakedness (the pursuit of phenomenology) and its correlation with ‘being’, particularly ‘existence’. The reason for this evolvement which turned out to be very radical can be credited to Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, as these were the two thinkers who influenced Sartre heavily. The novel runs along Phenomenological and Existential lines, so David Detmer remarks, “the entire novel can be read as an extended critique of Husserl’s “phenomenological reduction” (Detmer 54). These years can be counted as the most important and fundamental years of Sartre’s philosophical career since these were the times when Sartre was attaining the philosophical maturity and development. Mulling over new concepts and ideas of the German phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, Sartre was trying to strengthen his philosophy and as a result he radicalized Husserlian ideas to its maximum. “Both Husserl and Descartes start out by questioning taken-for-granted beliefs, our ordinary presuppositions about the world, a process that Sartre re-enacts in Nausea” (Rolls and Rechniewski 108). Ideas like epoché, “intentionality”,
“negativity”, all find a new expression in Sartrean metaphysical system. Same
happens with Heideggarian ideas too where he borrows largely from his treatise Being
and Time. Sartre’s Being and Nothingness and Heidegger’s Being and Time can be
read as a parallel to each other because of the fact that Sartre in his magnum opus
attempts a similar approach and subject in dealing with the idea of existence and some
related issues of Ontology. These early years of investigation in these disciplines form
the rubric for Nausea and reflect Sartre’s position in understanding human existence
and its multiple layers from these newly acquired positions of Phenomenology and
Ontology. “The Le Havre years were an important period of personal and
philosophical development for Sartre” (Cox 79).

Nausea underpins his philosophical ideals and commitments in the literary
form and the study of this work, which is a fiction of much sublimed class and a piece
of philosophical aesthetics, regains its charms in the break and discontinuity of
‘being’ and his encounters. It is an attempt of study in consciousness primarily which
is revealed in the literary expression in order to simplify the complexity which
Sartrean philosophy involves. To ask the question regarding consciousness as Barnes
asks as:

What of consciousness in all this? Nausea reveals that one’s
consciousness is inextricably linked with a particular body, located in
time and space. This is what Sartre calls its facticity. Yet
consciousness cannot pin itself down or make itself an object for itself
except in an infinite regress, ‘thinking about thinking about
thinking...’ If my consciousness attempts to empty itself of all contents
so as to be aware of itself only, it finds nothing there. As Roquentin
stares in fascination at the chestnut root, he feels for an instant as if the
chestnut root in its overpowering reality has absorbed him. He realizes
that at this moment he is ‘nothing but an awareness of it’. (Barnes 24-
25)
This work, being psychological in nature, finds its voice in the fictional character, Antoine Roquentin who is the central protagonist and an anti-hero of this philosophical novel, but an outsider in the Mudtown of Bouville. Being a philosophical novel and written as a diary entry, it subtly provides a glimpse into the craftsmanship of Sartre who, despite being a philosopher, was also a writer of great merit. This blend of philosophy and literature which is a rare faculty places him alongside with existentialists like the lonely Dane, Kierkegaard, and the last of the nihilists, Friedrich Nietzsche. The pervasive influence of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard is evident in the novel though not directly, but their philosophies serve Sartre on the ideas of “existence”, “contingency” and “authenticity”. To see his engagement with Phenomenology Cox writes, “Sartre first outlined his ideas on contingency as early as 1926 while studying Nietzsche” (Cox 79).

Not only a philosophical marvel and a complete text on the level of ideas and content, this novel also reflects and asks to call upon the nature and techniques of this work, which is of prime significance and is creative in its own way. The written novel is in the form of a diary, which serves as memoir and adds to the personal biographical elements lending originality to the work and moves the protagonist beyond the limits of the writer. The protagonist Roquentin clearly states the reason and nature of keeping and writing a diary, and says:

The best thing would be to write down everything that happens day to day. To keep a diary in order to understand. To neglect no nuances or little details, even if they seem unimportant, and above all to classify them. I must say how I see this table, the street, people, my packet of tobacco, since these are the things which have changed. I must fix the exact extent and nature of this change. (Sartre, Nausea 9)

The inclusion of diary becomes a matter of great importance and one sees the role it plays in Roquentin’s life. Thomas Martin says:

Jean-Paul Sartre’s Nausea is presented as the diary of Antoine Roquentin, whose main aim is to document, describe, and analyze a
condition that has befallen him in recent weeks; a condition he names ‘the Nausea’. Things - objects, people, even himself - at times make him sick, nauseous. (qtd. in Rolls and Rechniewski 65)

This style of the fiction displays Sartre’s arresting nature of writing and his idea of doing fiction when he decided to merge his philosophy with fiction. To Sartre, fiction holds an immense value and thus it becomes a vehicle to take his philosophy among masses. The commentaries of some brilliant critics make us aware of the technicalities and richness of Sartre’s style of doing fiction, which is clearly reflected in this work. Sartre’s understanding of literature finds a clear articulation, in What is Literature? where he assumes the responsibility of writing and meaning of literature. The purpose of writing, which remains a central tenet in the expression of commitment, finds its careful expression closely, wrapped in the overtly philosophical overtones of Nausea in Western philosophy. The literature which he believes in is a literature of engagement and commitment, known as litterature engageee, and places his fiction on the frontiers, as one of the distinct and explicitly different literature, which he characterises for its role and actually practices it for the sake of commitment. The commitment here is to freedom and existence. At the heart of What is Literature? lies Sartre’s commitment to freedom. This commitment as seen in literature and as a fiction in Nausea is of highly individualistic and ontological kind which shows itself as specimen for reading of phenomenology and ontology. Nausea, being the literary expression of this commitment can be considered a substantial work of Sartre which led him to do philosophical writings later. In a way, the reputation of Nausea stamps the quality of the later works, especially in respect to Phenomenology, Ontology, Psychoanalysis, all in the labyrinth of Existentialism. Being and Nothingness forms a major category in these specialised disciplines. Nausea is not only rich in literary landscape and is densely meaningful but the techniques used in this fiction sum up this work as a complete commitment, showing the dedication of the tireless artist, Sartre, and thus making it as one of the most significant works in twentieth century list of fiction.

The writer – narrator relationship can be best viewed through this lens of understanding like the techniques of Dos Passos or Faulkner, which is central to
Sartrean technique. He makes his character free and rather delimits himself to make larger than life characters where the writer goes beyond omniscient narrative technique and weaves the understanding of the writer and narrator to produce the best result for understanding the work. To Sartre, omniscient narrative technique and fiction ‘written after the fact’ seems a great subject of criticism. "A past was delivered to us which had already been thought through ... [but] no art could really be ours if it did not restore to the event its brutal freshness, its ambiguity, its unforeseeability..." (Sartre, Literature 185). For Iris Murdoch, Nausea is a bundle of multiple understanding and a collection of diverse view. She says, “It is an epistemological essay on the phenomenology of thought; it is also an ethical essay on the nature of ‘bad faith’. Its moral conclusions touch aesthetics and politics” (Murdoch 17).

Murdoch renders Nausea as a meeting point of multiple discourses, like “...freedom and bad faith, the nature of thought, of memory, of art” (Murdoch 11). And similarly:

Frank Kermode in The Sense of an Ending terms this narrative structure apocalyptic. It makes sense of things by arranging events or experience in a beginning – middle – end structure, in which a middle passage is meaningfully integrated between an anticipatory beginning and a concordant ending. As an example of this structure, common to the novel and to life, Kermode offers the perception of the sound of a clock as “tock” a feeble apocalypse... Nausea, for Kermode, is one of the most intriguing of these modern novels. (LaCapra 97-98)

Roquentin is at the centre of this novel and reflects multiplicity, except the political ones, but includes everything in his fluid existence, like a rhythm, falling down on every note from phenomenology to art, from individuality to bourgeoise contempt, from anguish to commitment and finally taking his purpose of writing a book as a marker of this commitment. Murdoch remarks about this work with her overwhelming critical insight by saying, ‘A young man’s tour de force’. The style of writing seems very poetic, though Sartre was never in favour of poetry, and his commitment to prose remained a lifelong commitment. “Prose, he argues is capable of a purposeful reflection of the world, whereas poetry is an end in itself. In prose, words
are significative; they describe men and objects. In poetry, the words are end in themselves” (Sartre, Literature viii). Though, Nausea being a prose, its poetic rendering can never be avoided. Iris Murdoch observes, “It seems more like a poem or an incantation than a novel” (Murdoch 19). These lines reveal the poetry hidden behind the prose of Nausea. “.... this cold is so pure, this darkness is so pure; am I myself not a wave of icy air? To have neither blood, nor lymph, nor flesh. To flow along this canal towards that pallor over there. To be nothing but coldness” (Sartre, Nausea 43-44).

Nausea not only reveals a vast world, when we see its unveiling in the world of modern fiction, which is distinct in terms of style and presentation, the most important aspect is the content of this novel which is serious and displays a remarkable power of expression of being an existential novel. In fact, the novel echoes some similar themes of different works and qualifies it to be of a universal kind. This echoing and similarity of the existential notions which other works also carry do not overshadow Nausea but on the contrary, it enriches it in terms of meaning and its universal acceptance. The Kafesque idea of metamorphosis, the underground man of Dostoevsky, they all seem close to Roquentin. When the narration proceeds, Kafesque absurdity is clearly reflected in the embodiment of the protagonist Roquentin. Absurdity embedded in the very existence haunts this young man, in the realisation of existence. Kafka seems quite agreeable when we hear Roquentin’s talking about his tongue which may turn into centipede, somewhat like Metamorphosis, where the protagonist Gregor Samsa turns into a vermin when he gets up from the sleep. In this bizarre and actually Kafkasque work, Mr. Samsa turns into a bug posing obstacles to himself and his family. On an individual basis, Samsa suffers badly like Roquentin when he faces the meaningless state of things. The next existentialist whose works are similar to Nausea is none other than Sartre’s own friend Albert Camus. The very opening of the novel draws a kind of comparison from Camus’s novel The Stranger and his philosophical magnum opus, The Myth of Sisyphus. Mercasult is the one who resembles with Roquentin. He is the representation of absurdity like Roquentin and we see him coming close to every instance of their approach of the subject which they take in writing over existence. Mercasult and Roquentin though not similar exactly, but both of them hold absurdity as the bottom line from the very start in the respective works and represent a struggle.
with the contingent universe. Barnes expressing the absurdity of Roquentin says, that “One has the strong impression that the absurd universe described by the hero is a faithful picture of reality for the author” (Barnes 25). Sartre and Camus, both being the advocates of living a life, have different ways of telling this truth. Camus appealed to live life without an appeal whereas Sartre was more radical. But they have to be understood in the ‘metaphorical’ and ‘gestural’ way. In addition, Nausea is also rare like Rilke’s fiction The Notebooks of Maria Laurids Brigge or the Prelude. Hints of Kafkaesque absurdity are again pretty evident when Sartre dramatizes the human condition and existence by frequently referring to ghost town or the individuals turning animal – like, like in Metamorphosis, The Castle and also The Trial.

Nausea reflects the salient themes of existentialism and discusses them at length. Its randomness, contingency and superfluity of the world are Roquentin’s own randomness and contingency which calls for a reality check and its arbitrariness. Gary Cox writes about the nihilism and brutality of this work. “...Nausea, manages to convey a sense of the terrifying contingency and absurdity of existence (Cox 3). Nausea concentrates on this subject where Roquentin explains the cause and effect of living an existence with other various existing forms of meaning. ‘Art’, ‘perception’, ‘meaning’, ‘meaninglessness’, ‘bad faith’ and ‘authenticity’, ‘freedom’ and no freedom, all form a part of this existential discourse, explaining the project of existence, and the reason, for these being as subjects, lie, “upon a certain discovery, of metaphysical interest, which is made by the hero, Antoine Roquentin” (Murdoch 11). Further Murdoch says, “This peculiar book lives on many levels. It is a sort of palimpsest of metaphysical doubt, and also analyses that doubt in terms of contemporary concepts” (Murdoch 42). The novel is as an account of the journal in which a note opens first explaining to the readers about this fictional character and his doings. The epigraph is of much import and at the very onset serves the atmospheric sense of the novel. This epigraph also serves the purpose of the novel in the most subtle sense by meditating on the existence of Roquentin and his nature. Celine remarks, “He is a fellow without any collective significance, barely an individual”. In this remark by Celine, there is a subtle reflection of the persona of Roquentin, giving an idea of the character that is going to be dealt in the novel. The ‘fellow’, Roquentin; is a subject here in which Celine makes her assertion of the dispute and nothingness which he carries in the guise of existentialism and human paradoxes, mixed in the life
and living of the protagonist and thus makes him quiet visible in this canvas, in this novel, in the loose and disjointed form of a diary.

In the account of this journal the reader notes that the protagonist Roquentin, is a young man of thirty, tall, red haired and is living alone, completely in solitude in the “mudtown” of Bouville. Living on limited means, but largely independent, he explores himself in Bouville, under the historical project which he has taken on the study of the 18th century French diplomat Marquis De Rollebon. As the plot unfolds, he is seen under the strong influence of Sartre’s philosophy and is an extremely solitary individual. Solitariness seems to complement the very mood of novel as well as serve the dread which existentialism underlines. Roquentin takes note of this solitude and solitariness. He says “Or perhaps it is because I am a solitary? People who live in society have learnt to see themselves, in mirrors, as they appear to their friends. I have no friends: is that why my flesh is so naked? You might say- yes, you might say nature without mankind” (Sartre, Nausea 32).

This solitariness of Roquentin reminds one of the ‘militant and sufferer’, the underground man who echoes Roquentin if not in the exact lines. “I am a sick man ... I am a spiteful man. I am an unattractive man. I believe my liver is diseased” (Kaufmann 53). This is the depth of Sartre which he covers in returning to the root of existentialism and creates his metaphysical image. We see that the notes of Dostoevsky and the diary fusing together to approach the same dilemma which they encounter in their existence. We hear Roquentin saying and expressing the angst which is supposedly inherent in his nature, “It is unusual for a man on his own to feel like laughing” (Sartre, Nausea 18). This shows the pessimism he feels and is very frustrated with the present state of things which he is encountering for he does not want the reality as it is. Murdoch remarks that, “He sees reality as a fallen and existence as an imperfection. He yearns for logical necessity in order of the world. He wishes that he could know things through and through and experience them as existing necessarily. He wishes that he himself existed necessarily. He feels the vanity of these wishes” (Murdoch 42). These predicaments move further and we see the evolvement of Roquentin from “illness to wholeness”. Traversing on almost every aspect of human existence, he develops his life in the confusion of multiple views and systems, of which he is a part directly or is positioned as a default and a helpless unit,
in the larger cosmos of the things. Sartre’s eternal questions are regarding the condition of human being, his freedom, his existence, the metaphysical truths and their quest, its meaning and his relationship with society all rising in the shadow of Roquentin’s own movement. To his credit, this novel does catch all the dichotomies. Lacapra says, “The novel’s tendency to place in question extreme dichotomies between the literary and the philosophical or theoretical is one of its strengths” (LaCpara 95). Though Roquentin is quiet an opaque character illuminating Sartrean phenomenological and existential systems at its best, it largely remains a character of underground nature. Primarily set in the existential ambience, Roquentin undergoes this pressure to reveal the idea of existence which Sartre bears in his mind. It begins with a climax where he experiences some severe existential and psychological transformations regarding existence, within him and the world outside, when he encounters his being with the outer world. He is trying to find out the reason for this kind of change which happens to him. This change happens throughout the novel, reflecting the psychological, ontological and phenomenological nature of existence. And through this process, Sartre’s philosophy and his project for the ‘nauseating existence’ which he intended to serve in this work and subsequently in other works, like his collection of short stories, or other pieces of fiction is evident. The theme which Sartre deals here is clearly rare and philosophical raising strong questions of existence and shows him as a metaphysician. Barnes thus quotes the tension and captures it by saying:

By ‘nausea’ Sartre refers specifically to the taste of oneself. If insisted of seeking a conceptual answer to the question ‘What am I?’ I try to feel my reality as an existent being, my self-awareness is likely to take the form of sheer visceral sensation. (Barnes 24)

In the novel, the solution as proposed in the end is a pledge by Roquentin, committing himself “... to write something that would be ‘beautiful’ and hard as steel and make people ashamed of their existence... A book. A novel.” In this tumult and confusion Sartre lays a path from nihilism to the world of words and writing. Thus the narrator quotes tracking the purpose of the work and says, “it is one of the few books devoted to the logical exploration of a world without meaning” (Sartre, Nausea vii).
Roquentin is an existential as well as a metaphysical figure in the larger tradition of understanding human nature and its categories. His sketch throughout the novel reveals the ideas of freedom and the sense of being, a question which is very fundamental to the idea of existence, a question which is as profound as its answer. Freedom and its effects is a question which haunts the readers when Roquentin is looked from the perspective that, what is the impact of freedom on him. Maurice Cranston says about Roquentin, “He is degage or uncommitted; and it is one of Sartre’s central beliefs that degagement is only a mockery of freedom, is, in fact, a form of running away from freedom” (Cranston 14). As we know that freedom for Sartre is absolute and is a matter of condemnation and so there is always this suspense that how Roquentin will react to it when he finds himself in the face of existential, Sartrean freedom. The reason of Sartre putting his theory as absolute lies in his philosophical understanding of consciousness, and which he claims as free. As Cox writes, “...consciousness is essentially temporal,... freedom is an inalienable feature of consciousness”(Cox 13). His analysis also involves the much celebrated theme of existentialism which assumes to absurdity in this work. There are some strong reflections of absurdity in the novel which suggest the futility of existence and meaningfulness of the world. It is only through absurdity which begins as early when the novel starts and turns more intense as it progresses, drawing a parallel between the author’s belief and the actions of Roquentin. Roquentin, after going through this pool of absurdity realises the meaning of life, according to his own choices, understanding and decisions which he finally makes in this world. Though it is seen that the whole novel runs under the shadow of absurdity but Sartre never allows defocusing from his central thesis of ‘being’ and freedom. Barnes observes similar understanding and says, “The revelation which Roquentin witnessed in the ‘horrible ecstasy’ was of existence. Within the novel ‘existence’ becomes synonymous with ‘absurdity’, but it is contrasted with “being”’ (Barnes 29). The reason for this kind of voyage by the protagonist is actually put up to serve a purpose, where he discovers and realises his confrontation with ‘brute being’ and explains Sartre’s project of an individual, specifically of being an authentic man. He is in fact the representation of Nietzsche’s “Übermensch”, who “will create his own values as a free being. This moral person will freely invent his own morality, which will be the source of all values. This kind of morality is deemed to be “beyond good and evil” as it abandons these categories for the individual to flourish as a free and authentic being” (Daigle 55). This
absurdity, being an accepted truth and also a very common theme in existential writings across the literatures, is also a pretext to understand the famous Sartrean doctrine, which tries to explain human as an individual, who has a choice and responsibility and is ‘always free’. This claim rightly sums its meaning in his famous declaration, “Existence precedes Essence”, which he said in his lecture delivered in an essay, “Existentialism is a Humanism”. The purpose behind this famous declaration brings the massive thesis of Sartre’s understanding of human being, which is largely visible in all of his works ranging from the phenomenological texts to Marxist and literary works. An example of this thesis is seen in his play No Exit where Garcin speaks, “A man is what he will himself to be” (Sartre, No Exit 221). His oeuvre offers this meaning of essence in great detail, and Sartre’s chauvinism to ‘essence’ is best explained in the idea of freedom, which an individual receives as being an existence. As a result, it reflects the ‘sense’ and an attempt of an ‘irrational man’, coming face to face with absurdity and authenticates himself by choosing a role. Nausea seen thus turns into a tale of dark elements rendering a very nihilistic nature of existence and its associated truths.

Primarily, the most important subject in this category and of the novel is freedom, as freedom is a value, a virtue, essence, which Sartre never divorced from his philosophical system. An ardent propagator of this ethics, Nausea is a strong thesis on the study of Sartrean freedom. To Sartre, freedom is a very complex and a necessary and inevitable ideal, repeatedly a centre of his philosophy associated with other ideas entwined with freedom. In his philosophy, freedom is a massive and complex system with many breaks and contradictions, but never affecting the prominence of freedom, that is, its presence as inevitable. Freedom thus becomes a much contested issue when he asserts the absoluteness of freedom irrespective of conditions and limitations. Existence as the core, embedded with freedom, in nutshell is Sartre’s philosophy. Freedom then has to be understood in relation to existence, and so in the existence of Roquentin. “Human freedom precedes essence and makes it possible; the essence of human being suspended in his freedom. What we call freedom is impossible to distinguish from the being of “human reality”. Man does not exist first in order to be free subsequently; there is no difference between the being of man and his being free…” (qtd. in Reynolds 55).
Sartre, when discussing freedom, treats freedom as his forte and this idea becomes a condition in *Nausea*. The nature of freedom, not being positive and life-like, gives way to nihilistic and negative impression lending a very dark sense to the novel. Roquentin is a case in this nihilist tradition of freedom who finds himself placed between the fracture of meaning and meaninglessness. This dilemma and anguish of the self, as a reflection of nausea is “Antoine, and therefore the novel itself, walks a thin, ironical line between telling a story and striving not to tell a story” (Cox 82). The nihilism thus finds itself in the anguish of freedom:

I am condemned to exist forever beyond my essence, beyond the causes and motives of my act. I am condemned to be free. This means that no limit to my freedom can be found except freedom itself or, if you prefer, that we are not free to cease being free. (qtd. in Cox 30)

*Nausea* conveys this paradox of freedom and existence. Contradiction is the permanent marker in Roquentin’s character and his projects which he undertakes in his life and finds it deeply frustrating owing to the viciousness of existence. The position, which comes out of this contradiction, derives its question from the basic Sartrean ideas like absurdity, contingency, bad faith, meaninglessness, anguish, which are thoroughly embedded in the principle position of freedom in relation to its meaning. In other words, it raises questions like ‘What it means to be free?’ or “In Sartre’s dramatic phrase, ‘We are condemned to be free’” (qtd. in Flynn 77).

As influenced by Heidegger, this project of Sartre’s freedom is substantiated by Heidegger’s idea of “abandonment” which means infinite freedom. The crisis of existence, which is derived from the very presence of existence, characterised as “contingent”, and to know that the very nature of existence is “contingent”, reveals the negativity as the only truth available to cling to and accept for Roquentin. The reason to this negative position is further advanced by the basic and primordial thirst for god. Sartrean world in this regard is purely Nietzschean, which embarks on the same meaning, from the famous Nietzschean dictum “God is dead”. The absence of god in Sartrean universe is the worst crisis for the mankind and an empty position which has been left alone and vacant. So man as a free being has to act and make an
essence out of his life explaining Sartrean dictum, “Existence precedes essence”. The existence comes first and one has to make essence by acting over existence. Considering this proposition, Sartre has this world as a free world and allows itself to let loose and be totally free. More poetically, as Sartre is a literary genius, he declares the human life as ‘condemned’. According to him, the man has been left and thrown and has to make his own rules in the absence of god and universal ethics, so a man is free to make himself. So, we hear Sartre saying again, one of the scandalous statement which reads as: ‘man is a useless passion’ (qtd. in Webber 107).

The belief which Roquentin shows in himself is the reflection of the belief which Sartre holds in a man. We later see Roquentin trying to decide for his life and declaring his intentions of writing a book. This promise can be seen when Sartre rightly says that, “There is no other universe except the human universe, the universe of human subjectivity” (qtd. in Priest 45), leading the being into the absurd and illogical brute world, leaving him to be more of an outsider and nihilist. This position is the point at where Existentialism fuses and concentrates in an effort to reveal the layers of meaning the existence holds, or meaninglessness to which existence is subjected, to the conditions in which one is there. For Roquentin, his shift from many positions brackets him in and out in the episodes of life, which make him meaningless and meaningful in the dialectical fashion. He is seen evolving through this crisis of existence, where at times he rejects existence as well as freedom, whereas sometimes accepting this condemnation of existence as only a viable solution. Ontological abundance of freedom comes to its full grandeur when Roquentin scratches his existence to remove it, only to realise later that he exists like any other objects of existence and cannot break out of contingent cell. He has to live with it, die with it, has to face it. Thus the Narrator says, “Roquentin is solipsist, trapped in a terrible echo chamber of the self, haunted by the sonics of his inflamed personality” (Sartre, Nausea x).

Now, the position which Sartre takes here is more of committed in nature and is seen at the end of the novel demanding the protagonist to choose one of the available roles from the existing ones. Roquentin chooses the role of a writer and says:
Couldn't I try ... Naturally, it wouldn't be a question of a tune ... But couldn't I in another medium? ... It would have to be a book: I don't know how to do anything else. But not a history book: history talks about what has existed - an existent cannot justify the existence of another existent. My mistake was to try to resuscitate Monsieur dc Rollebon. Another kind of book. I don't quite know which kind - but you would have to guess, behind the printed words, behind the pages, something which didn't exist, which was above existence. The sort of story, for example, which could never happen, an adventure. It would have to be beautiful and hard as steel and make people ashamed of their existence. (252)

Roquentin engulfed in this temperament starts his diary when the novel starts and he slowly reveals the myriad disputes of his living, his existence, his world and then his own proposed solution. The idea of contingency dominates his mind, and, as said, in Sartrean philosophy that existence is a revelation by consciousness. The flamboyance of this superfluity marks the nature and character of Roquentin's existence, in which he feels severely trapped and is unable to come out of. In an ironical statement he announces the break of freedom "I am free: I haven't a single reason for living left...this freedom is like death" (Sartre, Nausea xii). This is the climax of his inner conflict, and reveals the crux of the Sartre's philosophy.

Roquentin is undergoing an existential conflict giving way to absurd human conditions, characterised by his hopelessness of existence, which has risen from the profound elements associated with mankind. The first is existence and, the second, freedom. This conflict shows the transitory nature of freedom where Roquentin accepts and rejects his own existence, entrenched in the ethical value of freedom but is unable to remove it or end it, following the contingent existence and abundant freedom.

On the whole, this state of things marks a very significant nature of his relationship with his outside world - the world out of his consciousness, which seems
very loose and fragmented like his own existence. At his heart, things are not well and the society which he lives in, showing him the vast profundness of diversity between him and the people he meets and has met in his life till date. His relationship with his own self and with the fellow beings in Bouville, with the Autodidact or Anny his ex-girlfriend reveals an impression of isolation and coldness and shows a very bad shape of his relationships. Roquentin is not interested in any relationship but apparently, he shows some interest but finally loses all of them. An instance of this kind is clearly reflected in his meeting with the Autodidact where he has gone with him for a lunch in a nearby restaurant. On this occasion, we see some of Sartre’s own personal reflections contesting on different ideas in connection with society and especially with science, humanism and knowledge. In this connection the reflection of Roquentin is that he breaks between his acquired learning and the reality which he is witnessing. On the meeting with Autodidact this comes to total blow where he adopts a very hard line adopted for the present people around him. His love and his nausea seem visible with his relationship in Anny or his own work, which he is carrying in Bouville. Not only with the human world, but he feels disgust equally, with the non living world too. Objects and their presence form a necessary relationship with Roquentin when he sees the “tram seat”, or the “root”, or the “glass panes”. With almost every object, his encounter denotes the primary kind of a relationship which signifies the phenomenological experience of the world, and brings the real nature of the things. We hear him saying, “...a sort of nausea in the hands” (Sartre, Nausea 22) makes its appearance as a ‘sweet disgust’ which comes after he is unable to throw the pebble, and reveals the nature of pebble and his simultaneous relationship with it. As an object, the pebble exists, but it also exists as a source for Roquentin’s nausea. “... I’m sure of that, it passed from the pebble into my hands” (22). Thus Roquentin’s state of horror is revealed in the words of Murdoch, “... curious sickly horror overcomes him” (Murdoch 11) as “he looks at the pebble” (11). In the next instant, just before this realisation, the wet paper, ‘tender pulp’, which is ‘fresh’ and young, becomes the centre of his universe. His inability to hold the ‘grey ball’ as it would have rolled it in his fingers, had he touched it, narrates the distant and different sense of the things, which he is acquiring in relation to them. Roquentin says, “I bent down, already looking forward to touching this fresh and tender pulp which would roll into grey balls in my fingers... I couldn’t do it.” (Sartre, Nausea 22) This further extends when we see his other encounters and his reflection on them. As he repeatedly gets fits of
nausea from the objects, on Friday evening at "5.30" (32) he randomly speaks, "Things are bad! Things are very bad: I've got it, that filthy thing, the Nausea" (32).

His relationship is severely strained and shows Roquentin as someone who is a rebel in his own understood world of humans and things, and fails to obey or rather understand the given condition of existence which he actually faces during his stay at Bouville. His rule of living and the lived life till date turns to be momentarily nauseated at every act which he commits from reading or writing or making love with the patronne or being an artist and a critic. He regains sense at the cost of the past time of the life which he has lived till date and turns a victim in the process of this contemplation. He unfolds gradually when he receives the severe bouts of nausea and thus in the very beginning of the novel, the introduction states, suggesting the viscosity of the things involved in the plot and particularly in the life of the protagonist, as, "custom dissolves into nothingness" (xv), stating the fluidity of the vision of Roquentin, through which he sees the world and gets more immersed in the viscous reality of things. The sense of absurdity remixes every time, and brings his meaninglessness more strongly to him, making him very solitary and inhuman at times. The sense of meaning to be made here primarily resides in the interiority of freedom embedded in the very existence, which only becomes visible when this discontinuity is assimilated in the unity of making a meaning from the vast and varied experiences of Roquentin.

Thus one sees that the life of Roquentin reveals the biographical shade of the writer himself and is a clear resemblance of Sartre. As Roquentin struggles with freedom and contingency of existence, same happened with Sartre and there are ample passages devoted to these ideas where there is an echo as if Sartre himself is speaking on Roquentin's behalf. Freedom, individual and the society being central issues like in Sartre's other writings; Nausea too is an attempt at understanding the same set of issues. Roquentin is engulfed in these problems and tries to reflect the idea of freedom and its related effects on him. He is also the one who has a profound interest in understanding existence and in the course of the novel, he is seen leaving his project of history and taking an opposite turn to understand the idea of individual. So we must look now in the odyssey of Roquentin where he finds himself severely trapped in these ideas and tries to carve a solution out of it. It will be worth
considering his idea on freedom and would be wise to start from this point where one can get his reflections on freedom.

The freedom haunts him at every level. The disgust arises in Roquentin when he feels this sense of disgust at every level of his existence. He feels his freedom barred and useless when he fails to realise it, and is seen undergoing an existential crisis. Many a good part of lines and passages in the novel denotes this significant collapse in his thinking, making him aware of his dismal reality, which he plunges in, and in a very emotional statement, he declares his state, “There’s a spring inside me that’s broken” (34). This gives a strong sense of Roquentin’s state of affairs which he has been facing, and remains all broken, when we hear this fracture of youth in *Nausea*. Realising this throughout the novel, we see him falling prey to his contemplation and freedom in respect to existence. After continuous attacks by nausea, he starts holding a very negative view of existence. Unlike solving the problem quickly, he broods on his “doubt situation” bringing him in “...common with Hume and with present-day empiricists...” (Murdoch 13). The reason being his incapacity of solving the present problem of existence which he encounters and delays his salvation but this brooding and pondering expedite the existential randomness to its maximum. To accept this condemnation of existence and finding freedom to be meaningless make him run astray with no centre and meaning. To Sartre this view remains central, where in realising one’s freedom and accepting it for an authentic living gives way to despair and anguish. In nutshell, this acceptance of anguish denies oneself a living which is easy going and smooth. This too is the case with other existentialists, and specially Dostoevsky, who influenced Sartre very much. In *Existentialism and Humanism*, Sartre quotes Dostoevsky, “If God did not exist, everything would be permitted” (28-29). Accepting this proposition, which states the futility of existence similar to Dostoevsky’s underground man who embraces his existence without the veneer, and accepts the “multiplicity” of existence. In this acceptance, he shows the nihilism in which existence is embedded in and thus from here Sartre makes his way for his ideas. Though this notion corresponds to Sartre’s vision of existence but is slightly different when Sartre turns more intellectual and philosophical in his approach.
Roquentin is that “useless passion” who lives with this philosophy, oscillating between common human temperaments and the nauseated sense of the self. As Nabanita Roy clearly puts in her book quiet beautifully, for this kind of position which Roquentin is holding in relation to existence. She says, “To exist was to have a registered trade name somewhere on the infinite Tables of the word; writing meant engraving new beings on them – or this was my persistent illusion – catching living things in the trap of phrases (Roy 19). He contemplates on his freedom in his nauseating existence and understands that he is not free, stating the existential thesis of the brutality of freedom in the most oppressive sense of the word. This realisation of freedom reflects the unwanted position of freedom in human existence. But to Sartre, this is a difference purposely created to define the difference, between salauds (the swine) and the authentic existence. Referring to the idea of contingency, which states that nothing is necessity, but it exists, and so the existence remains not a necessity, Roquentin is seen justifying it, and he says, “that here we are, all of us, eating and drinking to preserve our precious existence, and there’s nothing, nothing, absolutely no reason for existing” (Sartre, Nausea 162). This thesis is also stated in Being and Nothingness as:

...being is superfluous (de trop)... consciousness absolutely cannot derive being from anything, either from another being or from a possibility, or from a necessary law. Uncreated, without reason for being, without any connection with another being, being-in-itself is de trop for eternity. (qtd. in Cox 94)

One is condemned to be free, and existence is contingent, realisation of freedom gives way to anguish and despair. Under these conditions, Roquentin is trapped in his chamber, realises the existence and its revelation, and is seen as the one with an impression of a philosopher, reading this universe in the phenomenological milieu. The purpose behind contemplation and reflection which results in revelation of freedom synonymous with existence in the case of Roquentin gives way to angst and despair, “I am full of anguish: the slightest gesture engages me” (Sartre, Nausea 83). Stating existence as entirely superfluous, as being existent and in relation with other existences too, this sense of superfluousness gives nothing except absurdity and
despair. “We were a heap of existents inconvenienced, embarrassed by ourselves, we had no the slightest reason for being there, any of us, each existent, embarrassed, vaguely ill at ease, felt superfluous in relation to the others. Superfluous” (184). Absurdity links itself in these patterns, when Roquentin fails to understand this uncommon experience of revelation and fails himself to realise that he is free, stating the nature of freedom which makes him imprisoned in the very face of the freedom. Roquentin experiences his absurdity in existence with the distaste for “existence” and thus reveals his absurdity in the situation:

The word Absurdity is now born beneath my pen; a little while ago in the park, I didn’t need it: I was thinking without words, about things, with things. Absurdity was not an idea in my head, or the sound of a voice, but that long dead snake at my feet, that wooden snake. Snake or claw or root or vulture’s talon, it doesn’t matter. And without formulating anything clearly, I understood that I had found the key to Existence, the key to my Nausea, to my own life. (185)

He further claims about the knowledge which he has ‘understood’ in finding “the key to Existence, the key to my Nausea” (185), and declares in the end the relationship of absurdity to existence. “In fact, all that I was able to grasp afterwards comes down to this fundamental absurdity. Absurdity” (185). The Sartrean sense of understanding the freedom, and its acceptance, makes him realise his futility and vulnerable position when he encounters the Sartrean existential and condemned freedom, which is inescapable and lies at the heart of human existence. As nothingness lies coiled in the heart of human being, so is the freedom, which holds existence like an entwined creeper. The whole of existence is coloured, with this negativity and burden, leaving no position except accepting this brutal reality, to which human is born with and has to accept it. Roquentin is the same subject. This meaning though he realises only quite late, the events and his dark remarks on the existence fill the novel with extraordinary horror of existence, making it a dark and grim novel. And pushing Roquentin “gently” and “slipping” him “into water’s depths, towards fear” (19). He is thus haunted and finds himself totally alien as he tosses in and out, between objects and himself, only
to gain nothingness till he realises his commitment. As this work unwinds further and further, it is seen that there is no fixed structure of existence and its meaning and as a result the narration of the novel too is marked by fissures showing the break which is actually the characteristic of the work as well as the character. The events lie scattered and suddenly get related from the purely subjective view point of Roquentin's thought creating a different world where things do not seem normal and are trapped in the triviality of understanding the existence. The incidents in the novel move beyond the ordinary incidents and assume a very negative understanding of the life because of the narration as well of the idea, where much of sordid imagery is involved in bringing the objectified vision of Sartre's idea of existence. Even the interconnection of events is largely loose and scattered which adds to the effect of nausea producing the nothingness at its maximum. Even the relationships get affected in this atmosphere and one sees Sartre's predominant thesis of relationship coming to the front. All this happens and Roquentin remains the centre of these discourses, who confronts his brute existence and freedom at a metaphysical level. Roquentin sums this thesis classically refusing his very self on the standards of phenomenology and bruteness of existence and turns an existential character in this absurd setting.

With rapid movements, which seem slow at times, the nausea is thus expressed in a good amount of poetry when Roquentin says; "I am rejected, abandoned in the present. I try in vain to rejoin the past: I cannot escape from myself" (53). With this state of things, it is very hard to certain the nature and idea of relationship in this present setting of Roquentin. He is completely lost and changes and undergoes some severe changes with regard to his perception of reality. This change also affects his state of relations with his immediate world. As mentioned above in the brief of Roquentin that his relations fade in dust and have no essence as such. So it is better to reflect on this area too where we can see some important dimensions of relations in Sartrean as well as existential setting. Roquentin is in the midst of the mess of existence and therefore it will not be worth to expect something very great on part of a relationship. Moreover he is an embodiment of Sartrean individual who believes in the nothingness of a relation opposite to the common general notion, where relationships find a value and meaning.
Roquentin is the ‘individual’ and he shows the dual nature of the existence representing the famous Sartrean, en-soi and pour-soi, who is torn between his subjective self and the objective world, the world of people and the society, his surrounding, which obviously contain the “other”. These dualities of the things exist in between the protagonist and he is seen constantly struggling on this nature. As a result, he struggles with his relations too in this dichotomy. To Sartre, the relationship between humans is characterised by conflict and this is the only essence in any human relationship. Conflict being at the centre of relationships, shows the struggle and the negativity involved in any human relationship. Though relationships can be studied in other forms as well, like a writer’s relationship to society, as Sartre does, in *What is literature?* or the commitment to one’s own nation, like he himself resisted the occupation for the liberty of France. But the study of relationship in this work is not at all political and social and hence falls in a different category of relationships. As mentioned earlier that Sartre’s idea of relationship is primarily characterised by conflict, we are reminded of his thesis “Hell is other” and his celebrated play *No Exit*. This work too, on the same philosophical line like the play portrays the relationships but not with that same contempt as treated in the play. Roquentin is the individual who faces this extremity of relationships but completely in the phenomenological setting and subtly reveals this contempt as similar to his nausea which reveals itself gradually. Roquentin is at fight with himself and his society in terms of freedom which only attains meaning at the end of the novel, by way of comprises where he accepts and making of the history and finally disowns it. This rejection lies in the fact that he drops his project of writing his project on Rollebon. Roquentin struggles from the very beginning when the novel starts and the beginning itself gives an impression of climax, and Sartre’s power of existential passion, which he has readily and largely invested in this sublime work. The breaks of the relations go parallel with Roquentin’s nausea, and we see that by the end he almost reaches in very shabby state with regard to his relations. Nausea thus becomes a sort of puzzle, revealing this disgust at frequent intervals of life, either in the solitary space or in the universalized surrounding and affecting the relationships very badly.

Roquentin feels this break in him and in his relations as a result of the available contingent existence. His dismal living is deeply entwined with the condemned freedom. Freedom at its base and a founding stone, *Nausea* results in an
expression where freedom of Roquentin being at stake brings also the relations at its worst. The theory of the condemned freedom actually meets the condemned existence and as a result of this condemnation a break and fracture in any relationship which Roquentin makes or relationships which Roquentin is a part of, knowingly or unknowingly. The Ogier P who is the Autodidact, Patronne of the cafe, Anny, her ex-lover, the Bouville society all find itself meaningless in the purview of relationships. At the worst, the very protagonist for that matter in his existential predicament suffers with his self and remains a subject of constant dispute amongst things. An expression of that subjectivity comes to a question in the existential boundaries of ‘I and We’ or more succinctly, an individual and his relationship with the society.

This creates a possibility of conditions where Roquentin starts failing to understand the eerie reality of life and turns out to be a solitary individual. For him, things turn totally meaningless and absurd. The phenomenological revealing and crisis of freedom though not directly comes in the very first on the undated sheet of the work, where he explains the nature and relationship of objects, related to his existence. He says, “I must see this table, the street, people, my packet of tobacco, since these are things which have changed. I must fix the exact extent and nature of this change” (Sartre, Nausea 9). This gets further profoundness and richness when he exclaims about his change in the fork and pipe or “I felt in my hand a cold object which attracted my attention by means of a sort of personality. I opened my hand and looked: I was simply holding the doorknob” (13). The series extends further, and this crisis comes narrowly to the Sartrean philosophy directly, when we see that Roquentin has been under the trap now with the problem of choice. He says in the relation to this change and his witness to which he is very unsure, “It’s an abstract change which settles on nothing. Is it I who has changed? If it isn’t I, than it’s this room, this nature; I must choose” (14). This uneasiness not only dominates his thinking with regard to non – living things but this very view expands to bring human beings in the same lens like the “doorknob”, “pipe” or the “fork”. “I was simply holding the doorknob. This morning, at the library, when Autodidact came to say good-morning to me, it took me ten seconds to recognize him. I saw an unknown face which was barely a face. And then there was his hand like a fat maggot in my hand” (14), suggesting that hand of his library friend, Autodidact, though a human being, turns no less than an object to him. This nature of things gets so overpowering and
disgusting for Roquentin that he hurries to settle it at the earliest, and thus decides
himself as a subject of change, and exclaims, “I think it’s I who has changed: that’s
the simplest solution, also the most unpleasant” (14). The introspection of Roquentin
largely remains with him, even though when he fails and falls down in his nausea. His
change constantly makes him his own subject and studies himself in this uneasy
change of which he is a part either directly or indirectly. Sometimes he feels that it is
nausea in him or it is the objects and this world which contains this and he cannot
avoid it. This sense conveys Sartre’s making of his philosophy for the contingent
existence, and his attempt to authenticate existence, even though if it is barred by any
existential problems which one faces. As Nausea is an early work of Sartre, in these
years he was primarily concerned with the anguished freedom of individual, born out
of his sense of understanding and pondering over the metaphysical questions on
existence as a reality.

Roquentin, thus, a subject of this early freedom, finds himself struggling with
the state of things which he has received as being condemned to freedom. The graph
of the novel states this up and down of his understanding of freedom, where he largely
remains in flux with what he experiences, and is unable to fix any meaning of his
existence and its necessity. Thus he always rejects the existence and also resists the
change which he undergoes. This rejection actually puts him in bad faith, and stops
him to live an authentic existence. This rejection is synonymous with the rejection of
freedom, and can be related with the famous dictum, “man is condemned to be free”.
This is the point in this purpose of writing, which states his illusionary aspect of
freedom, which he derives in the midst of his contingency and bad faith. Bad faith
remains a central idea of Sartre along with his contingent sense of existence and
things, which easily gets manifested in Roquentin literariness and in his day to day
acts. It will not be wrong to analyse Roquentin as an absurd artist, looking for
meaning in absurdity of self or existence for that matter, where he builds his own
reason to confront the brute contingency of the things. His escapist effort only plunge
him more into this greasy reality of the things, leaving him awe struck and
meaningless when he realises that he cannot escape this brute contingency, and has to
be with it, accept it, face it and in the end be authentic. The state of this nihilism and
absurdity which lends bad shape to relation lies in the very idea of existence. As
Nabanita Roy argues related to these state of things taking note of the whole novel
which involves instances of absurdity and existential dilemmas revealing the truth behind such condition. She says for Roquentin, “In Nausea the hero Roquentin becomes sick when the contingency and absurdity of the world is revealed to him and when he realizes that he cannot escape from this absurd world (Roy 18).

Roquentin at this juncture is also an individual who has to live amidst things. By things it means every such object which might be a flat pebble which he was unable to pick or the diversity of human beings ranging from children to adults. So we hear him saying, “I exist - the world exists - and I know the world exists. [...] It’s since that day when I wanted to play ducks and drakes. I was going to throw that pebble, I looked at it and that was when it all began: I felt that it existed” (Sartre, Nausea 176). He is in a society and already has a relationship which he cannot pull off. So to say:

Others play a central role in providing the backdrop of meaning that Roquentin experiences, at times, as a refuge from nausea, at other times, as precisely that, which through its incompleteness, propels him into nausea. Others also figure in the diary as ignorant or mendacious counterpoints to the newly ‘enlightened’ Roquentin or, less frequently, as fellow-travelers in absurdity. (Rolls and Rechniewski 66)

He lives his relations in his nausea, which is “all pervasive”, and these conditions of nausea actually dominate his whole existence, including his relationships, seeping” through all divisions imposed by human practices” (Cox 93), affecting his freedom badly. When we try to look deep in his life, we see his own reflections on the past and the present for which he has a great distaste and does not care for any kind of relations. He simply lives with these relations as he is helpless and has to face the other. “It can be said that the nausea is Antoine’s nauseated consciousness as a relationship to a world that is nauseating” (Cox 93). In this torn and dismal setting of Bouville the Mudtown, which is gloomy like Roquentin, adds to the case of contingent and meaningless existence and relations which are available here. To Sartre, the foundation of any human relationship is characterised by ‘conflict.’ ‘Conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others’ (qtd. in Webber 116). “The
essence of the relations between consciousnesses ... is conflict” (qtd. in Daigle 72). The thesis of Sartre regarding human interpersonal relationships expels disgust and contradiction, and to him it is in the very nature of human relationships where conflict lies as an essence. Though this may sound negative and highly pessimistic, but in Sartrean world, like Roquentin’s own world, this is the only truth of human relationships, which operates under the system of conflict, bringing in negativity, as the only outcome of human relationships.

This view is very much substantiated when Sartre dedicates an enormous amount of his philosophy in *Being and Nothingness*, explaining the constituents of this condition which forms the core to this kind of phenomenon. And also equally reasons out any possibility, for which, good can be strived thus bringing any positive dimension in human relations. This negative view thus rules out “the elaboration of an ethics” (Daigle 85) and hence serves the purpose of Sartre in proving the conflictual nature of the relationships.

Love, considered by Sartre as a fundamental of any human relations, is also questioned, when he sees that this project is unattainable and not possible, making him conclude that the nature of human relations is conflictual. In this case, Anny is the sufferer as we hear Roquentin saying about his break-up with her. In fact, in the end they are seen finally breaking with each other showing the failure of love. ‘Shame’, the other important characteristic of this conflict is an association to this world of conflicts. “I am ashamed of myself as I appear to the Other” (qtd. in Daigle73). The next position he takes on “Other” is the fear which is invested in the Other. “The Other [...] is presented in a certain sense as the radical negation of my experience, since he is the one for whom I am not subject but object” (73). Another important element is “Look” and is a crucial problem which is a mode of attack again on interpersonal relationships. Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness*, demonstrates this with an example of the voyeur, which contributes to his area of conflict:

“[ ... ]I hear footsteps in the hall. Someone is looking at me! [ ... ] I now exist as myself for my unreflective consciousness. It is this irruption of the self which has been most often described: I see myself because somebody sees me [ ... ].” (qtd. in Daigle 74).
These views are not limited to these two or three notions of exclusion (where individual try to evade each other), but these actually form a premise and foundation for the operation of the nihilist notion of conflict, born out of these relationships. These notions develop and multiply automatically, when a conscious encounters with the fellow beings, according to the given human conditions, when one meets in the purview of his freedom and situations. Sartre covers almost every domain of interpersonal relationships ranging from love to sadism or all the extreme points of human subjectivity which create and doom any relationship where one operates, ruling out any positive feature of human relationships. This result makes human relationships absurd.

Roquentin is the pivot of the plot and his relationships in *Nausea* come under the same perspective to which these positions of Sartrean understanding are concerned. He finds himself in conflict with almost everything which he encounters. The Other exists for him as an object and in turn he becomes an object for them, each reducing the other, killing each other’s freedom. As freedom is a central argument of Sartre’s philosophy, this tension of freedom lies even at the heart of human relationships. The conscious when existing with other conscious becomes a subject to each other, and hence freedom too becomes the subject for the other similar to Hegel’s notion which reads as: “Each consciousness pursues the death of the Other” (qtd. in Daigle 77). This tension is approached by killing other’s freedom, as one being tries to transcend or either dominates the freedom. In both the cases either, they “deny the Other's freedom” (77), or “try to capture the freedom of the other” (77). This view becomes tenser when the issue of freedom is at stake, and freedom is questioned bluntly in this dialectical relationship of contradictions and nihilism giving way to darker side of freedom. This relationship of conflict is not only limited to the human world of Roquentin but it stretches to the other side of the category too, meaning non – living things and objects. Though the central thesis on conflict of human relationships holds an important position in *Being and Nothingness* but here this work, which is largely phenomenological in nature, explains the nature and relationship of objects.

Anny, his ex-lover, is a direct relation to Roquentin, and a “romantic interest” (Solomon 91). Roquentin returns to her very frequently in the novel as she represents
the love of his life but which his love has lately died because of the ongoing transformations in him. Very much like Roquentin, she and he together represent and travel on the reef of solipsism. Though this relationship is of love, and Sartre holds much respect for this kind of relationship, but fails to admit it as an achievable act. The hypothesis of love fails when Roquentin and Anny fail to realise each other and the only acceptance to each other is in very objective terms. She represents nihilism in her own eccentric, non intellectual way and is actually an alter-ego of Roquentin. Anny represents crude kind of nihilism, full of stupidity, as she dreams for perfect moments. Not able to achieve the perfect moments, she has a feeling of ennui. She falls for her existence and thus in this pessimism, she says “I am outliving myself” (Sartre, Nausea 206). When Roquentin meets her in the later part of the novel, she has already met this fall of existence like Roquentin, who has just arrived by seeing the existence in all its nakedness. Later it is known that they have been separated forever and nothing remains between them except solitude and nothingness. As this relationship moves from the beginning to end in the novel, against this backdrop there are other relations too which make a voice, in which an individual really lives in a society, divided and dependent on multiple roles and choices. Autodidact for that reason represents the other alter ego of the hero. His debates on humanism, while doing the luncheon in the cafe show his relation to the existing positions of that age. There are even reflections of Descartes in the passages. Avowedly a phenomenologist, he dismisses altogether the debate of humanism. He thus replies to Autodidact criticising what Sartre thought useless and wrong while living in Le Havre as a teacher. He says about “Catholic humanist Benjamin” and criticises him for “he has chosen the humanism of the angels”. And later in the same part he criticises the other humanist and says:

But there are others, a swarm of others: the humanist philosopher who bends over his brothers like an elder brother who is conscious of his responsibilities; the humanist who loves men as they are, the one who loves them as they ought to be, the one who wants to save them with their consent, and the one who will save them in spite of themselves, the one who wants to create myths, and the one who is satisfied with
the old myths, the one who loves man for his death, the one who loves man for his life, the happy humanist who always knows what to say to make people laugh, the gloomy humanist whom you usually meet at wakes. They all hate one another: as individuals, of course, not as men.
(Sartre, *Nausea* 169)

As Autodidact is an alter ego, his dealings in society are of much concern to the existing development of the main plot and the protagonist himself. In the end of the novel, he is discovered as a pedophile and for the first time Roquentin is shown physically acting on the behalf of someone. He gives a blow to the Corsican. Even though the protagonist lives alone and preferably tries to live a solitary life, his positions on metaphysics also reflect the other metaphysical question in relation to the existing doubts which he has. This being his individuality, he is a boy—friend to Anny but it has no meaning now. The objects which concern him, and also the people around, like the Autodidact, who reads in alphabetical sequence, the patronne of the café with whom he has sexual relations on regular basis, the bourgeois society, (to which he himself is a part) are equally like objects. Even Sunday’s and so we see it as the dying Sunday, the idea of adventure and every relation of his, is in conflict. He just lives all of them like his nausea. He also has a great contempt for the hat ceremony or visiting the art gallery which readily calls for the evaluation of art in the perception of Roquentin and reveals his soft contempt for the bourgeois and all those painters who have their subject as rich people in their drawings. So, all these elements of a society which make him and in turn also unmake him, result in the profoundness of nausea and the conflict.

The most significant encounter happens at the end of the novel where Roquentin meets the root of a chestnut tree, as a solid verification for the authenticity of existence in its all nakedness. He thus says:

I couldn’t stand it anymore. I couldn’t stand things being so close any more. I push open a gate, I go through, airy existences leap about and perch on the treetops. Now I recognize myself, I know where I am: I
am in the municipal park. I flop on to a bench between the great black trunks, between the black, knotty hands reaching out towards the sky. A tree is scratching the earth under my feet with a black nail. I should so like to let myself go, to forget, to sleep. But I can’t, I’m suffocating: existence is penetrating me all over, through the eyes, through the nose, through the mouth...

And suddenly, all at once, the veil is torn away, I have understood, I have seen. (Sartre, Nausea 181)

And from this revelation Roquentin becomes indifferent to things and relations in general. He understands the reason for the existence and reflects on the municipal park episode. He says:

I was in the municipal park just now. The root of the chestnut tree plunged into the ground just underneath my bench. I no longer remembered that it was a root. Words had disappeared, and with them the meaning of things, the methods of using them, the feeble landmarks which men have traced on their surface. I was sitting, slightly bent, my head bowed, alone in front of that black, knotty mass, which was utterly crude and frightened me. And then I had this revelation. (182)

With all this happening with Roquentin, what can be made out for his relationship with the world he is living in? He considers everything superfluous on the earth including himself, his relationships and even death. After this incident of revelation, there is a great passage in the novel which sums up the work from every possible point of tension which it accompanies ranging from the nausea, reality and the state of relationships with the outer world and also with his self:
I realized that there was no half-way house between non-existence and this rapturous abundance. If you existed, you had to exist to that extent, to the point of mildew, blisters, obscenity. In another world, circles and melodies kept their pure and rigid lines. But existence is a curve. Trees, midnight blue pillars, the happy bubbling of a fountain, living smells, wisp of heat haze floating in the cold air, a red haired man digesting on bench: all these somnolences, all these digestions taken together had a vaguely comic side.... We were a heap of existents inconvenienced, embarrassed by ourselves, we hadn’t the slightest reason for being there, any of us; each existent, embarrassed, vaguely ill at ease, felt superfluous in relation to others. *Superfluous*: that was the only connexion I could establish between those trees, those gates, those pebbles... *Superfluous*, the chestnut tree, over there, opposite me, a little to the left, *Superfluous*, the Velleda... 

And I — weak, languid, obscene, digesting, tossing about dismal thoughts — *I too was superfluous*. Fortunately I didn’t feel this, above all I didn’t understand it, but I was uneasy because I was afraid of feeling it (even now I’m afraid of that — I’m afraid that it might take me by the back of my head and lift me up like a ground-swell). I dreamed vaguely of killing myself, to destroy at least one of these superfluous existences. But my death itself would have been superfluous. Superfluous, my corpse, my blood on the pebbles, between these plants, in the depths of this charming park. And the decomposed flesh would have been superfluous in the earth which would have received it, and my bones, finally, cleaned, stripped, neat
and clean as teeth, would also have been superfluous; I was superfluous for all time. (Sartre, *Nausea*, 183-84-85)

Then what it is to be in relationship at the cost of conflict and this superfluous state and what values one can derive from this torment. Luckily, Roquentin goes through this in a very well knitted structure of the novel, when we see him, paying homage to each and every tenet of this conflict, completing the cycle of nausea and freedom as per the wishes of his existential uncertainties. It is quiet noteworthy to point that these objects, which have a very deep relation with the protagonist and reflect a sense of disgust in the form of nausea, also serve as the tool for knowledge, in acquiring the understanding of existence. Though Roquentin never plans his approach or takes it as a project for understanding existence, things by their very nature bestow this knowledge in understanding the existence, particularly existence as a phenomenon, although being contingent. The futility of the existence, even of objects, is a concern like ones very existence, which is unnecessary, meaningless and absurd. As this being the background for the events in Roquentin’s life, Barnes says:

But for Roquentin contingency means absurdity, a total absence of relationships and meaning. Existence simply *is*; it does not mean anything. As an existent, Roquentin feels that he, too, is contingent, *de trop*, and he understands that this absurdity is the key to nausea which swept over him from time to time. For he *was* nausea. (Barnes 24)
Works Cited


Chapter III

There is no other except the Other: A Study in Sartrean Relationships
There is no other except the Other: A Study in Sartrean Relationships

_Hell is other people_ – Garcin

Jean Paul Sartre, a philosopher of a prime rank, contained a universe of literature in him. He was obsessed with the idea of writing a book since his childhood and turned into an excellent writer when he was very young. It is important to take into account the subject he chose for his writing in early years of his youth. For instance, in his early years he wrestled with phenomenology and the result was a highly philosophical novel _Nausea_. In his autobiography Sartre remarks that he began his life as he will undoubtedly end it – among books. Before he had learned to read for himself, he insisted on having his own books; he “looked upon teaching as a priesthood and literature as a passion” (Barnes 66). We find that he was consistently concerned with the same philosophical problems in his literary as well as representative works of philosophy. _No Exit_ (1944), like any other fiction of Sartre, is the amalgamation of philosophy and literature, neatly tied together to produce the maximum effect of putting literature at service so that it becomes more accessible and readable unlike his philosophy of ‘ontology’ and ‘being’. As a result, all his writings bear this impression and are fused together. This amalgamation in his writings lends Sartre a different and a notably significant position in the league of philosophers and can be compared to philosophers like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. These two philosophers had a style of doing philosophy in which fiction was employed at its best to render the exact meaning for their thoughts, and Sartre also does the same to bring his existential philosophy to his existential literature.

Sartre’s world of literature is a world of multiplicity and diversity committed to the understanding of man, in general, and existence, in particular. Sartre fruitfully brings together literature and philosophy to make this understanding compellingly persuasive. Man being the ultimate reality in Sartre’s world, his literature always comes back to review human predicaments in the light of freedom and responsibility, and thus distinguishing it as a literature of the man, written for the man, by the man. His commitment to literature at its best is evident in his excellent work, _What is Literature?_ (1950) which maps literature and its purpose. Following his passion in
wild, he is one of the most important writers of Twentieth century literature and primarily a cult figure in the Existentialist tradition. The Times described him as “One of the most and versatile writers of the twentieth century (The Times).” Though he was adept at writing prose, he found writing plays particularly useful as this represented a story of liberation to Sartre.

The idea of theatre is embedded in Sartre’s own experiences and binds him with history. He understood the scope of theatre as a prisoner of war in Nazi occupation. His play, Bariona (1964) was enacted while he was a prisoner of war under the Nazi occupation. Sartre realised the power of theatre as an indispensable medium towards understanding and realisation of freedom. It later turned out to be an enduring passion for him. His plays not only functioned as a site for intellectual engagement but it also proved to be a refined medium to revisit his own philosophical positions and put them into practice. Christine Daigle rightly says that “His theatre was the occasion for him to revisit his philosophical ideas and present them to public in a different form” (Daigle 8). Even though he wrote novels, his plays dominated his literary career and surpassed novels in volume as well as in content. Purely existentialist and phenomenological in nature like the very creator of these plays, the plays of Sartre represents “The theatre of freedom” (Cox 132). Unconventional and distinct, they are reflections of human predicament and grim realities of living. Entirely committed to the sole purpose of studying man in his pure nakedness, his purpose and meaning, Sartre’s plays are about understanding freedom in relationship to an individual. So they are nothing more or nothing less, but existentialist to the core. Highlighting Sartre’s commitment to freedom, Barnes says “Sartre argued that literature, which derives from man’s freedom, must always be addressed to the cause of human freedom” (Barnes 67). Another critic remarks of Sartre’s theatre, “... While not a didactic theatre, Sartre’s theatre is one that makes the audience think about the human condition and reflect about important ethical problems” (Daigle 8).

*No Exit or Huis Clos,* and also known as *In camera,* is his master piece which brought him tremendous reputation as a playwright, and it is a literary philosophical presentation in the light of *Being and Nothingness.* It is a similar study like his philosophy which he revisited in the world of “Being – For – Others,” a major and an
important section in part three of Being and Nothingness. It is a representation of Sartre's theatre in full grandeur and is the "best – known and most iconic play" (Cox 132). Existentialism proposed at its best, No Exit, is a master piece of intellectual reflection which "... epitomizes the absurdity, anxiety and hopelessness that are synonymous with existentialism in the popular consciousness" (132). Devoted to the "logical exploration" of 'Other', an important area in Sartrean system of thinking, this is a search of absurdity in its full rationale consciousness offered by the 'Other', which always remains literally 'Other' and at the other end in the domain of knowledge. 'Other' is an important constitute which holds significance in defining the individual and his relationships. Thus Sartre pays special importance to understand this 'Other' in connection with the individual. No Exit being such a play, where the dialectics of the 'Other' operates in freedom, and hence forms a major section of the play, is entwined with look, an important aspect of No Exit. It is also an important theory of Being and Nothingness as Sartre says; "At each instant the other is looking at me" is a crucial language to understand the 'Other' (Sartre, Being 257). Largely being a philosophical play, it primarily tries to map the idea of freedom, in close connection with society primarily in relation to the idea of relationships which operate between human beings. The play deals with "...the theory of the structure of relations between people" (Webber 118). At the very outset Sartre clearly defines the project of interpersonal relationships and so in 'analysis of his personal relations', Sartre states:

There is no dialectic for my relations toward the Other but rather a circle – although each attempt is enriched by the failure of the other one. Thus we shall study each one in turn. But it should be noted at the very core of each the other one remains always present, precisely because neither of the two can be held without contradiction. Better yet, each of them is in the other and endangers the death of the other.

Thus we can never get outside of the circle. (qtd. in Barnes 55)

The interpersonal relations pose a great difficulty to Sartre and it's very difficult for him to maintain its positive nature. But it has to be noted in this connection that his views significantly changed in terms of human interpersonal
relations. *No Exit* is primarily based on his earlier views about relationships, and
draws its basic ideas from his phenomenological and ontological treatise, *Being and
Nothingness*. Whereas the shift in his view holds individual more responsible and less
absolute for the reason that his position in the later years of his life was influenced by
Marxism. Hence his later work, *Critique of Dialectical Reason* serves this purpose of
difference in approach, quiet at variance with *Being and Nothingness*. It is only in
*Critique of Dialectical Reason* that there is a shift of this notion from solitary
individuality to collectiveness which later takes the shape "... in his concept of 'we'.
This was admittedly only as an evanescent inessential structure in *Being and
Nothingness* but takes on great significance in the concept of the group – in – fusion
in the *Critique*" (Barnes 15).

Focusing on the earlier views, which is central to *No Exit*, this contradiction is
the inherent tension of any human relationships, and thus this hampers freedom
severely in every regard of the individual who has any relationship. Conflict holds an
integral and important value in *Being and Nothingness*. This is characterised in human
relationships; it holds a vast panorama of negativities, thus colouring the human
project of relations, in grimness and pessimism. But this is the truth in Sartre's system
of philosophy. To him, "The essence of the relations between consciousnesses is not
the Mitsein; it is conflict" (Sartre, *Being* 429).

The centre of Sartre's philosophy, which is freedom, is again at stake but
unlike *Nausea* or *Bariona*. It has a difference in the treatment and delves more into
studying the psychoanalysis of freedom investigated in the life and commitment of the
characters of the play. Sartre's concept of freedom has to be understood in the most
fundamental sense of which Sartre proposes. Hazel E Barnes writes about Sartrean
freedom:

... for Sartre, freedom and responsibility are inseparable. Freedom
'creates the objects from which we suffer,' as we saw in *Bariona*. It
'enchains itself in the world as a free project toward ends' (qtd. in
Barnes 64). But freedom is not gratuitous. We 'use our own scales'
(64) to weigh each act and every final end. Freedom has two limits: I
am not free not to be free, and thus freedom is limited by itself, and I am limited by the freedom of the Other, who can always bestow on my life and my projects an outside which I have not chosen. (64-65)

In other words, it is offered here as a two-fold concept – it limits itself and restricts one to stay free and refuses the possibility of a disengaged entity in relation to freedom. This being one of the aspects of Sartrean freedom which suggests limitation is actually the point of contention. Sartrean freedom is absolutist in nature but with this absoluteness, it comes with a paradoxical nature of freedom. Sartre claims that one is free not to be free. The other feature of freedom is in relation to ‘Others’ which is expressed in the Sartrean phenomenological terms as, ‘Being for others’. Christine Daigle claims, “my being – for – others is strictly determined by others” (Daigle 75).

Lacking all the possible methods of politics and actions, which are important to Bariona or the phenomenological rendering – the core of Nausea – No Exit is woven in existential philosophy. It is worth mentioning that Simon de Beauvoir’s novel She Came to Stay (1943) shares No Exit’s existentialist impulse. It exposes the conflictual nature of human relations since it is grounded in the dialectics of human interpersonal relationships. The main plot revolves around a love triangle where two women reveal the feeling of jealousy borne out of love. The characters in She Came to Stay are Sartrean for they reflect the conflict arising out of human relationships even in the instances of unrequited love. This fact can be ascertained at the end of the novel when Xavieire is murdered by Francoise “fulfilling Hegel’s pronouncement,” that is, “Each consciousness pursues the death of the Other” (qtd. in Daigle 76-77). But it is important to mention regarding her seminal work, The Second Sex (1949) which centres on historical and social account of women, that it takes an altogether different position in defining the human relationships and perspectives. She takes it to be a “…ambiguous inter – subjectivity and the fact that one always needs the Other as a free consciousness in order to flourish as a human being” (Daigle 77). His play The Flies is also somewhat similar to both these works. In the light of Being and Nothingness, it explores freedom in depth through the characters and shows the force of Sartrean freedom that remains largely unhindered in any situation.
Though focusing on the vision of human relations, *No Exit* like *She Came to Stay* is precisely committed to the Sartrean ideal of freedom. It finds itself manifested in multiple forms, covering the entire range of philosophy on the subject of man’s relation to the ‘Other’. As Maurice Cranston remarks in *Sartre*, it offers “views on concrete relations between people” (63). As the title suggests, it is presented with a measured sense of philosophical depth that human existence entails. The play gradually reveals the incarcerated existence to be a binding truth of humanity and the dramatist achieves this by adopting a cloistered setting. Although the idea of ‘Other’ assumes significance in the play, freedom remains an enduring concern for Sartre. It is evident in the play as it is in the rest of his works. Freedom serves an important purpose in explaining the idea of ‘Other’, as to understand the meaning of other. It is only in conjunction with the idea of freedom, and from the perspective of free consciousness, that the ‘other’ gains importance. As noted earlier in *Being and Nothingness*, the free consciousness gives way to freedom and makes the meaning possible. We see this when the characters try to attain their salvation from each other. They cannot reduce the other and yet they have to look their selves and be protected from the other’s consciousness. To work out salvation, one of the protagonists, Garcin does everything to evade the other but fails, and he finally says,

GARCIN. You’re crazy, both of you. Don’t you see where this is leading us? For pity’s sake, keep your mouths shut. [Pause.] Now let’s all sit down again quietly; we’ll look at the floor and each must try to forget the others are there. (Sartre, *No Exit* 200)

The subject of ‘concrete relation with the others’ in *Being and Nothingness* is thus explained by Hazel E. Barnes, in her chapter, “Hell is Others”, which brings the essence of freedom and the pragmatics of other operating in this milieu, the only milieu which is default as far as Sartrean writings are concerned. To understand this one can always look at the idea of love and precisely the comments of Plato. Barnes quotes Plato and Sartre together to explain the difference of positions which Sartre holds and his views on the interpersonal relationships:
As Plato put it, love is the desire and pursuit of the whole. Unity with the Other, a unity in which two free subjects become a single transcendence, is ‘the ideal of love, its motivation and its end, its unique value’ (qtd. in Barnes 57). Sartre declares this idea to be unattainable both factually and theoretically (Barnes, Sartre 57).

So in this connection one has to look at Being and Nothingness for this complex weaving of ‘freedom’ with the ‘Other’. ‘No Exit’ creates a space to think, asking the meaning of these two words which carry two different propositions. What is the purpose of these two simple words? Why did the author choose No Exit as the title? It is not to refer to the exegesis of the title but to the ideas; what is the reason and need for such a coinage? It hints towards an absolute end – an end of meaning in every possible direction of thinking. The reason, being that an end accompanies the claustrophobic situation, and also the inherent nature of nothingness which dominates in the play. The title is suggestive of the situation in the play which signifies an inescapable situation. Does the play only refer to the confinement of characters? Or does it imply something more profound, in which language simply reflects this confinement as an inevitable human reality? Undoubtedly, the play also draws us to face a palpable fear that captivity induces in us. It is the fear of being confined till eternity without any possibility of evacuation (or redemption) that necessitates certain kinds of thought like existential philosophy and inspires ruminations like what we witness in the form of conversations between Inez and Garcin. Moreover, what this utter despair signifies is the truth of existence reflected in what Inez says about this whole situation.

INEZ. I know. And you’re another trap. Do you think they haven’t foreknown every word you say? And of course there’s a whole nest of pitfalls that we can’t see. Everything here’s a booby – trap. But what do I care? I’m a pitfall, too...

GARCIN. You won’t catch anything. We’re chasing after each other, round and round in a vicious circle, like the horses on a
roundabout. That’s part of their plan, of course... Drop it, Inez...

(Sartre, *No Exit* 207-208)

This labyrinthine, which goes to extremes by running the risk of being absurd, and reasoning this absurdity, in the larger canvas of prime structures, is basically a point in the Sartrean system of discourse to understand this torturous reason. Hence we see the defeat of reason and one of the characters acknowledging the situation,

ESTELLE. I’m looking at you two and thinking that we’re going to live together... It’s so absurd. I expected to meet old friends, or relatives. (191)

The structure in Sartrean context is freedom, and here especially in this play, it is the presence of the ‘Other’. So the presence of the other is simply a cause for the death of the other’s freedom and hence we see, the characters suffering from this presence. According to Barnes:

Sartre makes the preliminary statement that all human relations are variations on two primitive attitudes: (1) I attempt to absorb the others freedom while still maintaining it as freedom; I allow myself to be an object before it, but gladly in the hope that it will sustain me in my being, thus allowing me at long last to be coincident with myself. As manifestation of this attitude, Sartre considers love and masochism. (2) I try to posses the Other as an object so as to prevent him from ever threatening my own sovereign subjectivity. In this connection Sartre analyzes indifference, sadism and hate. (Barnes 54)

*No Exit* is an inescapable virtue of Sartrean philosophy, a freedom from which one can never escape. It is central to Sartrean system, according to which an individual and his life operate. Sartre’s position on freedom complements his ideas on
human condition and commitment which also inform the meaning of this play. The opposite meaningful position from which this meaning of freedom gains importance is human relations. Amidst the struggle of these two centres, the meaning is born, which is as, “Hell is . . . other people!” (Sartre, No Exit 223). The two positions here are the contradiction in a relationship which is derived from the presence of the ‘Other’. They are simultaneously linked to each other, and provide meaning to Sartrean usage of freedom making freedom as one of the most important ideas, when it comes to human relations. The instance of these can be found in the multiple examples which Sartre cites in Being and Nothingness. And the play No Exit is a complete representation of those examples showing the exact tension which surrounds a relationship.

Situated in ‘Hell’, No Exit is a story of three characters who cling to each other for salvation but in the end, meet the futility of relations resulting in ‘Conflict’. Unable to make any meaning of their ‘Other’s’, they fail, and are condemned forever. Hence the male character Garcin, comes to the disturbing conclusion “Hell is other”. Hell, being the place where the drama operates, is an important idea and is of supreme importance, which as a confluence point, is a reservoir to contain the literal and metaphorical sense of the hell. “Hell is both literally and metaphorically the dramatic setting of No Exit” (Barnes 73). It is an interesting fact that though Sartre was avowedly militant atheist he chooses hell as the setting and thus treats the whole idea for the realisation of truth, which is in fact, a kind of enlightenment and a message, for the one who goes to hell for the misdeeds one has committed while living on earth. We witness in the play that the characters finally come to understand the structure and meaning of the hell and are punished for their inauthentic actions. This play is an attempt to navigate the labyrinthine ways and lay bare the underlying pillars of human philosophy and its social dimensions. Hell as represented in the play is devoid of the conventional structure but the meaning of the structure remains intact when it comes to suffering. Regarding the setting of this hell, Christina Howells says in Necessity of Freedom (1988), “The apparently conventional Second – Empire stage – set of Huis Clos – bronze ornament, coloured sofas- is no more than a mirage masking the highly unconventional location: Hell” (Howells 84). Sartrean hell has nothing to do with any theological conception of hell, but serves the purpose like any other theological hell and the “… situation is like that in Dante’s Hell. As they close
themselves in life, so they are fixed in eternity” (Barnes 74). Howells adds, “Myth is not for Sartre an abstraction or a fiction, it is another kind of universel singulier in its very specificity it corresponds to a universally experienced phenomenon” (Howells 82). The idea of punishment forms the essence of the play. It is represented through the change in the way the characters relate to each other as the play progresses. It culminates into a situation where each of them struggles to deal with their own sense of damned self – awareness. This is what underlines the failure of human relations “and the punishment is that each shall in constant awareness be creating his own damned spirit” (Stuart160).

The play traces the gradual undoing and unraveling of the layers of subjectivity till it attests to Sartrean impulse of futility embedded in human relations. It also leads us to a point where mundane conversations, as we find it unfolding among the characters, go beyond the pale of conventional understanding of human inter – subjectivity. It inadvertently blows away the innocence attributed to the high traditions of humanism and brings out torture and destruction inhereing in such relationships. As it has been aptly expressed, “... Hell is apparently the conflict of subjectivities, and this interpretation is certainly consistent with the ideas Sartre had expressed in the point *Being and Nothingness*” (Barnes 76). Sartre approaches the subject of torture through various mechanisms like look, gaze, hate or death. It is through these multiplicities that the meaning of hell is finally delivered as an inescapable reality.

*No Exit*, placed in hell, starts with, “A drawing-room in Second Empire style. A massive bronze group stands on the mantelpiece” (181). We are introduced to “Three characters – a man and two women – are condemned to spend eternity together in a very Sartrean hell” (Leak 63). They are, “Garcin the coward, Inès the lesbian, Estelle the infanticide” (Leak 63). The characters are shown to have led an inauthentic life for which they have been condemned to eternity. It opens with a valet ushering them into an ornate Victorian style room, the one among many that has to be their last refuge. In the Sartrean philosophy authenticity is the measure of the worth of life. Sartrean philosophy persistently cautions against the failure to lead an authentic life and lending oneself to bad faith. The characters in the play find themselves in the hell for these very reasons. Bad faith and interpersonal relations, which give rise to
conflicts come to be questioned, and hence the result is hell. “Huis Clos, Kean and Les Sequestres d'Altona present only anti – heroes, bad faith and negative messages” (Howells 73). The entire play is wrapped in the tensions of bad faith and authenticity, which largely deals with the social dimensions of look, ‘Other’, conflict, indifference, sadism, desire, body and hate eventually resulting into ‘conflict’. It is the inability to lead an authentic life and escape from the radical freedom that has rewarded them with the ‘hell’. In other words, a life that was lived in bad faith is the biggest sin one could commit in the Sartrean world. They are sinful and are suffering, and also inflicting pain on each other out of human and inter – subjective relations for they have lived their life in bad faith thoroughly. Garcin resembles other Sartrean fictional characters displaying similar disapprovals and aversion towards radical freedom; a prominent example in this genre of thinking is the trilogy, The Roads to Freedom (1945-49). A juxtaposition of Mathieu and Garcin reveals striking similarity in their disposition towards life and that they live a life marked by a complete absence of a sense of radical freedom. There are similarities with regards to the situational details too as we find them in the respective works. Mathieu can be seen as a character that anticipated a Garcin in Sartre’s later works – he former living a life while the latter dramatically represents a life led inauthentically.

Garcin is the first to enter the hell, and exhibits the usual human fears, wants and complaints, which are evident in his pleas to the Valet. His first complaint, which mirrors the life on earth and now in hell, is a common human attribute. “GARCIN. Second Empire furniture, I observe... Well, well, I dare say one gets used to in time...” (Sartre, No Exit 181). Garcin’s human tendency is not limited to these complaints and continues to act the way when he was alive. The difference between the hell and the earth, as Sartre demonstrates here, has an important purpose. Although Sartrean hell is a place like earth representing same human wishes developed in bad faith and in rejection of inescapable freedom, it also represents the life as we live. The setting of hell attests to the diegetic innovations associated with Sartrean plays. It also testifies to the dramaturgy of the existential plays shared by other dramatists of that era. It is notable that Sartre opens the play by invoking a desolate feeling borne out of being stranded at a place and condemned to sustain this feeling without any hope of redemption. The anxiety and dismay we find in Garcin reminds us of the angst and a sense of abandonment embodied in Samuel Beckett’s Vladimir and Estragon in
Waiting for Godot (1954). It can be safely argued that Sartre used Hell both as a heuristic spatial category to foreground his philosophy of existence and as the perfect analogy that captures the underlying horrors of an inauthentic existence. Theatre, Sartre maintained, "is concerned with 'truth' rather than 'reality'" (qtd. in Howells 81). As one can see now that Garcin complains, it shows the earthly sense in him, but on the other extremes, what he has made of himself, can never be changed. It means precisely that he cannot undo his inauthenticity. Time, too as a phenomenon, is important for Sartre. He uses the concept of time accordingly to serve the purpose. Representing two time schemes simultaneously, one of the earth and the other being of hell, Sartre makes characters speak of their life on earth here in hell with a purpose to reveal the acts which they did when alive and how they betrayed themselves in some of the most important and pressing situations of existence. Though they excused themselves, but couldn't convey the exactness, the essence, which was demanded of them. Living in bad faith, they lived in an illusion, and hence turned unauthentic.

We find Valet and Garcin talking about the room and the place, where Garcin is surprised and awe struck after not discovering the mythic world of torture machines:

GARCIN. ... where are the instruments of torture?... The racks and red
-- hot pincers and all the other paraphernalia? (Sartre, No Exit 182)

In the midst of this enquiry, Valet gets angry from this continuous chatter, which is of no use to him and says, that it is the usual and moron things people ask when they come here. "Most of our guests have quite a lot to ask me. But I won't insist" (186). Valet, after hearing multiple complaints, remarks "... So you haven't yet got over your - What - do - you - call - it? - sense of human dignity?" This offends Garcin to extremes and thus he replies back:

GARCIN [thumping ragefully the arm of an armchair]: I'll ask you to be more polite. I quite realize the position I'm in, but I won't tolerate..." (182), and this is how Garčin sums his existence in hell, devoid of things, which he requires, like earthly life, "... So that's that; no toothbrush. And no bed, either. One never sleeps, I take it?" (183).
This is what we see as a first individual of the hell, who is still very much in his setting, of which he is no more a part, but he is unable to undo himself since he is not authentic. His claims of hell sound funny when he talks of ‘lights’, ‘mirrors’, and different space, which is abundant on earth. When he fails to get any of the difference which he is looking for in relation to the existing elements of the hell, he resorts to his own ‘Self’. In a strange sense of continuity, he realises his self from macrocosm to microcosm, to some extent it is phenomenological but crude, bracketing his existence as a subject of torture and in retrospect, a torture for the others. Thus he says, “... No eyelids, no sleep; it follows, doesn’t it? I shall never sleep again. But then – how shall I endure my own company?” (Sartre, No Exit184). This is an existential outpouring and in order to exist he wants the ‘Other’ to exist like Roquentin in Nausea, who needs Autodidact, Marquis De Rollebon or Anny, his girlfriend for survival. But unlike Nausea, here the presence of ‘Other’ is not for existence alone but for the other negativities and conflicts which ultimately manifest themselves as conflicts and oppression:

GARCIN. ... Try to understand. You see, I’m fond of teasing, it’s a second nature with me – and I’m used to teasing myself. Plaguing myself, if you prefer; I don’t tease nicely. But I can’t go on doing that without a break. (Sartre, No Exit184)

This is a pattern laid by the lead character, and thereafter, Inez and Estelle play the same role, only with the difference in the approach and subject they take. Estelle represents a crude damsel, “heartless, beautiful infanticide” who is “entirely frivolous” and sick in her psyche, as she doesn’t care anything till she has got a man beside her to praise and love her (Morgan 346). Inez on the other hand is a “brusque lesbian”, and speaks bluntly and attacks on the other two scathingly, Garcin and Estelle. It is only when they reveal their story and the reason for coming to hell that we happen to get a complete and in depth view of what they made of their life on earth. Each of these stories serves the exact sense of their evil and bad faith, which they practised bluntly. ‘She illustrates pure sadism’ (Barnes 74) and carries all the elements of torture within herself, as she herself is a subject of bad faith and evil but not a hypocrite like Garcin and Estelle. After the arrival of Inez in the triad, the scene
starts getting complex, when we happen to see all the positions of Sartre seeing in
the tension. "Look" comes in as a first question, representing the theory of Sartre, and
keeping the pace of the play in turning it to real hell in accordance to the schema of
torture.

Look, as defined above, has more to say than it appears naturally to human
eye. But Sartre is not different from Freud in terms of psychological rendering of the
subject. He too has a measure of psychological dimension in understanding the
simple, natural look, turning it to be a captive of subjectivity and freedom. Look
becomes a permanent feature of the play and operates at every level, irrespective of
the intensity of the situation. Thus it's to be seen that look comes as a compliment and
a catalyst to every such act which adds to the discomfort of relations. And it remains
like a condemnation till eternity. The vulgarity and violence of the look, as
accommodated very tightly in Sartrean system, expresses extreme disgust. Sartre
shares his idea of shame and look as, "I am ashamed of myself as I appear to the
other" (qtd. in Daigle 73). Look -- a major idea in Sartrean system--has gained
attention in the post -- war theoretical deliberations by continental theorists and
philosophers in terms of subject and object relation. Poststructuralist thinking is
flooded with this notion of man being a subject. The post structural thought also
pursues the idea of the subject as an effect of gaze and it highlights its discursive role.
Lacan's theory of the mirror stage or Foucault's idea of surveillance with regulatory
mechanism serves to the understanding of gaze. There are also several other theorists
who have explored the regulatory interventions of the gaze. Indeed Sartre, in the
chronology of time, stands as a precursor, and his contribution to the postmodern
thinking cannot be ignored. All three locked in one room, locked up in a room for
their afterlife, the characters cannot sleep or close their eyes. It is one of the first
things that Garcin realises upon arriving in the room, that he will have to "live" with
his eyes wide open. Being in the presence of others, it is impossible to escape the look
of the Other. Thus, "each of us will act as torturer of the two others" (Sartre, No Exit
195). The presence of torture is first reflected when Inez accuses Garcin as the
torturer. The language being very direct and terse, the beginning of the play highlights
the inherent tension and nature of the work. The confrontational tone of the dialogues
and the searing ferocity of speech underline the predicament associated with a tragic
play:
GARCIN. ...Who do you suppose I am?

INEZ. You? Why, the torturer, of course. (Sartre, *No Exit* 186)

Garcin does not realise the fact of the look, takes it very casually, and “bursts out laughing”, and claims himself to be a “... man of letters by profession” (186) as he is a journalist. He claims himself to be very “peaceful sort of fellow” later and not a “talker”. Thus hearing this garrulous talking Inez looses patience, for she can’t bear herself to be in his presence. This is very evident in Garcin’s remark, “I can quite understand that it bores you having me... quite frankly” (187). But this is only at the beginning where Inez directly refers to this the concept of body, which is very central to Sartrean phenomenology, as what she says about Garcin’s mouth.

To Sartre, body holds significance and he defines body in the section “Body For The Others” as “The body is the totality of meaningful relations to the world” (Sartre, *Being* 344). And in relation to Other’s, he further declares, “My body as a thing in the world and the Other’s body are the necessary intermediaries between the Other’s consciousness and mine” (223). “INEZ. There you are! You talk about politeness, and you don’t even try to control your face. Remember you’re not alone; you’ve no right to inflict the sight of your fear on me” (*No Exit* 187) and to Inez, the Garcin’s mouth appears “grotesque”.

Estelle is the third to enter the hell and the moment she enters the dramtic action is intensified. Her attack is on Garcin and the mode of attack is the Gaze. The gaze becomes the target and the inevitability of gaze becomes the reason for the torture. Though, eye and face as being a part of the body play a significant role in the purpose of attaining the gaze and fear in the context of the play, but this idea of look is not only limited to eye or face. In *Being and Nothingness*, the example of voyeur shows the ubiquity of this idea, even when there is no eye or face, meaning look or body. This idea of look surpasses the facticity of body and reigns as a concept more in fear and doubt. Thus Webber says, quoting from *Being and Nothingness*, “for the Other, *I am leaning over the keyhole as this tree is bent* by the wind” (qtd. in Webber, 121).
As Garcin hides his face hidden because of scathing remark by Inez, Estelle perceives him wrongly but actually means what the playwright wants; that is to bring forth the conflict which is the only truth in a human relationship:

ESTELLE [to GARCIN]. No! Don’t look up. I know what you’re hiding with your hands. I know you’ve no face left. (Sartre, No Exit 188)

And thus this culmination of look entangles the Brazilian journalist at the centre of look and gaze. Estelle finally remarks, “Oh! Then we’re to stay by ourselves, the three of us, this gentleman, this lady, and myself. [She starts laughing]” (188)

It’s not Garcin alone, who suffers this victimisation but Estelle too is a sufferer primarily from Inez’s look. Inez has suffered too and now the fashionable Estelle, who is very crazy for attention – seeking, falls prey to Inez’s lesbian tendencies. One can see that Estelle herself is the victim of her own looks. After her makeup, “[Meanwhile ESTELLE has been plying her powder-puff and lipstick. She looks round for a mirror, fumbles in her bag...]” (Sartre, No Exit 196). When she misses the mirror in the room she feels severely disappointed and frustrated:

ESTELLE [opens her eyes and smiles]. I feel so queer. [She pats herself] Don’t you ever get taken that way? When I can’t see myself I begin to wonder if I really and truly exist. I pat myself just to make sure, but it doesn’t help much. (196-197)

Further, she says, but this time in very poetic and subtle words, expressing her fears of not turning a subject in Inez’s eyes “... I’m going to smile and my smile will sink down into your pupils, and heaven knows what it will become” (198). To this Inez replies and she too is no less poetic. She makes an excuse of pimple; again a frivolous reference demonstrating Estelle’s shallowness and this becoming the pretext, this look is turned into capture and torment:

INEZ. ... -- that nasty red spot at the bottom of your cheek? A pimple?
ESTELLE. A pimple? Oh, how simply foul! Where?

INEZ. There ... You know the way they catch larks—with a mirror?
I'm your lark-mirror, my dear, and you can't escape me ... There isn't any pimple, not a trace of one. So what about it? Suppose the mirror started telling lies? Or suppose I covered my eyes—as he is doing—and refused to look at you, all that loveliness of yours would be wasted on the desert air ... I can't help looking at you, I shan't turn my eyes away... (Sartre, *No Exit* 198-99)

As this process of look is a continuous process, the characters exchange their hate and disgust with each other, the play also moves in between finding the reasons of their torture and coming to hell. They try to explore the setting of the room and finding a justification for their presence in each other's presence. Hate and then conflict is more institutionalised in permanence, and only for the characters to realise that the situation is inevitable. As it is a hell, and this is not a strong realisation by the residents of this place, the questioning of everything here in the hell comes to question, ranging from material sofa to epistemology, which is reason. As Estelle says, “it's these sofas. They're so hideous. And just look how they've been arranged. It makes me think... old aunt of mine, Aunt Mary. Her house is full of horrors like that...” (188).

Sartre sees all human “relations in terms of subject and objects” (Barnes 57). He explicitly says that the others’ existence is an object and so this is weaved as subject-object dialectics. “The presence of the Other makes everything slip; I become an object and my world disintegrates to become his” (Daigle 75). And in this setting, as mentioned earlier, the brutality of hell reaches its climax. The existences are turned to the meaning of subject and object binary, reducing the being to nothingness not as a freedom but an end. Every character now is silent, after discovering the fierceness of the look and their subjectivities have been ravaged completely. But before coming to this fierce debate and battle of gaze, one has to look into the matters of death, for their reason of coming to hell. Though death characterises the departure from earth, but death here lies in a purpose for they had an inauthentic living and lived in bad faith.
The death of these three has been very superfluous in nature like Roquentin’s contemplation in *Nausea* who thinks of his death to be totally superfluous and hence meaningless. His contemplation is on phenomenological lines, but the meaning is the same – death does not make any mark on the lived life. The three characters are in search of their truth, and are the victims of their own death because their death has not justified an authentic life, which is a demand in the Sartrean idea of existence.

And this is what is lacking in the characters, who have not earned their authenticity, as Garcin claims himself to be a pacifist, rather is “a cowardly collaborationist” (Morgan 346). Inez though is not a hypocrite but a sadist and Estelle turns out to be quite avaricious in terms of physical gratification as well as worldly matters.

Inez asks Estelle about the cause of her death and she reveals it to be pneumonia. Later Inez asks the same question, the cause of her death, and the reason given is a fatal incident involving a gas stove. Garcin sounds different, and thus he claims, that he is not a good company among the dead. The reason is that he has been shot twelve times in his chest which becomes clear by the description of his coat. It makes a deep impact rendering a tragic bend to his death. These are reasons they give for their death, and in some way they try to make themselves authentic to each other and win each others’ good will. But this never happens in the world of Sartre, where subjectivities fight each other till death, for they all are struggling for freedom.

Nabanita Roy in her book, *Jean Paul Sartre: On Literature, Freedom and Commitment* (1997), explains the self and the others in the context of Sartrean freedom. Here she explains the freedom and the dread associated with it. She says “But when another looks at an individual he imposes certain characteristics and places the individual within a fixed time and space. The other by its look brings a sudden and essential modification within the for -itself – that is, the individual turns into an object a thing in-itself. This is the original fall for the freedom as it ceases its power of transcendence as well as freedom this look is threat to those who intend to live an authentic life, for, the for-itself begins to realize that his being has been determined and there is no new possibility to surpass the present situation.” (Roy, 30-31) In Sartrean system, the freedom is of grave concern and so the realisation of freedom is a source of dread. Marjorie Greene says, “And It is the awareness of that freedom,
which is each man's concern and his alone, that constitutes dread. "Dread is the reflective grasp of freedom by itself" (qtd. in Greene 74).

Though the point about their death has been made clear by all the characters, there is an inevitable tension lying at the heart of their accounts since they are not truthful and are being deceptive. The only objective truth about them is that they all are dead. Garcin can be considered not central but an important participant of the triad. He remains a pivot between two women, and Sartre portrays him in greater detail in later parts of the play. Hence we see Garcin struggles the most for his case. It is not Garcin alone who struggles but the other two also suffer in their peculiar way. On the level of ideas, it is Garcin and Inez who dominate the scene. However, it is Estelle who suffers on the level of body – a signifier of carnal desires. A note must be taken to understand the idea of desire, which forms a libidinal currency for Inez and Estelle. Estelle represents more of a common type, wherein she craves for Garcin, and Inez for Estelle. It gives rise to an emotional disturbance, which becomes their extended and additional suffering besides the condemnation to which they have been sentenced till eternity. The cause for this arises from the position of the lover, as they are unable to consummate their passions. This triad is also dominated in the hierarchy and repetition of distrust and naked desire, which hangs nude from their deathly, hollow and meaningless souls. In the words of one of the reviewers, it is as "we should be to ourselves and others would be to us either nothingness or things" (Brown Jr., 161).

Every character is a prototype of each other, and they make the best use of themselves in an unwanted pursuit of human relations. Introductions, greetings, and well wishes are hard among them. Inez greets Estelle with flowers, only to hide the truth from each other that they will become their torturers in the course of time:

INEZ. You’re very pretty. I wish we’d had some flowers to welcome you with.

ESTELLE. Flowers? Yes, I loved flowers . . . Oh, well, the great thing is to keep cheerful as we can, don’t you agree? (Sartre, No Exit 189)
Garcin shows reverence by vacating the sofa but it is actually a gesture of frustration and has nothing to do with the idea of respect. In complete anguish, he represents himself in a way which is again deceptive and his speech hereafter shows the truth behind such gesture and also indicative of the truth borne out by Garcin. Garcin says, "Oh... the sofa, you mean. So sorry. [He rises.] Please take it, madam" (188). He goes away and, facing himself alone, and utters a stoic line, "I think I could stay ten thousand years with only my thoughts for company" (195). Remaining silent, using a decent language and proving him a man of worth, he boasts, "I'm Joseph Garcin, journalist and a man of letters by profession" (186). His character is revealed later in relation with women, which is sharply contradicting on the levels of trust and bonding. Garcin turns out to be a failure for a woman on terms of mutual respect and understanding. His relations with women show the Sartrean dimension of sexuality. As demonstrated in the play, his relations with women call for an analysis. This will also lead us to understand the Sartrean explanation of relation between man and woman where body is at centre of desire and exercise. In the end these formal and civilised gestures die down as the nihilism creeps in badly and refusing anything positive and worthwhile. Garcin needs to be especially emphasized, for he validates all of Sartrean contradictions. Inez, on the other hand, acts as a torchbearer who leads this procession of negativity to hell clearing the blur of the myth and truth, which in fact all three hold to the best. Inez is characteristically different from the other two and is clearly delineated from them. She accepts her condemnation at the cost of all the pain and suffering to which she has been put till infinity. Her position of condemnation, which she knows well, is very much clear in the reply to Garcin:

GARCIN. I was setting my life in order. [INEZ starts laughing.]

You may laugh, but you'd better to follow my example.

INEZ. No need. My life's in perfect order. It tidied itself up nicely of its own accord. So I needn't bother about it now. (Sartre, No Exit 190)
This sense is also conveyed to Estelle, when Estelle, after her arrival, finds the absence of mirror, and starts feeling sorry for her existence, thus claiming her agony, "When I can’t see myself I begin to wonder if I really and truly exist. I pat myself just to make sure, but it doesn’t help much (Sartre, No Exit 196-97). “Sartre’s discussion of Being – for – others is a natural extension of his analysis of one’s attempt to be oneself” (Barnes 57). This position is similar to Marleau Ponty’s position on body described in his seminal work The Phenomenology of Perception (1945). Maurice Marleau Ponty in this work explains the idea of body and speech in a chapter titled ‘The Body as Expression, and Speech’. The idea of body is discussed in relation to language and, specifically, speech, in which there is an attempt by Ponty for the explanation of the extension similar to Sartrean extension. He says “… that my body is as it were a “natural” subject, a provisional sketch of my total being’ (qtd. in Baldwin 87). The objects in the world are an extension of body and thus in a way start behaving as an extension of the body, encompassing all human reality.

INEZ. You’re lucky. I’m always conscious of myself – in my mind.

Painfully conscious. (Sartre, No Exit 196-97)

This discontinuity is markedly absent by Inez, and she appears to be more cold and damned in the proper sense of the condemnation. Nevertheless, she is affectionate and easy going with her little “plaster saint” or the child, Estelle, although not always. Inez shows love for Estelle for which an inevitable end awaits them every moment for they didn’t live authentically. They fail utterly;

ESTELLE. [looking at the other two with a puzzled air]. Really I can’t imagine why they put us three together. It doesn’t make sense.”

And then Inez breaks in a laugh, and Estelle continues “I’m looking at you two and thinking that we’re going to live together … it’s so absurd. I expected to meet old friends, or relatives” (Sartre, No Exit 191).

This is the scene which dominates most part of the play and brings out the persistent bad faith which informs their actions even in the hell. As being dead, there is always an indirect revolt in their persona refusing what they have met with finally.
As Estelle says, “Somehow I feel we’ve never been so much alive as now” (Sartre, No Exit 190). Lying to their fellow people on the Earth has been their habit and how they repeat it again in hell with other participants. There is a sharp difference here; the play breaks in two parts, not on the strict levels of ideas as such, but on the level of truth and falsity. The nature of reality turns clearer here, when Inez interrupts at this mundane hour, where she feels fed up of hearing the falsities of the journalist Garcin and the freak Estelle, who are now ready to give the truth which they hold in proper bad faith: INEZ. Yes I see. [A pause.] Look here! What’s the point of play acting, trying to throw dust in each other’s eye? We’re all tarred with same brush (Sartre, No Exit 194), and the other two who are reacting still but on the verge of almost breaking with their lie. Estelle replies “Stop! For heaven’s sake... and “GARCIN [raising his fist]. Will you keep your mouth shut, damn it!” (194).

Nonetheless, the truth of their state of existence, which they acquire and are ready to deliver, and which is still very much hanging in the fear of bad faith, is not a result out of gratitude or honesty. But in a way Sartre forces them to speak the truth which they have concealed and brings them to a point where they cannot escape freedom. The present state of mind of the characters is almost shaken and unable to withstand the ongoing incidents. They are almost on the brink of collapse which will result in telling the exact truth of them being inauthentic and will also give the insight of them being in bad faith. The reason lies in the fact that the entire event takes place not on earth but in hell. This is one of the possible reasons as to why Sartre takes this play to some mythic and metaphysical world, and thus shows the failure of man in the greatest fall – one being the deceiver of one’s own self and practicing bad faith. This purpose to show the difference of bad faith is only attained in the employment of hell by bringing the characters to their real self. It would not have been possible without their death and they would have continued to live on earth in bad faith. Thus the stark difference can be easily seen when we see the characters almost on the verge of speaking the truth. Though Sartre has explicitly cleared that the realisation of freedom gives way to ‘dread’, similar to the other existentialist masters who also claim the same nature of freedom, but Sartre always insists to live an authentic life and not practice bad faith even in the worst of situations. Sartre severely criticises this notion of bad faith, referring to those who practice it as Salauds, (meaning, the bastard or
swine). The play moves in breaks and fissures but follows a cycle of the same old methods of torture, but only becoming more refined with the gradual passage of time.

After the interaction of Inez, not only at this point but from the very beginning of the play, Sartre seems to be offering her a position of judge in the play. She is the one to deliver justice, if so possible, only to the effect that the justice would be meaningless. But still, she holds this capacity despite the fact that she herself was in bad faith when she was alive. Now as she is in hell, she has left all the worldly wishes, contrary to the other two hell mates. And thus because of this virtue which unfortunately cannot be counted and means nothing, her position in hell makes her more authentic than the other two. She thus questions the reason for coming to hell in reply to the answers and the reasons the other two have furnished,

INEZ. What have you done? I mean, why have they sent you here?

(Sartre, No Exit 193)

As mentioned before, they have definitely died of the same causes, which they have mentioned - “bullet shots”, “pneumonia”, and “gas – stove” – but there is something more and significant to these causes which form the subject of Sartre. Again we see the repetition of the cause of the death but with a slight difference. Inez is the one who peels the skin to show the wounds, the ghastly wounds also carried by Garcin and Estelle together. Estelle is hesitant in replying again and we see that she is no more different and changed as she was on earth. She theorises the death in general and by referring to absentee she refers to her old claim of chance that she might have been put here by mistake. The people who she means as absentee are the one missing here. Hence to her understanding the reason of her being in hell is ‘mistake’ and so she is here in the company of these two.

ESTELLE [quickly]. That’s just it. I haven’t a notion, not the foggiest.

In fact I’m wondering if there hasn’t been some ghastly mistake....

think of the number of people who... who become absentee everyday”. (193)
And then she talks about her death in a very low and sympathetic voice. Her dialogue shows her as a victim of situations in the hell:

ESTELLE. What else should I tell? I’ve nothing to hide. I lost my parents... were terribly poor and when an old friend of my people asked to marry him, I said ‘Yes’. He was very well off, and quite nice... six years... happy married life. Then two years ago I met the man I was fated to love... He asked me to run away with him, and I refused. Then I got pneumonia and it finished me.” (193-94)

This is a simple and painful story which is bound to bring tears in the eyes of the listener and also bring a lot of sympathy for this cursed soul. Thus in this confidence she discusses this whole matter in terms of ethics. She further says to complete her aforementioned cause,

ESTELLE. No doubt, by certain standards, I did wrong to sacrifice my youth to a man nearly three times my age. [To GARCIN] Do you think that could be called a sin? (194)

This is how ethics is contested in the most refined sense. Estelle asks the question of right and wrong to Garcin, who is ethically sterile in hell, but this is the fact, and they are going in this process only to be joined later by other two. This affirmation and acknowledgement of each other causes a crisis and it’s seen that no one is admitting the acceptance of each other. Sartre’s understanding of Other is seen here in complete contrast to each other. The truth of other in Sartrean understanding is ‘conflict’ whereas it is seen here in hell that every character except Inez is looking for the acknowledgement of each other verifying oneself as a truthful one and in Sartrean terms an authentic being, and not a salaud.

And then it is Garcin’s turn. He responds to Estelle’s position that she is right and delivers a complete conclusive phrase, “Certainly not”, showing her act as worthy and not to be blamed for what happened in her life. Taking an advantage of the
moment, he puts his own position under scrutiny. His address is first made in terms of principles, meaning ethics, unlike Estelle and asks her a question, "...do you think it's a crime to stand by one's principles?" (194) and to which Estelle replies back "Of course not". Surely no one could blame a man for that!" (194)

Garlan then puts his cause for the commitment he has invested in his idea of principles and suddenly bursts out speaking his heart:

GARCLIN. Wait a bit! I ran a pacifist newspaper. Then war broke out.

What was I to do? Everyone was watching me, wondering 'Will he dare?' Well I dared. I folded my arms and they shot me. Had I done anything wrong? (Sartre, No Exit 194)

Estelle replies, with great keenness as if Garlan is a martyr that "... wrong? On the contrary. You were..." (194) and to which Inez joins with full face attacking both. She adds the leftover, "[breaks in ironically]: ... a hero!"

This is the pattern of lie which Estelle and Garlan build around doubting their point in coming to hell, without realizing that they have done something very severe and that's why they have been dropped in hell. Inez listens to all this and as her role is to torment and pick the bitter truth, she commands both of them not to be pretentious and accept the condemnation, the only truth they have to live with. Hell is devoid of the problem of choice for it is a decision already granted for the actions which the participants have done in their life. They cannot undo or choose anything. Garlan, Inez and Estelle though try to look in earth and see what's going on, but they are helpless for no change can be initiated now. Change is only possible when one is alive while one is in "existence". Sartre here is emphasizing his famous notion, "existence precedes essence" (Sartre, Being 568). After being dead, the made up life is the only possible result which they could make it in their lifetime. Garlan has made his life like the others, in which he has bitten his wife badly and tortured her. He has been shot down for a reason and now in hell he is furnishing this concealed truth in great capacity which unfortunately is still a lie. The other Estelle who is so sorry and remorseful as if she has been mistakenly sent to hell and is not 'a baby killer' is again the same representation of Sartrean 'bad faith'.
All these positions of the characters demand important insight in their subjectivities which question man’s predicament to the extremes. These positions question the validity of the truth they claim. As they always repeat the act of clearing this point, seeking the reason for coming to hell, it questions the very notion of their questioning about what they have done in their life. Surely at this point the play enacts extremeness of the situation and sheds light on the grimness covering the whole affair. For this situation covers every element of gaze and other elements of torture. They lack the freedom to undo the things because they are dead now. They cannot change anything; they can’t even change themselves for any better. They remain the same and cannot deny each other which pose a challenge to freedom. Freedom of doing anything by these characters meets nothing. They only try but it doesn’t qualify as an act since it’s a wrong place for the right action. There is a severe mismatch from the perspective of freedom on every level. Philosophically and, more appropriately, following Sartrean principles, as on earth, a human being lives in the face of dreadful freedom, so here too, they have died to live this freedom in condemnation till eternity. As on earth, as Sartre claims that the absence of God asks man to act and make his essence which makes one condemned to be free. In hell too, there is no God and they are condemned like they were on earth. The human situation is an inescapable situation, and it turns worse in the presence of the ‘Other’. Inez as observed earlier not to pretend and stop “play – acting”. She becomes very ruthless when she hears the repeated lies again and again,

INEZ. Yes we are criminals – murderers- all three of us. We’re in hell, my pets, they never make mistakes, and people aren’t damned for anything. (Sartre, No Exit 194)

She doesn’t give to the foolish game of Garcin and Estelle and keeps on trying for what she has been asked to do, though not directly as such but we see her role as one naturally inclined to be tortured and also being torturer, owing to her nature. She is comparatively less in bad faith than the other two. Even when she says all this, it does not affect Garcin or Estelle much. She defends the truth but they are not ready to accept it, and this brings her wrath on the other two hell – mates, a torture which she is bound to give, till they three exist in that room:
INEZ. A damned soul – that’s you, my little plaster saint. And ditto our friend there, the noble pacifist. We’ve had our hour of pleasure, haven’t we? There have been people who burnt their lives out for our sakes – and we chuckled over it. So now we have to pay the reckoning. (194)

Everything stops and seemingly frozen, every greeting, civility and pretension almost fade away as this is the time for the naked truth. Inez is saying again and again, and thus knows the reason for putting them together along with the reasons for being in hell. She knows exactly what one needs to know and despite Garcin repeatedly reminding her, she doesn’t stop. She enlightens, “I know why they’ve put us together” (195). Garcin, unable to bear this truth, asks Inez to reconsider her statement, but what is said is said, and Inez elaborates this truth further with more conviction, “INEZ. I mean that each of us will act as torturer of the two others” (195). This becomes unbearable and the nakedness of Sartrean truth is revealed in full vivacity. It leaves the scene silent and the truth remains ungraspable for some time. Sartre makes things alive with this truth in hell and it’s seen that the situation is very numb.

[There is a short silence, while they digest this information.] (Sartre, No Exit 195)

Aloofness and solitude from here gathers in the play and as seen, the faith in each other for salvation dies. The company of others which has really become unbearable reminds again the nature of Sartrean theory which is taking its shape as a reality and an inevitable truth. Being and Nothingness has theorised this dimension of torture encapsulating every possible tension including this situation. However, now this dramatization gets cruel and death – like. Freedom hangs here now as a truth arising out of this acceptance of truth of one’s position as a torturer, even though if one doesn’t want it. That is why Garcin says, “No, I shall never be your torturer. I wish neither of you any harm, and I’ve no concern with you” (Sartre, No Exit 195). But choice too is killed as we see that they are a failure even in their death. Now here
is an interesting fact to be considered. After condemnation the next position which a human seeks is salvation. And it is being ironically sought by Garcin as these attempts do not make any point in the place where they exist, after death. Salvation could be worked out, had they been alive and on earth, they could mend something to bring essence to the existence. But now as condemned souls this sounds wrong and uneasy and yet they try.

Garcin proposes to be silent and withdrawing to one's own position and taking “no notice of the others” as a possible solution (Sartre, No Exit 195). This is the salvation which he thinks can work out. It is immediately put forwarded for practice, but as we know, that other makes everything impossible, except conflict only being the essence of any human relation. And again, the entanglement continues, conflict and horror of 'others’ presence dominates. It is no more choking of the truth but nonetheless the strangulation of the flow is continuously visible. Though they have come to the terms of understanding among themselves for solving the problem, that is they should not act as the torturers of each other. But the effort fails and we see Garcin, the one who is most interested in solving the Other syndrome saying “I stuck my fingers in my ears, but your voices thudded in my brain. Silly chatter ... leave me in peace, you two? I’m not interested in you” (199). Garcin has been affected most, as he is also been engulfed in the body - sexual desire matrix. This conception of attraction is unconventional in a way since it is the presence of the lesbian Inez who is equally attracted to Estelle. Here one is reminded of an eponymous character Gia, who has a lead role in the movie Gia. Gia too is a lesbian and she moves away from her boyfriend when she discovers her lesbian tendencies on a nude photo shoot with her colleague. The established connection with no exit in this regard is on the tendency of Lesbianism where the craving for body withstands every insult and even the situations like absurd i.e. hell. This too happens with the famous American model Gia, who in the wake of this desire, gets ravaged in terms of her social life (Cristofer, Gia).

Estelle who is always seeking the other only in terms of body and Inez, by the virtue of being lesbian are a complete torture to each other in terms of desire and its discourse. Body becomes important subject here, for Inez directly replies to Estelle’s question,
ESTELLE. Are you really ... attracted by me?

INEZ. Very much indeed. (Sartre, No Exit 199)

And then Estelle complains of her desire for Garcin to which he does not respond. Inez feels herself marginalised even on the desire graph,

ESTELLE. [indicating GARCIN by a slight movement of her head]:

But I wish he'd notice me too.

INEZ. Of course! Because he's a Man! (199)

This is the vulgarised existential situation of Sartre which seeks more pessimism till it reaches end. Desire forms an important element of his philosophy which explains the subjectivity of being an existence. As Sartre himself had said, "My original attempt to get hold of the Other's free subjectivity through his objectivity – for me is sexual desire" (Sartre, Being 382).

Inez here gives her long speech which sums up Sartrean philosophy possibly from every angle from which Other can be thought of. She touches Other as if she has caught the very essence of it, and in fact she herself is the other here in the play for the characters. She is furious and this is a reply to all the complaints made by Garcin and Estelle. Her very speech starts with the idea of negation, about forgetting and ignoring the 'Other'. Here it can be recommended to look deep down in Sartrean philosophy which explains other in every respect. Sartre has a very wide connotation of Other. He proposes his idea of Other in his magnum opus Being and Nothingness. The centrality of this thought is so strong that we find its reference in almost all of his works which deal with human relationships in phenomenological perspective and existential setting. Deriving this idea from phenomenology, the 'Other' forms a major section explaining the idea of other individual and his presence. In Being and Nothingness, Sartre gives flurry of examples to prove this thesis of 'Other'. The meaning of Other in Sartre's world is primarily characterized with negativity. There is no positive aspect which the Other of Sartre carries and hence we see it as an impediment in any kind of project. The range of Other being so diverse that it accommodates everything which a other individual holds and has the capacity to
destroy the freedom of other. Thus we see that everyone is the other of every other person and is a destroyer of freedom. So the ‘Other’ is the central thesis of No exit and runs over a great length defining the possible aspects of ‘Other’ and the effect which it carries on an individual.

Though in this play it is basically the Other which has been referred as people but in the speech by Inez, Sartre’s total understanding of the Other is explained to every bit within the limited possible situation of the play and meaning. Sartre thus conveys the idea of other. “It is not just my ‘being – for – others’ that is revealed, then, not just ‘my existence for the Other’, but the very existence of ‘the Other’ itself” (Webber 189). This other which he relates and explains further is not only associated to look or “watching me”. By giving the example, “I hear a rustle of branches and wrongly assume there is somebody there or when soldiers creep past a farmhouse they do not realize is empty” (Webber 189). This is the complete explanation of Other where every aspect of Sartrean philosophy is revealed.

This is the case in the Inez’s speech too, which holds this idea again from Being and Nothingness explains the broad spectrum of this idea thus, “… the Other is present everywhere, below me, above me, in the neighbouring rooms, and I continue to feel profoundly my being – for – others” (Sartre, Being 277). In the play Inez speaks thus:

INEZ. To forget about the others? How utterly absurd! I feel you there, down to my marrow. Your silence clamours in my ears. You can nail up your mouth, cut your tongue out – but you can’t prevent your being there. Can you stop your thoughts? I hear them ticking away like a clock, tick – tock, and I’m certain you hear mine. It’s all very well skulking on your sofa, but you are everywhere, and every sound comes to me soiled, because you’ve intercepted it on its way. Why you’ve stolen my face; you know it and I don’t! And what about her, ... You’ve stolen ... her too; ... I won’t leave you in peace – ... You’d go on sitting there, in a sort of trance like a Yogi,
and even if I didn't see her I'd feel it in my bones—that she was making every sound, even the rustle of her dress,... Well I won't stand for that, I prefer to choose my hell; I prefer to look in the eyes, and fight it out face to face. (Sartre, *No Exit* 200)

Look is here again as a god's eye, viewing everything which is visible in the capacity of the room, in the subjectivity which the consciousness holds and the available freedom through which one is condemned at last in the process of this encounter. Inez has declared a war in the preceding statements and this can be assumed as a measuring scale for the things to come. Other being philosophised to maximum, it holds demonstration now to extract the truth and it is an attempt by the author to eliminate the inauthenticity of the characters that are living in bad faith. *Being and Nothingness* can be considered as a gospel of the philosophy of Sartre, and thus the action in the play repeats that philosophy, sounding akin to Marx who talked about actualising the philosophy. Sartre, like Marx, demonstrates his philosophy, when it comes to action following Marx's call for action, and not just simple idealism. In these actions of the three characters, we witness the actualisation of the theory, which becomes alive with the afflictions, pessimism, tortures, pain, inhumanness and conflict, finally rendering the no exit as it was imagined with an actual experience.

Body and touch which Garcin now holds as a connection and this being the only appropriate connection where body as a representation is a subject in the view of desire, and Garcin trying to touch Estelle reveals the caress of sexuality. “He holds that the caress is the language of desire. It is ‘an appropriation of the Other’s body,’ and it represents, for Sartre, a more fundamental expression of sexuality than even the tumescence of the genital organs” (Barnes 60-61). Desire primarily in the words of Sartre holds greater importance because to Sartre, love is failed project and thus Barnes states, “Sartre declares this ideal (love) to be unattainable both factually and theoretically” (57). And to this, Estelle refuses, “Don’t touch me” (*No Exit* 200) not submitting her freedom to Garcin. The story of freedom is now on the practical levels in which there is the reference of freedom being very direct, which maintains that the idea of freedom is now turning more practical rather being phenomenological. The
nature of this practicality is explained here in terms of bringing the sexual nature of the talk by the characters.

But again, there is a break which is a nightmare; the obsession with the truth which haunts Garcin. He immediately returns to the position of finding the story, the truth, and the reason for him along with the others and says, “So long as each of us hasn’t made a clean breast of it – why they’ve damned him or her – we know nothing. Nothing that counts (Sartre, No Exit 201).

He begins it like a child’s game asking Estelle first and, as usual, she being one of the torturer declines the proposal. He starts talking to himself since he constantly lurches in fear and torture and reveals the truth:

GARCIN. I’m here because I treated my wife abominably. That’s all.

For five years. Naturally, she’s suffering still. There she is: the moment I mention her, I see her.” (201)

And this is the reason which gives to save himself. But in the very next line, he contradicts himself when he says, “It’s Gomez who interests me, and it’s she I see.” (201)

This is a bone of contention, which rises again at the level of profound doubts on the part of Garcin. It is not clear how long he will continue like this and will remain in bad faith. He is unclear even as he seeks a clearance of the doubt and truth. But he on the other hand is interested in Gomez while ignoring his wife like the way he used to ignore her, when he was alive and treated her badly. He really mistreated her wife, and this is very abominable of him as a human being. This is the grim reality of humanity where relations even of the sacred and nuptial knot of marriage die a death in the fire of body and lust. Garcin, though married and had a good wife, as he himself confesses, “... She sat up for me... never cried, never uttered a word of reproach. Only her eyes spoke. Big, tragic eyes ... not a tear, not a protest” (Sartre, No Exit 202), and to this nature, Garcin, reacted pathetically, by treating her to extremes. Garcin continues, “Well here’s something you can get your teeth into. I brought a half-caste girl to stay in our house. My wife slept upstairs; she must have heard...
everything. She was an early riser and as I and the girl stayed in bed late, she served us our morning coffee” (202). Seeing all this, Garin can never be trusted for what he actually wanted in his life and even now its undecided that what he wants in hell. We see him being torn in two entirely different worlds. In short Garin appears as a “brute” and according to him, “a well – beloved brute” (202).

And this is supposedly a search for the truth again as Inez too narrates her story, furnishing her refined reasons for cruelty she inflicted on Florence and her husband. At his point, which is somewhat release of tension, a consensus is made on the past i.e. the life on earth, of the ‘Other’, but this narrative of truth won’t help anyone, because this very moment too is infected with the gaze and desire of the subjects. Inez, taking hold of the scene, accepts the truth of “Three: Three deaths...” which has happened because of her, one being Florence, her husband, the second and Inez the third. “One man and two women?” (203).

As it’s known that Inez has sadistic impulses, her nature was not different when she was alive and her interpretation of the deaths reveal a very horrible ecstasy in warp and woof of sexuality only to be followed later by the other two. She had her time on earth to practice her tendency to the most and, supposedly, this led to the three deaths. The reason was that none of them wanted to be owned by the other in the righteous sense of the word. Inez had started owning Florence like an object and there was no love in the relationship. It was an affair for the sexual satisfaction. Inez was operating on the level of desire and ownership. She wanted to own the freedom of Florence by the mechanism of desire and body and this definitely led to the end and killing of freedom on the weaker side on which Florence stood.

As Inez says, “I crept inside her skin, she saw the world through my eyes. When she left him, I had her on my hands. We shared a bed – sitting – room at the other end of the town” (Sartre, No Exit 203). Florence, unable to bear the torture of death and living with Inez, decided to put an end to her life. Though in a way, Florence can be counted as a murderer of Inez but she paid the price of suicide for this end. Inez had forced her into such horrible situations. Inez herself accepts that “... I used to remind her everyday; ‘Yes, my pet, we killed him between us’” (No Exit 203). She further elaborates her own subjectivity and says in reply to being ‘cruel’ that what it means to her by being cruel:
INEZ. When I say I’m cruel, I mean I can’t get on without making people suffer. Like a live coal. A live coal in others’ hearts. When I’m alone I flicker out. For six months I flamed away in her heart, till there was nothing but cinder. One night she got up and turned on the gas while I was asleep. Then she crept back into bed. (203-04)

Inez is an embodiment of extreme cruelty, and her role in the existing situation is to inflict torture and pain as she has accepted her condemnation to the core, and she doesn’t demand any salvation.

Next is Estelle who still hesitates to reply and, being pursued by Garcin brutally, finally gives up when the case of smashed face is referred. She does not reply instantly, and after being bullied for some time, she runs in haste to the door and says, “Leave me alone! It’s... it’s not fair, bullying me like that. I want to go! I want to go!” (204).

Garcin tortures her now, accusing her as the reason behind murder, suicide or anything, which finally results in death. Though we have seen that in the past they are possible for each other in terms of sexual relations, but Sartre here even surpasses the basic instinct of sexuality over the tension of the Other. The tension of Other in every frame of human understanding is dominated by the conflict because of the presence of the Other. And thus she comes down with her murderous story:

ESTELLE. He wanted to have me baby. So there!... I certainly didn’t.

But the baby came, worse luck... went to Switzerland... it was a girl... Roger was with me... It didn’t please me! There was a balcony overlooking the lake. I brought a big stone. He could see what I was up to, and he kept on shouting, Estelle for God’s sake, don’t!’ I hated him then. He saw it all. He was leaning over the
balcony and he saw the rings spreading on the water . . . (Sartre, 

No Exit 205)

And she concludes, “I came back to Paris -- and he did as he wished” (205).

Roger had blown “his brains out” and this is sum of Estelle who, though looks very 
fragile in front of the two, is an adulterous and a child killer. Though she sobs and 
says that “I’m a coward. A coward (206)” this makes no difference, for she had done 
exactly what she meant, and that is why she is in hell here with the other two 
characters.

The plot seems to resolve now at the level of the storyline but retains the 
intensity at the level of engaging with ‘Other’. Nobody is going to forgive, or help 
anyone, for forgiveness is not in the capacity of the other. ‘Other’ as meant in the play 
is no meaningful purpose, at least in terms of relationships, and hence no salvation 
can be carved out from these painful and hopeless relations. The role of the ‘Other’ is 
not anything except conflict.

But as all of them still retain the human nature, they try to solve the problem of not 
inflicting the pain on each other with being Inez the only exception. But they fail as 
they still deceive themselves and the others and remain inauthentic. Garcin 
continuously insists to help Inez but she refuses him every time. He says that it just 
needs a little bit of effort; “just a spark of human feeling” (Sartre, No Exit 207). 
“That’s beyond my range. I’m rotten to the core”, Inez replies. The reason being that 
she knows that nothing can save him or the rest of the two. She further describes 
herself and her condition as, “It’s no use. I’m all dried up. I can’t give and I can’t 
receive. How could I help you? A dead twig, ready for the burning” (207). Garcin and 
Inez are here in confrontation with each other, explaining each other the possibility of 
redemption. Garcin somewhere suffers from the illusion of hope that in due time 
things will be alright. But it remains shrouded in mystery with a lingering effect on 
Garcin and leaves him contemplating. For we see that he is obsessed with something, 
which is still very doubtful. In the past, there is only one reflection, where he had 
talked about the idea of principles for which a man should stand. And this is what he 
is still pursuing. Describing the whole situation which even Garcin understands now
that this hell is a trap and it is not by mere chance, as Estelle used to think in the past, Garcin remarks about this idea as an unending and with an infinite nature. He says, “We're chasing after each other, round and round in a vicious circle, like the horses on a roundabout. That’s a part of their plan, of course ... Drop it Inez. Open your hands and let go of every - thing. Or else you’ll bring disaster to all three of us” (208).

Inez is now the most important subject of the hell followed by Garcin and Estelle. Even though, she is beautiful and has offered herself to Garcin, it has not brought much change; though there always remains a shift on the part of Garcin towards Estelle but it has no purpose. The shift is purely at the level of physicality, referring to the domain of desire and sexuality. However, the role of Inez as a woman, does not match the conventional attributes of a woman. Inez is fearless and she does not loathe anymore. She can be considered as the heroine of the hell when she comes down boldly on the frontiers of hell unlike Garcin and Estelle and tries to be a bit authentic in comparison with the other two:

INEZ. Do I look the sort of the person who lets go? I know what’s coming to me. I’m going to burn, and it’s to last for ever. Yes, I know everything... What’s the good of trying to enlist my sympathy? I assure you I know everything, and I can’t feel sorry even for myself.” (208)

Help becomes a buzz word in this hell now, even though the characters are not tortured in the conventional way, which one knows about the hell. Garcin and Estelle unlike Inez want help from each other but nobody is helping anyone. Failure at its most, and forgetting the idea of help, which creates space for torture again by 'looking' seems quite evident again in this process. Suddenly we happen to hear the case of Garcin’s death. Inez says to Estelle when she is not being helped by anyone, demonstrating the power of look, “I’ll keep looking at you for ever and ever, without a flutter of my eyelids, and you’ll live in my gaze like a mote in a sunbeam”(Sartre, No Exit 211). But Estelle will not give herself to Inez and she replies back which shows the actual tussle of bodies in terms of freedom and subjectivity. “Estelle:
Everyone knows by now what I did to my baby. The crystal’s shattered, but I don’t care. I’m just a hollow dummy, all that’s left of me is the outside – but it’s not for you” (211). On the other hand, Garcin who wants to be saved at the hands of Inez has fallen down again, and he is ready to get involved with Estelle, for he is a man, and Estelle a woman. As we hear, in the words of Estelle addressed to Inez, “To her? But she doesn’t count, she’s a woman”( 211). And thus she gives herself to Garcin and we witness some intimate scenes, but with no intimacy left in it, as Garcin replies to Estelle “I’ll give you what I can. It doesn’t amount to much. I shan’t love you; I know you too well” (212).

These acts too in the process become as torture for other. And precisely, it is a compromise and nothing else for these acts represent hollowness and holds an object – kind of nature. It is an attempt to save oneself from the other. To not loose one’s sovereignty to look is always working like Panopticon of Bentham, which gradually has been refined to Foucault’s concept of surveillance. As is the case it is Inez who suffers the most. Though she suffers, she is the one, through which the surveillance is cast, and hence she says “... don’t forget I’m here, and watching. I shan’t take my eyes off you, Garcin; when you are kissing her, you’ll feel them boring into you...” (Sartre, No Exit 213)

Inez, being a lesbian, looks for Estelle similar to the idea when she was alive and was in a lesbian relationship with Florence. But Estelle, not being interested in Inez, is rather hunting Garcin. So, all these three do not fall in the reception of each other and they continually are haunted by the idea of Gaze which pervades their relationship at every moment. This tension rises till it turns into a failure and nothingness, proving the helplessness of the situation and relationships. Inez watches them from now on. The look is constant from here on; even there were talks and significant discussion among all three which again incorporates the whole paraphernalia of torture. But look remains a constant engagement on the part of Inez:

[During the following scene she watches them without speaking.] (213)

Suddenly, Garcin withdraws from Estelle and gets very disturbed as he can hear people talking about him. He says “it’s Gomez” and “...he’s talking about me” (213). Estelle asks Garcin that what they are talking about him, Gomez and their men but
Garcin reacts very sharply to this and abuses Gomez, “He’s a swine, that’s all. [He listens attentively] A god damned bloody swine” (213).

It is surprising to see, that such a brawl breaks out of an intimate scene, and Garcin abuses Gomez bluntly because the abuse is suggestive. It is suggestive of the fact which is still not clear that whether there is something else which lies in Garcin’s heart other than the stories which he has told so far. This reaction of his might lead to the exact reason for him being in bad faith. Garcin says to Estelle, “Will you trust me?” (214) but she does not reply what Garcin actually wants, and answers cunningly. Garcin again says about trust and he clears that what kind of trust he is looking for. And again, the reason for the birth of trust is referred by Estelle when she says, “You must have something pretty ghastly on your conscience to make such a fuss about my trusting you” (214). This is an opening in the heart of the Garcin, and it explains why he is so much desperate to get a belief in him and thus looking for trust in these two women. The reason for this is clearly said by Garcin “They shot me” and to this Estelle replies “I know. Because you refused to fight” (214).

Inez enters the scene, and she makes fun of Garcin by saying that “... he bolted like a lion. For ‘bolt’ he did, and that’s what’s biting him” (214). Inez knows the exact reason like Estelle but she is more matured in her approach and clear about the case of Garcin. Lastly the debate of ‘being coward or not’ is not launched by Garcin, when, unable to bear this pressure of his inauthenticity he asks Estelle, “Well Estelle, am I a coward?” (214).

Estelle’s reply reminds us of the famous passages of Sartre’s *Existentialism is a Humanism*. In his lecture he mentioned that there was this boy who had come to him for the reason that he was in dilemma of choice. The choice was that whether he should join the war or should be with his lonely mother. As everybody of their family had died, she was alone, only with this boy of hers. Sartre replied to him that he cannot choose for him, and so he has to choose himself, what suits best to him. And later Sartre says that he chooses the same, which he knew before hand. The emphasis of this choice is very important in this context, which Estelle makes for Garcin. She says, “How can I say? Don’t be so unreasonable, darling. I can’t put myself in your skin. You must decide that for yourself” (Sartre, *No Exit* 215).
And this leads us to deal with the question and debate of the choice as real and genuine. Sartre sounds more didactic here and not existentialist. Throughout the play, though there is not any direct reference to ethics and morality but the questions like these which utter the sense of right and wrong, is an obsession with the dramatist. Inez asks Garcin about the reason for his bullet shots and his fleeing away, and questions his conscience. She says, “Exactly. That’s the question. Was that your real motive?” (215). Garcin reply is full of dilemma and reflects the existential dilemma, as he says that:

... Day and night I paced my cell, from window to the door, from the door to the window. I pried into my heart, I sleuthed myself like a detective...But I always harked back to the one thing certain – that I had acted as I did, I’d taken the train to the frontier. But why? Why? Finally I thought: My death will settle it. If I face death courageously. I’ll prove I am no coward. (Sartre, *No Exit* 215)

And the question now clears the tension, which has been lingering from the time he has left the earth.

INEZ. How did you face death?

GARCIN. Miserably. Rottenly. [INEZ laughs.] (215)

The point has been made, and even though if Garcin tries to undo the feeling and the label of coward which he is carrying, it will not save him from himself. And this is what Sartre asserts in terms of living and individuality and authentic existence. Sartre maintains:

Authenticity and individuality have to be earned: I shall be my own authenticity only if under the influence of the call of conscience (Ruf des Gewissens) I launch out toward death with a resolute decision(}
Entschlossenheit) as toward my own most peculiar possibility. (Sartre, Being 246)

Because Garcin has proved himself a coward by running away and therefore he says, "... I wanted to show my colours, my true colours, do you understand? I wasn't going to be silenced. [To ESTELLE.] So I ... I took the train ... They caught me at the frontier” (Sartre, No Exit 214).

We see Estelle too joining Inez in the process of condemning him by not trusting him and declaring him a coward. As mentioned before, Estelle is completely a sexual being in particular but the project of Garcin also depends on her and later he leaves her as she represents other.

But the other, who is Inez, too is worth consideration in the eyes of Garcin, as she understands evil and cowardice. The last and probably the most important scene is when the door opens, and Garcin, though tries to leave, is unable to do so. He stays and remains silent, and prefers to stay where he is located. The reason supplanted by Garcin reveals the impact of the notion of cowardice which is his predicament. He does not want to be remembered as a coward, as he is in present remembered by his mates on earth and in future too, he will be remembered as the coward. He does not want to repeat this trail as his hell—mates also know that he was coward and so his punishment is hell. His continuous grappling with this idea thus forces him to stay back and pushes him continuously to change their view about his coward act. He wants them to acknowledge him in any regard, whatever it may be but not as a coward. But this is a failure as he is in hell and he is with others. He cannot do anything and thus in this frustration, he declares “Hell is ... other people!” (Sartre, No Exit 223). The play ends on this note with all three laughing, and Garcin, stating the futility of the situation, says “Well, well, let’s get on with it...” (Sartre, No Exit 223).

The subject of the play in the existential terms is nothing but a Sartrean dialogue of existentialism in the warp and woof of human predicament, subjected to multiple forces of Sartrean systems like bad faith, other, authenticity, angst, dread, fear which prove to be an impediment in living an authentic life. The forces which determine ‘I’ against his will and make him a subject of his situation. Freedom is
born and killed in this force, where the subject is ascribed in the perception of other, of which he has no control and to which he is profoundly helpless. He is only a recipient of the gaze, anger, look, desire and every meaning, which is available in the larger gamut of understanding of the Other. A prey to subjectivity and helplessness thus like Sartrean fall, "My original Fall is the existence of the Other" (qtd. in Sartre xxxii). The fall of mankind is helpless and will be till eternity.

*No Exit* is the truth, which remains an eternal awakening for all the souls, though alive but condemned for they are born with this fall in this world where they get divided according to the given conditions of the society and the presence of the Other in the societies before making any meaning. Hence, it can be concluded that the essence of human relations is conflict and it acts as a severe impediment to practical human freedom.
Works Cited


Chapter IV

My Salvation is my Condemnation:
Reflections on *The Flies*
My Salvation is my Condemnation: Reflections on *The Flies*

*Neither slave nor master. I am my freedom* — Orestes

The play, *The Flies* (1960) is a collection of all the great themes of humanity which have their relation with ‘freedom’ and ‘society’. Detailing every bit of human predicament at its best, the play reflects Sartre’s sensitivity towards freedom and individual. It is not only centred on a specific idea but also expresses its concern with the related ideas associated with freedom and existence. Based on the idea of myth, this play tries to explore the possibility of freedom in the toughest conditions of human existence. As an existential play it reflects on the protagonist and his associates who experience existential crisis. The theme of the play is such that it joins the other great world literatures which have talked about similar serious themes and thus making *The Flies* a parallel in the world literature.

Freedom and society are the two anchors of this play. Sartre here tries to demonstrate the inevitability of freedom in a life and its effects which change the destinies of the characters in the play. Based on the philosophy of his magnum opus *Being and Nothingness* (1958), this play tries to explore the earlier notion of freedom of Sartre, and can be well grasped in the circuits of Ontology and Phenomenology. Sartre treats freedom philosophically in this play like his earlier phenomenological positions of when he was an absolutist with regard to the nature of freedom. The voice of freedom expressed is similar to his philosophical understanding of the idea which is rooted in consciousness. The idea of individual is also governed in the same direction as freedom is pursued to be an absolute goal and ideal. Man is the centre of existentialism and also the pivot of Sartre’s philosophy. This play forms the overview and gives a complete picture of this philosophy in which both man and freedom are inevitable for any kind of thinking. “In his essay, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Sartre says that existentialism is a doctrine that ‘renders human life possible; a doctrine, also, which affirms that all truth and all action imply both an environment and a human subjectivity’” (Wahl 5). So here comes a point in which man and freedom fuse together and man becomes a synonym for freedom. Man or existence, to Sartre, is freedom, as Orestes says, “neither slave nor master. I am my freedom” (Sartre, *The Flies* 309). To understand this concept of freedom we have to understand
it in the light of Sartrean positions which he took in his phenomenological works. The Sartrean freedom is not the general and mundane understanding of freedom, where one is always concerned with the practical dimension of freedom. Though Sartre has invested the freedom with the practical goal but it is only traced through phenomenological understanding of freedom in which we see the nature of freedom as an absolute one, and least affected from the external world. As Natanson has argued:

Sartre means something quite different by ‘freedom’ than is intended in common usage or in general philosophical usage. Freedom, as it is generally understood, might be defined as “the ability to satisfy needs plus the ability to develop new needs, with the understanding, of course, that abilities do not evolve unless objective conditions are favorable” (qtd. in Natanson 48-49) Sartre cannot accept such a definition. (Natanson 48-49)

This is how Sartre rejects the common notion of freedom. His idea of freedom, as observed earlier, is of absolute nature. But there is a change in this conception when we follow his entire span of philosophy and the treatment of freedom in different stages of life. Freedom in the later years becomes conditioned and is hindered by the practicality of the situation in which being is conditioned to exercise his freedom. The freedom in his philosophy thus witnesses a change at two points in the different periods of Sartre’s life. “Freedom, says Sartre, is the sole foundation of values” (Wahl 60). So Freedom, according to Sartre, “is the constant possibility of being something other than what we are” (Wahl 65). This foundation is the cause of the absolute freedom which Sartre advocates. But this freedom is equally a way of dread and nihilism. Thus, due to this nature of freedom which also exhibits condemnation as a permanent marker of his freedom, gives a way to illusion and anguish which are the chief characteristics of the play The Flies. “Freedom is not self-determined initially; and as it is part of our facticity, we are not free not to choose, we are not free not to be free. This is the import of Sartre’s statement that we are condemned to be free” (Wahl 61).
The reason of raising this point in this play is that it can be compared with some of the most significant writers who have written heavily on freedom and on the anguish of man. In *The Flies*, it is anguish and freedom which holds central position in contrast to gods and men, and the awakening of the society of Argos to freedom. The pronouncement of the victory of these values in a totalitarian and dictatorial regime makes the play the champion of freedom but only with certain limitations and conditions. As mentioned earlier, the effect of this freedom gives a way to dread and nihilism which holds a place of prime enquiry in this investigation. So we see that “existentialism discussed or used to explicate the condition of man, to examine his suffering and aloneness and guilt” (Natanson 12). And this is what is also sought in this play. At the level of literary merit, Sartre’s writing is at par with the other masters. Natanson writes “Writers such as Kafka, Dostoievski, to some extent even Sartre, are shrewd and revealing psychologists as well as literary masters. If we are concerned with descriptions of people, of characters, in specific then few descriptions surpass those of Dostoievski” (Natanson 12).

Dostoevsky’s Grand inquisitor or Kafka’s Joseph K., or anything which can be imagined in terms of literary merit, *The Flies* holds the richness of Scheiller, the notion of Over-man of Nietzsche, Camus’ Rebel or Mersault, all alive in one canvas and the embodiment of these multiplicities is Orestes. Orestes is the central and the main character of this play in which Sartre primarily employs his idea of freedom. The making of Orestes is such that it holds a tendency of all the above, and defines a persona beyond good and bad. He is the portrait of the Nietzsche’s Over-man and rises above the normal trifles of things. In the play, it is Orestes who comes very closely with the famous Sartrean dictum “Man is condemned to be free” (Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism* 29).

With this notion in which man is condemned to be free, it is seen that Orestes, who brings peace to Argos, also brings disaster to his very self. Though this disaster is what Orestes is looking for as freedom, it begets him anguish and complete isolation as mentioned by Sartre in his theory of freedom rendering freedom as a source of annihilation (here meaning as anguish) along with the liberation. The liberation implies the acceptance of freedom and also the acceptance of anguish as a result of the acceptance of the condemned freedom:
...Orestes, in *The Flies*, realizes that the law of Jupiter is powerless against his own liberty: 'I emerge alone and in anguish confronting the unique and original project which constitutes my being; all the barriers, all the guardrails collapse, nihilated by the consciousness of my freedom. I do not have nor can I have recourse to any value against the fact that it is I who sustain values in being ... I have to realize the meaning of the world and of my essence; I make my decision concerning them – without justification and without excuse.' (qtd. in Webber 122)

The lines here by Andrew Leak do sum up the essential meaning which Sartre offers with freedom and the way a man can act because man is freedom in Sartrean universe. But equally the paradoxical nature of freedom which is hinted here raises important question. Illusion and contradiction is a point of tension in the philosophy of existence for it is an important centre of this thinking in the atheistic existential tradition. The reading of Sartre by Wahl offers contradictory characteristics of his freedom, for the freedom of Sartre offers self-destruction and is caught up in the circle where it is relevant to ask: "...Is there not a fundamental freedom governing all our particular acts of freedom?" (65) so "In Sartre, freedom is always on the verge of disappearing, on the verge of being swallowed up by the in-itself" (Wahl 66).

Freedom in Sartre is of utmost importance and hence the only reality, where any other reality or commitment is secondary. His characters are always caught up in this paradox and understanding of freedom. They question and answer their existences with their defiance or with submission, and in this process they struggle and undergo multiple changes of thinking and commitment raising an eternal question of freedom. Freedom in Sartre is not a freedom which gives a sense of achievement, power and comfort, but it is of a different kind. His freedom sketches a different track altogether in which freedom seems very ghostly and tiresome. In a way, this freedom assumes a position of curse and man, being the subject of this freedom, is inevitable to this curse too. The inevitable choice which a man faces in confronting his existence is also
central to Sartrean nature of freedom. And in fact, Sartre by choice means freedom. "Whenever we choose, we inevitably choose freedom, in so far as any choice is an expression of freedom and even not choosing is a choice" (Bernasconi 58).

As the play was an attempt of resistance, like all of his writings this particular work also comes with the manifesto of commitment. In order to do so, under the Nazi occupation, Sartre used the idea of myth to achieve his purpose. In order to achieve this effect, and also to pass the censorship by the Nazis, Sartre uses the idea of Greek myth of Electra. Employing Myth for a special purpose, it can be studied as an expression of mythical reality, on the level of ideas as well as on the frontiers of commitment. It has two-fold purpose in its creation. "Continuing the tradition of reworking of ancient Greek myths in the pro-holocaust scientific age, Sartre uses the myth of Electra to incorporate his existential themes into The Flies for a modern audience" (Cheema 113). On the one hand, it is an extension of Sartre’s corpus of absolute freedom, an intellectual and phenomenological treatment which this play receives in the action of multiple characters, on the other it is a question of French conscience under the occupation of Nazis.

This play also concentrates on the “inner” working of freedom. Christine Daigle remarks about this notion that in addition to his other writings “Two plays in particular illustrate the inner workings of absolute freedom as it is presented in Being and Nothingness: The Flies (1943) and The Devil and The Good Lord” (1951) (Daigle 52). Here in this chapter I am concerned with the inner working of freedom rather than treating it on the political frontiers. It treats the theme and meaning of freedom, which is very central to both the concerns- political, in terms of resistance, and philosophical, as freedom forms the nucleus of Sartrean philosophy. The very purpose of this creation had to do with the liberation of France and thus, without freedom, it would not be possible to understand the idea of resistance. The historical reason is of much significance here since some French including the Vichy government collaborated with the Nazis in the siege and the capture of France. Hence Sartre even questions this notion, when the very fellowmen of the same land took sides with the enemy and captured the very nation, of which they were a part and who lived on that very land.
This whole resistance is spoken in the language of ‘Myth’, the central
technique and an important element of the play. As said earlier that Sartre employed
myth for a special purpose, and it is only through myth that he made himself available
to the masses in those political and war times of Paris. “... Les Mouches carried a very
different message to the post-war Germany and to war-time France” (qtd. in Howells
72). Myth remains an important element in weaving the fabric of resistance. In the
past, too, Sartre had used myth to speak about his commitment like in Bariona or The
Devil and The Good Lord. In this play also, under such severe circumstances, Sartre
uses myth to achieve his project of freedom and resistance. As Christina Howells say,
“The call to revolt against Nazi occupation in Les Mouches escaped censorship
because of its mythical disguise” (Howells 72). Howells remarks on the Sartre’s idea
of Myth, “Myth is not for Sartre an abstraction or a fiction, it is another kind of
universel singulier: in its very specificity it corresponds to a universally experienced
phenomenon: ‘C’est qu’en & ant le plus individuel, on est le plus universel’ (qtd. in
Howells 82). The translation for the lines above is, “it is by being the most individual
that one is the most universal” (Howells 237).

As his writings are the representations of commitment, they run at extremes in
serving its cause. This sense of commitment also lies at the heart of this play which
runs the risk of being propaganda. But this writing, being a pure manifestation of art,
does not fall prey to the propagandist notion and in the end remains a literature of
commitment for the reformation and sensitization of society. To take note of this
difference, we can see that:

The idea of art as an end can be interpreted on various levels, the
simplest and most superficial being by opposition to any idea of art as
a means to an end. Sartre rejects propaganda: he believes that true art
cannot be the servant of any cause, however worthwhile. (133)

Though Sartre clearly rejects the idea of propaganda and dismisses it to the core, but
as Howells says, the idea of art is a subject of multiple interpretations and the most
superficial being an opposition to its own. Hence the play has also been also treated
by the same contempt and has been termed as a propaganda machine. But, being the
literature of commitment, the play is a brilliant expression of resistance and returns back to its original understanding where art remains an art and the purpose of it being the commitment. This position of art and its purpose is further clarified when we see the position of Sartre in respect to literature and its purpose:

As we shall see, Sartre’s theatre is not usually *a these*: it provokes reflection, criticism and self-criticism, it is ironic and often parodic, but its multiple possible interpretations, whilst being the condition of literature rather than propaganda, also facilitate its recuperation. Sartre always maintained that the 'objective' meaning of a work of art depends ultimately not on its author's intention but rather on its readers' or audiences' reception and interpretation, in particular in the case of a play which is recreated by the audience as a group each night rather than by individual readers. (Howells 71)

Sartre also clarifies his own position with regard to the meaning of art. He places the responsibility on readers and audiences in deciding the meaning of art and play. The point of concern here is the time when the play was written. Here Sartre’s attempt was of a resistance and hence, the play, considered as propaganda, was a political tactic to oppose the Nazi occupation. And that is why the play was enwrapped in the idea of myth. Hence it would be wise to consider the play as an attempt of liberation rather to see it as a propagandist play. Sartre shuns propaganda and “He believes that true art cannot be the servant of any cause...” (133). The case of *Bariona* too is of the same category, which explained the idea of freedom and passed the German surveillance and censorship. For Nazis this play might have been propaganda but to the French, it was a true and subtle expression of hard contempt and liberation.

Orestes is the real hero of the play and also the “guilt stealer” makes his fate against the wishes of Almighty Zeus and frees his kingdom, Argos, from the reign of fear and terror. But in the end he meets anguish, despair and aloofness. This is the norm of Sartrean system where anyone who meets freedom and accepts the responsibility of being free, that very moment he is burdened with the existential
dilemmas of freedom and existence, and thus figures as a pessimistic cult in the labyrinth of existential meaning. Thus this is what makes an end, leaving the self, though not divided completely, but, nonetheless, giving chilling moments of pessimism and absurdity. These states mark the response of that individual which has unlimited emotions surging up in the wake of freedom and, as Orestes has accepted everything in accepting the freedom in a flash, the rest of his life remains characterised by this unbearable load, which he carries. We see Orestes materialising the curse that “Man is condemned to be free” (Sartre, Existentialism 29) to its full prospect and meaning.

This can be viewed as a complete point, a climax, where one reaches in claiming ones freedom, as Orestes does, and as a result fills with anguish and despair- a very close line to absurdity. Though he meets anguish, he brings out the truth and instills awareness in the society of Argos- The society which used to live in an illusion and had only this notion that there can be no freedom, and it is only atonement and repentance which is the truth of their life. Sartre here with the help of Orestes finds a way for the Argives, and also, a way for Orestes himself. The play thus compliments society and individual, the presence of society and the individual come on similar planes to work the salvation for each other and giving a meaning to Sartrean commitment. Orestes in this setting realises himself, and the society is freed from the cruel Aegistheus and Clytemnestra, the king and queen of Argos, whereas Orestes finds himself in the real face of his destiny and experiences the power of Sartrean freedom which is needed for being authentic.

This assertion of freedom, and especially condemned freedom, is an ontological reality, and also finds its expression in the massive treatise Being and Nothingness. This notion of absolute freedom dominates early Sartre, and in his early years he talked about the absoluteness of freedom, theorising his ideas from the phenomenological viewpoints. Consciousness as a core, and always a free consciousness, mark the liberation of the idea of freedom and thus gain an absolute sense, in which one is not free not to be free. This very thesis of Sartre’s is invested in Orestes where he is shown to be a completely authentic being from the Sartrean lens. We see him as an individual who is built up from innocence to violence and evolves into a man evading bad faith. The idea of freedom here is about understanding the
absolute freedom, which remains unhindered and is invincible. It is always there like an existence, and we can see it, when Orestes claims, that “... I am my freedom” (Sartre, The Flies 3.309).

As far as the progress of the idea of freedom is concerned, Sartre suffers a charge of the incoherence and discontinuity in his thinking due to his two positions with regard to freedom and its treatment. In first half of his life, he is thoroughly an Existentialist, whereas in the later half, his existentialism serves Marxism to a great deal. The result of this approach significantly affects his ideas of freedom, and we see Sartre proposing two different views of freedom. But Sartre is definitely like universal singulier and his corpus remains an integral and compact whole which echoes the same ideas, which were his preoccupation from his childhood till death. This shift by Sartre, called as an “epistemological break” by Althusser does not stop him and we see him more evolved and giving a holistic nature to his lifelong project of freedom. The Flies, being one of the representative plays, can be best understood in the position of early Sartre. Existentialism Is a Humanism rightly serves the purpose, if it is to be considered the philosophical bridge along with Being and Nothingness with the play The Flies. Freedom and the individual, the central tenets of Sartrean world, always dominate his literary output in every dimension of his commitment, ranging from art to politics. This play, too, positions Sartrean philosophy in a very clear and significant line of thinking and allays with the theme of the aforementioned works in particular. His early years, and the understanding of freedom in those years, serve the philosophical dimension of Sartrean understanding on freedom, and perhaps, this remains throughout the same only with slight changes in-between, but the overall thrust remains the same, that is man is basically a free being.

In the context of freedom and his theatre, it is necessary to understand his concept of theatre in relation to freedom, and then it is a marvellous exemplification where the character itself turns a mythic figure in the exercise of the act; in this case, (Les Mouches) is the medium for the exercise of freedom. Sartre always scorned and rejected the psychological theatres and he preferred the theatre of situations. “...Sartre rejects psychological theatre, 'le theatre de caracteres', in favour of a theatre of situations, on the grounds that psychological drama leaves no real room for human freedom: an essentialist view of character makes for predictable theatre, 'tout est
decide d’avance” (qtd. in Howells 79). Thus we can now understand the purpose of Sartre in adopting the theatre of situations and theatre of resistance and rejecting the psychological theatre.

The plot of the play renders tragedy to the fullest extent, and is very serious, disturbing and tragic. In the wake of freedom, these characters accept and reject the truths of existence, and thus these contradictions build the play from beginning to end. In a way, these contradictions and opposite positions are brought sharply in contrast to each other with greater dexterity so that, the idea of absolute freedom comes to meaning and at the same time giving French a hope in times of despair and pessimism. Myth employed at its best serves the political purpose and also bridges the idea of freedom to greater possibilities. Freedom which serves as a condemnation to Orestes turns a myth when we happen to see and reflect on it for it is something which a psyche can never accept in the name of freedom, when every person is chained to his own existence and to his own freedom and as like Orestes goes with flies, condemnation, and aloofness. This is the question of existence and especially in Sartrean brand of existentialism, where the position of Orestes is to be discovered and has to be looked in details. Through him, Sartre underpins the psychology of freedom, and declares the absolute freedom, which paints everything negatively and renders nihilism, meaninglessness and illusion. In fact this declaration is done by Orestes and also gives him the same dread.

The very arrival of Orestes irrespective of his travelling habit as seen later, is a demonstration of responsibility and a message which can account and envision the course of the things which will take place in the play. Though not clearly but in a subtle sense, Orestes is going to take responsibility, as he will declare himself free, according to the tenets and the purpose of Sartre and the play. In this process he also defines himself in his relation to the society directly and retrospectively, as a result of which the society is brought to truth by a process of trial. Sartre at this instance brings society to trial and shows the collective failure of Argos.

The play starts with the inherent tension of fear and cowardice and non-communication by combining fear and alienation to its most when it is seen that The Tutor and Orestes fail to communicate anything in this dismal and tragic land of Argos. On this occasion, the only truthful connection which can be established is that
we can see the gap available between the way Argives live their life and these two foreign characters, which hold altogether a different meaning of life. As the play begins, the place is rendered in contempt and anger, in the words of The Tutor:

Stupid old hags!...these uncouth hillmen-one would suppose they'd never seen a foreigner before... A hundred times and more I've had to ask our way, and never once did I get a straight answer. And then the grilling heat! This Argos is a nightmare city. Squeals of terror everywhere, people who panic the moment they set eyes on you, and scurry to cover, like black beetles, down the glaring streets. Pfoo! I can't think how you bear it-this emptiness, the shimmering air, that fierce sun overhead. What's deadlier than the sun? (Sartre, The Fies 1.249)

This is a detailed description in which the place is inhabited with one of the most important form of thinking which holds almost permanent truth in human understanding, that is God. Zeus is central in making the whole structure of the play as well as with the other leading characters. "A public square in Argos, is dominated by a statue of Zeus, god of flies and death" (235). His description reveals the temperament of the place as well as the purpose of choosing Zeus when he is further described in details. "The image has white eyes and blood-smereed cheeks" (235). The description of God in the very beginning with an awful image along with, the reactions of the folk of the place suggest the grimness, and builds the condition for the upcoming events. "The atmosphere suggests a plague-ridden city where Zeus' statue is blood-stained and his attributes are not those of a god but of a monster" (Cheema 114).

The inevitable presence of Zeus, who is the God of flies and death, appears again at the very start with his flies and lends a very dismal charm to the present death like situation. As far as the action of the plot is concerned, nothing very significant has happened till now but the overwhelming presence of flies frustrates the Tutor heavily and we hear him saying:
Those flies in Argos are much more sociable than its townsfolk. Just look at them! [*Points to the idiot boy.*] There must be a round dozen pumping away at each of his eyes, and yet he's smiling quite contentedly; probably he likes having his eyes sucked. That's not surprising; look at that yellow muck oozing out of them. [*He flaps his hands at the flies.*] (Sartre, *The Flies* 1.237)

The description of the flies and their attacking on the town folk, here in this case the boy, who is the most suffered, is demonstrated by the "yellow muck oozing", representing the very pathetic condition of the place. The reason of the over presence of flies explains the phenomenon by Zeus, who is disguised as a traveller in the name of Demetrius from Athens and tells them the exact story in which the idea of freedom and cowardice is situated. This narration apparently moves the plot but philosophically it corresponds to the idea of freedom, when in his narration one finds the acts, deeds and crimes involved. This narration of Zeus further pushes the plot in the depths of Sartrean freedom which literally becomes an abyss for the characters, and, specially, for the prince Orestes who was born here. He is out here to face the explanation and live these flies in the face of freedom and responsibility, and to deliver a message for the sake of action and commitment to evade and leave Bad faith and turn into an authentic being. To explain this complex notion of bad faith, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, a lecture by Sartre, states, "if we define man's situation as one of free choice, in which he has no recourse to excuses or outside aid, then any man who takes refuge behind his passions, any man who fabricates some deterministic theory, is operating in bad faith" (Sartre, *Existentialism is Humanism* 47). But again as mentioned, the position of freedom and its relationships turn vague and meaningless on the level of interpretation and common sense, and assume a very negative space in the understanding of the things. In line with the Sartrean notion, Orestes is condemned all together, and thus, condemned to be free. He will live this condemnation throughout, after this realisation, what is delivered is actually the verification of Sartrean philosophy. This is what troubles The Tutor, his slave and he suspects Orestes coming to the city. Thus, he says:
THE TUTOR. Harm? Do you call it doing harm to people when one emancipates their minds? Ah, how you’ve changed! Once I read you like an open book... But at least you might tell me your plans. Why bring me to this city, and what’s your purpose here? (Sartre, *The Flies* 1.244)

The Tutor is in dilemma and, supposedly, he being Orestes tutor and knows Orestes well, is also settled in doubt and suspicion as far as the motives of the prince are concerned. Orestes replies to his state of affairs. The building of Orestes as a character by Sartre is a gradual transition which smoothes very naturally. His confusion and the purpose lie in a purpose created in the imagination by the playwright. We see him being unsure of many things except few like his place of birth and his city. Orestes is tied to his roots despite of the fact that he has been brought up somewhere else and shows the purpose of the play, in which Sartre calls for the Frenchmen to fight for their land against Occupation:

ORESTES. Did I say I had a purpose? But that’s enough. Be silent now. [*He takes some steps towards the Palace.*] That is my Palace. My father’s birthplace. And it’s there a whore and her paramour foully butchered him. I, too, was born there. I was nearly three when that usurper’s bravos carried me away. Most likely we went out by that door. One of them held me in his arms. I had my eyes wide open, and no doubt I was crying. And yet I have no memories, none whatever. I am looking at a huge, gloomy building, solemn and pretentious in the worst provincial taste. I am looking at it, but I see it for the first time. (Sartre, *The Flies* 1.244-45)
Zeus is a sadist and his part is more involved in extracting pain and feeding his soul on that pain which might be a reason for his immortality. He is a participant in evil, though he is a God and a destroyer of freedom. Zeus does not like freedom, and so he hates that the people of Argos should get free. He has followed Orestes and the Tutor from the beginning of the journey, and also from the start of the play. Now, after a brief conversation with the Orestes and the Tutor, he tells about the event which is known as a "Dead men's day" and details the course of things, which has to do with Orestes' father Agamemnon and his mother Clytemnestra, lover of the king Aegistheus, and finally his own sister Electra.

ZEUS. ... Fifteen years ago a mighty steench of carrion drew them to this city, ... Yes, I often visit Argos. As it so happened, I was here on the great day of Agamemnon's homecoming, when the Greek fleet, flushed with victory, anchored in the Nauplia roads. From the top of the rampart one saw the bay dappled with their white sails. [He drives the flies away.] There were no flies then. Argos was only a small country town, basking in the sun, yawning the years away. Like everyone else I went up to the sentry-path to see the royal procession, and watched it for many an hour wending across the plain. At sundown on the second day Queen Clytemnestra came to the ramparts, and with her was Aegistheus, the present King.

The people of Argos saw their faces dyed red by the sunset, and they saw them leaning over the battlements, gazing for a long while seawards. And the people thought: 'There's evil brewing'. But they kept silence. Aegistheus, you should know, was the Queen's lover. A hard, brutal man, and even in those days he had the cast of melancholy ... (Sartre, The Flies 1.51-52)
The gory past of the city is revealed by Zeus, where we see the reaction and events, related to the murder of the king Agamemnon, and which he discloses in the very next speech and talks about the response by Argives as being silent to this murder. This is basically the plot and the theme, which gives way to every question, including the questioning of God along with the idea of commitment and responsibility of the people living in Argos.

The people of Argos have failed to commit themselves even when their king has been murdered, and are an accomplice to the crime in Sartrean frame. We can see that the next notorious statement by Sartre, ‘hell is other’, makes it appearance, when they prefer to remain silent on their king’s death rather than committing themselves to put a resistance to this heinous act. “Hell is… other people” (223), in the context of the play, can be understood on the same model which Sartre prescribes for understanding this idea. The relation is the idea which gives way to this theory. Hence, he also indicates the nature of human relationships. In Sartrean Universe, the nature of relationships is basically infected with the idea of conflict. So the relation of Argives to their earlier king is of the same nature and is equally the same with the present one. “The essence of the relations between consciousnesses is not the Missetm; it is conflict” (Sartre, Being and Nothingness 429). We can get a glimpse of the idea of bad faith, where one remains silent without action, and evades his responsibility.

As Zeus continues, he refers to the problem of Agamemnon and his mistake, and tries to justify his death as natural. The reason of justifying lies in the fact that Zeus as God can declare this as he is the one who created the mortals and thus knows the reason of death, and considers it to be just. But as Sartre has employed Zeus with a purpose as a binary to his idea of freedom, Zeus is the one who creates resistance for Orestes. Zeus in the latter half of the play asserts and dictates as he considers him-self as the sole provider of value and morality, considering him to be at the top of the order and man as his slave. The representation of Zeus and his interference in the life of Argos is a simple demonstration to keep people in bad faith, and in particular, to keep Orestes, at bay who in course of time will become something very different at the cost of everything, except being inauthentic. By bringing the two dimensions of the same act, his accusation serves rightly in the interest of Gods and thus, he says:
ZEUS. Agamemnon was a worthy man, you know, but he made one great mistake. He put a ban on public executions. That was a pity. A good hanging now and then—that entertains folk in the provinces and robs death of its glamour.... So the people here held their tongues; they looked forward to seeing, for once, a violent death. They still kept silent when they saw their King entering by the city gates. And when Clytemnestra stretched forth her graceful arms, fragrant and white as lilies, they still said nothing. Yet at that moment a word, a single word, might have sufficed. But no one said it; each was gloating in imagination over the picture of a huge corpse with a shattered face. (Sartre, *The Flies* 1.52-53)

And so the pain is justified in the eyes of Zeus and whatever has happened in the past holds right to be the behaviour of Argives, and also finds itself somewhere appropriate in the larger understanding of the things. Such incidents dominate almost the whole play, where there is a parallel plot running at least on the level of thought, and in return kindles to think about the king’s death and the present condition of the city. On one hand, it is the mighty Zeus who is debating on behalf of Argos and its present state of things, and the justification of flies till the process of atonement and repentance, for the crime which this city has witnessed, whereas the Phileabus, the disguised Orestes, is showing the rebellious nature, the nature of freedom gradually. The conversations of these two build and create a background for the climax of freedom.

Zeus shows that the present system of things is fine and so the present has a natural relationship with existing state of the city and its people. On the whole, the situation in Argos is natural as interpreted by Zeus. But Orestes denies this and he resists this whole affair, and in this process he even questions God. By questioning, he gives an account of the place in further detail and also brings the horrific reality which has dominated the place for a long time.
ORESTES. You surprise me. Then those blood smeared walls, these
swarm of flies, this reck of shambles and their stifling heat, these
empty streets and yonder god with his gashed face, and all those
creeping, half-human creatures beating their breasts in the
darkened rooms, and those hideous, blood-curdling shrieks – can it
be that Zeus and his Olympian delight in these? (Sartre, The Flies
1.242)

This is how the place appears in the vision of Orestes, and so his conclusion lies in the
abstract position of God in relation with "... a locale where plague reigns supreme,
flies scourge guilt ridden humans, sordid imagery haunts the milieu, saviours need
somewhere to belong to and sadistic gods seek hideouts to eavesdrop..." (Cheema
113).

The purpose in understanding lies here in the fact that the society of Argos is
in quest of freedom but they cannot realise what freedom is actually all about. Even
the protagonist Orestes has no idea. It is only with gradual revealing of the play,
which will be seen later, that lets Argives and Orestes come face to face with
freedom. The very seed of this action which comes to the front from the sides of
Orestes lies in the conversation with his tutor and then his only companion in the city
of Argos. At the level of the meaning of the play it is not the conversation which
would lead this play to proceed further but on the level of an individual thinking, a
prime aspect in Sartrean Philosophy, where an individual is free to look and do the
things of his own. Orestes in this speech hints his condition of freedom in great details
and has an awareness of the fact that his existence precedes his actions and it is only
his existence by the virtue of being free that holds immense possibilities of action, and
mostly, free action which will decide his life in particular.

ORESTES. ... You've left me free as the strands of torn by the wind
from the spiders' webs, that one sees floating ten feet above the
ground. I'm light as gossamer and walk on air. I know I'm
favored, I appreciate my lot at its full value. [A pause.] Some men are born bespoken; a certain path has been assigned them and at its end there is something they must do, a deed allotted ... For memories are luxuries reserved for people who own houses, cattle, fields and servants. Whereas I - I'm free as air, thank God. My mind's my own, gloriously aloof... (Sartre, *The Flies* 1.246)

This trail and conditions of Orestes coming into action continues despite the fact that his tutor as well as Zeus do not want him to stay in Argos. Both give different reasons for asking Orestes not to stay in the city but Sartre has actually brought him to city with a purpose. Orestes is still in doubt but he reveals his last wish, if at all he had, to stay in the city. His staying in the city and his wish are all very directly linked with the idea of freedom. Orestes now fully determines to take responsibility of being in the town and it can be sensed that the actions will now take place for the supposed project of freedom. Orestes now decides to act. Here we see that Orestes does everything to claim his freedom and as well as for the freedom of Argos. With some brief conversations with the queen Clytemnestra, Electra and Zeus who has earlier persuaded him to his best to leave Argos, Orestes clearly defies Zeus and he decides to stay in Argos itself. Orestes says, "I've changed my mind. I am not leaving Argos" (1.259). With this we depart for the freedom and its quest in the subsequent happenings of the play. Freedom here is an existential freedom, which Orestes is pursuing, unlike the practical freedom which Sartre endorsed in his later years when he came close to Marxism. As the play is an existential one, the freedom, too, is the existential freedom and so the understanding of freedom in connection with Orestes can be read and interpreted as "Existential freedom conditions existence" (Cebik 397). Orestes is conditioned by this freedom because of the existential nature of freedom and, hence, his actions and interpretations carry the message of absolute and phenomenological freedom. In the next scene, there is an event of the dead men's day and it is here in this situation which is dominated by fear and remorse that Orestes reveals himself. He reveals to Electra that he is not Philebus but actually her own brother.
ORESTES. Electra, I am Orestes.

ORESTES. Electra, I'm Orestes; your brother. I, too, am of the House of Atreus, and my place is at your side. (Sartre, The Flies 2.1.275-76)

The meeting of Orestes and Electra is a very important point in the play because it is only through the meeting that the larger meaning and the action is captured which gives way to the existential freedom. The act of Orestes is dependent on freedom of which he will be a victim and equally be a receiver of the existential freedom. In this process Electra needs an "accomplice", and Orestes will be the accomplice in doing the act for the sake of liberation. The illusion which he meets before entering the complete isolation is revealed in the words of Orestes to Electra. Thus, stating his conditions of aloofness and a state of wandering in the society of Argos, he says:

ORESTES. You are right. No hatred; but no love, either. You Electra, I might have loved. And yet – I wonder! Love or hatred calls for self – surrender. He cuts a fine figure, the warm blooded, prosperous man, solidly entrenched in his well-being, who one fine day surrenders all to love – or to hatred; himself, his house, his land, his memories. But who am I, and what have I to surrender? I'm a mere shadow of a man; of all the ghosts haunting this town today none is ghostlier than I. (2.1.277)

This is the condition of Orestes now who has really become very existential and can be an accomplice in any act unlike before when he was more reluctant and escapist. Sartre has shown him now the person who is required for the perfect action and the one who will be caught in his own freedom. The freedom is inevitable in Sartre's world and this is what is shown in the character of Orestes. The condemnation of freedom lies in the state of responsibility which has severe effects on Orestes. In this effect he will be doomed and so the freedom gained with the responsibility will lead
to his doom. The understanding of doom here carries the result of the radical freedom which is very similar to absurd state of things. "In that case man is freer—but he is also terribly alone with his terrible burden of freedom; he stands outside the pale, and his every act is a leap in the dark" (Kahn 7). This is the state of Orestes now which is slow but will gradually intensify when he will be in the middle of the things and will be engulfed completely when he reaches the extreme of situations. The intensity of this despair, firmness and the existential power is exhibited more in the speech of Orestes when he defies Zeus and carves himself into a different man altogether: "ORESTES. Orders? What do you mean? Ah yes, the light round that big stone. But it's not for me, that light; from now on I'll obey no one's orders, neither man's nor god's" (Sartre, The Flies 2.1.280).

He has totally defied the existing system of values and seeks to make his own values and way of living. This is all his process which is making him to leap in the darkness of freedom and so the different states he is meeting now are equally important points of departure from the normal day to day living. Realising his change, which he is very much aware of, he speaks of his state in much profundity:

ORESTES. What a change has come on everything, and, oh, how far away you seem! Until now I felt something warm and living round me, like a friendly presence. That something has just died. What emptiness! What endless emptiness, as far as eye can reach! [He takes somesteps away from her.] Night is coming on. The air is getting chilly, isn't it? But what was it ... what was it that died just now? (Sartre, The Flies 2.1.280)

This is a complete state of nihilism and the beginning of deep pessimism. The pessimism here is a break and a difference which will give way to a new and different start of life for Orestes. In the wake of the proposed goal by the dramatist which Orestes is unaware of, except only being conscious for his own action and responsibility, the shadow of Sartrean freedom strongly lingers on the psyche of Orestes. In doing so, the definition of the individual is also defined in relation to the
existential makeover of Orestes. Thus he says about such state of change in which he identifies and demonstrates himself in full authenticity, “I say there is another path ... my path” (2.1.280).

The protagonist now has decided his path and is ready to start his journey for the sake of freedom which will haunt him like a ghost throughout the rest of his life. He will be burdened with the existential condition and will be pressed by the load of this freedom which he will receive after committing the actions suggested for him. With firm resolution he leaves and bids adieu to his “youth” embarking upon the acts for which he has chosen this destiny. Thoroughly portrayed as an iconoclast now, he is the mover of his own values and systems which state his rightfulness in his own consciousness. With the fine lines below he expresses his valour and also gives us the sense of change which he has undergone:

ORESTES. Listen! All those people quaking with fear in their dark rooms, with their departed round them – supposing I take over all the crimes. Supposing I set out to win the name of ‘guilt-stealer’, and heap on myself all their remorse; that of the woman unfaithful to her husband, of the tradesman who let his mother die, of the usurer who bled his victims white? Surely, once I am plagued with all those pangs of conscience, innumerable as the flies of Argos-surely then I shall have earned the freedom of your city. Shall I not be as much at home within your red walls as the red-aproned butcher in his shop, amongst the carcasses of flayed sheep and cattle? (Sartre, The Flies 2.1.281).

And immediately after this, the man who was thought weak by his sister, Electra reveals his wish. He replies to her wish and says, “Are you going to draw back... now? Hide me somewhere in the Palace, and lead me tonight to the royal bedchamber-and then you’ll see if I am too weak!” (2.1.282). The trail of things have started now and Orestes is moving on with his own values and is trying to define his
own self through his own actions and beliefs. To note strongly, the position of Orestes in Sartrean philosophy as an individual lies here in two bounds of understanding. On the one hand, he can be interpreted as an individual who was reluctant and easy for the state of things, and was not responsible for the fate of the place to which he belonged. But as seen, he leaves the easy state of things and tries to come forward to accept the real state of things and thus exhibits his real sense of responsibility which is only available through freedom. This freedom, which will finally give him a substance and a concrete understanding, is no less taxing when it is seen in the situation of Orestes. But before reaching this state of things, he was luxuriating in another kind of freedom and had nothing to do with the existential freedom.

So in a way, one finds two freedoms being channelized through the position of Orestes. He can be considered in bad faith before he has put himself to commitment and action, and thus in the existential philosophy of Sartre he is not an authentic being. Whereas before, in the common sense of freedom, which Sartre refers in *Existentialism is a Humanism* in which freedom is understood in common sense as a value to do anything without the sense of responsibility, is contrasted by the existential freedom where responsibility becomes a major concern. In this regard the charges were made by the Christians and god-lovers who criticised Sartre’s existentialism. So the answer which is very much in accordance with the play lies in the words below:

Christians, on the other hand reproach us for denying the reality and validity of human enterprise, for inasmuch as we choose to ignore God’s commandments and all values thought to be eternal, all that remains is the strictly gratuitous; everyone can do whatever he pleases and is incapable, from his own small vantage point, of finding fault with the points of view or actions of others. (Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism* 18)

It is these illusions that haunt him at two levels of being. On one side when he is not an authentic being, he is in illusion of the freedom for what he thinks of
freedom is entirely opposite to the freedom as conceptualized by Sartre. In the next, when he is in the situation of a Sartrean world, he encounters the real and existential freedom, and thus will be doomed for this belief. So Orestes here is an embodiment of change which goes from simple freedom to the condemned freedom, and validates the thesis of Sartrean idea of condemned freedom.

From now on Orestes will be focused on the second dimension till he reaches his condemnation and will actually create a situation of no exit like Sartrean freedom which is inevitable and is a condition of the very existence. No exit is not that situation which holds ‘Hell is other’ but it is literally a situation in which one cannot escape from freedom. This condition of Orestes reminds us of Mathieu, the protagonist in one of the novel’s of Sartre titled, The Age of Reason. The connection here with Orestes and Mathieu is similar and we see that, what one would do with freedom which is condemned? Since Sartre also has the same purpose in the play, it will be apt to quote Mathieu’s condition similar of Orestes. Alfred stern rightly says for Mathieu, “This ethical consequence of Sartre’s metaphysics is a recurrent theme of his novels and plays. There is, for instance, Mathieu, the professor of philosophy, who finds himself in a dilemma...” (Stern 53). He quotes Mathieu as:

He was free, free for everything, free to act like an animal or like a machine, free for accepting, free for refusing, free for shuffling. . . . He could do what he wanted to do, nobody had the right to advise him. There would be neither right nor wrong unless he invented them. . . . He was alone in a monstrous silence, free and alone, without help, without an excuse, condemned to decide without any possible recourse, condemned forever to be free. (qtd. in Stern 53)

In the next scene the cause of the situation and the plight of Argives are revealed. The cause lies in the present king and queen of the city who like playing on the fears of the town people and like keeping the whole kingdom in fear and torture. This is clearly revealed in the conversation between Aegistheus and Clytemnestra.

CLYTEMNESTRA. What is troubling you tonight?
AEGISTHEUS. You saw what happened? Had I not played upon their fear, they'd have shaken off their remorse in the twinkling of an eye.

CLYTEMNESTRA. Is that all? Then be reassured. You will always find a way to freeze their courage when the need arises.

AEGISTHEUS. I know. Oh, I'm only too skilful in the art of false pretence. [A short silence] . . . (Sartre, The Flies 2.2.285)

We come to know now, the reason and also the cause for which Orestes wants to be what he was not before. In a way he is being defined according to the existential and atheistic tenets of Sartre and by this, he will be reborn as a Sartrean man. Sartre then, defines this man in his lecture *Existentialism is a Humanism* as:

Man is not only that which he conceives himself to be, but that which he wills himself to be, and since he conceives of himself only after he exists, just as he wills himself to be after being thrown into existence, man is nothing other than what he makes of himself. (Sartre, 22)

The conversation also reveals the nature of the present king and the queen of the place, in which Sartre lays the conditions on which Orestes can act upon. As the play moves further, the rupture is shown very clearly. Even the oppressor has become tired and fed up with the present state of things. Sartre here is a moralist when he induces this kind of notion because we see that the present king is also turning away from these petty and nasty affairs. He thus says again to Clytemnestra:

AEGISTHEUS. I am tired. So tired. For fifteen years I have been upholding the remorse of a whole city, and my arms are aching with strain. For fifteen years I have been dressing a part. Playing the scaremonger, and the black of my robes has seeped through my soul. (Sartre, The Flies 286)
He further continues, saying: "... But I – what am I but an empty shell? Some creature has devoured me unawares, gnawed out my inner self. And now, looking within, I see I am more dead than Agamemnon. Did I say I was sad? I lied. Neither sad nor gay is the desert; a boundless waste of sand under a burning waste of sky. Not sad, nor gay but ... sinister. Ah, I’d give my kingdom to be able to shed a tear. (2.2.286-87)

Aegistheus too is broken at this point and the rupture seems quite visible in the speeches made by him. Even when Zeus tries to convince him that he is not wrong he does not listen to him carefully like before. This scene will reach the climax as this scene is meant for the action by Orestes. The action suggested is the murder at the hands of Orestes. But before Aegistheus and Clytemnestra are murdered, Zeus and Aegistheus hold an important conversation on freedom, telling its nature and force.

ZEUS. You have. The same as mine. The bane of gods and kings. The bitterness of knowing men are free. Yes, Aegistheus, they are free.

But your subjects do not know it, and you do. (2.2.291)

This freedom is also feared by Zeus and he knows the meaning of this freedom. He wants the king to act upon and seize the freedom of Orestes so that he cannot act and seize the power of Zeus too in doing and recognising his freedom. Zeus knowing all this, says, "Orestes knows that he is free" (292) and to this Aegistheus gives a reply which is very enlightening and goes in depth to explore the psyche and power of freedom:

AEGISTHEUS [eagerly]. He knows he's free? Then, to lay hands on him, to put him in irons, is not enough. A free man in a city acts like a plague-spot. He will infect my whole kingdom and bring my work to nothing. Almighty Zeus, why stay your hand? Why not fell him with a thunderbolt? (2.2.292)
Aegistheus knows that Orestes is free and nothing can stop him except if Zeus stops him from his commitment. And then Zeus replies to the question and expresses the state of freedom of Orestes. He speaks his helplessness in this regard.

ZEUS. Once freedom lights its beacon in a man’s heart, the gods are powerless against him. It’s a matter between man and man, and it is for other men, and for them only, to let him go his gait, or to throttle him. (Sartre, *The Flies* 2.2.292)

Zeus, too, is helpless and compliments the state of the king who also is helpless in the same way. Orestes is a free individual and a typical Sartrean individual who is free to act. The difference of awareness only lies in the act which will make him aware of this freedom. Zeus, being the God by virtue of his power and being the creator of the mortals, knows this beforehand that Orestes is free and his heart has been lighted by the “beacon” of freedom. And due to this cause Zeus is helpless even though he is a God. He surrenders to the freedom of Orestes and we see Orestes as a fully independent being. He sounds similar to Zeus and says about an individual and freedom to Aegistheus. This statement comes immediately after Orestes has struck Aegistheus. He kills him. So, “William Hamilton suggests that the canonical Orestes myth shows us that "to overcome the death of the father in our lives ... the mother must be abolished and we must give our devotion to the polis, to the city, politics, and our neighbour" (qtd. in Smith 2).

AEGISTHEUS [tottering]. Ah! You struck well, Orestes. [He clings to Orestes] Let me look at you. Is it true you feel no remorse?

ORESTES. Remorse? Why should I feel remorse? I am only doing what is right.

AEGISTHEUS. What is right is the will of God. You were hidden here and you heard the word of Zeus.

ORESTES. What do I care for Zeus? Justice is a matter between men, and I need no God to teach me it. It’s right to stamp you out, like
the foul brute you are, and to free the people of Argos from your evil influence. It is right to restore to them their sense of human dignity. (Sartre, *The Flies* 2.2.293)

Orestes kills the king and queen and makes the town of Argos a free place and especially the people of this place who are now free from this tyrannical rule of fear and oppression. Orestes like any conventional hero as mentioned by him as “guilt-stealer” makes a fine impression of a Sartrean individual but only at the cost of himself. The cost laid on Orestes is very taxing as he is to be burdened with the massive load of freedom in return for the act he has done. He owns his responsibility with heavy freedom. Though he is free, but the use of words like “crash” and “thunderbolt” are replete with resounding of the unbearable sense of the word freedom and the meaning which it carries here and specially in the case of Orestes as the Sartrean individual. Orestes talks to his sister Electra and says:

ORESTES. I am free, Electra. Freedom has crashed down on me like a thunderbolt.

ELECTRA. Free? But I — I don’t feel free. And you — can you undo what has been done? Something has happened and we are no longer free to blot it out. Can you prevent our being the murderers of our mother ... for all time?

ORESTES. Do you think I’d wish to prevent it? I have done my deed, Electra, and that deed was good. I shall bear it on my shoulders as a carrier as a ferry carries the traveller to the farther bank. And when I have brought it to the farther bank I shall take stock of it. The heavier it is to carry, the better pleased I shall be; for that burden is my freedom. Only yesterday I walked the earth haphazard; thousands of roads I tramped that brought me nowhere, for they were other men’s roads. Yes, I tried them all; the hauler’s tracks
...along the riverside, the mule-paths in the mountains, and the broad, flagged highways of the charioteers. But none of them was mine. Today I have one path only, and heaven knows where it leads. But it is my path... what is it Electra? (Sartre, The Flies 2.2.296)

Orestes has done the deed and he feels no remorse like Electra or like anyone. He is a firm man with his responsibility and understands his deed. He does not collapse like Electra or any common individual. Even after murdering two people, he remains firm and is very authentic about his deed.

But as far as his freedom is concerned, he knows that he is free but in a different sense. He is not happy with his freedom and thus suffers from this particular type of freedom. In his very own words this freedom described by him suggests the dismal and painful nature of the thought. He says that it has come like a "thunderbolt" and is a "crash" on his self. The load of this thought has an unbearable power but it has to be accepted by him. Even if he wanted to deny his act, he could not, for the situation laid on him by freedom is inescapable. He cannot run, though he does not want to do so, he is conscious of the act.

As mentioned before, he is not happy at all with the state of things for he is under the grip of Sartrean freedom. He has been condemned in the most practical sense and is engulfed with the dread and fear which the Sartrean freedom brings. Orestes is the one who will have to face this condemnation and will also have to be the most authentic. Commenting on Orestes' state, Kahn writes:

Yet Orestes cannot be happy precisely because he is free, because to be thus free really means not to exist at all. A life empty of content is not "living"; and man, in order to be, must be something, must have some entanglements and "engagements," or else his life is but an illusion.

(Kahn 6)
This is what is contested in the realm of belief in freedom; it makes Orestes an authentic being, but at the cost of being condemned. The crashing height of freedom has turned into him to a completely isolated being. Almost separated from Electra, he is aloof and alone in the new kind of freedom he has attained. He says, “that burden is my freedom” (Sartre, The Flies 296), and suggests the goliath like nature of this newly acquired value. The interpretation of Sartrean freedom in this context is purely condemnation and thus is purely nihilistic in nature. The effect of this freedom is that he is isolated.

The last part of the play is highly dominated by the arguments on freedom by the two major characters of the play, Zeus and Orestes. A major part of the conversation here deals with the dispute that lies in the idea of freedom. Sartre, being an existentialist and a militant atheist, denies any divinity and their rules and also equally denies any other form of living except the existentialist living of which Orestes is a fine embodiment. The character of Orestes is invested with every characteristic of a Sartrean individual making him an ideal in the existential literature of Sartrean category.

With the furies tormenting Electra, the scene starts and Orestes is seen as very firm, defined and clear in his head for the act he has done. They are in the temple of Apollo as they have moved here to save their life after committing the murder. The furies are waiting out for them to torture and so the scene is very much tense with the murder which has happened. Here in midst of things, Zeus comes and tries to separate Electra and tries to help his affinity with torture. As Electra suffers, this adds to the joys of Zeus and, he says to Electra:

ZEUS. Do you hear Electra? And this man professed to love you!

ORSTES. She is dearer to me than life. But her suffering comes from within, and only she can rid herself of it. For she is free. (3,304)

This is an assertion regarding Electra who is still not able to understand the freedom, and, more appropriately, the existential and condemned freedom of Sartre. But
Orestes is different from his sister and says the truth of existence as a Sartrean “being”, an individual who is always a different individual from any other individual.

ORESTES. Listen, Electra! It’s now you are bringing guilt upon you. For who except yourself can know what you really wanted? Will you let another decide that for you? Why distort a past that can no longer stand up for itself? And why disown the firebrand that you were, that glorious young goddess, vivid with hatred, that I loved so much? Can’t you see this cruel god is fooling you? (3.306)

Even though Orestes tries hard to save his sister Electra, she completely gives to the Zeus’ wishes and surrenders in the end of the play. But Orestes, though condemned to freedom, remains firm like before. In this process, Zeus now directly comes in contact with Orestes and explains himself that he is the creator of this universe. A long speech by Zeus, which is of very importance, sums up the whole idea for the existence of God and its divinity. The reference of this speech is also an account for a common-man understanding that how a common man takes the life and this universe in which the position of God is so intact and sacred. The speech of Zeus is a manifesto for the religious rationale and which is generally applied at length to understand the workings of the mysterious world ranging from natural world to human life. This speech also sums up the state of naturalness in Argos which is considered right by Zeus. So this is an extension of Zeus’ thinking on the condition of the place and a link to his previous speeches in which he justifies the suffering of the people.

ZEUS. Orestes, I created you, and I created all things. Now see! [The walls of the temple draw apart, revealing the firmament, spangled with wheeling stars. ZEUS is standing in the background. His voice becomes huge-amplified by loud-speakers but his form is shadowy.] See those planets wheeling on their appointed ways, never swerving, never clashing. It was I who ordained their courses, according to the law of justice. Hear the music of the
spheres, that vast, mineral hymn of praise, sounding and
resounding to the limits of the firmament. [Sounds of music.] It is
my work that living things increase and multiply, each according to
his kind. I have ordained that man shall always beget man, and dog
give birth to dog. It is my work that the tides with their
innumerable tongues creep up to lap the sand and draw back at the
appointed hour. I make the plants grow, and my breath fans round
the earth the yellow clouds of pollen. You are not in your own
home, intruder; you are a foreign body in the world, like a splinter
in flesh, or a poacher in his lordship's forest. For the world is good;
I made it according to my will, and I am Goodness. But you,
Orestes, you have done evil, the very rocks and stones cry out
against you. The Good is everywhere, it is the coolness of the
wellspring, the pith of the reed, the grain of flint, the weight of
stone. Yes, you will find it even in the heart of fire and light; even
your own body plays you false, for it abides perforce by my law.
Good is everywhere, in you and about you; sweeping through you
like a scythe, crushing you like a mountain. Like an ocean it buoys
you up and rocks you to and fro, and it enabled the success of your
evil plan, for it was in the brightness of the torches, the temper of
your blade, the strength of your right arm. And that of which you
are so vain, the Evil that you think is your creation, what is it but a
reflection in a mocking mirror, a phantom thing that would have no
being but for Goodness. No, Orestes, return to your saner self; the
universe refutes you, you are a mite in the scheme of things. Return
to Nature, Nature’s thankless son. Know your sin, abhor it, and tear
it from you as one tears out a rotten, noisome tooth. Or else-beware
lest the very seas shrink back at your approach, springs dry up
when you pass by, stones and rocks roll from your path, and the
earth crumbles under your feet. (Sartre, The Flies 3.308-09)

Zeus gives his long speech and in which he tries to show everything that can help him
do his job; the job of bringing Orestes back to the fold of common humans and then
finally worship the almighty Zeus, as Electra does. But Orestes is more adamant than
before and does not accept the claims of Zeus, and refutes him saying that:

Let it crumble! Let the rocks revile me, and flowers wilt at my
coming. Your whole universe is not enough to prove me wrong. You
are the king of gods, king of stones and stars, king of the waves of the
sea. But you are not the king of man. (3.309)

This is the height of defiance by Orestes and shatters Zeus, the God in his pursuit. The
reason for this state of Orestes lies in his acceptance of the condemned freedom. Thus
“The walls draw together, ZEUS comes into view, tired and dejected, and he now
speaks in his normal voice” (3.309). Zeus too is fed up with the situation and gets
slow in his demand and righteousness and also in his claims. Still he tries hard and
converses with Orestes. There is a debate which takes place between Zeus, the creator
and the mortal man, Orestes. In this conversation we happen to see the glimpse of an
important section of Sartre’s philosophy. The talk reveals the highest point of freedom
and Sartre goes on to claim the very idea of existence of human freedom. The
existence synonymous with freedom is a radical claim by Sartre and is part of his
existentialist position with regard to man. But his emphasis here is on the action and
Orestes, being here the protagonist, is the subject of action. So the freedom of Orestes
in terms of existence is the idea of condemnation which one receives when one goes
through a path like taken by him.
Coming back to the conversation of Zeus and Orestes, one needs to see the rationality of Orestes in the face of condemned destiny which he fights in this powerful rhetoric:

ZEUS. Impudent spawn! So I am not your king? Who, then, made you?

ORESTES. You. But you blundered; you should not have made me free.

ZEUS. I gave you freedom so that you might serve me.

ORESTES. Perhaps. But now it has turned against its giver. And neither you nor I can undo what has been done.

ZEUS. Ah, at last! So this is your excuse?

ORESTES. I am not excusing myself.

ZEUS. No? Let me tell you it sounds much like an excuse, this freedom whose slave you claim to be.

ORESTES. Neither slave nor master. I am my freedom. No sooner had you created me than I ceased to be yours. (Sartre, The Flies 3.309)

The end of the conversation remarks “I am my freedom”. This is one of the most important pillars of Sartre's philosophy. Orestes is free to act out his freedom. It is very right that he definitely acts on his freedom but the results and consequences of this freedom are nightmarish. Even though this freedom is an acceptance of truth, the inevitable truth like the existential acceptance of existence in Nausea by Roquentin but it lends a very creepy feeling. Orestes though never says this but is always suggestive of this fact. The situation thus turns to extreme, lending meaninglessness to freedom. The sense of freedom runs out when the sense of liberation turns into a system of torture. The torture here is the existential boundary being laid by freedom from which nobody can escape and hence giving freedom a vague picture. Orestes’s freedom holds a trajectory of a life in which freedom has been incorporated with care of putting the philosophy of the theoretical rationale invested in it. Else, it is not the
commonly understood freedom. To understand this difference it would be right to quote Natanson who says, "... By definition, the slave is the man who does not have freedom; otherwise, he would not be a slave" (Natanson 79).

Orestes, after reacting to Zeus, contemplates and reflects about his own position. He tries to define the present in contrast to past and the state of his radical change from a simple boy to a determined man. He thus says:

ORESTES. Yesterday, when I was with Electra, I felt at one with Nature, this Nature of your making. It sang the praises of Good-your Good-in siren tones, and lavished intimations. To lull me into gentleness, the fierce light mellowed and grew tender as a lover's eyes. And, to teach me the forgiveness of offenses, the sky grew bland as a pardoner's face. Obedient to your will, my youth rose up before me and pleaded with me like a girl who fears her lover will forsake her. That was the last time, the last, I saw my youth. Suddenly, out of the blue, freedom crashed down on me and swept me off my feet. Nature sprang back, my youth went with the wind, and I knew myself alone, utterly alone in the midst of this well-meaning little universe of yours. I was like a man who's lost his shadow. And there was nothing left in heaven, no right or wrong, nor anyone to give me orders. (3.310)

Freedom has crashed down and this is the state of Orestes defined by him. Zeus tries a lot to bring him back but he finds helpless in bringing him. Even Zeus surrenders to this state of Orestes and he thus says.

ZEUS. ... Come back to the fold. Think of your loneliness; even your sister is forsaking you. Your eyes are big with anguish, your face is
pale and drawn. The disease you're suffering from is inhuman.

Come back. I am forgetfulness, I am peace. (3.310-11)

Zeus knows the intensity of suffering which Orestes is going through and so asks him to come back and to find himself in the normal procedure of life. The normal procedure is like that of Electra in which she is repenting and regretting. But Orestes, as said earlier, that he feels no remorse and is not all regretting for the things which he has done. He does not succumb to the suffering but is still a sufferer in the larger meaning of suffering. He is definitely aloof and alone now. In short he is actually condemned in the practical sense of the word. As said by Daigle the play The Flies is concerned about the inner working of freedom but the effects of the inner working of freedom are highly dangerous and destructive. It renders a complete state of illusion in which the possibility can never be ruled out from being absurd and death like. This is very evident when Zeus says to him:

ZEUS. ... Your vaunted freedom isolates you from the fold; it means exile.

ORESTES. Yes, exile. (Sartre, The Flies 3.310)

Orestes, as adamant as before, says now after Zeus has asked him to come back:

ORESTES. Foreign to myself— I know it. Outside nature, against nature, without excuse, beyond remedy, except what remedy I find within myself. But I shall not return under your Law; I am doomed to have no other law but mine. Nor shall I come back to Nature, the Nature you found good; in it are a thousand beaten paths all leading up to you- but I must blaze my own trail. For I, Zeus, am a man, and every man must find his own way. Nature abhors man, and you too, god of gods, abhor mankind. (Sartre, The Flies 3.311)
In this dialogue, which continues, Orestes has made his firm belief. We can also see the atheistic militancy in the character of Orestes, which is actually also of Sartre’s. Zeus too is questioned in the whole process of questioning the natural right order. Orestes being totally deep in his beliefs has no concern for God or any power which has its decision to rule him and rule man. In such a state he gives his speech, which actually in terms of greatness makes Orestes go above, even beyond, the idea of God. He says:

**ORESTES.** Take care; those words were a confession of your weakness. As for me, I do not hate you. What have I to do with you, or you with me? We shall glide past each other, like ships in a river, without touching. You are God, and I am free; each of us is alone, and our anguish is akin. How can you know I did not try to feel remorse in the lone night that has gone by? And to sleep? But no longer can I feel remorse, and I can sleep no more.

[A short silence]. (3.311)

Orestes has given his final verdict on the things and his state of emotions. He will not care for anything now. Sartre here sees the futility of the relation of men with the divinity or precisely with God. As Orestes really does not care for God, so he beautifully sums up this idea in the metaphor of a ship in the stream. He is least bothered with the idea of God and being in its divine presence and supervision. That is why he uses this metaphor to solve the meaningless of the relation between god and men. He says that Zeus can be god of many in this universe but he cannot be of a man. For man is alone like god. Sartre here uses the extreme existential line of thinking in which the thesis of ‘abandonment’, which is also interpreted as ‘thrown away’, is resembled with the present dialogue of Orestes. As man is thrown in this universe, he is eternally condemned to freedom. And so Orestes, who is a universal symbolic for this particular thesis of Sartre’s brand of existentialism, is the real icon in doing this act.
As now, Orestes and Electra are separated from each other in terms of their responsibility. Orestes has been left down and is completely aloof and alone. Almost an end now, they both converse and the conversation here shows the difference between the two states of thinking on freedom and the weight it carries. Electra unable to choose the Sartrean Freedom pays by getting separated from her brother Orestes. But she has not realised what she has done and thus Electra in this disillusionment calls Orestes as a “Thief”.

ELECTRA. Thief! I had so little, so very little to call mine; only a few dreams, a morsel of peace. And now you’ve taken my all; you’ve robbed a pauper of her mite! You were my brother, the head of our House, and it was your duty to protect me. But, no, you needs must drag me into carnage; I am red as flayed OX, those loathsome flies are swarming after me, and my heart is buzzing like an angry hive.

ORESTES. Yes my beloved, it’s true, I have taken all from you, and I have nothing to offer in return; nothing but my crime. But think how vast a gift that is! Believe me, it weighs on my heart like lead. We were too light, Electra; now our feet sink into the soil, like chariot-wheels in turf. So come with me; we will tread heavily on our way, bowed beneath our precious load. You shall give me your hand, and we will go...

ELECTRA. Where?

ORESTES. I don’t know. Towards ourselves. Beyond the rivers and mountains are an Orestes and Electra waiting for us, and we must make our patient way towards them.
ELECTRA. I won’t hear any more from you. All you have to offer me is misery and squalor. [She rushes out into the centre of the stage. The FURIES slowly close in on her.] Help! Zeus, King of gods and men, my King, take me in your arms, carry me from this place, and shelter me. I will obey your Law, I will be your creature and your slave, I will embrace your knees. Save me from the flies, from my brother, from myself. Do not leave me lonely and I will give up my whole life to atonement. I repent, Zeus. I bitterly repent. (Sartre, The Flies 3.312-13)

In the conversation ahead, Orestes though regrets for what has happened to Electra, is very much attached to the aloofness and solitude which he has received. He thus means going to “ourselves” and interpreting one’s own subjectivity in the light of one’s own knowledge and presence. So his insistence on being authentic for Electra is the same like him. Whereas, Electra is totally angry with Orestes and gives no way for the breach in her understanding and thus remains like any other in the natural order of things which Zeus had interpreted early to Orestes. She thus abhors the crime and this kind of freedom which Orestes is pursuing.

In the present state of things, we see that both of these significant characters hold their freedom in diametrically opposite sense. The understanding of freedom by Electra remains entirely different from that of Orestes. Electra is unknown to Orestes’s freedom and vice versa. To Electra, the freedom of Orestes is an illusion and nothing more than destruction. But to Orestes it is the only salvation. Strictly on the level of message, the meaning is easily conveyed by Sartre that only freedom of Orestes makes sense and nothing else on this earth can be substituted for it. But Electra too remains very firm and she cannot be ignored for her views. Though she has been shown as a weak character but her faith in what she believes is entirely her own project in doing so. Her belief in freedom is different from Orestes but holds its presence as a strong representation of a binary structure in the making of the meaning which Orestes holds. In the reference to each other, the thoughts of freedom by the
two are alien and indifferent. They both do not care for the other’s right and hence luxuriate themselves in the belief of their own stance of understanding the things and reality. And thus we hear Orestes saying when Electra is chased by the furies:

ORESTES. I am alone, alone. (3.313)

The end of the play is marked by Orestes addressing the town people of Argos. Here in his speech, he says that his intention of doing this act was directed towards the freedom for Argives. He proves himself as a "guilt-stealer", as said earlier. And thus the play ends, Orestes leaving the place. The end speech brings some sharp contradictions on the level of responsibility and action. Here it is Orestes who gives them the freedom and takes the responsibility. It is not the town people who have fought for their freedom. So it is not their earned freedom. And this brings out the problem of authenticity in Sartrean realm. It is not their self-made freedom and so they cannot be responsible for the freedom laid on them. It is a freedom bestowed on them by Orestes and cannot make a meaning out of it. In this regard, their access to this fortune rests on unstable grounds and can be snatched anytime by the power.

He then goes on to map out existentialism’s territory, defining it as a kind of "optimism," and a "doctrine of action," and man as someone who first exists: he materializes in the world, encounters himself, and only afterward defines himself. . . . He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself. . . . Man is nothing other than his own project. He exists only to the extent that he realizes himself, therefore he is nothing more than the sum of his actions . . . responsible for what he is. . . free. . . condemned to be free... Commit[ing] himself to life." (Sartre, Existentialism is a Humanism 10)

We see that Orestes’s freedom is immune to any condition and situation, and is unaffected from any external constraint. So there is a vast difference in the freedoms of the people in the play. Their freedom stands in the contrast to each other and is very different from the Oreste’s freedom. The thesis of condemned freedom is very nihilistic and is nicely brought to the front but the fact of other’s freedom lies at stake. The freedom is not the same for Electra and the town people. They vary in their own paradigm and equally find it justified in their particular situation. Overall, the illusion meted out in this purpose remains very natural and acceptable.
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Chapter V

Sartrean Humanism and The Racial “Angst”
Sartrean Humanism and The Racial “Angst”

In my own country for nearly a century I have been nothing but a nigger

— W.E.B Dubois

The Respectable Prostitute (1949) is a play committed to the understanding of racial discrimination. It is also a study in the vast existing gulf between the idea of civilized and the so-called civilized. The inevitable corollary of injustice associated with this sensibility and power is questioned in this play and in doing so, Sartre raises concerns of sensibility of the civilized society and, particularly, his subject of attack is the rich white American society. The play is torn between different poles and it represents a struggle of white and black, the history and the present, oppressor and oppressed; and, finally, between man and woman, revealing a story of subjugation, questioning the conscience and racism. The black being the subject of the play is the representation of marginalized and oppressed, and Sartre brings out the difference of sensibility in demonstrating the violence on the black by the white. The violence is taken to such extreme levels that it becomes a matter of existential crisis giving way to existential dilemmas for the black, eventually coming face to face with absurd in such harsh conditions of living. The difference of oppressed by the oppressor is reduced to such levels that it attains normalcy and appears as common sense for the crimes afflicted on black. It is so rationalized and naturalized that the language of oppression remains unquestioned and is left free to be accepted as normal and a matter of regular belief in which the violence over black is justifiable. To make the matters worse it signifies that the marginalized must be subjected to these punishments if they don’t obey the power of white American supremacy.

The word ‘black’ remains a significant concept and has remained an important category among various categories of the society. Historically marginalised and tortured, the blacks have been an important subject of study. In Sartrean world, the black holds immense importance and we see that in their treatment in the play they come across as another or the left—over people. Their presence in colonised societies and also in the civilised ones echoes only negativity and destruction. In the traditions of intellectual understanding there have been criticisms and exploitation of black and colonised, to an extent that they have been dehumanised and have been always
located at the periphery in the domain of power. This is the view in *The Respectable Prostitute* too where the American white folk treat Negro with contempt reducing him to subhuman levels. And this treatment of Negro at its worst becomes a call for Sartre to interfere in and bring out the truth of the civilised and a just society.

In order to do so, Sartre brings his theoretical postulations and tries to understand this oppression from the phenomenological and Marxian point of views. Centrally locating the concept of ‘Other’, the worldview of Sartre in the play pronounces the ‘Other’ in a very strong thesis with a purpose to bring the stark difference in the most practical sense. He brings to the knowledge of the social situations and every such limitation arising from the presence of situation which impacts human freedom and also looks into the reasons which give way to such tragic sense of life when one sees the condition of black in the play. The ‘Other’ here in the play becomes the Negro, who is the worst victim of such oppression in the hands of civilised American whites. In other words, Negro is the ‘hell’ for the white.

As mentioned earlier, there has been a serious attempt in understanding the racial issue from many quarters and so in the present time we witness an abundance of writing on the racial problem. Black problem remains a central focus of study in the academics and we see many theorists and writers addressing the issues form the multiple dimensions of identity, race, sexuality, nationality and etc. But despite so much writing on this subject, the severity associated with the problem is baffling as the conditions still remain vulnerable and shocking. The black problem is still an issue in almost every nation which has populations of different ethnicities. In this case, Europe and America largely bear the painful history of being the colonizers and, even in the present times, one can see many cases of racism frequently appearing, reminding of the inherent tension in these developed nations as well as a witness to the victimisation being faced by the black communities. This tendency of the developed nations sordidly reflects the cultural poverty of these places and thus poses a question to their own development and enlightenment. In fact in these circumstances, the very culture of enlightenment turns cannibalistic when it eats into its very roots. This injustice, discrimination and oppression became the reason for Sartre to take this challenge and respond to such evils. His reply to these evils was commitment through writing on the subject which went deep in explaining every bit
of the problem. Sartre as writer declared his intentions very clearly with reference to literature, and expressed his idea which he had for writing literature. He demands commitment and change and this is declared in his manifesto for literature entitled, *What is Literature?* (1993). Regarding writing and literature Sartre said in an interview that “If literature is not everything, it is worth nothing. This is what I mean by ‘commitment’. It wilts if it is reduced to innocence, or to songs. If a written sentence does not reverberate at every level of man and society; then it makes no sense. What is the literature of an epoch but the epoch appropriated by its literature?” (Sartre 13-14). The subject of racial crisis becomes befitting to his theoretical ideals in terms of writing literature and, more specifically, prose. America is the subject of investigation and becomes a part of the explanation offered by Sartre. This understanding was developed by Sartre quite early and we see how he interprets this problem in relation to his vision of freedom and the individual in the political and racial spheres of America. A strong example lays in the words of Robert Bernasconi in which Sartre understands and his view of black problem is represented as, “Sartre presents the obstacles placed in the way of African-Americans voting in the United States as an illustration of the hypocrisy of modern oppression” (Bernasconi 107).

Even though there has been an end of colonial rule and significant decrease in the dictatorial regimes, things haven’t changed very significantly. The oppression has taken a new language, and the imperialism still rules with a new face over the control of economies and governments of the Third World nations. There remains a question surrounding these issues to be addressed and Sartre poses a challenge to fight with the evolved system of such institutional evil embedded in the psyche of power. Sartre here takes all these challenges to fight the crisis and tries to check the hegemonic nature of such operation. On this instance, the condition can be well understood in the lines below which explain the times and the position of Sartre on these issues and which shows his attempts to check the evil of racism:

By the late 1960s Sartre had begun to consider how neo-colonialist structures enabled European domination and control to continue even after imperial rule had officially ended... He was beginning to discern
the importance of migrant labour and to sketch the contours of the
“new racism” that characterizes the age of globalization. (Judaken 5-6)

Though America, which is a subject of the play here was not a colonizing
power in the sense as other European powers were, but the treatment meted to the
blacks in the country was not less than the torture or the oppression of the subjects in
the colonised countries. The condition of blacks has always been a matter of concern
owing to the problem of racism. There are numerous instances in the history which
suggest the violence of these kinds in the name of racism. The massive massacre of
Algerians by French military stands as manifesto to this bloody history and bears the
evidence of these crimes. The Nazi occupation too is one of the most shocking
incidents which reflects the same tendency of killing the other in the name of several
constructed reasons where again, race and faith were employed for the nefarious
purpose. In fact, there are innumerable incidents in the history which showcase these
oppressions related to the same ideas which have been taken up in the play. This was
also a part of American reality that was questioned by the playwright dedicated to the
cause of the black. To sum up the racial and the Jewish problem, it is worth quoting
Richard Wright who says that, “There is no Negro problem in the United States, there
is only a White problem” (qtd. in Welcome 183). And he further adds, “Similarly,
there is no Jewish problem. There is an anti-Semite problem, only the anti – Semite
being haunted by freedom” (Welcome 183).

As the play The Respectable Prostitute is set in America and talks about
racism and underpins the reality of the nation, it has inherited an anti-Americanism
attitude and is, therefore, not a much discussed play like the other plays of Sartre. The
genesis and development of this notion of Sartre has moorings in existentialism and
reveals his position on racism and oppression. Sartre being radically interested in the
affair of existential as well as racial issue was a very much part of his thinking and as,
Judaken says, for Sartre, “Racism and racialized domination were much on Sartre’s
mind in the wake of World War II” (55).

*Sartre published three works in the year 1946. One being the play The
Respectable Prostitute, the next was The Anti Semite and Jew (1948) and the third, his
lecture Existentialism is a Humanism (1948) he delivered in Paris. In his lecture
Existentialism is a Humanism, which later appeared as a book, Sartre reproached all the philosophies in general and not only Marxism. But during that period he also had an inclination towards the oppressed and had hard contempt for the oppressor. In doing so, he was more close to classical Marxism with his own understanding of it. The testimony to this radical thinking and stand of supporting the oppressed is filled in the pages of The Anti Semite and Jew where he expresses his grave concerns for the atrocities committed on Jews, and asks to interfere in order to stop the crime. In the preface of the book one can easily come to grip with the Sartrean imagination which he had invested. Michael Walzer in his preface of the translated edition of the book by George J. Backer writes:

So he wrote what he thought, describing a world that he knew only in part, reconstructing it in conformity with existentialist psychology and enlightenment skepticism and the version of Marxist class analysis that he had made his own. (In the 1940s, he regularly denied that he was a Marxist, but his commitment-to-come is evident in this book.) He produced a philosophical speculation variously supported by anecdotes and personal observations. (vi)

In the case of The Respectable Prostitute, Sartre merges the line with his later philosophy which fuses Marxism and Existentialism together. His visit to America before this play and writings on race, and later on, Marxism, unveils his position with respect to racism and torture of the marginalised and victimised. We happen to see him more committed in his later phase of life to the idea of practical freedom rather than phenomenological one which was once a centre of Sartrean philosophy in his early years of youth. These multiple positions may sound a break, an “epistemological break” as called by Louis Althusser and also by other critics, which exhibits the fusion in the thinking of Sartre. But apart from this break which sounds as an accusation, Sartre’s commitments remain similar to his earlier beliefs like freedom and authenticity and we see that Sartre was only responding to his times like the way he weaved a philosophy out of phenomenology and then later, out of Marxism. In this connection The Respectable Prostitute serves as a powerful document and poses a
challenge for all those who hold this colonial mindset, and is a message of a resistance to the power. Sartre actually questions this very notion of black and white in which he questions everything related with 'black' and 'race', 'Negro' and 'white' and the institutionalised discrimination, where the structures of the State are enforced to achieve this inequality and unjust society with all the systems of knowledge.

Sartre focuses on race explaining the whole myth and its truth, and explains this dialectic in the best possibly way in which he employs the phenomenology of *Being and Nothingness* (1958) as well as the Marxism and Existentialism of *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960) to understand this unfortunate reality. Here in the play, he as well as the play, is positioned in between existentialism and Marxism. The reason being, as the play is more concerned with the practical freedom and acknowledges the importance of situations, the play tilts more towards the Marxist understanding of freedom and the individual. It also bends towards the postcolonial understanding of the subject and Sartre attempts to understand this postcolonial tension with the lens entirely different from the way he understood Roquentin, Mathieu or Garcin in his other fictional works. To understand this evolution and response, one can see his position as expressed by Judaken as:

...Sartre began to reexamine the theoretical foundations of his thought, specifically the relations between the individual, society, and history. What did not change were his existential commitments to freedom as constitutive of the human condition, his phenomenological conception of consciousness, his critique of determinism—whether by natural, social, or supernatural laws—and his emphasis on creating the self through an interiorization and subjectivation of the external conditions that shape humans. (7)

Race for Sartre has an important meaning, and we can see that there has been a considerable amount of writings on this subject, which explains the nature and commitment of Sartre to understand the myth of white supremacy over black and the colonized. It is very important to understand Sartre's notion of race in order to
understand the play. To him race is a “social construct” and “...he insisted that “race” is formed by social struggles and informs processes of inclusion and exclusion, racial subjectification and subjection;...” (Judaken 8). He argues strongly to understand this social construct which creates a mechanism for the defence of the white as well as a natural system in which oppression seems right and legal. To understand his commitment, one can easily see the reflection of his position not only on intellectual lines, in which he has spilled many thousands of words in writing books, but also his several meetings with the leaders of the oppressed class like Che Guevara fighting for Cuba’s independence against the dictatorial regime of Batista or Tito of Yugoslavia, on the political frontiers of battle and resistance, showing his preoccupation with this idea. Though all of his writings on the subject are finest expressions of an honest and complete intellectual, his remarkable preface to the bible of the resistance writing, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) by Franz Fanon serves itself to be distinct and triumphant. He also wrote other prefaces which brought the Negro and ‘negritude’ problem to the front and, as a result Sartre occupies a privileged position in French intellectual life as a very important prominent critic of such colonial powers. And so, it won’t be wrong to use the phrase that he was the one who spoke truth to power. In the lines below we happen to see the nature and power of Sartre’s work which was an important contribution in bringing “the negritude movement” to the front:

Elevating its visibility in the French intellectual field, he contributed the preface Présence noire” (“Black Presence”) to the first issue of the review in 1947. “Orphée noir” (“Black Orpheus”), Sartre’s preface to Léopold Senghor’s 1948 *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française* (Anthology of African and West Indian Poets Writing in French) was largely responsible for introducing the negritude movement to the world. (Judaken 4)

Not only on the writing, he was also quite committed to the political actions and carried himself very long in this process of resistance. He was a complete intellectual and represented a journey from philosophy to activism from First world to the Third World. In order to highlight Sartre’s commitment, Judaken maintained that:
By the early 1960s, Sartre was the global ambassador for "Third World" insurgents from Cuba to the Congo. By the late sixties, he embraced gauchist (New Leftist) student revolutionaries from Berkeley to Berlin to the barricades of Paris. And by the early 1970s, Sartre had come to see how globalization created "interior colonies" in the metropolitan centers of the industrialized and postindustrial North.

(Judaken 6)

His other work which is of much significance in this context is the *Anti Semite and Jew*. The mileage and nature of this work is best described in the words of its preface writer, Michael Walzer, who states:

*Anti-Semite and Jew*, in its best passages, stands with Theodor Adorno's study of the authoritarian personality, Talcott Parsons' essays on the sociology of Nazism, Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom*, and Hannah Arendt's account of totalitarian politics. (vii)

So these occupations of Sartre and his conception of the problem somewhere holds a similar understanding on both the subjects and equally a similar thinking of these two ideas. The events which have been turning points in the history of mankind and an example of complete oppression as reflected in *Anti Semite and Jew* represents the maturity of thought and engagement by Sartre.

*The Respectable Prostitute* is a play based in the American South, and is a story of a prostitute who is caught up in this black and white problem. She is the one who acts as a pivot between the controversies. She is a witness to the plight of the oppressed and is also a victim of the oppressor. In the end of the play, it is the black man who suffers the casualty and we see the supremacy of oppression being reinstalled by the white folk of this great country. We also happen to see the institutionalised violence by the great American nation and the use of knowledge as a
weapon for justification of the crime. In doing so, the use of knowledge can be equated with power where the knowledge is used for coercion and subjugation.

Sartre chose America as a setting of this play since he held pluralistic views about this nation. This sentiment arising from the condition of Jews in Europe, he had the consideration that America with its pluralistic vision would help to cater to this kind of crisis emerging in any point of time or history. The vision of America which Sartre and other writers held was of:

\[ \text{....... a permanent multiculturalism, an idea that was fully articulated only in the much more radically pluralist United States, where the co-existence of cultural (most importantly religious) difference and common citizenship was figuratively represented by the "hyphenated" American. (Walzer xxiii)} \]

But when he travelled to America his faith in American pluralism was shattered. He found a diametrically opposite situation forcing him to write a play by the title *The Respectful Prostitute*. According to Walzer:

Characteristically, Sartre, who visited the United States in 1945 and wrote *The Respectful Prostitute* immediately after, saw in American pluralism only oppression and hatred: racism was the anti-Semitism of the new world. He was not entirely wrong, not then, not now. The (relative) success of religious toleration in breaking the link between pluralism and conflict has not yet been repeated for race and ethnicity. But there seems no good reason not to try to repeat it, given the value that people attach to their identity and culture. (Walzer xxiii)

As the play is based in America, it questions the American state and the so-called American pluralism and diversity which were the visions Sartre had for this nation. But as it turned out untrue, it became a subject of question, and his intellect
was directed towards understanding the truth behind this false mantle of liberty and equality. This questioning of black and white problem, which is still very much relevant only with some modifications now, is quite contrary to the American system and every such system (especially those European countries which had colonies in the other parts of the world, almost in every nook and corner of the earth) and which claims itself to be just and equal. Sartre, disillusioned with this kind of regulated and institutionalised violence, took the case very seriously and attempted to bring out the real nature and the exact state of things in America and more particularly in the Southern part of the nation.

The intensity of this black and white problem in America has a long history and can be easily understood, if we look at the 1964 civil rights movement led by Martin Luther in America. The American south, a centre of dispute for the reasons of race, has been notorious enough to find its space in many intellectual writings of the times, since the history of this problem to the present generation. They have dealt with race and its modern dynamics, understanding the complex nature of the race and negritude problem which holds importance for the ideas of democracy and justice.

So this understanding appeared as a befitting subject of Sartrean writing – a European white intellectual’s thought who fought for this cause but has been sometimes remarked as “dead white male”. The reason of considering him as such lies in the fact that “He had no lived experience of the racial gaze or institutionalized discrimination, and it has been primarily those victimized by racism who have emerged as its most eloquent critics and most listened to voices, for they know of what they speak.” (Judaken 1)

The history of the America is of great importance to understand this play and it is only through this history that one can conclude the position of Sartrean philosophy and commitment towards this project. In exposing the racial problem and the hypocrisy within America, which is the motto of this play, his writing is an attempt with his lifelong passion of freedom. In doing this, he tries to reinstall the practical freedom and leave back the phenomenological one.

Freedom has always been a central, ethical and a virtuous value in any kind of history, a history which is characterised by the presence of oppressor and oppressed.
And when the question of freedom comes in, man, remains the central argument and the rest of the positions and conditions come secondary to the given situation or history. Analysing freedom on the level of common sense, it lends us a position to believe the hard brutal truth of the oppression and inequality which was then the only language in such oppressed systems of governance. So there cannot be a stance of freedom in the slightest sense of the word which would appeal to the idea of freedom, when we see that the society is subjected to coercion and subjugation. As a result we have glaring inequalities and oppression. There is a reflection of this in the play when we see the white folk speaking the history of the town, where the play is taking place and their contribution of making that town. This sense of ownership which they hold, and are ready to sacrifice anything for this civilised madness, has only to do with the victimization of the other and the killing of freedom.

In this condition when one tries to understand the idea of freedom, Sartrean existentialist’s phenomenology and his later Marxist interpretations of freedom prove to be of great help. One is forced to see that freedom as an idea is a mistaken phenomenon which has lost its significance, an idea which decides the elimination of one race completely. It also becomes an idea which will only serves the master for the exploitation of the slave in the language of oppression bringing the futility of freedom for the other. As a result, the oppression is validated on every level because of the mechanism which works behind in doing so. An example of this is the idea of the ‘white man’s burden’ or Hegel’s master-slave theory. The same happens in the play too where every knowledge and power is used in the elimination of the black race.

As the play is set in deep South of United States of America the racial tension accounts for much of the play and invokes the bloody history of the rift between the black and the white. Dominated by the problem of colour and the inherent tensions associated with it, Sartre tries to bring out the discrimination covered in the name of patriotism and nationhood. One sees in the play that a Negro becomes the “manhunt” on the basis of a false charge of raping a white girl who is a prostitute from New York, and is finally hunted and possibly killed by the so called builders of the nation, the whites at the pretext that they are the ones who built America and then bluntly justifying that the killing of negro is not a problem. It is very hard to determine the idea of freedom in this kind of situation for some individuals who being at the mercy
of their oppressors live in constant fear. In this constant fear, the idea of freedom seems weird on the part of the oppressed and his state of relations with the society can be imagined. There are only two poles here for Negro in which the whole of his life operates. For him, the freedom is that he wants to be saved, whereas for the white they have to kill him to retain their supremacy.

The freedom for Sartre is phenomenological as well as Marxist in nature. One can easily understand the positions of Sartre in which we happen to see an amalgamation of these two dominant modes of thinking, i.e. Existentialism and Marxism. “In 1944 he thought that any situation could be transcended by a subjective movement,” notes Simone de Beauvoir, and by “1951, he knew that circumstances sometimes rob us of our transcendence; against them, no individual salvation is possible, only a collective struggle” (qtd. in Judaken 2). So with this understanding, the idea of individual and his/her relationships determine the philosophy of Sartre and the structure of the individual in this play. As Judaken writes:

Adjusting his philosophical framework in relationship to these shifting situations and struggles, Sartre’s theoretical perspective changed from an emphasis on existential phenomenology to existential Marxism.

What remained constant was an effort to grasp what was at the heart of his existentialism: the possibility of human freedom in the face of lived constraints. (Judaken 6)

The case of freedom and individual’s relationship with society again comes under scrutiny of this phenomenological perspective and so the characters when analysed through this particular philosophical lens, they appear to be in bad faith and hence not authentic in the Sartrean system. “In The Respectful Prostitute (Sartre 1989) we see three examples of inauthenticity: that of Lizzie, that of The Negro, and that of Fred” (Welcome 184).

Freedom being an important issue in the play, we see that every character is bound to Sartrean ‘Other’ and also with issues and, therefore, is a victim in the sense of being a choice in each other. Every subject is an ‘Other’ to each other. Even the
mighty white structure is unable to overcome when it comes in gaining its freedom. It has to go above the black and kill his freedom finally to get it, claiming his race and whiteness. In doing so, not only in the legal sense of freedom, the killing of the Negro is also a symbolic understanding of freedom in which a whole culture is assailed in the assertion of might and comes close to one of the theories that the race is a social construct made for the purpose of ruling. The idea of violence becomes an important factor in this regard. One can see the insight on violence when Sartre talks about this in *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. In this connection of violence that he equates with right and ethics, he pronounces, "All violence presents itself as the recuperation of a right and, reciprocally, every right inexorably contains within itself the embryo of violence" (qtd. in Bernasconi 108). And this is how Bernasconi explains this particular fact, "Hence, Sartre writes that the Evil in violence comes not from the fact that violence destroys right, but because violence creates it, so that the vanquished has to accept right or die (108). Here Sartre goes back to Hegel and refuses his celebrated master-slave dialectic. "In reality, Hegel saw just one side of the slave: his labor," Sartre claimed. As a result, "his whole theory is wrong, or rather it applies to the prolechter, not to the slave" (qtd. in Judaken 31).

Sartre, like Marx, therefore flipped Hegel on his head when he asserted that "oppression is institutional" because it functions through a set of norms and rules that make possible "a certain way of living out a relation with the other" (qtd. in Judaken 31). Antiracism thus depended upon transforming the structures of oppression, which themselves conditioned the structures of perception. "To see clearly in an unjustifiable situation," Sartre averred in an arresting formulation, "it is not sufficient that the oppressor look at it openly and honestly, he must also change the structure of his eyes" (qtd. in Judaken 31). Here we can witness the famous Sartrean dictum "Hell is other" where every other acts as a torturer to capture freedom for oneself and hence freedom becomes a part of deathly chain. In the strict philosophical and political sense, the fight for freedom is the cause of this kind of tensions. From the matter of gaze as it was in the case of the example in *Being and Nothingness*, the "Other" has its manifestation in a different perspective.

In the play, it's the violent action first which makes its entry as a reminder of the disturbance. We see Lizzie speaking:
LIZZIE [softly]. There’s someone at the door. Don’t come out. [She opens the door. THE NEGRO appears framed in the doorway. He is very tall and fat with white hair. He stands very stiffly.] What is it? You’ve come to the wrong door. [Pause] Well, what do you want? Can’t you speak? (Sartre, The Respectable Prostitute 11)

In greater details as mentioned above about the black and white problem, the prostitute and the civilised moral folk, the colonizer and the colonised, all of them find a clear expression on the lines of freedom and their relations with the society for we see that at the very start, there is the involvement of the civil case and also the reference of judge. This language thus hints the nature of the play, which is both political and violent.

Lizzie the prostitute as mentioned earlier, is the pivot and the main protagonist, the anti – heroine of the play. She is the one who negotiates much of the situation in the play and it is only through her that the play sums up. In her, Sartre has laid the conditioning of freedom in which the whole of the play is entangled. Along with the Negro it is also she who is hunted for her decision because her decision will bring a significant change in the meaning of the play and more particularly she will save ‘one white’. In a way, she is the one through which this further institutionalisation is carried out and the supremacy of white race and the continuing hegemony is restored without any resistance. In the end she turns to be in bad faith because of this act as she forgets her responsibility completely and practically joins in the league of ‘bad faith’.

The other major character is Fred, son of a local Senator, who is in Lizzie’s apartment when the play opens as he has picked her from the town hall last night and probably as per Lizzie he is her first customer. This information leads us to believe that Lizzie is here in this Southern town as a commercial sex worker. As the play unfolds, we happen to see that she is the one who despite being prostitute and also a white understands the problem of this discrimination to which the Negro has been subjected by the lynching mob of the United States of America. Possibly out of her compassion for the Negro, she feels remorse for the treatment meted to him. She
deserves respect for she holds faith in humanity unlike her white counterparts. This sense leads her to understand as a prostitute who has ethics and compassion despite being into flesh trade and so lending the title of the play as *The Respectable Prostitute*.

The play starts with a conversation between Negro and Lizzie. In this conversation, the horrible fear is demonstrated by Sartre in the identity of being Negro. Here it is not a matter of freedom alone for which this Negro is fighting but it is a matter of life and death. As he is running and hiding from the white folk for the crime which he has not committed, he reveals a very stark reality of the situation when he says:

> THE NEGRO. That means I'se just got to run around and round till they catches me. When white folk start talking to strangers, some black man gonna die. [Pause] Tell them I didn’t do nothin’, mam. Tell the judge. Tell the newspaper boys, maybe they’ll print what you say. Tell them, mam, tell them, tell them! (Sartre, *The Respectable Prostitute* 12)

This conversation and the Negro asking Lizzie to save him by referring to the institutions of democracy, judiciary and media, and the common sense that “when white folk start talking to strangers, some black man gonna die” reveal the conditions of Negro and his fate of freedom too. It is only that he is free to face this situation. This further builds up more when the other characters of the play, put in their views on the problem. Later the conversation is carried out between Fred and Lizzie. Here in this conversation we get a glimpse of the situation of America and the views which affect freedom of these individuals who are caught in certain situations and further by the fusion of politics it gets aggravated. The politics of race in which the black has to suffer becomes a subject of this oppression. In the words of a black intellectual, Ralph Ellison, the stated view is, “true equality would only come with the “creation of a democracy in which the Negro will be free to define himself for what he is and, within the large framework of that democracy, for what he desires to be” (qtd. in Peters 28).
Fred after coming to know that there is no one at the door converses about the problem with some bickering with Lizzie and raises some strange questions pertaining to morality and race. This conversation being important in a way directs the intention of the playwright to achieve the effects of this social discrimination. As Fred had physical intimacy with Lizzie last night he thinks of sin for the act which has happened and says:

FRED [pointing to the bed]. While you’re at it, cover that up.” To this Lizzie replies, “What?” and again Fred replies, “The bed. I said cover it up. It stinks of sin. (Sartre, The Respectable Prostitute 13)

And then we see the inclination of Lizzie towards wealth as she tells Fred after seeing his ring.

LIZZIE. ... Let me see your ring. [With admiration] Boy, oh boy! Are you rich?

FRED. Yes.

LIZZIE. Very rich?

FRED. Very.

LIZZIE: That’s fine. [She puts her arms round his neck and offers him her lips.] I think it’s much better for a man to be rich.

It inspires confidence. (13)

Now this is the general understanding of these two characters who are affected for not being authentic and find themselves severely trapped in bad faith. Fred represents typical racist attitude who wants to forget everything and in doing so he is even ready to undo the truth. The truth being that he has slept with Lizzie last night and the very next morning he is not ready to take the responsibility for the act he has done.

On the other hand as Lizzie is a prostitute, she is more attracted towards riches of the world and gets attracted towards the wealth of Fred. It’s only this attraction for wealth
and her social conditions which push the play in more darkness and thus we see that Negro is brought to the altars of death.

These two form the specimen of the same theme running through the play and hence almost every character acts in bad faith as mentioned earlier. But along with the bad faith, the accountability of the situation too makes an important philosophical inclusion for the Sartrean freedom which has changed the destinies of these characters. Even Sartre incorporated this importance of situation in the later years of his philosophy. Hence, the understanding of the freedom has to be understood in terms of situation which poses a limitation. This has been aptly described by Alexander Welcome who takes care of situation and shows the inevitability of the situation which has its effects on individual and his freedom simultaneously. He says, “The situations faced by individual’s plays a major role in the dynamics of race” (182). “Man is defined first of all as a being ‘in a situation’ (qtd. in Welcome 182), a situation being something that a person:

...cannot be distinguished from, [as] it forms him and decides his possibilities, even though] it is he who gives it meaning by making his choices within it and by it. To be in a situation, as we see it, is to choose oneself in a situation, and men differ from one another in their situations and also in the choices they themselves make of themselves.

(qtd. in Welcome 182-183)

This is the situation where Fred and Lizzie are talking about everything; and that very moment, the reference of Negro is brought to the scene. Lizzie utters the word “Negro”, and thus her reference to Negro shows the social pressure which she is under and in which the identity of Negro is considered as a bad omen. Under the influence of this kind of thinking, she comes, saying “It ain’t a bad luck, is it, if the first person you see in the morning is a Negro? (Sartre, The Respectable Prostitute 14). To this, Fred replies with great contempt and hatred. He says, “It’s always bad luck to see niggers. Niggers are the devil. [Pause] Shut the window (15). This conversation gives us a grip on the identity of Negro and his position in society. Placing Negro on the social ranks of class, he figures as an outcast and has very
pathetic relation to his immediate world around him. This gets worse when he is brought under the scrutiny for the accusation laid on him. But this situation of Negro appears quite late in the play. In the meantime we see these two characters start talking again. With some silly talking as Sartre makes them do, they happen to touch some of the very important topics of our society. As the talk continues, the next topic of their discussion becomes their own experiences with each other. That is, their relation to each other.

Lizzie is a prostitute but is a compassionate and superstitious woman. Whereas, Fred is a hot headed white male who loves to bask in the wealth of his nation and is proud of his social and cultural capital. As mentioned earlier he is in 'bad faith' like other characters of the play and his insistence on avoiding responsibility is seen clear when he, with his own words makes such a pronouncement. Not only the denial of his responsibility but his ultra-sense of being white and rich further pulls him in darkness and thus creating him as the one who is a killer of freedom. Theoretically, Fred's freedom is the common sense of freedom in which he is in a position to do what he wishes. The verification of this common sense of the freedom lies in the lecture Existentialism is Humanism in which Sartre remarks about freedom, that being free doesn't mean that one can do whatever one wishes, but it's a different understanding of freedom which Sartre proposes in the lecture. In connection with interpersonal relations he says about freedom that:

> Under these conditions, the intimate discovery of myself is at the same time the revelation of the other as a freedom which confronts mine, and which cannot think or will without doing so either for or against me. Thus, at once, we find ourselves in a world which is, let us say, that of "inter-subjectivity." It is in this world that man has to decide what he is and what others are." (Priest 39)

Fred being a replica of this common sense of freedom is more associated with the practical dimension of freedom and is a character that stands just opposite to Sartrean freedom. The reason for Fred being like this has its truth in the fact that he is a representative of higher and affluent society and, moreover, he is also a symbol of the
white power who lives on the blood of the black for he comes from a racist
background and is living on the same ideals of racism like his forefathers. In all these
circumstances, the position of Negro gets very vulnerable and he becomes a subject of
direct attack. In fact this is what happens in the play when we see him being hunted to
death and treated like animal.

Lizzie on the other hand falls very low in the hierarchy; though she is also a
white but is a prostitute and is actually an instrument through which the events move
in the larger process. She, being a prostitute, has to act on the conditions laid by the
higher strata of the society as she holds no respect. She has to follow the dictates of
men as well as the dictates of power to which she is a subject. And so, she is the one
who is socio-politically subjugated to an extent, where she can be of some profit for
Fred and his class of people.

After a short exchange of some bitter words, Fred asserts patriarchy to the
extremes. He says to Lizzie when Lizzie has been continuously trying to remember
the last night, which is her in fact the first night in the city. Unable to accept the
events of the last night Fred lost taste for the whole affair. He disowns his act
frequently and that too, not even with the sense of an apology but rather with might
and force. He displays the typical patriarchal might of man over woman and
demonstrates the brute patriarchal mentality in which women are subjected to the
dictates of men. Completely treating her as an object, she is nothing more than a sex
toy for Fred. Revealing his mental status, it is worth quoting when he says, “I told you
to shut up. What a man does in at night, belongs to the night. In the morning, you
don’t talk about it” (Sartre, *The Respectable Prostitute* 16).

Here in these lines, the discourse of freedom turns on the level of gender and
the reflection of this mindset which holds extreme patriarchy is displayed on the part
of Fred towards Lizzie. There is a power struggle and the whole dynamics of the
situation serves the purpose of only losing the reference of freedom in ‘Other’s’
context. Though they both are white, the difference arises on the level of man and
woman and along with the social status which they carry as permanent markers of
their identity till the end of the play.
This clarity and difference explicitly holds its voice when Fred insults Lizzie on the grounds of being slut and mocks her status. The hypocrisy and the bad faith of Fred lies in the fact that he is the same Fred who the previous night made love and romanced with Lizzie and spoke good words to her as if he was a great lover of Lizzie. More appropriately, Lizzie explains that what happened when they met last night

LIZZIE. You took me in your arms and held me hard. And then very softly you said you loved me. (16)

She further continues revealing the intimacy of the situation.

LIZZIE. What a pity. I undressed in the bathroom, and when I came back, you blushed. Don’t you remember? Don’t you remember that i called you my little lobster? You turned out the light and made love to me in the dark. I thought that was very nice and respectable. Don’t you remember? (16)

Fred ignores her and has nothing to do with the last night’s business as he believes in business and specifically in straight business. He remains unaffected and has no sentiment for a prostitute. He straight away remarks to Lizzie saying, “Oh, so you enjoyed yourself! [He goes up to her, caresses her shoulders gently and then closes his hands round her neck.] Do you always enjoy yourself when you’ve fooled a man? [Pause] I’ve forgotten last night. Completely forgotten it. I remember the nightclub, that’s all. After that, you’re the only one who remembers. The only one. [He squeezes her neck.] (16)

On this note, the play proceeds and is seen that Fred and Lizzie come to a point of abuse and fighting. Both being the victims of the same structure suffer uniquely in their own way. The reason for the fight is now on the matter of payment. Fred has offered ten dollars for her service. With ten dollar value, Lizzie really gets crazy and she starts shouting on Fred. Fred in return also shouts back and abuses
Lizzie and says that ten dollar is quite enough “for a slut.” This enrages Lizzie to extremes making her go mad. The situation gets so worsened that she “... picks up a vase from the table with the evident intention of bruising him.” (18) In reply to this entire situation and to get out of it, Fred says, “Here’s another ten dollar, but shut up. Shut up, or I’ll have you put in jail” (18). Lizzie thus finds herself completely caught up in the situation and the threat issued by Fred really kills her freedom for she is in the authority of Fred. The verification and killing of freedom is very arrogantly pronounced when Fred reveals his identity that he is one of the precious and the rarest of this great nation as he is the son of the local Senator. Fred “violently” says, “I’m Wilson Clarke’s son (18).

This leads to a downfall in the events and there is preparation for the next event with a brief pause and again we see Lizzie coming to the scene. The case now being dealt is of rape in which Lizzie is at the centre and again a victim. The real problem is taken up now, which is actually the incident of “rape” and from hereafter there is much involvement of multiple and parallel rhetoric’s of power and right over this issue. Addressing the question of rape, Fred directly asks the question to Lizzie thus “Are you the girl the nigger tried to rape? (19). Till here what is seen is an association of whites, which includes both Lizzie and Fred but from here on, we see many incidents and a tussle over the case in which Negro and Lizzie become victims and are always on the verge of collapse. To take a note, Negro is the same fellow who had arrived in the flat of Lizzie when the play had started. Though in the process Lizzie tries to resist the whites but finally gives up in bargain of some favours for the reason that she has no choice and faces an existential crisis in respect to her position of being a prostitute. But though she gives up finally, her struggle against the rich and mighty is commendable and worthy. In fact, she comes out as the one who is to be respected even though if she is in a flesh trade.

Now Lizzie quite surprised replies back to Fred, “No one tried to rape me. [She laughs a little bitterly.] Rape me! See what I mean? (19). But Fred does not believe it, and he has some other intention in his mind for not believing the exact situation which is being revealed by Lizzie who is in fact the first hand person to experience this unfortunate incident. Fred thus replies, “It was you. Webster told me last night, at the club.” (19)
Now returning to the traditional structure of the imperial and colonial mindset of white, in particular Fred here, who represents the classic case of white myth and power in terms of supremacy and righteousness. His righteousness and his sense of being different is again heard clearly when he delivers something like this, an abominable hate and severe contempt for black in which the whole of the lens of seeing a black starts as means to end. Meaning, that the existence of the black only presupposes a condition of nothing or, exactly, a precise existence only meant for serving and slavery. The Negro is reduced to nothing and is just like an object as Lizzie was on the day when Fred used her for his sexual satisfaction. It’s important to take the note of conversation which reveals many hidden facts about the thinking of Fred.

Lizzie [pause]. So that’s it. That’s why your eyes were shining so, eh?

With such a good father too.

FRED [Pause]. If I really thought you’d slept with a nigger...

LIZZIE. Well?

FRED. I’ve got five coloured servants. When there’s a call for me and one of them picks up the telephone, he wipes it before handing it to me.

LIZZIE. [with an admiration whistle] Gee!

FRED [softly]. We don’t like niggers much here. Nor white girls who play around with them.

LIZZIE. That’s all right. I’ve nothing against them, but I wouldn’t like them to touch me.

FRED. How do I know? You’re the devil. Niggers are the devil too... [Abruptly] So? He tried to rape you? (Sartre, The Respectable

Prostitue 19-20)
Showing his truth (Fred), there is nothing left as such in the eyes of Sartre and possibly readers too where one can hope something truthful and transparent for the case of Negro. There is a conspiracy going on to bring him down for the crime which he hasn’t committed. But building this conspiracy needs further deceitfulness. In this deceitfulness, it’s very hard to figure the freedom which symbolises a value which can add as a mileage to situation and subsequently helping the being to overcome his situational reality. In this case, the situational reality of Lizzie and the Negro is same and are both victims at this juncture of thought and situation. The freedom here seems only in losing to the mighty white system, which becomes more dramatic fashion when the things turn more tragic.

In knowing the exact situation of what is being done by the white to black, the series of manufactured truths is in fact conditioned with the truth of the act which has to be taken into consideration before concluding any remark on the positions of these two constructions, black and white. It seems necessary to investigate literally the text and particularly the story of rape, which is deeply entwined with the purpose of freedom and also the idea of relation in which the freedom is pronounced. For Sartre suggests the gravity of situation, and also the relations of men with their surrounding men in such times of oppression. In general, it expresses the overview and the nature and the state of relations with the society in which one lives. These two positions severely affect the idea of freedom and have some scrounges interventions in relation to the idea of freedom. Here in this play too, till now, this has been the background which is echoing the Sartrean philosophy and counting the possibilities which will build further when the play progresses. Now coming back to the truth, the narration of text has been taking to know the exact proceedings related with rape and truth. Fred is the first to tell it. He says:

Two of them got into your compartment. After a little while they attacked you. You called for help and some white men came to help you. One of the Negroes pulled out a razor and a white man shot him with a revolver. The other nigger got away ... Was that what happened? (Sartre, The Respectable Prostitute 20)
Now Fred has asked this but this is not to know the situation as he cannot be trusted for his movements because he is constantly lurching in bad faith. To evaluate the situation of rape and influence Lizzie, he questions her vehemently so that Lizzie might break and submit to Fred's encroachment.

To the question by Fred, Lizzie replies:

Of course it wasn't. The two Negroes were sitting perfectly still, talking together; they didn't even look at me. Then, four white boys got in, and two of them made a pass at me. They'd just won a football game, and they were tight. They said the place stank of niggers, and they wanted to throw them out of the window. The coloured boys did their best to defend themselves, and finally one of the white boys got a sock in the eye. Then he pulled a gun and fired. That's all. The other Negro jumped off the train as we got into the station. (20)

This notion of situation and individual's relationship comes to the prominence, as Sartrean philosophy considers the idea of situation and the relationships of man with his society for the sake of freedom. In the above discussion by both, who are free beings indeed, are caught up in a situation and have reached a conclusion which suggest dispute. The dispute is the centre where other factors will take their place in building the difference of black and white and their respective traits. The black will be put to question and so his freedom in the rhetoric of white and Lizzie.

In order to understand this dimension more clearly, the dynamics of this situation which hold inherent tensions of phenomenology as well as racial difference under the oppressive regime situates itself as a subject of Marxism. Here in this play, the oppression of white by black is similar to the oppression by rich on poor, and brings the dialectics of freedom and individuality to the forefront and suggests the tensions which haunt Sartrean freedom at every moment. For this cause, Critique of Dialectical Reason serves as an excellent example, in which Sartre understood and took up the case and seriousness of situation in parlance to freedom as it tried to
understand existentialism and freedom in the light of Marxism. On the other, No Exit explains the relation of others as “hell is other”. Here the intervention of phenomenology decided the case for the position of others. So these bridge the thesis in which this play can be situated where we encounter both of these trends to very significant level. This thesis of “hell is other” derives itself from Being and Nothingness as mentioned earlier, and is also a philosophical grounding in the subject and serves to the cause, in which the “Other” in this play has acted like other only, with some slight reservations, on the part of colour and race.

On this model, when The Respectable Prostitute is encountered, there is every such position readily available in the light of phenomenology and Marxism, and hence the play is a semblance of two entirely different philosophies in which freedom is at stake but is discovered creatively by the playwright.

The conversation cited above on the matter of rape and the involvement of Negro in the case is brought ahead by Fred further when Lizzie refuses to speak Fred’s version of truth, and hesitates to go to the judge for she hates trouble and going to the judge. On this occasion, Lizzie gets frustrated and says, “Then I will tell them what I saw” (20). This reply is a problem for Fred and he comes up with his rhetoric in which he asserts a truth of being a white. The conversation below will demonstrate the position of freedom in the light of the psyche of Fred and the arguments which he gives for the purpose, to which he is committed and is pursuing wildly for he is a white and represents the myth of white supremacy and power. This conversation also in the philosophical structure of Sartre shows the tendency of extreme bad faith, in which Fred has immersed himself completely and has only one truth, which is based on the lines of power and oppression in the brute sense of racial discrimination. The conversation starts below between Lizzie and Fred:

FRED. You realize what you’ll be doing?

LIZZIE. Doing?

FRED. You will be defending a black man against a white.

LIZZIE. But the white man is guilty.

FRED. He isn’t guilty.
LIZZIE. Of murder!

FRED. He only shot a nigger.

LIZZIE. Well?

FRED. If one is guilty of murder every time one kills a nigger...

(Sartre, *The Respectable Prostitute* 20-21)

But Lizzie is persistent and strong in her position and says, “I must tell the truth” (21). This seriously offends Fred and he gets rough to such an extent that she is accused and abused by her status of being a prostitute. Fred replies to Lizzie that “… A ten-dollar whore must tell the truth! There is no truth; there are white men and black men and that’s all. Seventeen thousand whites, twenty thousand blacks. This isn’t New York; we have no right to fool around. [Pause] Tom is my cousin.” (21)

Now this is the breaking point of the play. Lizzie has stopped and is not succumbing to the powers of a person, who claims himself to be powerful for he is a white. On the other hand there is another revelation of truth by the reference to Tom. Tom is an important person who is also a white and the cousin of Fred. He is the one who is to be saved and the struggle going till now is for him. Fred now gives reasons for Tom’s freedom and his importance.

FRED. Tom. The guy with the gun. He’s my cousin.

LIZZIE [*understanding*]. Oh!

FRED. He comes of a very good family. Maybe that doesn’t mean much to you; but he comes of a very good family. (21)

This description of goodness in order to save him, the good family guy who holds a gun, is suggestive of the fact of the truth in which one can easily find the mindset of Fred in particular, and in general, the white psyche which holds this notion of truth despite the fact that he is the killer. As Lizzie is accused of not knowing or having a good family, for which she is exploited later on infuriates her. She lashes out at Fred after hearing this and says, “A man who comes of a very good family; who pressed
himself against me and tried to lift my skirts. I can do without that sort of good family! I'm not surprised to find you're related” (21).

We see Fred fighting again with Lizzie for the cause of Tom and shouts against Nigger. He says, “He made a pass at you – he shot a nigger – what does it matter? Those are things one does without thinking, they don’t count. Tom is a born leader, that's what matters...” (22). He has extreme contempt in which the Negro is completely structured in the lens of white eye. When Lizzie when she claims that the “Negro hadn't done anything”, Fred replies “A nigger has always done something” (22). In this condition which has taken a very serious turn, with a extreme biasness against race in the most brutal form takes place and thus the idea of an individual collapses. In the case of Negro, he is failing to qualify as an individual and is a total construct in the land and very psyche of white. He is an alien and has no status of a man like the definition as what one has for qualifying a man and being an individual. His relations in the society can be very well imagined and his position always calls for sympathy and help. In a way, in the phenomenological sense too, he has failed to make himself free. Though there is a logical derivation, when the case of Negro is being looked from the phenomenological perspective he can be accounted for bad faith, which is only revealed at the end of the play, the reason being that he is unable to act for himself. But when this very phenomenology is taken to the domain of conditions and seen from the perspective of Marxism and colonialism, the discourse of phenomenology becomes a weak thesis in understanding the condition of the Negro.

As this whole continues, to make the matters worse, the arrival of senator in the play is an exemplification of Sartre’s irony in retrospect to Americanism and the land of Uncle Sam. With a bit of scuffle and threat, the arrival of police, who are the friends of Fred and the associates of the great American dream, Lizzie is brought in a very dirty situation from the pressures ranging from legality to the emotional disturbances. For the legal confrontation, to which she is threatened directly, the emotional exploitation is carried out by the senator in whole.

As he arrives, he pampers her to deceive her and lures her in the emotional game of soft sentimental transaction. This is how he has been showed, creating a whole story of emotional farce in which he is an expert and bringing the things to his
side. Sartre has constructed him in such a way that he is at the centre, for we come to
know that he is a senator and is powerful man. Like any government, which
disciplines its subjects, the representation of senator here is the argument for the
discipline which he will teach at the cost of freedom and liberty. With emotional
fooling he will overcome the human consciousness building a false reality for the
system in which he stands and is committed to. He thus says, “She is perfectly right.
You enter her apartment without any authorization. [JOHN makes a movement of
protest. Emphatically] Without the least authorization. You treat her roughly and you
try to make her speak against her conscience. That’s a very un-American way to
behave. Did the Negro rape you, my child?” Lizzie replies “No” (25).

The respectable and decent address to the woman shown by Senator has been
completely contrasted to his son Fred, who shows diametrically opposite behaviour.
This contrast is the new mechanism where Sartre shows the shrewdness involved in
by the state to pull Lizzie down and also suggests new ways in which the plot might
move. Senator is very polite and calls Lizzie his child. He further builds his
confidence in the statements which are there to lure her completely. He says again,
“Fine. No mistake about that. Look at me. [He looks at her.] I’m sure she’s not lying.
[Pause] Poor Mary! [To the others] Well, boys, we must be getting along. There’s
nothing more we can do here. We must just apologise to Miss MacKay (25-26).

The trap being laid, which is almost complete with this particular statement by
Senator, shows the purpose of his employment and brings the hypocrisy of the state of
which the senator is a symbol. The question, of paramount importance is that the state
personnel who is there to take care of truth and righteousness goes astray purposely
and stakes Lizzie’s freedom in that process and also questions the authenticity of
freedom which is so vulnerable when it’s played in terms of meaning in the sense of
interaction and communication. This communication is the trap and the slavery which
Lizzie will go for and that too very voluntarily as she is very vulnerable because her
security lies in warmth and love and in fact not in money. Being a prostitute, she has
been reflected as the woman who has a weakness of warmth and socialisation and so
this situation which builds in a catastrophe will go against her in the end of the play
making her inauthentic too. In fact, we can see the power of situations in which Lizzie
is trapped similar to the acknowledgment of situation by Sartre in which he takes care of the human condition in a given situation. According to Smith:

Lizzie has a very clear sense of her own lack of unity with the US-American South. Coming by herself from the north, "Lizzie wants to be adopted, she wants to belong at all cost, even if it means signing the death warrant of the black man. Being adopted as a daughter by the city means finding a home, being part of the group, part of the family she never had... (Smith 4)

This deceit is carried by Senator unlike his son Fred who was violent. Senator is more polished in his business and gives Lizzie the assurance like a Father to help her to get out of this mess. He also promises to give Lizzie the love of Mary, the mother of the murderer, Tom. Thus in the name of Mary, she is bargained and Senator puts the bargain, capturing the subjectivity of Lizzie, which is the highest degree of siege and the killing of freedom in the light of rationality and truth. He addresses her as his child saying, "I can see through you, my child. Shall I tell you what you’re thinking? [Imitating LIZZIE] ‘If I sign, the Senator will go to her, he will say: “Lizzie MacKay is a good girl, she is giving you back your son”’. And she will smile through her tears, and she will say: “Lizzie MacKay? I will never forget her name.” And I who have no family. Whom Fate has put outside the pale of Society, I will have a little old lady, sitting in her big house, who thinks of me. There will be one American mother who has adopted me in her heart.’ Poor Lizzie forgets it (Sartre, The Respectable Prostitute 26).

Lizzie has been brought in this speech to the national trial based on the sentiments of America and Americanism. Senator has done his best as far as emotional trap can be made and we see Lizzie falling prey to it. Dealing specially with emotions and juxtaposing with a women’s heart, the senator makes his way for the case of Tom and by being victorious on Lizzie. In short one can consider Lizzie an emotional fool who is unable to clarify the disguise worn by Senator. She easily falls prey when she exclaims “Is her hair white?” (26). And to this, Senator replies as if he is revealing a magic to the curious child who wants to know the fairy tale and the
whereabouts of fairy itself. He replies “White as snow. But her face is as younger as ever....” (26). Senator coming to the “...question of a fundamental truth” (27), philosophises as a state sponsored intellectual who serves the cause of power relations for the benefit of the state and thus he uses his speech which gives a two way lens to see the rape and a pretext where the real accused and the murderer can be saved at last. Senator says, “No. No. He didn’t rape you. From one point of view, he didn’t rape you at all. But you see, I am an old man and I’ve lived a long time, and made my mistakes; but these last few years, I’ve made fewer mistakes. And I think rather differently about this than you” (27). And thus invoking Uncle Sam, Senator puts her in dilemma of choosing Negro and Tom. He says copying Uncle Sam, “Lizzie, you’ve to choose between two of my sons. One or other of them must disappear. What does one do in a case like that? You keep the better of the two. Well, let’s decide which is better. Shall we?” (27-28).

In comparison, the Negro is reduced to nobody and in whole, a construct as a man who has truth only as a myth in the prototype of man as he is treated with contempt, and in the pronouncement as only a meaning of subhuman and his type reduced to sub humanity. In the words of Senator the Negro “... doesn’t work, loafed and sings all day; he buy zoot suits and fancy ties...” (28). In contrast, he weaves a different sketch and promises the authenticity of binary to the fullest in the description of the killer of Negro, Thomas and says:

This other boy, this Thomas, has killed a black man, which is very bad. But I need him. He is one hundred percent American, the son of one of our oldest families; he went to Harvard. He is an officer- and I need officers- he employs two thousand workmen in his factory- two thousand men out of a job if he dies- he is a leader of men, a solid rampart against communism, trade unionism, and the Jews. His duty is to live, and your duty is to save his life. That’s all. Now choose. (28)

Lizzie hears this distinct conversation, turns more emotional for the killer’s mother and signs the paper in return of the love, which will be reciprocated with “some
flowers” and also being loved “like a daughter”. But before signing, there is a sense of rationality in Lizzie when she questions the fate of the Negro, in Sartrean terms, the state of his freedom, and the practical freedom of Critique of Dialectical Reason unlike the freedom of Being and Nothingness.

To this Senator again gives his powerful rhetoric of America and builds a complete trap in convincing Lizzie and killing the freedom of Negro. The situation of Negro is totally brought in the opposites of the white society and Americanism. He says, “The Negro? Bah! [He takes her by the shoulders.] If you sign, the whole town will adopt you. The whole town. All the mothers of the town” (29). And then he continues again, giving the reason of collective rationality but equally reflecting the hypocritical and deceptive mindset of the society. The Negro and the society can be best portrayed in this relation, where the whole of society and symbolically, the white and the rich and the civilised, which is the point of society here, has no feeling for being truthful and honest. Negro is at the mercy but there is no sign of any space in the name of freedom in the words of Senator. To this Lizzie replies “But...” and we see Senator again giving his justification for the society. He says, “Do you think a whole town can be wrong? A whole town, with its priests and ministers, its doctors, its lawyers and painters, with its mayor and town councillors and all the charitable institutions? Do you really think so?” (29).

To this Lizzie replies ‘no’ and it is here that she breaks. She is in bad faith, and is unable to overcome the pressure of her own selfish desires and the rhetoric of Senator. She gives easily to his speech and in the end which is almost the last dialogue of this particular event by Senator, Lizzie signs the paper. He makes her sign and asks Lizzie:

Give me your Hand. [He forces her to sign.] There, Lizzie. I thank in the name of the seventeen thousand white men of our town, in the name of Uncle Sam and the American Nation which I represent. [He kisses her on the forehead.] Good bye, my child. [To LIZZIE] I'll see you again; we have more to say to each other. Come along, boys. [He goes out.]
This is the end of the scene where Lizzie regrets, by signing the paper but Senator has already moved out. In the name of "Uncle Sam and the American Nation! [She puts in the plug and pushes the vacuum-cleaner up and down furiously.]" (29) In the next turn, the play turns violent with the cry of the oppressed, in addition to the failure of Lizzie. She has been betrayed and meets her dream of emotional warmth lying shattered totally. The Senator comes to her again, but he is different this time than the way he was before when he had come for signing the papers from Lizzie. At the arrival of Senator, Lizzie asks about Tom's mother that "Did she cry?" and to this Senator replies, "Cry? Why should she? She's a brave woman" (30).

LIZZIE. You told me she was crying.

SENATOR. A figure of speech. (30)

This is an ample justification of the problem which is explained in this scene. In the previous scene, when Senator and his whiteness were at stake, he did everything to save them and now when they have been saved, he again becomes an oppressor in the most brutal form. In this it will be primarily Negro and Lizzie and their fates which will suffer the most. After a brief conversation with Lizzie, the senator shows his real colour. As she was expecting a letter as a template of love from the killer’s mother but to her shock she is returned with a hundred dollar bill.

Senator "[taking an envelope from his pocket]: My sister asked me to give you this. Lizzie asks, "She's written to me? [She tears the envelope, takes out a hundred-dollar bill, looks in the envelope for a letter, doesn't find one, crumples the envelope and throws it away. Her voice changes.] You should be delighted; your son promised me five hundred, you've saved yourself a lot of dough."

(31)

This infuriates her very much and forces Lizzie to say, "... You fooled me beautifully" (32). And here the conversation ends with the Senator. Senator has done his work; the senator of America fooled her own white race too in saving the values
which he cherishes and has turned out to be real hypocrite in the name of American values.

The next part is largely dominated by the Negro and Lizzie’s conversation. In this conversation, the plight of the Negro is clearly visible and his repeated request to Lizzie is about saving his life. He comes at the door of Lizzie’s flat and repeats his request. Freedom here in this regard is a crude form of practical freedom which Sartre has always looked in his other major second text *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. The freedom is the same freedom which is being looked at from the perspective of *Critique of Dialectical Reason* and from the very beginning of this chapter till now is the same subject of the discourse.

This question of freedom has arrived in the simplest and the crudest form in which everything is questioned. As this play has almost reached its crucial moments, the crude freedom is the result which we happen to get after reading this play. In this search, through the lens of this practical freedom, we also find the relations of men and particularly the individual too in this context. The relationship of freedom to man and hence the definition of this freedom remains pretty crude for what we see in comparison to the metaphysical freedom, the philosophic one. On the other hand, the freedom discussed in the play is struggling on lines of practical freedom and is more concerned with the social reality of the particular situation unlike being as polished and intellectual as in *Being and Nothingness*. As a crude and practical freedom, this primacy of the subject freedom weaves the rest and the subsets of the dynamics associated with this tension. Relations of the men in particular and their dealings are brought within the framework of society, and here, the American society. The society which has questioned the truth of freedom in terms of race and blackness, on so called folkways and mores of the hegemonic construct and has let itself loose in the utopian visions of its hypocrisy. The Senator being one of the prominent and perfect examples of this kind, is a clear representation of the mindset of this country and place.

As Negro is being hunted for, he says to Lizzie, “That’s the hunt” (*Sartre, The Respectable Prostitute* 32). It means, as in the words of Negro, “Man hunt”. Lizzie fearing this asks that what will happen when he gets caught. Here we see the crudest reality of the sophisticated society when we hear Negro saying “Gasoline”. He will be burnt with gasoline if he is caught. We hear him saying, “THE NEGRO. Gasoline.
[He makes an expressive gesture.] They set fire to it (32). This is acute inhumanness which is depicted in the words of the Negro and explains the deadly phenomenon of burning a black individual if he is caught by the white men. Lizzie suffers in her own way and equally stands as damaged by the same enemy. In a party of these two, the centre of conflict lies in the difference of the freedom for which the party of Lizzie and, especially, Negro are struggling. Negro wants to be saved but is shocked when he hears that it was Lizzie who had told the white men that Negro is the culprit. But as Negro does not know the background of the events which have taken place between Lizzie and the Senator, Lizzie remarks her frustration and guilt when she says "... don't you want to break my neck?" (33). Negro replies, "They often make folk say what they don't think" (33). This conversation leads Lizzie to tell the falsity and hypocrisy of these white men which she herself has experienced firsthand. She says, "Yes often. And when they can't, they mix them up with their pretty stories." And she repeats again her guilt, "[Pause] Well? Don't you want to break my neck? You are a good soul. [Pause] (33).

While this conversation goes on, the hunt comes to the flat of Lizzie and we see Lizzie speaking the whole truth without her ifs and buts and doesn't carry any more the baggage of emotions and acceptance for the society in which she would be loved by the American nation and the mothers of the nation who would care to send her "... a lipstick, or a pair of nylons..." (31). She gets up and says, "I'm going to open the door and ask them to come in. For twenty five years they've fooled me. White-haired mothers! Heroes! Uncle Sam and the American Nation! Now I understand. They won't catch me out again! I'll open the door, and I'll say: 'He's here. He's here, but he has done nothing. I was forced to sign a false statement. I swear by Almighty God that he didn't do anything' (34).

This is the plan made by Lizzie if the police come to search her flat for Negro but in revealing this plan, Lizzie also details a lot about the American nation. She comes down very heavily on the constructed values, which, according to Lizzie, have always fooled her for twenty five years, and to which she has always subjected every time for being an American. She thus finds her captivity in these false values and myths of "Uncle Sam and The American Nation" and wants to break the myth of the American Dream.
The plan doesn’t work, as Negro fears and believe that they won’t believe Lizzie. Now Lizzie comes with a bigger plan and says, “You must shoot them too... And if you see the Senator’s son, try not to miss him, because he worked the whole thing...” (34). Here the reply of Negro is very stark in contrast to the position which he is holding. He denies this proposal and hence in a way condemns violence in his situation. His refusal is grounded in his fear and the construct of his whole overview in which he has no imagination which can lead him to go against the white. To see this, the conversation below shows the difference of understanding between a black and a white.

THE NEGRO: I can’t shoot a white man.

LIZZIE. They won’t be so soft.

THE NEGRO. They are white folk, mam. (34)

This particular reply sums up every victimisation which a black experiences in America and can be considered a gateway to understand the control and domination which are entirely opposite to the idea of freedom. The black doesn’t hold any imagination, as mentioned earlier, of killing a white man. He simply cannot do it. Here we can reflect the Sartrean position which talks of the freedom of slave, for which he can refuse the dictates of the master because he is free. In the least he can refuse the dictates in his mind or soul for the reason that “man is freedom” as he is a free consciousness. But when we encounter this kind of situation in the condition of Negro, who also represents the black oppressed community, does not have any position of that kind. He is just free in the illusionary sense where he can’t save himself. This is the possible break on the lines of freedom where we see the difference of freedom between the phenomenological perspective and the postcolonial one, where beings in the latter are more struggling with the practical freedom.

There is a vast difference in the position of Lizzie and Negro, though they are travelling in the same boat. Lizzie being white has the position to talk and be angry, condemn and abuse the white folk. Whereas the Negro is totally stripped off from this thinking, and even in this position of the two people travelling in same fate, Negro is on the mercy of a white again. He is requesting Lizzie but he is actually requesting a white woman in the larger dynamics of the case. The further conversation sheds light
on the degree and the intensity of this servitude or bondage to which the black man is
subjected. In his conversation with Lizzie after the men have gone searching Lizzie’s
flat, the talk between Lizzie and Negro reveals a sort of permanent grounding of fear
in the mind of the black, the ‘other’, precisely.

LIZZIE. Do you feel guilty too?

THE NEGRO. Yes, mam.

LIZZIE. And you’ve done nothing?

THE NEGRO. No, mam.

LIZZIE. But why is one always on their side?

THE NEGRO. They’re white folk. (Sartre, The Respectable Prostitute

35)

Here Fred appears on the scene to woo Lizzie again as he is unable to forget her as he
claims and thus wants her back. Negro has been hiding in the bathroom but is soon
discovered by Fred. And then what happens is natural in the land, as Fred is seen
running behind the Negro and fires two shots in the distance. In this course, Lizzie
tries to defend the Negro but she fails in convincing Fred and is left hopeless by the
act and sinks down in remorse. Fred returns and then gives the justification for
everything which makes the play, in nutshell, the cause and the rationale for this
demonic expression of brutality and inhumaness. He believes that he has the right of
being the superior and the only master of the land, with an acute sense of oppression
for the ‘Other’.

The scene takes place when Lizzie has picked up a gun to shoot Fred and Fred
in exchange exclaims, “Lizzie! Think of my mother! Lizzie replies, “To hell with your
mother! I’ve been had that way already” (37). And then we see Fred who talks till the
end of the play. Fred says:

[walking slowly towards her]: The first Clarke cleared a forest with his

own hands: he shot sixteen Indians before being killed himself in

ambush. His son built nearly the whole of this town; he was
Washington’s friend and died at Yorktown, fighting for the independence of the United States. My great-grandfather was a Vigilante in San Francisco; he saved twenty-two lives during the great fire. My grandfather came to live here; he dug a canal to the Mississippi and was Governor of the state. My father is a senator; I shall be a senator after him; I am his only male heir and the last of my name. We have made this country and its story is our story. There have been Clarkes in Alaska, in the Philippines, in New Mexico. Dare you shoot the whole of America? (37-38)

Here we get a complete view and also the reasons for everything that has happened in the play. America to Fred is a birthright and one has anything to do with except him and his clan. The power structure is very visible in the pattern and the language of the events which Fred has claimed since history to the present and also in future by becoming a senator. Fred continues his speech. He says, “Fire! Fire! You see, you cannot. A girl like you cannot kill a man like me. Who are you? What can you do? Do you even know your grandfather’s name? I have the right to live: there are so many things to do, waiting for me to do them. Give me that gun (38). And then the play ends, with Lizzie finally becoming the mistress of Fred and submitting to the riches of the country and their hypocrisy.

In conclusion one can say that with respect to freedom and individual the play is simply divided on extreme lines of freedom and non—freedom. The freedom of an individual is dependent on the other. In the play, all the characters who have to go through this process in which they have to encounter the Other for their freedom and this is the realisation which makes the other an inevitable faculty in the realm of human relations. In the binaries, as the play has been moving from start till the end, the whites have been dependent on the black and the marginalised and the vice versa. It’s a battle of existence, in which freedom remains the central goal of both the sides. And in this battle one looses, the black looses for he is not strong and has to perish. He is not free and there can be no speculation even through metaphysics about his
position, except understanding and accepting the fact that he has no freedom and so just lived in the bits of freedom. In these bits, he concludes his helpless state and when he finally meets his end, he realises his truth and comes to grips with his truth, an illusion of his existence and his freedom on which he had been feeding for years.
Works Cited


Chapter VI

Conclusion
Conclusion

_No two beings, and no two situations, are really commensurable with each other._

_To become aware of this fact is to undergo a sort of crisis._

— Gabriel Marcel

Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980) was an artist, a rebel, a master and a writer. He was a man who was always on the “razors edge” always ever ready from the political commitment of 1968 to the refusal of the Noble Prize for he never wanted to be a public monument. This is Jean Paul Sartre, a man who proposed useless passion as the only meaning and notoriously reached the peak as the most read philosopher of the 20th century, turning out to be no less than an institution.

The most important and the central subject of Sartre’s philosophy is freedom. His affinity and passion with this idea made him write on freedom unraveling the power within this belief which showed the beauty and contradiction inherent in it. As a sweet confusion permanently marked in the writings of Sartre, freedom for many was a matter of faith and condemnation. A glaring example of this paradox lies when Sartre issued a statement in the occupied France, which read as:

We were never more free than during the German occupation. We had lost all our rights, beginning with the right to talk. Every day we were insulted to our faces and had to take it in silence. Under one pretext or another, as workers, Jews, or political prisoners, we were deported en masse. . . . And because of all this we were free. Because the Nazi venom seeped even into our thoughts, every accurate thought was a conquest. . . . At every instant we lived up to the full sense of this commonplace little phrase: "Man is mortal." And the choice that each of us made of his life and his being was an authentic choice because it was made face to face with death, because it could always have been expressed in these terms: "Rather death than. . . ." All those among us who
knew any details concerning the Resistance asked themselves anxiously, "If they torture me, shall I be able to keep silent?" Thus the basic question of liberty itself was posed, and we were brought to the verge of the deepest knowledge that man can have of himself. For the secret of man is not his Oedipus complex or his inferiority complex; it is this limit of his own liberty, his capacity for resisting torture and death. (qtd. in Stern 86)

This is the inspiration, which I mean as a beautiful confusion, that fuels the argument here and brings everything which can be debated in the domain of freedom like the occupation and resistance and realize this value as the only value for Sartre, and the Man.

Freedom becomes suddenly restless and flies everywhere like the furies of Les Mouches trying to bite the rebel Orestes. It comes in directly to the making of completeness and wholeness in the existence of the ‘being’ Roquentin more intact than ever, and asking him to realize the epiphany which has been revealed for eternity like the very contingent existence. Garcin notoriously says “Hell is other People” showing the vulnerable and miserable angle to one’s relationship. This is the summary of the philosophy of freedom which resides in us for we are freedom as Sartre said. Man is freedom, Sartre claims, and hence to be an illusion in one’s own imagination is nothing less than being creative as a genius who remains blind in his beauty. Sartre is the same man who has been accused of “epistemological break”, by Althusser and the Frankfurt school. But Sartre was unstoppable and hopped in every direction and pursued ideas for he found the beauty of freedom everywhere like a restless soul, similar to Rilke’s conception of beauty when he says, “There is much beauty here for there is much beauty everywhere.” Like Roquentin he discovered the passions hidden behind existence in freedom and found his solace in commitment of its practice.

The research undertaken here by me is a humble attempt to understand Sartrean freedom and his arguments regarding freedom in his literary and philosophical works. As the topic goes, “Illusion of Freedom, and The Individual’s Relationship with Society in the Select Works of Jean-Paul Sartre”, I have tried to
focus on the different images of the protagonist in the Sartrean system and their relations with their surroundings in the boundary of freedom. The different characters in the plays and novels here have been treated with respect to his philosophy. Though he proposes the purpose of writing and writing literature, the import of his philosophy to literature was a primary concern. The research done here has taken the philosophical framework of Sartre and Existentialism to study his literary writings.

The Introduction is titled as "Existentialism and the Sartrean Thought: A Narrative of Freedom." I have undertaken the study of Existentialism and the philosophy associated with it along with a major concern with the philosophy of "being" in the light of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and primarily Jean Paul Sartre. I have therefore, elaborated the philosophy of Sartre based on Being and Nothingness, Critique of Dialectical Reason and his lecture Existentialism is a Humanism. There are references of the different existentialists in order to show the power of this philosophy which stands as a reaction to different philosophies of those times. The primary study on these subjects serves as a guide and also gives an overview of the work which proceeds and tries to understand the three central points in the thesis: Freedom, Individual and Society.

The novel Nausea attempts to look into Sartre's early conception of freedom and relation to the idea of existence as a contingent creation and that is why it is titled as, "Existence is a Misunderstanding: A Classic Case of Antoine Roquentin's Freedom." I have tried to see the existential turns in the life of Roquentin through the text where we find his absurdity and freedom being mixed at many levels. The mixing of entirely two different ideas gives him nausea and also puts him in a state of illusion. Freedom thus becomes a matter of condemnation and we see Roquentin feeling absurd because of freedom. This is a point where I engage my arguments when we see that the very idea of freedom turns to be negative and nihilistic for Roquentin, and as a result there is a severe break in his relations with the immediate world where he lives. The idea of society remains merely a matter of nominal entity and we see the protagonist loosing every connection with the world gradually. The subject interpreted in Nausea is of great importance as it gives us a picture of Sartre's early conception of freedom projected trough Roquentin who at time turns to be an illusionary character when he faces the veneer of existence and turns absurd.
No Exit being the other manifestation of the same brand of freedom is a classic representation of Sartrean understanding of human relationships and the problem related to "authenticity" and "bad faith". The chapter is titled as "There is no other except the Other: A Study in Sartrean Relationships". Here I have tried to focus more on the interpersonal relations which is an inevitable part in any individual’s life. Either direct or indirect, the relations form a part of ourselves and govern our living. This happens in the play, where the characters are trapped in hell and feel the burden of each other. They are unable to undo this situation and hence we get the name of the play No Exit. Here the focus is also on the bad faith where one evades the right way of living (authentic) which is the reason for these characters being in hell. They are here for their bad faith and inauthenticity, and thus this play organizes itself around the issues like society, freedom and the idea of an individual. In fact the very freedom seen here acts in the reverse sense and behaves as a torture for each other when we see the characters afflicting pain on each other and are unable to control the happenings taking in hell. There is an emphasis on this particular kind of freedom which is of an absolute nature and becomes a source of torture for each other.

The other play, The Flies is a resistance play showing Sartre’s concern for freedom in occupied France and the chapter is titled as “My Salvation is my Condemnation: Reflection on The Flies.” Orestes is the individual and the protagonist of this play who becomes a subject of study in relation to his society and freedom. He is an embodiment of Sartrean individual who acts according to his own understanding and decides his fate. I have tried to investigate the freedom which starts with phenomenological impression but ends in being a practical one giving way to a lot of actions as validity for the commitment. Orestes is an individual who acts but also acts for the sake of society of which he is a part similar to the anticipation which Sartre had for France and for the French to act against the occupation. There is also a lot of difference in the thesis on interpersonal relations and we see that the play is more dedicated to the society and its cry for freedom. Unlike before, there is a positive voice in the idea of individual’s relationship with society which is missing in Nausea and No Exit. We also see that the individual behaves as a hero in bringing peace unlike Roquentin who has nothing to do with his immediate world in the sense of bringing order to the bourgeoisie society of Bouville. The last and most important idea in the play is that Orestes also acts on the behalf of society which is very
unconventional in Sartre’s world. As the Sartrean proposition goes “man maketh himself” we see that though Orestes has made himself, but the men of that society have not acted accordingly and remain in bad faith. On the reverse, they feed on the actions of Orestes and are not authentic at all. Paradoxically they are the ones who enjoy the fruits of freedom brought to them by Orestes showing a contrast in the proposition of freedom by Sartre. This is a point of conflict in the Sartrean thesis where we see that the individual acts as a leader and robs the opportunity of a society and every man to act for oneself. So taking all of the above insights, the focus is on the contradiction and tries to unravel the tension of freedom in the play taking note of the shift of the notion of the freedom and the individual.

_The Respectable Prostitute_ is a mark of resistance but very different from that of _The Flies_. It is titled as “Sartrean Humanism and The Racial “Angst.” Here the resistance is taken towards the powerful and the American White who have been the oppressors, victimizing the Black. This play leans towards the post colonial study of the subject and we get a very different picture from that of the earlier works. In the play, the idea of the individual is not the central thesis but it is the idea of the individual seen as the oppressed and the victimized. The Negro and Lizzie are the two characters who have been shown facing the oppression. The play also focuses on the idea of relations between men who come from the same background and social ranks. Thus the study investigates in bringing the truth of oppression and shows the importance of practical freedom unlike the phenomenological one. There is also an attempt to show the importance of practical freedom in a situation where there is a matter of life and death and thus the phenomenological freedom turns out to be a luxury in the case of _The Respectable Prostitute_.

I have given special emphasis to the conceptual understanding of the subject. Sartre’s philosophy is an interesting mixture of many things but this mixture remains more singular than being just single. That is what I have observed about Existentialism and his way of practicing it. He has everything in his writing which can force a man to reflect for a reason and question his contingent I or ask the society to be an opposition to that very I, which he sees in the images of Batista or Hitler. He is always changing but is at harmony without losing the essence of that change and bridges what could have been impossible as theory. Thus to say, the present of Sartre
which he was living with commitment and the future which he laid because of that very commitment suggests multiple paths for establishing him as an individual who is timeless. His philosophy is an expression of the primordial thirst which reveals itself in every lived moment and recurs again as a question to the expression, man. In this change, we have come here in 21st century and we still find him very close to our hearts for he talks about the naked truth and robs from us fear and anxiety.

I have tried to understand the philosophy of Sartre first, and then later have tried to investigate it in selected literary works which includes a novel and three plays. Thus the methodology as proposed in finding the arguments on freedom is conceptual. The conceptual underpinning of freedom, individual and society remains the subject of research within the broader understanding of existentialism. The central motif of this research is to find the various positions of freedom and individual in order to show and understand the philosophy of Sartre in this connection. An attempt has also been made to understand the inherent tension which Sartre’s philosophy carries when imported to literature. The import of philosophy brings some problems and that is very visible when we see the play The Flies. In this particular play, we can see a sharp distinction in terms of freedom where the phenomenological freedom glides to the practical freedom. This shift also called as a “break” in the thinking of Sartre, was criticized by many critics but is not the concern of this research and does not go into this debate except mentioning the name of few critics and their accusations. The Respectable Prostitute which is more oriented towards the study of the marginalized and the less privileged sections of society can be seen as a sample for studying this shift in contrast to the other texts dealt here. The reason is that Sartre became more concerned with Marxism in the later years of life and finally became an Anarchist in the end. So this work in particular serves to the Marxist commitment of Sartre and is the expression of Sartrean Marxist Existentialism.

I have tried to look at the broad canvas of Sartre’s philosophy and have taken these texts with a purpose to investigate some of the key issues which are related to the three central points proposed in the title. I have also made an effort to justify the proposal and the research question which I have undertaken and with a purpose to do justice with this particular topic. There have been many limitations in pursuing the research, and one of them is the lack of knowledge of French which limited me to
read the texts in their translations. The next major hurdle in doing this project was in the fusing of literature and philosophy together so that they could sync, harmonize with the effect which I desired in this project. The ideas of Husserl specially and the phenomenological part was a bit of struggle and makes a significant portion in the first chapter which is the Introduction. Apart from these, Sartre too was challenging and still remains the same and so I have done my best to interpret him in the way as his philosophy and literature demands.

To my understanding the principle of knowledge which reminds us of making this world a better world and persuades the philosophers to look deep into the skin was the real inspiration for me to take this research. I have always wanted to see the fusion of philosophy and literature and see the complex and smooth being woven as one. And thus I embarked on this journey with the responsibility which my vision had for this project.
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