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## From Literature to Philosophy: Exploring Sartre and the Path of Existentialism

**Neelanjana Chowdhury**, *Assistant Professor, Dept. of Philosophy, Samsi College, Samsi, Malda, West Bengal, India*

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### Abstract

A review of history shows that whenever a crisis arises in human society, literature becomes the primary weapon to overcome it. This very literature teaches people how to fight against the crisis and how to live anew. Such literature does not contain abstract ideas, but rather the essence of human life. Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) was a French philosopher, playwright, novelist, and critic, widely regarded as one of the leading figures of 20th-century existentialism. During the Second World War, when humanity had nearly forgotten its own existence, literature became a means to reanalyze and reconsider the past. Among such literary works, Sartre's writings were particularly significant, as they opened up a new world of philosophical thought. This article offers a clear look at how Sartre's novels, plays, and stories, such as *Nausea* (1938), *No Exit* (1944), and *The Flies* (1943), played a central role in building his ideas about freedom, choice, and the meaninglessness of life. Rather than simply retelling his philosophy, Sartre's creative works acted as a space where he explored and shaped the core of existentialism: the belief that we exist first and define ourselves through our actions. By examining these books, this study shows how storytelling helped Sartre craft a philosophy that still resonates today. This paper argues that Sartre's books were more than examples—they were tools for building his philosophy. Drawing from earlier writers like Dostoevsky, he used fiction to blend their insights with his own, creating something new. Through clear analysis, we'll see how his stories turned abstract thoughts into vivid experiences, from Roquentin's dread to Orestes' resolve. This study not only sheds light on Sartre's process but also suggests that books can do more than tell tales—they can spark big ideas. It invites readers to consider how Sartre's blend of story and thought offers a fresh way to understand life's challenges, making existentialism less a puzzle and more a practical lens for today.

**Keywords:** Existentialism, Essence, Freedom, Choice, Bad faith, *Nausea*, *No Exit*, *The Files*.

### Introduction:

Human history is replete with instances where profound societal disruptions have catalysed a surge in literary output, serving as both a mirror to turmoil and a blueprint for recovery. Far from detached abstraction, such writing captures the pulsating core of lived experience, guiding individuals through adversity toward renewed purpose. At the

forefront of this tradition in the mid-20th century stood Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), a towering intellect whose roles as philosopher, storyteller, dramatist, and activist intertwined to define existentialism. In the grim shadow of World War II, with its erosion of human dignity and certainty, Sartre's key literary contributions— the novel *Nausea* (1938) and the plays *No Exit* (1944) and *The Flies* (1943)—functioned not as passive vehicles for ideas but as dynamic arenas for their development. Sartre's philosophical ideas on existentialism are centred in the book *Being and Nothingness*. Sartre is in the inheritance and development of Husserl's irrationalism, and then pushes the boundaries, and constantly develops and forms his unique philosophical ideas of atheistic existentialism, but also to promote the development of existentialist philosophy, so that it has entered a completely new stage. Sartre's life is full of legendary colours. He was born in the darkest era of human history, when the world experienced the impact of war, and everywhere was full of violence. Sartre was conscripted into the army at the outbreak of the Second World War, and spent ten months of his life in enemy camp. It was these ten months that brought about a great change in Sartre's thinking. Sartre's thinking shifted from individualism to concern for the state of society and the masses of people, and he began to use the pen as a gun, using literature to rescue the people in dire straits. In Sartre's doctrine of existentialism, he was more concerned with the value of man as a being, and fundamentally established the unshakeable status of the human subject. Sartre fully expressed his existentialist views early on in his famous work *Nausea*, a diary novel of an autobiographical nature. Afterwards, Sartre published his academic masterpiece *Being and Nothingness*, which created a considerable wave in the philosophical and intellectual circles at that time. Later, in his speech 'Existentialism is a Humanism', Sartre elaborated the basic ideas of his existentialist philosophical conception to the public, magnificently demonstrating the 'Sartrean Existentialism'. At the heart of Sartre's existentialism is the idea that human existence requires finding the true self. The central idea of existentialism is responsibility through freedom. The basic argument of existentialism is that existence precedes essence. The three basic principles of Sartre's existentialist philosophy are: 'existence precedes essence', 'the world is absurd, life is painful' and 'free choice'. These three basic principles not only perfectly interpret Sartre's existentialist philosophy, but also, to a certain extent, become Sartre's guide to action in life. This paper dissects *Nausea*, *No Exit*, and *The Flies* to reveal their seamless integration with Sartre's thought, while juxtaposing it against the perspectives of existential kin such as Soren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, and Albert Camus. These comparisons underscore Sartre's unique emphasis on engaged humanism. In sum, Sartre's writings invite us to reframe existentialism as an actionable ethic, vital for addressing modern dilemmas like isolation in a digital age or ethical voids in global conflicts.

### **Sartre's Philosophical Foundations: Freedom, Bad Faith, and Absurdity:**

Understanding Sartre's literary innovations requires grounding in his ontological blueprint, most fully articulated in *Being and Nothingness* (1943). He bifurcates reality into 'en-soi'—the opaque, self-sufficient matter of the universe—and 'pour-soi'—the reflective, freedom-wielding consciousness that disrupts and reconfigures it. For the pour-soi, life unfolds as an unending endeavour to transcend given conditions, devoid of preordained roles or cosmic mandates. As Sartre says, "Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself"<sup>1</sup>, a formulation that burdens every decision with profound accountability.

'Bad faith' (*mauvaise foi*) emerges as the chief evasion tactic, wherein one feigns determinism to sidestep freedom's vertigo. Sartre's classic vignette of the overzealous waiter, who embodies his profession to the point of caricature, exemplifies this abdication<sup>2</sup>. Freedom, in turn, breeds anguish, confronting us with an absurd expanse where no external arbiter validates our paths. This absurdity is not a cul-de-sac but a launchpad for invention, demanding authentic engagement over resignation.

Sartre's prose and drama operationalize these principles, embedding them in character arcs and conflicts that demand reader complicity. Diverging from Kierkegaard's faith-mediated individualism or Nietzsche's Dionysian exuberance, Sartre's vision incorporates a relational ethic, where autonomy intersects with communal stakes. Heidegger's existential analytics provide the phenomenological scaffolding, yet Sartre infuses it with political urgency, evident in his underground publications. Camus, by contrast, diagnoses the absurd similarly but prescribes defiant endurance rather than Sartre's value-creating labour. These tensions animate Sartre's texts, pushing philosophy toward narrative vitality.

### ***Nausea*: The Visceral Grip of Contingency and Absurdity:**

Sartre's inaugural novel, *Nausea*, released in 1938, masquerades as introspective memoir while dissecting the raw underbelly of being. Antoine Roquentin, an aimless archivist ensconced in the dreary port town of Bouville, undergoes a cascade of revelations that shatter his perceptual equilibrium. This titular 'nausea' manifests as a gut-wrenching awareness of existence's superfluity, mundane entities—a bench, a chestnut root—assert their unbidden presence, defying categorization. Roquentin confesses, "The word abscess is there, but beyond the word... the abscess itself, the magnitude, the color, the horror"<sup>3</sup>, capturing language's inadequacy against being's onslaught.

This episode dovetails with Sartre's dual ontology: nausea signals the *en-soi*'s relentless encroachment on the *pour-soi*'s fragile sovereignty. Roquentin muses, "Everything is gratuitous, this garden, this city, and I myself... I thought I was living, and I am only existing"<sup>4</sup>, embodying the precedence of existence over essence. Sartre heightens Heidegger's *Angst*—that disquiet revealing our thrownness—into a corporeal upheaval, a rebellion against the world's reifying drag.

The diary format, with its staccato reflections, echoes the *pour-soi*'s elusive negativity, thwarting tidy resolutions. Roquentin's dalliance with Anny, haunted by illusory perfect moments, unmasks bad faith's siren call. Redemption glimmers in artistic resolve as a melodious recording spurs him to pen a tale that endows "strange objects... no place in the world"<sup>5</sup> with narrative heft. This pivot resonates with Nietzsche's imperative to affirm recurrence, yet Sartre layers in moral exigency—creation as defiant solidarity.

Kierkegaard's despair in *The Sickness unto Death* (1849) anticipates nausea as existential malaise, but his antidote is divine surrender, not Sartre's secular fabrication. Camus's Meursault in *The Stranger* (1942) mirrors Roquentin's estrangement, though his serene apathy contrasts Sartre's proactive forge. Infused with Dostoevskian introspection, *Nausea* pioneers a genre where phenomenology meets fiction, making the abstract viscerally immediate.

Now, 'Existence precedes essence' is the basic principle of Sartre's existentialism. Sartre elaborated on this in his series of writings, asserting that there is no God who predefines

the model of human nature, and that there is no so-called 'universal human nature' as advocated by classical philosophy. Sartre began his 1945 lecture 'Existentialism as a Humanism' by stating that the purpose of the paper was to defend himself against several existentialist charges. Sartre begins this speech with a defence against three accusations of existentialism. Firstly, existentialism does not encourage a despairing attitude of inaction towards life. Secondly, existentialism does not emphasise the dark side of the human condition, depicting things that are vile, dirty and nasty, while ignoring certain things that have and are beautiful and belong to the bright side of human nature. Finally, existentialism does not seek to deny the truth and seriousness of human endeavour. In his essay 'Existentialism as a Humanism', Sartre elaborated on 'existence precedes essence': "If God does not exist, there is at least one being in the world that can be proved to be 'existence precedes essence'; and this one being can be proved to be 'existence precedes essence'; and this one being can be proved to be 'existence precedes essence'. If God does not exist, then there is at least one being in the world that can be shown to be 'being before essence'; a being that existed before it could be defined by any concept, and that being is man; or, in Heidegger's words, the reality of man"<sup>6</sup>. 'Existence precedes essence' can be broken down into three layers: 1) life is limited, everyone has to end his life one day; 2) life itself is meaningless, we have to find the meaning of existence for our own life; 3) loneliness is eternal, because your inner feelings are unique and cannot be truly understood by others. 'Existence precedes essence', first of all, man exists, and then he can explain himself. Objective idealism holds that man is the product of God, and how man's essence depends on God's stipulation; whereas atheists deny the existence of God, and in their thinking, essence precedes existence, i.e., man completes the stipulation of his own essence before he exists in the world. Sartre's atheistic existentialism argues that "there is no human nature in the world because there is no God in the world who set human nature"<sup>7</sup>. In the beginning, man is empty, but as he seeks and obtains certain things, he makes himself according to his own will. In other words, according to Sartre, man first 'exists' as a being, and at the beginning of his life he is empty, without any innate characteristics, without any essential provisions, and then he creates his own essence according to his own will. The human being, as a special being, must first exist, and then clear his essence. Man is thrown into the world, and when there is no existence of him, the world is nothingness to him; and when he exists himself, this self is empty, and the essence is empty of all, so that he is still confronted with nothingness.

Sartre also says that the World is Absurd, Life is Misery, as he once said, the world is absurd, life is painful, life is meaningless, the pessimism between the lines is overflowing. 'The world is absurd', this absurdity is not an ironic denial of all the rules and regulations of society, but refers to the existence of human beings. Is the absurdity a pejorative irony of the rules of society, the absurdity is simply a description of this existence of man. Sartre argues that existence precedes essence, and that for man, a special being, man exists simply because man is what already exists, for no reason whatsoever. There is no natural essence of man, not because any philosopher, God defined man's essence and then created him. Man exists just as he already exists, so man's existence is absurd, so the world is absurd. And the reason why life is painful is because man exists in a meaningless world, and man is in a state of enmity with the world. Sartre believes that subjectivity occupies the vast

majority of social ideology, i.e., man is free to choose, free to act, and to take control of his own life through subjective initiative. Man is therefore subjective and dominant, so others are objects in relation to the 'I', but how can objects exist when everyone is a subject? According to Sartre, it is because of the subjectivity of man's own existence, and because he struggles with others in order to preserve his subjectivity. Therefore, it is inevitable that there is a conflict between human beings, and the conflict is the primordial meaning of existence for him. Man, as a being prior to his essence, slowly creates all kinds of conflicts, brutal wars, hideous crimes, are caused by such conflicts, and the Other is the source of the conflict. This is another important point made by Sartre: "The other is hell", which means that we must live in the gaze of the other. The self and the other are opposites, subject and object, and both, through the gaze, make the other the object of their consciousness, or even virtualise the other as a being. In order to let the readers feel the horror of 'gaze' more intuitively, Sartre quoted the Greek myth: Medusa in Greek mythology would turn others into stone whenever she was gazed at by them. 'The other is hell' is from Sartre's play *The Confinement*, which is about three ghosts who are waiting to go to hell and keep on deceiving and torturing each other, and finally realise that they don't have to wait to go to hell, because they are already in hell. In other words, the present world is undoubtedly 'hell', and it is painful for people to live in such an environment, which can only bring sadness and despair to people, both the poor and the rich.

Sartre's novel, *Nausea* (1938), serves as the literary bedrock upon which his existential ontology is erected, most notably establishing the cardinal principle that 'existence precedes essence' through its unflinching portrayal of the world's profound absurdity. Antoine Roquentin, the novel's introspective protagonist—a historian adrift in the banal provinciality of Bouville—embodies this reversal of traditional metaphysics, where human beings emerge not as preordained artifacts with inherent purposes but as contingent entities compelled to forge their significance amid an indifferent cosmos. Sartre, drawing from his phenomenological encounters in Berlin, crafts Roquentin's diary as a raw chronicle of this awakening, transforming abstract speculation into a narrative of existential dread that prefigures the systematic exposition in *Being and Nothingness* (1943). The novel's absurdity crystallizes in Roquentin's encounters with the sheer gratuity of being, where objects and sensations assert their unmotivated presence, defying any teleological rationale. This is no intellectual abstraction but a somatic upheaval: the titular nausea erupts as Roquentin grapples with existence's viscous superfluity, as seen in his confrontation with a chestnut tree root during a rain-soaked reverie. He records:

"Suddenly there was a great noise of roots, a sound like a gasp of pain. The tree was groaning. I saw its roots, black and twisted, writhing under the earth like the tentacles of an octopus. It was hideous, this black, slimy thing, covered with mud and dead leaves. And it was alive. It was alive and it was suffering. I thought of the men who had planted it, who had watered it, who had watched it grow. They thought they were giving it a meaning, a destiny. But it had none. It was there, gratuitous, absurd."<sup>8</sup>

This passage encapsulates the world's absurdity as an ontological scandal: the tree root 'exists' without necessity, a brute eruption of en-soi (being-in-itself) that mocks human projections of essence. Roquentin's revulsion stems from recognizing contingency's tyranny—things simply are overflowing with pointless plenitude, unanchored by divine or

rational order. As he elaborates elsewhere, “The essential thing is contingency. I mean that one cannot define existence as necessity. To exist is simply to be there.”<sup>9</sup> Here, Sartre inverts Aristotelian teleology: essence does not precede existence for humans, who, like the root, arrive gratuitously and must retroactively impose purpose through anguished choice. Roquentin's historical labors—meticulously reconstructing the life of the Marquis de Rolleston—crumble under this insight, revealing biography as futile bad faith, a vain quest to essentialize the inessential.

Yet, Nausea's establishment of these tenets aligns seamlessly with Sartre's broader philosophical humanism, offering not nihilistic resignation but a prelude to authentic creation. Roquentin's misery—his isolation from Anny's illusory ‘perfect moments’ and the café's jazz-fueled banalities—forces a pivot: “I wanted the moments of my life to follow one another without any gaps, to be like beads on a string... But now I know: it's all a farce.”<sup>10</sup> This despair births resolve; inspired by a phonograph's ephemeral melody, he vows to author a novel that endows the absurd with invented heft: “It would have to be beautiful and hard as steel and make people ashamed of their existence.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, existence's precedence demands freedom's exercise—choice as rebellion against absurdity—echoing the engaged praxis in Sartre's later plays like *The Flies* (1943).

In the context of 20th-century crises, Nausea resonates as a diagnostic tool, prefiguring existentialism's therapeutic role. As Roquentin's epiphany unfolds, it invites readers to confront their own contingencies, transforming literature into a mirror for philosophical self-fashioning. This novel, then, is no mere prelude but the existential forge: absurdity unveiled, essence deferred, freedom inexorably claimed.

### ***No Exit*: Intersubjectivity, Bad Faith, and the Hell of the Gaze:**

Debuting in 1944 amid Vichy France's stifling censorship, *No Exit* (*Huis Clos*) distills Sartrean drama into a suffocating salon, where eternity unfolds sans implements of torment. The arrivals—Garcin, the spineless journalist; Inez, the venomous seductress; and Estelle, the vain murderess—unwittingly forge their inferno through reciprocal scrutiny. Garcin's epiphany, “Hell is other people!”<sup>12</sup> crystallizes the regard's tyranny: external eyes petrify our becoming into static identity.

Bad faith permeates the ensemble's machinations. Garcin importunes Inez for exoneration—“Only believe me... I am not a coward”<sup>13</sup>—while evading his desertion's truth. Inez's predatory insight lacerates illusions: “I'm your lurer... I'm the one who'll be with you”<sup>14</sup>. Estelle's vanity, chasing reflections and admirers, epitomizes escapist denial. Their vicious interplay—accusation laced with desire—illustrates Sartre's thesis: “Hell is other people because most of us are cowards and knaves.”<sup>15</sup>

The play's economical staging—dialogue as scalpel—forces confrontation, evolving philosophy into performative critique. *No Exit* interrogates existentialism's social fissures, affirming literature's power to unsettle complacency.

The core themes of *No Exit* are ‘Bad Faith’ and the ‘Hell of the Other’. Sartre's existentialism warns that true freedom breeds anguish, as we must constantly choose our essence amid absurdity. Yet, to flee this vertigo, humans resort to bad faith: a pernicious self-lie where we deny our agency, pretending to be fixed roles or victims of circumstance rather than authors of our lives. In *No Exit*, this manifests in a bare, locked room serving as the afterlife for three damned souls: Joseph Garcin, a cowardly journalist executed for

pacifism; Inez, a sadistic postal clerk who destroyed a love triangle; and Estelle, a glamorous socialite who smothered her illegitimate child. No pitchforks or flames await—their torment is each other.

The play's genius lies in its distillation of Sartre's intersubjective ontology from *Being and Nothingness* (1943): our *pour-soi* (fluid, choosing consciousness) seeks transcendence, but the regard (gaze) of the Other reduces us to *en-soi* (inert object). Garcin's plea—“So that's the arrangement, is it? A pure mind can see the truth, but a pure mind can't act”<sup>16</sup>—exposes his bad faith; he begs validation from Inez to rewrite his cowardice as heroism, all while the door remains unlocked. Inez, with predatory lucidity, mirrors his denial back: “I'm your lurer... I'm the one who'll be with you at the resurrection of the flesh.”<sup>17</sup> Estelle, addicted to admiration, ignores her victim's accusing shade, embodying narcissistic evasion. Their sadomasochistic triangle—accusations laced with erotic tension—culminates in Garcin's despairing cry: “Hell is other people!”<sup>18</sup> Sartre clarifies in his philosophy: hell arises not from isolation but from mutual objectification, where “the Other's look fashions my body into an object.”<sup>19</sup>, perpetuating inauthenticity. Freedom lingers—escape demands mutual honesty—but bad faith prevails, a wartime allegory for Vichy's moral abdication.

This setup establishes bad faith as relational pathology: unlike solitary nausea, it's a social contagion, where we co-conspire in our chains. Sartre's drama forces confrontation—no exit from self-awareness. *No Exit* operationalizes bad faith through confined theatrical economy—90 minutes of escalating dialogue mirroring existential entrapment—making it more immediate than the sprawling phenomenology of *Being and Nothingness* or the mythic sweep of *The Flies* (1943). It builds on *Nausea's* (1938) absurdity but shifts to interpersonal dynamics, influencing Sartre's later ethics of engagement. The play's brevity amplifies its punch: audiences leave questioning their own deceptions, as Sartre intended for ‘committed literature’.

In contrast to Kierkegaard's inward bad faith as sin against the self or Nietzsche's resentment as herd weakness, Sartre's is dialogic and political—echoing Heidegger's *Das Man* (the anonymous ‘They’) but ethicized toward solidarity. *No Exit* endures as existential theater's gold standard, probing why we choose hellish complicity.

### ***The Flies: Mythic Reclamation of Freedom and Responsibility:***

Sartre's 1943 adaptation of the Oresteia, *The Flies*, alchemizes ancient lore into a manifesto for emancipation. In remorse-choked Argos, tyrannized by Aegistheus and Clytemnestra, Orestes and Electra orchestrate vengeance against Agamemnon's slayers. Zeus, remorse's divine puppeteer, deploys guilt-flies to subjugate the masses—metaphors for internalized oppression. Orestes's filicide shatters the spell, but bequeaths him the swarm's eternal chase, a badge of unyielding duty.

Liberty's anthem resounds in Orestes's proclamation: “I am my liberty... Human life begins on the far side of despair.”<sup>20</sup> Departing from Aeschylus's divinely adjudicated Orestes, Sartre's avenger owns his deed: “I have taken Electra's place... I have chosen. Henceforth, I am no longer free”<sup>21</sup>—a ‘bondage’ of chosen fidelity, aligning with “Man is condemned to be free... responsible for everything he does.”<sup>22</sup>

Veiled as mythic fable, the drama lambasts collaborationist France; Zeus embodies coercive authority: “You can always choose to love me... or hate me.”<sup>23</sup>, mocking illusory

options. Orestes's atheism reclaims myth for humanism, spurning godly fiat for human edict. Nietzsche's tragic Dionysus in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) celebrates mythic surge, but Sartre weaponizes it against tyranny, recasting flies as assumable remorse rather than vengeful specters. Kierkegaard's teleological suspension in *Fear and Trembling* (1843) justifies faith's isolation; Orestes's solidarity, however, galvanizes the collective: "You must take your past upon yourselves... Dirty hands, that's the truth."<sup>24</sup>

The philosophical core themes of *The Flies* is 'Freedom as Choice and Responsibility'. Sartre's philosophy insists that humans are "condemned to be free"<sup>25</sup>, thrust into existence without predefined paths or excuses—divine, social, or otherwise—forcing us to invent ourselves through unrelenting choices. This freedom is anguishing because every decision forges our essence and implicates others, yet it is the ground of authenticity. In *The Flies*, Sartre dramatizes this through Orestes, the exiled prince of Argos, who returns to avenge his father Agamemnon's murder by killing his mother Clytemnestra and her lover Aegistheus.

The play's Argos is a stifled polis haunted by guilt-flies—swarms symbolizing the oppressive remorse imposed by Zeus, the god of order and manipulation. The citizens, paralyzed by collective bad faith (self-deception to evade freedom), wallow in staged remorse, allowing tyrants to rule unchallenged. Orestes, initially detached and seeking only escape, encounters his sister Electra and confronts his heritage. In a climactic act of choice, he says the usurpers, declaring: "I am my liberty... I have chosen. Henceforth, I am no longer free."<sup>26</sup> This paradox captures Sartre's essence: true freedom binds us to the consequences of our acts. Orestes embraces the flies—not as divine punishment, but as self-assumed guilt—liberating Argos and himself. He tells the people: "You are free! Elect freedom and bear it, like a wound"<sup>27</sup>, urging them to choose responsibility over subjugation. This establishes freedom of choice as revolutionary praxis: against Zeus's deterministic theology, "You can always choose to love me... or hate me."<sup>28</sup> a false binary mocking authoritarianism, Orestes's act affirms human sovereignty. The play critiques Vichy collaboration, where 'choice' meant acquiescence; instead, Sartre posits choice as rebellion, echoing his wartime ethos that inaction is itself a choice.

*The Flies* predates Sartre's popularized lecture *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1946) and builds on *Being and Nothingness* (1943), but it uniquely enacts freedom through theatrical immediacy—characters' dilemmas unfolding in real-time, compelling audiences to reflect on their own choices amid occupation. Unlike *Nausea* (1938), which probes absurdity's nausea in isolation, or *No Exit* (1944), which traps freedom in interpersonal hells via the gaze, *The Flies* celebrates choice's emancipatory potential. Orestes's arc—from tourist-like observer to committed actor—mirrors Sartre's shift from phenomenological description to engaged ethics.

Scholars like Thomas R. Flynn note the play's role in politicizing existential freedom, influencing post-war thinkers from Simone de Beauvoir to Frantz Fanon. By play's end, Orestes departs into exile, flies in tow, embodying freedom's cost: "Dirty hands, that's the truth"<sup>29</sup>. This isn't despair but a call to action—choice as the forge of meaning. For deeper reading, Stuart Gilbert's 1946 English translation preserves the mythic intensity. Sartre's drama here reminds us: in a world of contingencies, to choose is to live.

**Conclusion:**

Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea*, *No Exit*, and *The Flies* transcend generic boundaries, constituting a philosophical odyssey where fiction forges thought. Through Roquentin's visceral absurdity, Garcin's intersubjective hell, and Orestes's burdensome liberty, Sartre vivifies freedom's terror and triumph, bad faith's seduction, and responsibility's imperative. Aligned with his ontology, these works affirm existence's gratuity, urging readers to author meaning amid void. Sartre forges an ethics of implication—literary in form, revolutionary in aim.

Yet, in the stark light of present era, Sartre's legacy demands a realistic appraisal, unvarnished by romanticism. Our world—riven by cascading climate disasters, the unchecked sprawl of artificial intelligence that commodifies human choice, resurgent authoritarianisms from Eastern Europe to the Global South, and a lingering post-pandemic fatigue that amplifies isolation—mirrors the absurd contingencies of Roquentin's Bouville more than ever. Algorithms curate our gazes, trapping us in *No Exit*-like echo chambers of misinformation and performative outrage, where bad faith manifests not in wartime salons but in viral thread and deep fake diplomacy. Freedom of choice, Orestes's hard-won prize, feels increasingly illusory amid economic precarity and surveillance states that preempt agency, turning existential anguish into systemic exhaustion.

Sartre's humanism, for all its optimism, falters here without adaptation: his call to “act as if the freedom of all was at stake in our acts”<sup>30</sup> rings hollow if unmoored from intersectional realities—racial inequities, gender-based violence, and ecological debt—that his Eurocentric lens often overlooked. Still, his literature offers pragmatic anchors: *Nausea*'s nausea as a cue to dismantle AI-driven essentialisms; *No Exit*'s relational hell as a warning against polarized social media, where the Other's gaze fuels cancel culture's cruelties; *The Flies*' mythic resolve as inspiration for grassroots resistance, from climate strikes to digital detox collectives, where we shoulder “dirty hands” to reclaim collective liberty.

Realistically, existentialism won't solve these crises—Sartre himself grappled with Marxism's materialist corrections to his idealism, as in *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960). Nor does it promise utopia; it equips us for Sisyphean persistence, acknowledging life's misery without paralysis. In present era's flux, Sartre's blend of story and thought compels a grounded praxis: read, reflect, resist—not as isolated leaps, but as networked choices that humanize the absurd. Literature, then, remains our unflinching ally, sparking not grand revolutions but daily authenticities amid the grind.

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