

# Gender and the Abject in Sartre

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## Abstract:

This essay takes Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection as a starting-point to explore the relationship of the French nation to German fascism in the twentieth century — a relationship marked by an othering of fascism as foreign. To investigate this relationship, the essay specifically analyzes the discussion of fascism and the phobic abjection of the feminized (female or homosexual) Other in the early work of France's leading philosopher of the twentieth century, Jean-Paul Sartre. In contrast to Sartre's claims to an unequivocally antifascist ideological stance, his early work demonstrates the historical continuity between the modern European patriarchal tradition and fascism, and the dialectical implication even of antifascist philosophy and art in fascist thinking.

There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. (Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* 256)

1 In this essay I will take Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection as a starting-point to explore the relationship of the French nation to German fascism in the twentieth century — a relationship long marked by an othering of fascism as foreign or non-French. To investigate this relationship, I will specifically analyze the discussion of fascism and the phobic abjection of the feminized (female or homosexual) other in the early work of France's leading philosopher of the twentieth century, Jean-Paul Sartre. In that Sartre's work gives expression to the extreme fear of the feminine that, as Klaus Theweleit has argued, is at the basis not only of patriarchal society in general, but also of its extreme manifestation, fascism, it can serve as an example of the dialectical implication even of antifascist critiques in fascist thinking.

2 As Kristeva has pointed out in *Powers of Horror*, the continually endangered boundary between the inside and the (ultimately illusory) outside of a given symbolic system — such as, for instance, the nation — can only be maintained through a process of othering. Kristeva posits that abjection occurs when the rules of classification peculiar to a certain symbolic system cannot be maintained — that is, when "leakage" occurs. The binary structure of patriarchal society, the basic separation of (masculinized) inside/center and (feminized) outside/margin, cannot be kept intact. Abjection is a blurring of boundaries, a contamination of the "proper" center by the outside. The abject is both the zone where contamination occurs and the contaminating matter itself:

It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite. (Kristeva 4)

The transgression of established separations and the impossibility of keeping these strict separations intact produce what Kristeva calls the "abject." Abjection is thus the mechanism by means of which patriarchal society, in the interest of establishing a clear inside/outside division, constructs the "feminine" as its other — as everything that threatens that distinction.

3 Well-known scholars of fascism such as Klaus Theweleit have argued that the attempt to establish strict classificatory boundaries and the abjection of alterity are at the heart not only of patriarchal societies, but to a heightened degree also of fascist patriarchal societies. Both Theweleit's exploration of the proto-fascist male psychic constitution in his classic work, *Männerfantasien* (*Male Fantasies*), and Kristeva's analysis of fascism in *Powers of Horror* center on the fear of the invasion by the feminized other. My Kristevan analysis of the rhetoric of alterity in Sartre's drama *Les mouches*, his philosophical treatise *L'être et le néant*, and other early texts, reveals a patriarchal language marked by the fear of contamination and points to the continuities between Sartre's patriarchal thinking and what Theweleit has theorized as the extreme manifestation of patriarchal society, namely fascism.

4 I would like to emphasize clearly here that I am not claiming that Sartre was a fascist. Rather I aim to point to the problematic nature of an "othering" of fascism. Such an "othering" has marked both Sartre's early work and — until quite recently — France's official stance towards its role in WWII. While France's reassessment of its war-time responsibility started in the 1960s, I argue (in response to the American historian Robert Paxton's different assessment quoted below) that there was a long way to go from the early questions often asked by a younger generation and the public acknowledgments by the French government and other institutions that the second half of the 1990s saw.

5 It was Theodor Adorno who, in his *Negative Dialectics*, insisted on the inescapability of dialectical contradiction, on the 'remainder' inevitably excluded in all conceptual identity. Adorno is interested in the part of the object that is not included in the identifiable thought, in the specificity, the concrete and individual, that is covered up by generalizing concepts. Conceptual thinking, in other words, does not readily acknowledge the multi-valence of social experience. I would argue that this insight also applies to the concept "fascism." Neil Levi and Michael Rothberg cite Adorno's famous and equally misunderstood statement that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (12). They explain that "[w]hat initially concerned Adorno [. . .] was less the impropriety of any artistic response to the Holocaust than how culture in general and poetry in particular failed to recognize their own implication in the 'sinister' forces of total social integration that made the barbarism of Auschwitz possible in the first

place" (12). I argue that Sartre's work as well, while claiming fascism as its absolute other, is also implicated in its structures.

6 My essay thus explores the complicated relationship between Sartre's celebrated antifascist art and philosophy and fascism. Although I do not intend to minimize in any way the atrocities committed under German fascism, my argument also aims to establish the continuities between Western modernity, including French cultural discourse, and the catastrophe that was early-twentieth century fascism.

7 Similar to the *Historikerstreit* (Historians' Debate) about the uniquely German nature of the Holocaust, a debate that German intellectuals have engaged in with varying degrees of virulence since 1986 and that was stirred up again in 1996 by Daniel Goldhagen's controversial book, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, France's and French citizens' relationship to Nazism and the German occupation of France during WWII have been the subjects of a recurring debate. The trials of Klaus Barbie, René Bousquet and Paul Touvier, the 1997/8 trial of Maurice Papon in Bordeaux, and the revelations about François Mitterand's questionable past again brought up the issue of the complicity of the Vichy Regime in Nazi war crimes. Former French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin took the Papon trial as an occasion to proclaim that concerning the period of Nazi occupation, "il n'y a pas de culpabilité de la France parce que [. . .] Vichy était la négation de la France et en tout cas la négation de la République" (Montvalon 8).<sup>1</sup>

8 In spite of such proclamations denying any French complicity, the American historian Robert Paxton wrote in 1999 that "the often expressed American view that the French won't confront the dark side of their response to Nazi occupation has been false for thirty years. Ever since students began challenging their elders' reticence in 1968, France has undergone binges of self-scrutiny, whose feverish and repetitive character led Henry Rousso to give his book on history and memory the title 'The Vichy Syndrome'" ("The Trial of Maurice Papon" 32). Indeed, for some years now, France has been engaged in what Caroline Wiedmer calls a spectacular reassessment of its past, and specifically of its "uniquely ambiguous relationship to Nazi Germany" (3).

9 It is often argued that Sartre embodies the twentieth century better than anyone. In 2000, the French philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy published a study of the twentieth century entitled *Le siècle de Sartre*. I will posit that Sartre's work specifically highlights the ambiguities inherent, in the twentieth century, in the tensions between fascism and antifascism. Notwithstanding Sartre's role in the intellectual Résistance and his reputation as

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<sup>1</sup> Jospin's affirmation was very favorably received in the National Assembly (as well as by the RPR's Jean-Louis Debré, showing that this assessment transcended party lines).

an antifascist writer and activist, a feminist and psychoanalytical examination of Sartre's early texts clearly points to the limits of this antifascism. In this essay I will not discuss in more depth the compromises Sartre made to get his work published during the occupation years — his articles in the collaborationist cultural review *Comœdia*; his publishing with Gallimard, which had been "dejewed" (*désenjuivé*) by the *liste Otto*; the public performance of his plays in occupied Paris, or other tacit accommodations with state antisemitism. In that respect as well, Sartre is more or less typical of what Omer Bartov calls "the moral confusion and the depth of accommodation that characterized the French intelligentsia in the first years of the Occupation" (65-66).

10 In my textual analysis of the rhetoric of Sartre's work, I will instead start my investigation with a brief exploration of Sartre's "Qu'est-ce qu'un collaborateur?" before embarking on a detailed examination of Sartre's famous drama *Les mouches*, a play first performed in Paris in 1943 under German occupation (1940-44). Whereas Sartre repeatedly emphasized the antifascist intentions of *Les mouches*, and whereas David Carroll, in his excellent study *French Literary Fascism*, counts Sartre, together with Adorno, as one of the "important antifascist theorists" (12), my analysis of the rhetoric of alterity in *Les mouches* and other early texts identifies the blind spots of Sartre's anti-fascism, revealing a language that is deeply patriarchal.

11 In his standard work on German fascism, *Männerfantasien*, Theweleit examined early-twentieth century European fascism as the extreme manifestation of the pervasive, constitutive fear of alterity in patriarchal society. Fascism is thus not external to Western society, but a logical extension and continuation of its fundamental, constitutive traits. The present essay supports this argument of continuity by pointing to the similarities between Sartre's language and the proto-fascist texts studied in *Männerfantasien*. Theweleit not only analyzed the psychic constitution of proto-fascist men, but repeatedly also emphasized *the dialectical implication of antifascist critiques in fascist thinking*.

### **Fascism as the Absolute Other**

12 Similar to Jospin's statement quoted at the beginning of this essay, Sartre's "Qu'est-ce qu'un collaborateur" (1945), although published more than fifty years earlier, asserted that collaborators with the German occupation force had no real links to contemporary France (48): "soutenu par des armées étrangères, il [le collaborateur] ne pouvait être que l'agent de l'étranger" (50). In a by now famous misspelling, Sartre wrote the French fascist writer Robert Brasillach's name with a z, thereby emphasizing Brasillach's ideological ties with Nazism and,

again, the "foreignness" of this association. As Russell Berman notes, "[t]his was perhaps no naive error but at least a significant lapsus if not a calculated effort to represent the collaborator as a traitor, as if the French intellectual could have greeted the Nazis only by surrendering his native identity and aiding an emphatically foreign power" (xi).

13 The assumption that fascism is categorically "other," i.e., historically and culturally different from French culture, pervades Sartre's essay. Historically, in addition to this perception of fascism as alien to Western modernity, two myths in particular still pervade our interpretation of fascism and modernity: that fascist cultural production was homogenous and artistically inferior, and that modern art heroically resisted totalitarian ideologies.<sup>2</sup> The problematic concerning the relationship between modern art and fascism, and between fascism and anti-fascism, is one of the main concerns of this essay.

14 Sartre's essay is one of the most celebrated expressions of an earlier generation that denied any native French involvement in fascism and established fascism as the absolute Other. Whereas Carroll equates fascism with "the ideology of masculine superiority radicalized or even absolutized" and "a symptom of a deep fear [. . .] and violent rejection of nonsubservient or nonidealized women" (148), this essay seeks to transcend the emphasis on the biological sexes as fixed categories of identity and specifically a stable concept of the biologically female that plagues not only Sartre's work<sup>3</sup>, but also Theweleit's somewhat essentialist study.

15 If the process of othering, the repudiation of alterity, is at the heart of fascism, the dichotomy that Sartre attempts to establish between himself and the fascist Other, and by implication between France and German Nazism, collapses. If, as Theweleit has argued, fascism is an extreme manifestation of what latently underlies patriarchal societies, forming their foundational discriminatory structure, France, like any patriarchal society, then bears the roots of fascism within it. The electoral successes in France of the *Front National*, whose politics consist mainly in "othering" immigrants and other (non-white) races, corroborate this point.

16 However, it is important not completely to conflate fascism, patriarchy, and othering. As Lynda Hart observes in *Fatal Women*, the formation of subjectivity is based on the process

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<sup>2</sup> In this context Henry Rousso speaks of "the myth of resistancialism" (*Vichy* 20-21).

<sup>3</sup> With regard to Sartre, Judith Butler writes: "Women are not only represented falsely within the Sartrian frame of signifying subject and signified Other, but the falsity of the signification points out the entire structure of representation as inadequate." Butler understands gender as "a *relation* among socially constituted subjects in specific contexts. This relational or contextual point of view suggests that what the person 'is,' and, indeed, what "gender 'is,' is always relative to the constructed relations in which it is determined. As a shifting and contextual phenomenon, gender does not denote a substantive being, but a relative point of convergence among culturally and historically specific sets of relations" (*Trouble* 10).

of othering, on the establishment not only of an ego position different from the (m)other, but also on the differentiation from the "alien" within:

If the "I" is produced through the expulsion of waste products, this process can be understood as a kind of elemental "othering," a construction of subjectivity based on excluding or expelling the "alien" within. The body makes waste in order to constitute itself as autonomous, sovereign, pure. The formation of subjectivity is thus a process that occurs not between discrete subjects but rather through the concealment of differences that exist within the subject. (98)

17 What differentiates fascism, literary or other, from more "benign" othering as part of the formation of subjectivity or community identity is the former's totality.<sup>4</sup> Although it is equally important not to conflate the blind spots of antifascist texts with fascism itself, Sartre's treatment of alterity does fit the description Carroll gives of the gender ideology and the literary fascism of the French writer Drieu la Rochelle:

Such an ideology is constituted by the project to establish both genders as distinct and totalizable identities, to make man as such or woman as such either an ideal type or the representative of absolute negativity, of a pathological deviation from and threat to the norm or ideal represented by the other. If this is so, no approach that accepts such distinctions and the hierarchies they impose, no matter which term is privileged or how vigorously the masculinist ideology of fascism is opposed, can effectively undermine the ultimate gender ideal of literary fascism: to be 'total.'" (169-170)

Sartre establishes a strict gender dichotomy and poses both female and male identity as stable and essential. Woman is represented as a negativized threat to the norm represented by man. It is the totality, the absoluteness, of the representation of gender in Sartre that is reminiscent of the patriarchy's extreme outgrowth in fascism.

## **Abjection**

18 In "Qu'est-ce qu'un collaborateur," Sartre moreover discusses collaboration as an illness ("une maladie"; see above "contamination"), "un fait de désintégration" (46), an extreme danger exerted by the foreign Other and its collaborators resulting from the disintegration of the French nation. In Sartre's essay, collaborators are described as threatening the purity, the clean and proper nature of the symbolic inside with abject

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Butler, "For a Careful Reading": "It might be clarifying [. . .] to consider that whereas every subject is formed through a process of differentiation, and that the process of becoming differentiated is a necessary condition of the formation of the 'I' as a bounded and distinct kind of being, that there are better and worse forms of differentiation, and that the worse kinds tend to abject and degrade those from whom the 'I' is distinguished [. . .]. That an 'I' is differentiated from another does not mean that the other must become structurally homologous to the 'I' in order to enter into community with that 'I.' At the level of political community, what is classed for is the difficult work of cultural translation in which difference is honored without (a) assimilating difference to identity or (b) making difference an unthinkable fetish of alterity" (139-40).

contamination, Kristevan excess ("déchet," 48, 49) and, according to Sartre, they therefore have to be ab-jected.

19 Kristeva's psychoanalytical essay establishes an analogy between the perceived threat to the body politic and the imagined threat to the organic body and the self traditionally associated with it. She theorizes the threat of ego dissolution, of disintegration, of a falling back into a pre-oedipal state of non-differentiation. Following the anthropologist Mary Douglas' influential work, *Purity and Danger*, it can be argued that our understanding of complex social formations and views of social order and cohesion take as their model our interpretations of the structure of living organisms. As Tina Campt has outlined, Douglas' "work theorizes how the perceived danger of bodily pollution and aspirations to purity and its maintenance symbolizes the relationship between parts of society and mirrors desires for hierarchy, symmetry and homogeneity in the larger social system" (no pag.). Within the cultural and historical context discussed in this essay (France and Germany during the 1940s), the symbolically constructed boundaries of the body politic of the nation are imagined and represented as analogous to (equally symbolically constructed) bodily boundaries. These boundaries are involved in the constitution not only of national, but also of racial (or rather raced/racialized) and gendered forms of identity (Aryans vs. non-Aryans, men vs. women). As we will see in the brief analysis of Sartre's homophobia that follows and my longer discussion of the gender ideology in Sartre's work, the national body politic itself is clearly gendered (as well as raced or racialized, although race is not the primary focus of this essay). In brief, the notion of bodily boundaries and the perceived consequences of their transgression and violation in social terms are at the heart of Kristeva's theory of abjection. The extreme fear of contamination of the *Volkskörper*, in its literal as well as figurative sense, is characteristic of literary and non-literary texts from the era of National Socialism. Although Sartre critiques exactly this fear of contamination (by the Jewish body) in *Réflexions sur la question juive* (40), the same fear is found in his "Qu'est-ce qu'un collaborateur?".

20 What is most threatening, of course (as the Lynda Hart quote cited above already showed), is that the Other is really first and foremost inside — inside the symbolic system and inside the ego — and that this threatening *inside* can only be "projected" outside.<fn>I am using the term "projection" in quotation marks, because, as Theweleit (94-95) points out, it is indeed problematic when used in reference to the subjects of his analysis, the protofascist Freikorps members.</fn> Sartre as well establishes a link between collaboration and the collaborator's "inner nature," which is latent but manifests itself under the right circumstances (43). Sartre's collaborators, in other words, were already subject to the disintegration of the

self before they succumbed to the integrative forces offered them by Nazism (which provided them with what Theweleit calls an "ego armour"). Sartre describes this inner nature as inherently traitorous. The repression he consequently advocates is clearly reflective of the simultaneous repression and controlled incitement of feminized libidinal drives in patriarchal society. As Theweleit has demonstrated, fascist thinking takes this fear of the (feminized) inner drives and the ensuing repression and controlled incitement to its most acute level. Whereas Sartre argues that the collaborator tries to kill off "the human" in himself ("anéantir l'humain en lui et chez les autres," 60), he (Sartre) does not seem to be aware that his own article, submitting to a rigidity and restrictiveness reminiscent of fascist texts, targets inner human nature and its disintegrative pull as the very source of the described problem (collaboration). Without elaborating further, Sartre advocates repressive laws that would keep what he describes as the feminized drives of democracy ("un ennemi que les sociétés démocratiques portent [. . .] en leur sein;" 60) under control: "il convient qu'on fasse enfin des lois restrictives: il ne doit pas avoir de liberté contre la liberté" (60). On the intrapsychic level, the mechanism — the repudiation of the Other — is the same for both the collaborator as described by Sartre, and for Sartre himself. This mechanism also finds expression in Sartre's dualistic and hegemonic language, when he consistently refers to the collaborator as an essential(ist) "il," who is then continuously — but, as I have shown, ultimately in vain — opposed to the "nous" of the article.

21 Reflecting patriarchal societies' feminization of the abject Other, the Sartre of "Qu'est-ce qu'un collaborateur?"<sup>5</sup>, in clearly misogynist and homophobic fashion, discusses collaborators with the German occupation force as weak, effeminate men, as women and/or as homosexuals, and as societal misfits ('les éléments marginaux,' 46; 'les ratés,' 47). The collaborator, according to Sartre, uses "les armes du faible, de la femme," i.e., "la ruse, l'astuce [. . .] le charme et la séduction" (58). As we can see from the syntactic juxtaposition of "femininité" and "haine de l'homme" in the essay (60), the target of the perceived threat posed by the feminine is man.

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<sup>5</sup> As Carroll (152) points out, "Sartre was certainly not alone among political theorists of the left in characterizing the fascist as a 'failed male' or homosexual. Theodor Adorno, in a section of *Minima Moralia* [. . .] [w]ritten in 1944 and entitled 'Tough Baby,' made the sweeping claim that 'totalitarianism and homosexuality belong together.'" See also Andrew Hewitt's excellent chapter, "The Frankfurt School and the Political Pathology of Homosexuality," in his *Political Inversions*. Theweleit takes up — and for a long and disturbing time goes along with the conflation of homosexuality and fascism, in order eventually to prove it wrong.



### *Les mouches and La nausée*

22 The repudiation of the feminized Other that characterizes Sartre's essay "Qu'est-ce qu'un collaborateur" is also a trait of his drama *Les mouches*, written two years earlier. Since Theweleit examines the intense fear of the feminine as the central trait of both the patriarchal and fascist psychological constitutions, my investigation of Sartre's drama focuses on the representation of the female protagonist, Electra; but contrary to earlier, at times essentialist studies of Sartre's "sexism," I also want to look beyond anatomical sex or gender. As this essay will further show, existence, nature, the fluvial facticity of the *en-soi*, sexuality, maternal engulfment, and feminized abjection are what Sartre's characters fear, what causes their nausea and what — like Kristeva's abject — fascinates them at the same time. By the end of Sartre's play, the threatening feminized force represented by Electra has been contained, appropriated and absorbed by the male hero, Orestes. Whereas Oreste Pucciani asserts that "Sartre was perfectly aware of the dangers of dualism and protected himself against it" (153), I argue that in contrast to Hegel's work, Sartre's rigid dualistic ontology denies the possibility of a synthesis or mediation between the (masculinized) self and the (feminized) Other. Whereas Theweleit's protofascist subjects found their protective "ego armours" in military mass formations, Sartre establishes a rigid binary philosophical system to fend off the perceived threat posed by feminized abjection.

23 A juxtaposition of *Les mouches* with the protofascist texts analyzed in *Männerfantasien* is especially intriguing since Sartre himself repeatedly emphasized the political, antifascist implications of his modern Oresteia adaptation, and since the validation of *Les mouches* as "a work of political protest" (Pucciani 159) has gone largely unquestioned in Sartre scholarship.<sup>6</sup> Following Sartre's essay "Paris sous l'Occupation," which describes the Vichy régime's cult of remorse, national defeat and humiliation, the attitude of the people of Argos, who live in fear and remorse, can indeed be read as a thematization and critique of the attitude of the French people during the Nazi occupation. As Ingrid Galster points out, Vichy propaganda spread the idea that the French defeat was a logical consequence of the sins committed by the French during the Third Republic (12). In this vein, the character of Jupiter can be interpreted as Hitler, and Aegisthus as the Vichy government or Pétain. In his Sartre biography, Ronald Hayman furthermore argues that Clytemnestra can be read as a collaborator: "The queen represents the docile conformism of occupied France: 'For fifteen years we have kept silent, and only our eyes betray us' (187). Hayman's reading makes Orestes and Electre appear as Resistance fighters. Like Orestes' liberation of Argos,

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<sup>6</sup> One notable exception is Gilbert Joseph's *Une si douce occupation*.

the *Résistance* was, "a movement not of revolution but of revolt. It had no intention of taking power after the war; its single goal was to liberate France from the occupying Nazi forces" (McCall 23). The critique of paternalistic authority structures in Sartre's play, finally, can be seen as a critique of Pétain's speeches proclaiming the renewal of France along the lines of a clerical and restorative paternalism (Kohut 158).

24 In contrast, or rather in addition, to the interpretations prevalent in criticism on Sartre of the surface text of *Les mouches* as a liberal, antipaternalistic and antifascist text, a reading of the subtext, of the "excess" (in Kristeva's sense) of Sartre's play, reveals a language that is not only profoundly patriarchal, but reminiscent of the proto-fascist texts examined by Theweleit. The dualistic role distribution between Electra and Orestes in Sartre's play reflects the binary structure of Western patriarchal thought, where, as feminist theorists such as Hélène Cixous (in the section "Sorties" of *La jeune née*) have pointed out, the devalued side of oppositions such as weakness/strength and nature/culture is associated with the feminine. In Sartre's play, women are again depicted as inefficient and impotent. In contrast to Jean Giraudoux' Oresteia adaptation, *Electre*, written six years earlier, Sartre's Electra is clearly weaker than her brother Orestes. At the beginning of the play, she declares herself too weak to deal with Jupiter, the representative of paternalism, on her own. She waits for Orestes, the male phallic hero ("avec sa grande épée," *Les mouches* 125), to reveal the hollowness of divine authority and to kill her hated mother and step-father. After Orestes has then declared his determination to kill his mother and Aegisthus, Electra accepts Orestes as her brother and acknowledges his male authority: "Oreste, tu es mon frère aîné et le chef de notre famille, prends-moi dans tes bras, protège-moi, car nous allons au-devant de très grandes souffrances" (*Les mouches* 182). Electra sketches the picture of a patriarchal family, in which authority is based on gender and age and entails the protection of the "weaker sex."

25 The same dualistic and hegemonic rhetoric also structures the rest of the play. In contrast to Orestes, who represents metaphysical freedom and authenticity, Electra is shown as ultimately still embroiled in negativized paternalistic authority structures. In spite of her initially very vocal and determined opposition to Jupiter, her latent entanglement in paternalistic conventions becomes manifest when, ravaged by remorse after the murder of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, she accepts Jupiter's interpretation of her act as that of a child who does not bear responsibility. By accepting this interpretation, Electra falls back into paternalistic — i.e. divine, royal and paternal — authority structures, the master-slave dichotomy, and the state of an object (in Sartre's terminology, the state of *en-soi*): "Au secours! Jupiter, *roi* des *Dieux* et des hommes, mon roi, prends-moi dans tes bras, emporte-

moi, protège-moi. Je suivrai ta loi, je serai *ton* esclave et ta chose, j'embrasserai tes pieds et tes genoux" (*Les mouches* 239; my emphases).

26 As Ninette Bailey and Stuart Zane Charmé have both demonstrated, this binary distribution or split between privileged virility and deprivileged/negativized femininity is representative of Sartre's work as a whole. It also structures his first major philosophical treatise, *L'être et le néant*, published in the same year as *Les mouches* (1943), in which Sartre establishes his famous distinction between *être-en-soi*, which stands for inanimate objects, non-human nature, whose being coincides with itself, and *être-pour-soi*, human consciousness.

27 *L'être et le néant* and *Les mouches* clearly complement each other. What separates and distances Orestes from (devalued, feminized) nature or pure existence is his consciousness, which includes his alienation from and dismissal of divine authority. Orestes's murder of his mother, a crime against nature, further reinforces his alienation from nature: "Etranger à moi-même, je sais. Hors nature, contre nature, sans excuse, sans autre recours qu'en moi." (*Les mouches* 235) What Jupiter offers in Sartre's play is a return to the *en-soi* of unconscious nature. He tries to persuade Orestes to leave Argos by illuminating a stone (177). Leaving Argos would deter Orestes from finding his human essence (consciousness) and instead lead him back to mere existence (*en-soi*), to the massiveness of an object in non-human nature, a stone. Contrary to Orestes, at the end of the play Electra chooses to return to the unreflective state of *en-soi*, the state in which the people of Argos find themselves throughout the play. The female protagonist, like many of the other female characters in Sartre's dramas<sup>7</sup>, comes to represent what Sartre (in *L'être et le néant*) criticizes as bad faith (*mauvaise foi*), dishonesty, self-deception.

28 In the section "Les conduites de mauvaise foi" of *L'être et le néant*, Sartre poses the question "Que doit être l'homme en son être, s'il doit pouvoir être de mauvaise foi?" When he starts to answer this question in the next paragraph, his first sentence reads: "Voici, par exemple, une femme [. . .]" (94). On the following page, he predictably concludes: "Nous dirons que cette femme est de mauvaise foi" (95). "Man," on the other hand, is associated with candor, sincerity, with the opposite of bad faith: "Si l'homme est ce qu'il est, la mauvaise foi est à tout jamais impossible et la franchise cesse d'être son idéal pour devenir son être" (98).

29 Another example Sartre gives of bad faith is a homosexual, also repeatedly referred to as "un pédéraste" (103-105). Sartre's homophobia becomes obvious in passages such as the

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Léni in *Les séquestrés d'Altona*, Estelle or Inès in *Huis clos*, Jessica in *Les mains sales*, Lizzie in *La putain respectueuse* and Catherine in *Le diable et le bon dieu*.

following: "L'homosexuel reconnaît *ses fautes* [my emphasis], mais il lutte de toutes ses forces contre l'écrasante perspective que *ses erreurs* [my emphasis] lui constituent un destin" (104). With regard to "the homosexual," Sartre's appeal for sincerity is couched in the following terms: "*Péché* avoué est à moitié pardonné" (104; my emphasis). And he refers to the homosexual as "[le] coupable" (105), the guilty one.

30 At the end of *Les mouches*, Electra falls prey to bad faith. Like Daniel in *Le sursis* or the Autodidact and the bourgeois in *La nausée*, she accepts the calm and permanency of an object, delivered from freedom, responsibility and existential anxiety. She uses her submission to God (Jupiter) as an escape from the human condition.

31 The devaluation not only of women and homosexuals, but also of feminized inner and outer nature links Sartre's work to Western patriarchal ideology and ultimately as well to fascism as theorized in *Männerfantasien*. Since in this tradition feminized libidinal drives are perceived as threatening, *Les mouches* advocates an ideology of emotional restraint. Whereas Orestes, the male hero, thinks rationally and therefore does not come to repent what he has done, Electra is consumed by feelings of guilt, because her participation in the murder was — like Clytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon — an act of passion, of hatred. In *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, Sartre, giving expression to the patriarchal and specifically bourgeois distrust of libidinal drives, denigrates passion:

L'existentialiste ne croit pas à la puissance de la passion. Il ne pensera jamais qu'une belle passion est un torrent dévastateur qui conduit fatalement l'homme à certains actes, et qui, par conséquent, est une excuse. Il pense que l'homme est responsable de sa passion. (37-38)

Passion, according to Sartre, is an escape, an excuse. While Electra consequently cannot escape the plague of the city of Argos, namely, the flies, symbolizing guilt and repentance, Orestes does not feel bothered by them (209). In contrast to Electra's miserable fate at the end of the play, the last sentence of Act II has Orestes say: "Demain je parlerai à mon peuple" (210). Orestes is the new king of Argos, the new — male — authority.

32 As we have seen, it is above all women who are associated with unreflective nature and with animals in Sartre's play. Whereas Orestes senses his alienation from nature, Electra is depicted as still part of nature and metaphorically linked to animals.<sup>8</sup> In their black mourning attire, the women of Argos as well resemble the flies of the play's title. The association between animals and (feminized) lack of consciousness also becomes clear when

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<sup>8</sup> She says to Orestes, for instance: "Tu étais mon frère, le chef de notre famille, tu devais me protéger; mais tu m'as plongée dans le sang, je suis rouge comme un boeuf écorché; toutes les mouches sont après moi, les voraces, et mon coeur est une ruche horrible" (*Les mouches* 280).

Aegisthus calls his subjects (represented as women), whom he keeps in a state of fear and does not want to know that they are free, "chiens" (*Les mouches* 165), dogs.

33 Establishing a link between feminized sexuality, violence, and animal imagery, Sartre uses the latter to thematize the threat posed by feminized and negativized libidinal drives ("inner nature"). In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva links the abject to animals:

The abject confronts us, on the one hand, with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of *animal*. Thus, by way of abjection, primitive societies have marked out a precise area of their culture in order to remove it from *the threatening world of animals or animalism, which were representative of sex and murder*. (12-13; my emphasis)

In his *Die Traumdeutung* (*The Interpretation of Dreams*), Freud interprets animals in dreams as the displacement of the repressed libido. Animal imagery marks the site where libidinal energy and violence meet.

34 In Sartre's play, the apathy of the people of Argos, who fail to warn the returning Agamemnon of the impending violence and danger to his life, is linked to "volupté" and "une femme en rut," a woman "in heat." In the same passage, Jupiter then refers to an old woman as an insect and a fish, as

cette vieille cloporte, là-bas, qui trotte de ses petites pattes noires, en rasant les murs; c'est un beau spécimen de cette faune noire et plate qui grouille dans les lézardes. Je bondis sur l'insecte, je le saisis et je vous le ramène [. . .]. Voilà ma pêche [. . .]. Voyez ces soubresauts de poisson au bout d'une ligne. (*Les mouches* 111)

The woman's "voluptuousness" and silence are held responsible for Agamemnon's death and thus ultimately for bringing the flies to Argos. With reference to the murder of Agamemnon, Jupiter says to the old woman: "Tu as rudement bien dû faire l'amour cette nuit-là" (*Les mouches* 112). This conflation of violence and sexuality is reminiscent of the texts examined by Theweleit, whose fascist subjects' only access to sexuality is through a sexualization of violence. Uncontrolled, unmastered, abject sexuality and nature are what Sartre's characters — like Theweleit's protofascist subjects — fear, what causes their nausea, and what — again like Kristeva's abject — at the same time exerts a deadly fascination over them.

35 Abjection, the fear of engulfment by what is only projected outward, namely the inner drives, the fear of border transgression and ensuing erasure by the feminine, is addressed in *Les mouches* as well as in other texts of Sartre's, such as *La nausée*. In *La nausée*, cities figure as protection from "wild nature," from the feared libidinal drives:

J'ai peur des villes. Mais il ne faut pas en sortir. Si on s'aventure trop loin, on rencontre le cercle de la Végétation. La Végétation a rampé pendant des kilomètres vers les villes. Elle attend. Quand la ville sera morte, la Végétation l'envahira, elle grimpera sur les pierres, elle les enserrera, les fouillera, les fera éclater de ses longues pinces

noires; elle aveuglera les trous et laissera pendre partout des pattes vertes. Il faut rester dans les villes, tant qu'elles sont vivantes, il ne faut pas pénétrer [!] seul sous cette grande chevelure qui est à leurs portes: il faut laisser onduler et craquer sans témoins. Dans les villes, si l'on sait s'arranger, choisir les heures où les bêtes digèrent ou dorment, dans leurs trous, derrière des amoncellements de détritiques organiques, on ne rencontre guère que des minéraux, les moins effrayants des existants. (*La nausée* 217-218)

The unpredictability of what escapes the laws of the symbolic, the threat of the feminine ("elle"), is also addressed in the following passage:

Cependant, la grande nature vague s'est glissée dans leur ville, elle s'est infiltrée, partout, dans leur maison, dans leurs bureaux, en eux-mêmes. Elle ne bouge pas, elle se tient tranquille et eux, ils sont en plein dedans, ils la respirent et ils ne la voient pas, ils s'imaginent qu'elle est dehors, à vingt lieues de la ville. Je la vois, moi, cette nature, je la vois [. . .]. Je sais que sa soumission est paresse, je sais qu'elle n'a pas de lois: ce qu'ils prennent pour sa constance [. . .]. Elle n'a que des habitudes et elle peut en changer demain. (*La nausée* 221)

36 The *patronne* of *La nausée*, who is — due to not only her skin color, but also her maternal traits — a "white woman" in Theweleit's sense, conjures up the fear of the devouring mother. Her scent, that of "a newborn child," can be interpreted as a Freudian displacement for the mother. Whereas this mother figure smothers the narrator, pressing him against her maternal breast, he rescues himself psychologically by "distractedly" evoking the image of another male figure and "intellectual" pursuits. The narrator's reaction to feminized sexuality expressed in metaphors of lower flora and fauna is a feeling of disgust and physiological sickness. The verb *vomir* not only denotes physiological disgust; vomiting also marks a border transgression, the transgression of the bodily boundary between inside and outside and thus, abjection.

J'ai dîné au Rendezvous des Cheminots. La patronne étant là, j'ai dû la baiser, mais c'était bien par politesse. Elle me dégoûte un peu, elle est trop blanche et puis elle sent le nouveau-né. Elle me serrait la tête contre sa poitrine dans un débordement de passion: elle croit bien faire. Pour moi, je grapillais distraitemment son sexe sous les couvertures; puis mon bras s'est engourdi. Je pensais à M. de Rollebon: après tout, qu'est-ce qui m'empêche d'écrire un roman sur sa vie? J'ai laissé aller mon bras le long du flanc de la patronne et j'ai vu soudain un petit jardin avec des arbres bas et larges d'où pendaient d'immenses feuilles couvertes de poils. Des fourmis couraient partout, des mille-pattes et des teignes. Il y avait des bêtes encore plus horribles: leurs corps étaient faits d'une tranche de pain grillé comme on en met en canapé sous les pigeons; elles marchaient de côté avec des pattes de crabe. Les larges feuilles étaient toutes noires de bêtes. Derrière des cactus et des figuiers de Barbarie, la Velléda du Jardin public désignait son sexe du doigt. "Ce jardin sent le vomi," criai-je. (*La nausée* 88-89)

As Kristeva explains, the expulsion of what is inside, nausea, is a protective mechanism necessary to the subject's ego formation.<sup>9</sup> In the passage quoted above, vomiting abjects the threatening inner drives and protects the ego from dissolution, from being engulfed by the suffocating mother.

37 Matrophobia, the fear of the archaic mother, also finds its expression in *Les mouches*, where the feminized Erinyes are depicted as a perversion of maternal love and metaphorically linked to animals, fluids, floods and inundation. In Aeschylus' ancient version of the Oresteia, the Erinyes already represent Clytemnestra's spirit. In Sartre's adaption, the First Erinye, conjuring up images of the engulfing, devouring and suffocating mother, declares that she will roll on Orestes' and Electra's stomachs and chests "comme un torrent sur des cailloux" (*Les mouches* 213; my emphasis) and further states: "La haine m'inonde et me suffoque, elle monte dans mes seins comme du lait" (*Les mouches* 214; my emphasis). She then further predicts her penetration of Electra's body: "J'entrerai en toi comme le mâle en la femelle, car tu es mon épouse, et tu sentiras le poids de mon amour" (*Les mouches* 214). Similar to fluids, the Erinyes, who are (traditionally and also in Sartre) depicted as women, overstep and blur boundaries — including bodily boundaries and the boundaries between male and female sexuality — and are exponents of Kristeva's abject. Moreover, as in Aeschylus, the Erinyes are metaphorically associated with putrefaction and pus (*Les mouches* 216), a contamination of clean, proper matter with improper matter.

38 In *Les mouches*, the threat posed by abjection is thematized not only in the description of the Erinyes, but also in that of the title metaphor — the flies. The flies, which have an important symbolic function, are attracted by flesh/meat and are agents of contamination. The pedagogue who travels with Orestes calls the old women of Argos "[v]ieilles carnes" (*Les mouches* 104), literally "pieces of old, spoiled meat," establishing a metaphorical link between the flies, putrefaction, contamination, and feminized fluidity.<sup>10</sup>

39 The link between Electra, animals, and feminized abjection becomes even clearer when Aegisthus orders Electra to leave town. He declares that if she is still inside the city walls, i.e., the masculinized inside or center, the next day at dawn, she will be slaughtered

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Kristeva: "Loathing an item of food, a piece of filth, waste, or dung. The spasms and vomiting that protect me. The repugnance, the retching that thrusts me to the side and turns me away from defilement, sewage, and muck [. . .]. Food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection [. . .]. I experience a gagging sensation and, still farther down, spasms in the stomach, the belly [. . .] *nausea* makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it. 'I' want none of that element, sign of their desire; 'I' do not want to listen, 'I' do not assimilate it, 'I' expel it. But since the food is not an 'other' for 'me,' who am only in their desire, I expel *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish myself [. . .]. [T]hat trifle turns me inside out, guts sprawling; it is thus that they see that 'I' am in the process of becoming an other at the expense of my own death. During that course in which 'I' become, I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit" (2-3).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. also the images of rats and lepra (*Les mouches* 244).

"comme une brebis galeuse," like a mangy sheep (*Les mouches* 166). Electra, who, like a diseased animal, is threatening contamination, needs to be expelled from the center, abjected. When Electra's dance is interrupted by Jupiter, the people call Electra a seductress and a witch: "Nous n'avons rien fait, ça n'est pas notre faute, elle est venue, elle nous a séduits par ses paroles empoisonnées! A la rivière, la sorcière, à la rivière! Au bûcher!" (*Les mouches* 164-165). Hans-Peter Dürr analyzes the witch as a woman who continually crosses the boundary between inside and outside, culture and nature, civilization and wilderness (46).

40 By depicting feminized abjection as a negative threat, Sartre's play participates in the patriarchal process of othering described by Kristeva. There are only two instances in the play where abjection seems to be presented as a positive force: the Electra of the beginning of *Les mouches*, who is still representing Agamemnon's masculine claim until Orestes comes to replace her in that role; and finally Orestes, the male hero, who has recognized his existential freedom. As the discussion of the viscous and of sexual desire in *L'être et le néant* will show as well, Sartre's work gives expression to the extreme fear of abjection — ultimately, the fear of maternal engulfment and sexuality — that, as Theweleit has suggested, is at the basis of both patriarchal society and fascism.

41 By the end of *Les mouches*, the threatening force represented by Electra, the threat posed by abjection, has been contained and transferred to — not to say, absorbed by — the male hero. This *dénouement*, among other traits, marks Sartre's *Les mouches* as a product of patriarchal society and a masculinist play, which depicts *masculinized* violence and sexuality as positive. Orestes addresses his sister, who is identified with the feminized city. For Sartre any encounter with the feminized Other is a project of forceful appropriation, not to say rape.

Viens Electre, regarde notre ville. Elle est là, *rouge* sous le soleil, *bourdonnante d'hommes et de mouches*, dans l'engourdissement têtue d'un après-midi d'été; *elle me repousse* de tous ses murs, de tous ses toits, de toutes ses portes closes. *Et pourtant elle est à prendre*, je le sens depuis ce matin. *Et toi aussi, Electre, tu es à prendre. Je vous prendrai. Je deviendrai hache et je fendrai en deux ces murailles obstinées, j'ouvrirai le ventre de ces maisons bigotes*, elles exhaleront par leurs plaies béantes une odeur de mangeaille et d'encens; *je deviendrai cognée et je m'enfoncerai dans le coeur de cette ville comme la cognée dans le coeur d'un chêne.* (*Les mouches* 179; my emphasis)

Reinforcing the philosophical proximity of *Les mouches* and *L'être et le néant*, the theme of appropriation also gains particular insistence in Part Four of *L'être et le néant*.

### ***L'être et le néant***

42 The fundamental concepts of Sartre's analysis in *L'être et le néant*, namely *pour-soi*, *en-soi*, *pour-autrui*, and *en-soi-pour-soi* are based on Hegel (*Fürsich*, *Ansich*, *Für-*



*Andere, Ansich-Fürsich*).<sup>11</sup> It was Hegel who introduced — but, given the history of Western patriarchy, in no way invented — the master-slave dialectic, the dichotomy between "Herr" (master, lord) and "Knecht" (slave, servant, bondsman). He distinguishes between "two opposed shapes of consciousness": "one is the independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself, the other is the dependent consciousness, whose essential nature is simply to love or to be for another: the former is lord, the other is bondsman" (115).

43 Contrary to Hegel, however, Sartre denies the possibility of a synthesis or mediation between the subject (*pour-soi*) and the object (*en-soi*). Although the goal of the for-itself's totalizing appropriation is the establishment of the in-itself-for-itself, although, according to Sartre, man's desire is to be simultaneously *en-soi* and *pour-soi* — self-sufficient like a thing, but endowed with the freedom human consciousness provides — , the totality of *en-soi-pour-soi*<sup>12</sup> is ultimately illusory. In Sartre's philosophy, the higher dialectical synthesis, which Christianity identifies with God and Hegel with Absolute Knowledge, remains an unachievable ideal. As Sartre's drama *Huis clos* with its famous proclamation "L'enfer c'est les autres" demonstrates, for Sartre, the basic relationship with others consists of conflict:

Pendant que je tente de me libérer de l'emprise d'autrui, autrui tente de se libérer de la mienne; pendant que je cherche à asservir autrui, autrui cherche à m'asservir. Il ne s'agit nullement ici de relations unilatérales avec un objet-en-soi, mais de rapports réciproques et mouvants [. . .]. Le conflit est le sens originel de l'être-pour-autrui (L'être 431).

44 The power struggle between the for-itself and the in-itself in Sartre's philosophy and dramatic oeuvre is a variation of the struggle for domination that characterizes both Western patriarchal thought and practice and fascism. Sartre critiques neither the *pour-soi*'s attempt to establish mastery nor the basic binary and oppositional structure of Western thought; instead, his work can itself be analyzed as a product of the Western logic of mastery and domination. The struggle for domination negates playful ambivalence, abjects it, and affirms dualistic structures.

45 In the subchapter "La Psychanalyse existentielle" of *L'être et le néant*, Sartre describes the threat posed to the *pour-soi* by the viscous, a clearly negativized, "hostile" and "horrible" state. Like Kristeva's abject, the slimy, despite its repulsive character, exerts a deadly, trap-like fascination and poses the threat of fusion, degradation, ego-dissolution (e.g. L'être 701),

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<sup>11</sup> Ronald Aronson also points out that "*L'être et le Néant* bears the traces of [Heidegger's] *Being and Time* on virtually every page" (94). Contrary to Heidegger, Sartre stresses the primacy of the thing; the in-itself is prior to consciousness.

<sup>12</sup> Sartre's term is obviously a translation of Hegel's *An-und-für-sich*.

and engulfment by the (m)other. The physiological reaction to the viscous is "a sweetish sort of disgust" (Manser 12), nausea (e.g. *L'être* 404)

46 Like the abject, the slimy is essentially ambiguous, "[une] substance entre deux états" (*L'être* 699), a substance between solid and liquid matter. The encounter of for-itself and in-itself is an encounter between masculinized mind (liquid) and feminized and sexualized<sup>13</sup> matter (solid). The ensuing matter, the viscous or slimy, as well is feminized in *L'être et le néant*: "c'est une activité molle, baveuse et féminine d'aspiration" (700), a soft, yielding, feminine sucking, or "[la] [r]évanche douceâtre et féminine [de l'En-soi]" (701); it is "comme l'étalement, le raplatissement des seins un peu mûrs d'une femme qui s'étend sur son dos" (699). (The "ripe" breasts of a woman are of course those of the threatening, engulfing mother.) Whereas the masculinized *pour-soi* attempts to absorb and possess the feminized *en-soi*, the slimy resists this project of assimilation and turns the tables on the for-itself, in turn appropriating it. The clear distinction between the in-itself and the for-itself, the clear delineation of classificatory boundaries, is thus impossible to maintain. Abjection sets in.

47 In this context, it is again interesting to compare the reaction to the viscous — which is ultimately the reaction to abjection and the threat of maternal engulfment and sexuality — to Sartre's description (also in *L'être et le néant*) of sexual desire, which is associated with fear, the fear of the erasure of the rational, conscious ego, and "une douceur lourde et pâteuse" (457). Sexual desire, due to the threat it poses to consciousness of being invaded, submerged by the fluvial facticity of the *en-soi* (*L'être* 457) (as opposed to the "dry" characteristics of hunger), has to be subdued, repressed.

48 As we have seen, in spite of the dualistic rigidity of Sartre's work, one part of the opposition actually represents the negativized and repressed part of the self, which has been pro- and ab-jected outward. The qualities of the slimy, for instance, can be read, in a manner reminiscent of Theweleit's analysis of the psychological constitution of the proto-fascist Freikorps members and their "projection" outward of feminized libidinal drives, as a projection outward of the negativized, and therefore repressed, internal qualities of the self. However, in contrast to a Hegelian recognition of the self in the other and an ensuing reconciliation, in Sartre's dualistic ontology, mutual influence or exchange, intersubjectivity in Jessica Benjamin's sense, does not take place: "Les subjectivités demeurent hors d'atteinte et radicalement séparés" (*L'être* 498). In *Huis clos*, Manser observes, "all three characters are in hell precisely because they are prevented by their own choices from establishing any proper relations with those around them" (98). The inability to form object relations, the fear of

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. again the animal imagery ("ses ventouses" [suction cups], "il [le visqueux] s'accroche comme une sangsue;" *L'être* 701).

social interpenetration and mixing, is also one of the dominant features of the fascist psychological constitution as analyzed by Theweleit.

49 The result of Sartre's fear of the other and of the antithetical rigidity that ensues from it, the result of the fight for the subject position at the expense of the other's reduction to an object, is isolation. The pattern of domination prevalent in patriarchal society "leaves the self encapsulated in a closed system" (J. Benjamin 67). For Sartre the problem does not consist in realizing human freedom in the world, but on defending it from the world, when he writes in *La nausée* for example:

Le voilà encore qui me regarde. Cette fois il va me parler, je me sens tout raide. Ce n'est pas de la sympathie qu'il y a entre nous: nous sommes pareils, voilà. Il est seul comme moi, mais plus enfoncé que moi dans la solitude. Il doit attendre sa Nausée ou quelque chose de ce genre. Il y a donc à présent des gens qui me *reconnaissent*, qui pensent, après m'avoir dévisagé: "Celui-là est des nôtres." Eh bien? Que veut-il? Il doit bien savoir que nous ne pouvons rien l'un pour l'autre. Les familles sont dans leurs maisons, au milieu de leurs souvenirs. Et nous voici, deux épaves sans mémoire. S'il se levait tout d'un coup, s'il m'adressait la parole, je sauterais en l'air. (97)

In Sartre, the subject's destiny is solitary, absolute freedom: "Autrui est par principe l'inaississable: il me fuit quand je le cherche et me possède quand je le fuis" (L'être 479). Human solidarity and identification with the other in Albert Camus' sense cannot be realized in Sartre's system of thought.

50 Here it becomes clear that the universal responsibility that Sartre advocates, "l'universalité de l'homme," (*L'Existentialisme* 70, 74) in fact only consists of a fending off of the others' threat to one's own subjectivity (the threat of engulfment by the Other), an absorption instead of others' subject positions, and an imposition of one's own choice on them: "Tout ce qui vaut pour moi vaut pour autrui" (L'être 431). In *Les mouches*, Orestes assimilates, appropriates Electra's, the Other's, freedom. His existentialist project of recovering himself is, ultimately, a project of absorbing the Other. Since human solidarity and "fraternity" are unachievable, Orestes remains free, but alone. At the end of the play, he again leaves Argos.

## Conclusion

51 Contrary to Sartre's claims to an unequivocally antifascist ideological stance, his early work demonstrates the historical continuity between the modern European patriarchal tradition and fascism, and the dialectical implication even of antifascist philosophy and art in fascist thinking. As this article has aimed to demonstrate, Sartre's early work shows a gender ideology reminiscent of the proto-fascist texts analyzed in Theweleit's classic text on

fascism, *Männerfantasien*. Both the texts analyzed in Theweleit and Sartre's texts examined here are characterized by an extreme fear of the feminized, abject Other — a fear of (inner and outer) nature, sexuality, maternal engulfment and ego dissolution. Sartre establishes a rigid, dualistic philosophical system as a protective armor against the imagined threat of invasion or contamination posed by feminized abjection. Due to this phobic rigidity, Sartre's fictive characters as well as his philosophy betray an inability to form object relations already familiar from Theweleit's study. According to Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, this modern inability to establish non-instrumentalized interpersonal relations and the consequent perception of any libidinal desire as ultimate threat found its most radicalized expression in twentieth century European fascism. If, as Theweleit has argued, fascism is an extreme manifestation of what is latently always already present in the basic exclusionary and phobic structure of patriarchy, France — like any patriarchal society — bears the roots of fascism within it. The exploration of the work of one of France's most influential antifascist writers and leading intellectuals of the twentieth century confirms this assessment.

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