Submitted for the degree of M.A. at the University of Canterbury by Gwen Mardle, September, 1971.
"For Heidegger and Sartre reflection is subjective and existence, far from vanishing, is the object of the highest interest; one should, in evaluating either of these two figures, 'make ample allowance for those aspects of their philosophies which reflect only the peculiarities of their own existence and no more'."

Fernando Molina
FOREWORD

On completing this work I would like to thank all my friends from both Hastings and Christchurch for their many and different kindnesses, particularly my flat-mate A whose enthusiastic and sincere interest in these studies has long been a welcome source of encouragement.

I also owe special thanks to Monceur Chaussivert of the University of Canterbury not only for his helpful guidance in the beginnings of my research but for his intelligent and sensitive teaching that greatly stimulated my own love of French literature.
Abbreviations:

H: Le Nausée
A.R: L'Âge de Raison
S: Le Surnier
M.A: La Mort dans l'Âme

All other references by means of asterisk and numbered notes at the end of each chapter.

Because of the repeated use of two of Gaston Bachelard's texts these have been abbreviated after the first use.

Terre: La Terre et Les Rêveries de la Volonté
Air: L'Air et Les Songes.
INTRODUCTION

All art, we believe, is a testament of a singular experience of life. The man who makes such a testament through an art form is seeking to renew that experience, its time, its place, his own person in relation to it. It is the artist who is wanting more than just the "forward" movement of ordinary life. He wants stillness, a time of "reflection" to draw together all the tremors, all the insights of his experience and then to hold it away from himself so he might see in its ordered wholeness some measure of truth or understanding, some fulfilment of aesthetic qualities. And, even as the man himself was the nerve centre to the forward living experience, so too will he be the pivot of his reflective artistry. However, his engagement will have lost its unformulated excitement, and, as if distilled away by time and retrospection, the artist will be able to meditate more freely on the source and the meaning of his experience, and on those forms it takes in his reflection and that it will take subsequently in his work of art.

Sartre's singular experience of life, as his art, has its beginning in three major sources. His awareness of the candid fullness of life draws mainly from his remarkably acute sensibility. With a child's lack of moral or intellectual inhibitions, Sartre is able to feel into the living core of his world. He is physically excited by existence and he seeks to renew that excitement by fully integrating his characteristic blend of keen
often audacious frequently subtle sensation into the universe of his novels. Our access to a richer, more stirring experience of life is surely, as Proust recognizes, through such a testament of sensorial vivacity.

"Ainsi tout se passe comme s'il existait deux univers, celui des 'sensations reçues', où nous vivons, et l'autre sorti des grands créateurs et où ils nous introduisent."

This sensibility is matched and tempered by an astute almost cynical intelligence that even as it rejects institutionalized reasoning seeks to discover its own and greater truths. For this reason very little of the Sartrean experience is allowed to become an idle independence, but imaginative whims and the insights of sense penetration are all formulated by this philosophical mind that curiously reflects both the pragmatism of Derridy and the humanitarianism of Cusan.

"Sartre ne cesse d'insister sur le caractère artificiel de tout art qui prétendrait saisir les choses, et à plus forte raison les êtres, hors de leur signification humaine."

So his art will take on a more pervasive thoughtful intensity than his original experience would have known.

To these two capacities must be added Sartre's rather curious enthusiasm for the imaginary, for the fictional that begins in reality but that finds its satisfaction in idealism. We will find in the novels a selection of materials that have excited a creative response in Sartre, moving him to assimilate their different beings into the major significant areas of his fictional universe, and to let their images become the personal
voice of a system of alchemical values. It is in those areas of creative reflection, as Bachelard has already recognised, that the artist is crystallizing his own person in relation to his experience.

"L'image est toujours une promotion de l'être. Imagination et excitation sont liées. (....) Il n'y a pas d'images sans excitation."

From these sources comes the Sartrean experience, that singular association of sensation, thought and creative imagining which provide Sartre with the base for the formal meditation of his novels. The aim of this thesis is to take the Sartrean experience in its "reflective" or art form and examine in it two areas that we feel Sartre has particularly wished to give testament to: substance and sensation. This examination will on both occasions begin from Sartre's interpretation of his experience, i.e. from the thought or philosophy (to which we give a brief introduction, although a reading knowledge is assumed), and work outwards through these areas; in substance from thought to creative imagination, in sensation from thought to sensitivity, seeking even in these textual studies some measure of the artist himself, some insight into the artistic process.

For although we believe that the fundamental relationship of substance and sensation with the Sartrean universe is established and controlled by the philosophy - and we will deal commensurately with just this relationship - we also feel that substance and sensation establish an existence quite apart
from this working role. We believe with Gaston Bachelard and Paul Valéry that creativity has a very inner spiritual source, a beginning within the artist, the man himself, whatever capacity the creation may have for objective expression.

"C'est avec notre propre substance que nous imaginons et que nous formons une pierre, une plante, un mouvement, un objet; une image quelconque n'est peut-être qu'un commencement de nous-mêmes...."

So within our working field, the four published novels of Sartre, *La Nausée*, *L'Age de raison*, *Le Surprenant*, *La Noct dans l'Ame* (*Les Chemins de la Liberté*), - which we will call the Sartrean universe - we shall set out to develop our understanding of the rapport which living experience provokes between the writer and his art.


LEXICON OF SARTREAN TERMS

"Ce qui n'est pas fixé n'est rien,
ce qui est fixé est mort."
Paul Valéry

POUR-SOI: While the world might appear as a solid fullness that could not admit further existence, the ability to recognise the compact completeness of Being points to the existence of something outside of and other than this Being. Such a further being Sartre says is a fluid transparency that surrounds an object and makes its totality perceptible through a halo of nothingness, of absence, that he calls Pour-soi. Having no other reality than that of being the negation of Being, the Pour-soi can exist only in the presence of an object and can be only what that object is not.

This non-being is then the detachment from Being, and characterises man's existence since human consciousness is able to project itself arbitrarily on to the world, recognising it as a separate entity.

"L'homme, lui, peut se faire autre qu'il n'est et même sortir de ses limites et étudier un monde qui est au-delà de lui. En ce sens il est transcendant."

It is precisely this projection forward in the effort to distinguish that Sartre calls freedom.

"la liberté est le néant même qui fait l'homme, elle est arrachement à toute espèce de donnés, à l'être brut."

LA LIBERTÉ: Not only does this freedom set man apart from the exterior world but, equally, from his own person. Every effort of the consciousness to 'seize upon itself' as a defined being
aborts. In turning upon itself consciousness is unceasingly thrown back either to the outside world or to its own past, from both of which, moreover, consciousness is irrevocably separated.

"consciousness is (....) the freedom from total immersion in that thing of which it is conscious."*4

In brief, man is unable to reduce his existence to an accomplished essence, his freedom implies a separation from Being.

"The Ego can be reduced neither to an act nor to a state."*5

L'ANGOISE: "Ce qui est ainsi rejeté hors de la conscience, c'est toute référence à un de personnel, individuel, particularisé."*6

Man is only ever an unrealised future.

"L'essence de l'homme est toujours en suspens dans sa liberté."*7

He is forced to project himself into a definition of his being that can never be assumed. The source of all anguish is the awareness of one's fundamental incapacity to Be in any certain or fixed way, and of one's responsibility to choose this nothingness. Anguish is the fear of non-being.

"C'est précisément la conscience d'être son propre avenir sur le mode du n'être-pas que nous nommerons l'angoisse."*8

L'AUTENTICITÉ: To deny one's insufficiency of being and thus one's freedom is to commit "la mauvaise foi" since the only authentic beliefs are those which take account of this fear of and responsibility for non-being.
"Quoi qu'il en soit, il ne peut y avoir de vie authentique que dans l'angoisse, i.e. dans la prise continue de sa propre responsabilité, avec tout ce qu'elle peut comporter de tragique."*

**LA FACTICITÉ:** The consciousness that attempts in any way to dismiss its freedom lapses into inauthenticity, into a facticious being that is characterised by a false durability, a rigid self-imposed security.

**EN-SOI:** All fixed, compact and autonomous matter is En-soi. En-soi, says Sartre, is solid, inert and opaque, and, since its future being, its destiny is pre-determined by its stable material form, En-soi appears to have a justified and necessary existence. En-soi 'ne bouge pas et apparaît comme le modèle de la tranquillité'. For Sartre the dignity and stability of En-soi makes it the most satisfying, the most edifying Being.

**LA CONTINGENCE:** Freedom allows man to transcend the whole of existence. He is able to pass beyond the categories and the fixed laws that he had imposed on existence from nostalgia for order and determined beings (essences), and is able to see the world apart from its human significance. He is able to discover that things are entirely what they seem and that,

"derrière elles (...) il n'y a rien". (N:138)

In short, he perceives the contingency of existence; that nothing exists necessarily, that man himself is superfluous ('de trop'), that every manifestation of existence is inexplicable, that existence is pure gratuitity, that it simply EXISTS.
LA NAUSEE: To be aware of the contingency of existence, of one's own irrational presence is to have known, the intense visionary and physical experience of sickness, of la nausée. The world seems suddenly to release itself from the solid forms where man had encased it, and to flow into an amorphous and viscous mass which threatens to absorb man in its mucous anonymity. Whereas the reserved and self-contained solidity of En-soi is, in the Sartrean universe, an acceptable, even an enviable matter, the clinging softness of gluey substances is worthless and repulsive. 'La nausée' is then the physiological response to the apprehension of the "ubiquitous presence of the irrational."*10

EN-SOI-POUR-SOI: For Sartre the ideal Being will combine the autonomy, the stability and the dignity of En-soi with the transparency and the fluid-like lucidity of Pour-soi. This condition, En-soi-pour-soi, is a contradiction, particularly when considered as a combination of opposed material beings, solid and liquid. Such a being Sartre tells us is God-like and is the impossible state to which his characters strive albeit hopelessly.

"C'est ce projet impossible et contradictoire que tente l'homme et devant lequel il ne peut que désespérer."*11
2. Robert Campbell, *Expliquez-Moi... L'Existentialisme*.
5. Id., p. 79.
7. Sartre, op. cit., p. 61.
8. Id., p. 69.
11. Robert Campbell, op. cit.
SUBSTANCE
13.

POUR-SOI

"L'homme est un puits où le vide
toujours
Recommence."

Victor Hugo

Sartre represents the Pour-soi,*¹ and the drama of feelings and actions which are involved in recognizing the synonymity of Pour-soi with freedom, through a series of sensations and through what Colette Audry calls "quelques métaphores difficilement oubliables".*² Let us consider first of all these metaphors since, as Dufrenne assures us,

"C'est cet échange à l'intérieur de l'image entre le sujet et l'objet, et cette initiative de l'objet qu'il importe de saisir."*³

In wishing to conceive the Pour-soi through material objects, Sartre is forced to acknowledge the paradox basic to his thought: that freedom is the essence of human reality but is not itself an essence. Sartre's problem then is to give Pour-soi an objective reality within stylistic formula such as images without negating its immaterial being. If, as Bachelard owns, "il faut que nous soyons masse imaginaire pour nous sentir auteur autonome de notre devenir,"*⁴ what imagined forms we may well ask will best represent Pour-soi, an emptiness, a tearing away from being? As Knight reminds us "mind and matter are two 'modes of existence' which in no way resemble one another."*⁵

Aerian and fluid substances are the first and obvious choice for imaging the transparency and the lightness of consciousness, of Pour-soi.
Daniel constantly envisages his freedom through images of immaterial substance.

"C'était si vertigineux ce repos languissant d'une conscience pure, d'une insensible conscience pure. Il se sentait libre comme l'air ..."

(A.R.:220)

Elsewhere he describes his freedom as an "évaporation" (S:223), or similarly as a cloud.

"Il fallait prolonger ce moment extraordinaire; Daniel était déboulé; il se sentait perdu dans un nuage écarlate sous un ciel de plomb (...) "C'est moi qui suis libre", se dit-il."

(A.R.:131)

The lightness and mobility of Pour-soi are here contrasted dramatically with the dull leaden fixity of En-soi (the sky). It is this same fluid nature of freedom that Brunet feels in Mathieu's self-sufficient and irresponsible person, describing him as "un absent qui vit en l'air" (A.R.:172). And in aspiring to the ethereal purity of the Boulevard Noir, Roquentin envisages such perfection in the insubstantiality of air.

"Ce froid est si pur, si pure cette nuit; ne suis-je pas moi-même une vague d'air glacial?"

(N:43)

However, the 'masse imaginaire' that Sartre favours is light. The frequent and stylised appearances of light in all the novels*6 assures us that light is a phenomenon that has been, "imaginée en profondeur, dans une intimité de la substance et de la force".*7 It is light which realises both the transparency and the fluidity of Pour-soi.
"Je ne suis rien, je n'ai rien. Aussi inséparable du monde que la lumière et pourtant exilé, comme la lumière, glissant à la surface des pierres et de l'eau, sans que rien, jamais, ne m'accroche (...) la liberté c'est l'exil."

(S:419)

Light, as Pour-soi, is a detachement from En-soi, an insufficiency of being, co-existent with completeness yet opposed to it.

We could well note here the significance of this to the play of light and dark in Sartrean novels. Darkness appears to symbolise the anonymous denseness of En-soi,

"toutes les vies humaines se fondent dans l'ombre".

(S:406)

whereas light is an "apparence (qui fait) rentrer les choses en elles-mêmes" (A.R.:202). Daniel uses these very symbols when he contrasts Mathieu's self-denial of being with Marcelle's desire for a stable unreflective being.

"J'imagine que ça ne doit être toujours commode de vivre dans ton rayonnement. Elle s'est cherché un coin d'ombre."

(A.R.:340)

Even more significantly light and dark are used to convey the concept of the look, so central to the Sartrean universe. As with the active consciousness, the look is an enveloping aura, a halo of nothingness through which the totality of Being is perceived. It is this look, that Daniel describes, which perfectly realises Pour-soi.

"Te dire ce qu'est le regard ne sera bien facile: car il n'est rien; c'est une absence; tient: imagine la nuit la plus obscure. C'est la nuit qui te regarde. Mais une nuit blissemante; la nuit en pleine lumière; la nuit recèle du jour. Je suis celle de lumière noire."

(S:469)
The problem previously envisaged with Pour-soi, that of authentic materialisation, is here adequately resolved. While the darkness (En-soi) gives substance to the non-being, the metaphysical absence of the look, the introduction of light (Pour-soi) counter-balances the paralytic effects of dense matter: 'lumière noire' perfectly polarises substance and nothingness in a single form.

While air and light are evident choices, water, apparently congruous with such materials, is rarely used by Sartre to image Pour-soi. On the other hand, images of anguish, the emotion synonymous with freedom, rely almost exclusively on water for objective expression. Anguish is "une arde" (H.A.:179), the Sartrean character 'plunges' into anguish, drowning and afraid.

"je glisse tout doucement au fond de l'eau, vers le peur."

(N:19)

But anguish is only one of several intense sensory reactions that Sartre considers relative to man's awareness of his freedom. Of the other sensations **8** the keenest **9** involves the sense of movement. In projecting itself forward and away from En-soi, a process of temporalisation, consciousness evokes a definite sense of mobility. Bachelard explains this phenomenon in relation to the material forms just reviewed.

"Or, se mouvoir dans un mouvement qui engage l'être dans un devenir de légèreté, c'est d'abord se transformer en tant qu'être mouvant."**10**
This transformation of being which Daniel expresses as an "évaporation sans répit vers le ciel vide" (8:223), does indeed engage the whole person, especially if we are to judge by the recurrent correspondence of freedom and dizziness. The suspension, the hesitation that comes from having to choose between persons to be, actions to make, are the fundamental source of intense attacks of 'le vertige'.

"Il était hors de lui-même (...) Une seconde encore il lui sembla qu'il restait en suspens dans le vide avec une intolérable impression de liberté et puis, brusquement, il tendit le bras, prit le cliché par les épaules." (A.R.:93)

It is particularly Mathieu, indecisive, negative, uncommitted, who feels light and floating, prey to "tous les vertiges de l'innamour" (A.R.:175). Frustrated in his attempts to possess freedom as a tangible quality he is forced to recognize that his only association with freedom is in the vertiginous estrangement of his consciousness from Being.

"Je suis ma liberté (...) il y avait (...) seulement ce douloureux, ce vide saisie de vertige devant lui-même, cette angoisse que sa propre transparence empêchait à tout jamais de se voir." (8:419)

Inseparable from this sensation of constant projection, of dizziness, is the fascination of consciousness with itself and, in particular, with its own potential for self-destruction. 

"Le vertige est une fascination du POUR-soi devant le pire qui peut lui venir de lui-même, devant la possibilité qui est la sienne de se détruire." #12

Daniel, perturbed by his own power to either yield to or refuse a temptation, expresses his fear of surrender as a sense of imbalance at the edge of a chasm.
"Daniel eut une nausée d'angoisse et, pendant une seconde, tout bascula: l'enfant, minuscule et lointain, l'appelait du fond de l'abîme; la beauté l'appelait; Beauté, mon Destin."
(M.A.: 167)

What in fact is menacing is the fixed role that such a situation asks of Daniel, it is the En-soi as a pederast that is attempting to dominate the Pour-soi, the freedom to choose not to be a pederast. As Sartre has said elsewhere,

"Se perdre dans le monde c'est se "faire boire par les choses.""*13

We might well consider the pivot of the Sartrean universe to be this constant struggle between the different material beings of Pour-soi and En-soi. The particular interest of Pour-soi is in its material representation for, as we shall see, Sartre's character appears most satisfied by dense material forms and not, as this chapter seems to demonstrate, by fluid insubstantial matter. And though we shall in the end know Sartre's universe as the voice of an "imagination matérielle"*14 it is vital to have taken a full account of the opposing movement, of the desire for the purity of non-being. This movement, though perhaps prompted by an aesthetic's understanding of freedom, does keep a balance of power between "le dynamisme qui conserve et le dynamisme qui transforme,"*15 which the Sartrean universe otherwise struggles to resolve in a single spiritual and material force.
2. Colette Audry, op. cit., p. 28.
5. Everett W. Knight, Literature Considered as Philosophy, p. 22.
8. We feel that the following examination of sensation is more relative to this area of our study than to the section devoted to sensation itself.
9. Of the other sensations taste is the most curious.
   Consciousness, Roquentin says, "laisse un drôle de goût" (N:142) and Mathieu describes his removal from being as "un petit goût acide et familier, un petit goût de fourmi très négligeable." (S:419).
11. It is interesting to hazard a comparison of this phenomenon with 'ce masochisme dynamique' that
    Bachelard remarks on in Cocteau.
    "Il n'est guère de véritables jouissances qu'au point où commence le vertige". (Bachelard, Terre, p.349).
12. Colette Audry, op. cit., p. 36.
15. ibid.
Solid substances occupy a very central place in the
Sartrean universe, designating both a fundamental part of
Sartre's thought and the very definite Sartrean affinity (or
"rêverie" in Bachelardian terms) towards hard material.

Brigitte Knabenhans, in her examination of the role of
the stone in Sartre's writings concludes "(qu'elle est pour
Sartre le symbole préféré de l'En-Soi."1 & 2) The denseness of
En-soi, especially that of stony material, realises the aspirations
of Pour-Soi to a perfect coincidence with itself, to an autonomous
and stable being.

"Être de pierre, aveugle et sourd (....) une statue
farouche aux yeux blancs, sans un projet, sans un
souci; peut-être que j'arriverais à coïncider avec
moi-même (....) Être ce que je suis, être un pédérateur,
un méchant, un lâche, être enfin cette imbécile qui
n'arrive même pas à exister (....) Être. Dans le noir,
l'aveuglette. Être pédérateur, comme le chêne est
chêne. S'êtrindre." (S:155)

Daniel is wanting to overcome that hollow area of his conscious-
ness which forces him to look at himself as if he were a separate
person. He wants to be rid of the uncertain being that Pour-soi
makes of him and to acquire the dense and established form of
En-soi. And for Daniel the most satisfying example of En-soi
is stone because of its unequivocally determined being; the
Stone simply IS.

"Dans l'En-soi, dans le monde des choses, des êtres matériels, tout est en acte (....); la possibilité, la puissance sont exclues."*3

Fixed within its material form, stone possesses the tranquil fullness appertaining to an ordered existence. The Sartrean character cannot help but be attracted to the autonomy of stones.

"Tout est mort. Mon regard et ces pierres. Eternel et Mineré comme elle (....) A présent c'est mon regard seul qui m'attendent, s'attendent pierres, demain, après-demain, toujours." (S:406)

Whereas his own existence is obstructive, hazarded and inconsequential, that of the stone is firm, purposive and insular.

Mathieu as much as Daniel is attracted to stones, for their compact and real qualities are at the furthest remove from his own insubstantiality, his own inability to feel or be anything fully.

"Il étendit les mains et les promena lentement sur la pierre de la balustrade, elle était rugueuse, crevassée, une éponge pétifiée, chaude encore du soleil d'après-midi. Elle était là, énorme et massive, enfermant en son le silence écrasé, les ténèbres comprimées qui sont le dehors des choses. Elle était là; une plénitude. Il aurait voulu s'accrocher à cette pierre, se fondre à elle, se remplir de son opacité, de son repos."

(S:419)

His sense of touch is certainly excited by this hard material, even sensing its dark interior quietness! Mathieu's affinity to stones is brought out even more by his very poetic descriptions of this En-soi, of its interior being as "ténèbres comprimées", of its roughness and its largeness. Such a profound admiration is founded surely, as Bachelard explains, on the simple attraction
of opposites.

"A vivre un peu dans les rochers, nous oublierons
tant de faiblesse."  

From this understanding we are better able to appreciate
the different ways in which Mathieu and Brunet are presented to
us. Brunet is the communist whom Mathieu respects so much,
whose moral certitude and political conviction he envies, who
inspires Mathieu with 'confiance' and 'joie'. Whereas Mathieu
is described as 'un absent', 'ni chair ni poison', Brunet is
'snorme et solide', 'dur et nouveau', 'pensant et massif'. If
Mathieu is irresolute then Brunet is 'sur de (lui)', 'd'accord
avec lui-même'. On these terms we may well agree with Bachelard
again to say that solid substance symbolises here,

"un être ... de la littérature activiste qui nous
apprend à vivre le réel dans toutes ses profondeurs
et ses proximités."

There is after all no doubt that Brunet has a most direct
engagement with reality.

"Brunet (...) s'était engagé (...) il était là, bien
réel, avec un vrai goût de tabac dans la bouche, les
couleurs et les formes dont il s'emplissait les yeux
étaient plus vraies, plus denses que celles que Mathieu
pouvait voir ..."

(A.R.:175)

In all these scenes the approbation extended to solid matter
draws in particular from the characters' desire for comparable
immutability. With stony or mineral matter they are able to
forget their own existence, forget that it is "amorphe, vague et
triste" (N:185) and know, instead,
"l'absolu, sans cause, sans raison, sans but, sans autre passé, sans autre avenir que la permanence, gratuit, fortuit, magnifique." (S:406)

However, to attain the dignity and permanence of the world of solids necessitates, according to Sartre, some sort of pure gratuitous act, such an act as only exists for itself, turned in upon itself, finished and set within itself as a stone's being. Only a spontaneous 'élan', a witnessing "qu'il est impossible de vivre" yet a defiance of death will secure Mathieu's existence, fixing and giving it a sense of solidification.

"Mathieu sauta sur ses pieds, épaule, ses yeux surcirent: debout et dense, dans un monde de solides, il tendit un canon au bout du canon (....) il tira (....) quelque chose était arrivé. 'Quelque chose de définitif' pensa-t-il." (M.A.:269-71)

It is notably the En-soi that has this finiteness, the stability or being both a beginning and an end in the single form. Essential to the concepts of En-soi and of petrification is the notion of finiteness, ends or death. Death acts as an arrest to the movement of life, establishing it extant, "toute entière (....) dense et close". Death as Malraux and Camus also understood it, has the power to transform life into destiny. The imperfection of existence - its inconclusiveness - is corrected by death. In death man can终于 enclose his whole being as into a petrified form."

"(le mort) n'avance pas, il est déjà arrivé, il a cessé de se courir après, son avenir s'est éternisé." (M.A.:226-221)

It is, as Roquentin tells us, only the finality, the death of a thing that determines its meaning. Take for example Lola,
whose existence seems only to achieve something at her death, 
as if distilled away from its previous uncertainty and deposited, 
fixed and formed.

"cette vie (....) flottait en marge du monde, entre 
parenthèses incroyable et définitive, plus indestructible 
qu'un minéral et rien ne pouvait l'empêcher d'avoir été, 
elle venait de subir son ultime métamorphose: son avenir 
s'était figé." 
(A.E.:303)

Death not only substantializes the abstract fluidity of life 
but all sensation and feeling within it, so that the final being 
has the compactness of minerals.

"Mort. Et sa vie était là partout, impalpable, achevée, 
dure et pleine comme une œuf (....) les bruits étaient 
là, glacés (....) Viguier était mort, sa vie flottait, 
enfermant des doutes imposibles (....) d'indestructibles 
petits joyaux (....) Personne ne pouvait changer l'avenir 
indestructible de sa vie morte." 
(5:72-74)

This stabilising of life, of its slipping from 'avenir en avenir', 
that Sartre realises for us at a material level, reveals, 
Bachelard says, a positive measure of metaphysical rebellion.

"L'action minéralisante est donc (....) éminemment 
positive. On l'imagine comme agissant contre les 
forces habituelles de dissolution."*8

And although Germaine Brée feels that the inconsistancy of life 
in the Sartrean universe may never be mended,*9 we must see in the 
frequent scenes of petrification, of sudden stillness in the midst 
of shapelessness, a very definite Sartrean response to the 
gratuitous nature of the world.

There are other forces that have the same paralytic effect 
on human life as death.*10 Of greatest significance in the look 
(le regard) which acts as a calcifying trap to all insubstantiality,
to all vacillation of the Pour-soi.

"C’est l’agression du regard de la gorgone qui nous 'fixe' et transforme notre action en geste."*11

To be looked at is to be brought back to one’s being,*12

"il y a un regard; il se dressait devant un regard, lâche, pédestre, méchant, comme un défi. Ça me voit, ça me voit comme je suis." (S:218)

to one’s body,

"Il s’était senti sale et puant sous ce regard." (S:437)

to one’s attitude.

"Mathieu se senti gêné de rester seul avec lui; il lui semblait qu’on l’avait remis brusquement en présence de sa faute. Elle était là, en face de lui, vivante, elle vivait au fond des yeux de Daniel." (A.R.:427)

The look reduces human existence to what Robert Campbell aptly calls "un(e) chose- REGARDÉE!*13 in other words to the En-soi nature of petrified substance.

"Il regarda ses camarades, son regard périssable rencontra sur eux le regard éternel et médusant de l’histoire (......) ils étaient les soldats fabuleux d’une guerre perdue. Statufiés." (M.A.:95)

However, there is another side to the consummation of life by death or by the look, for in transforming life into a destiny, into rock or mineral, death prohibits all of life’s possible value. Two statements by Robert Campbell will help to explain.

"Au moment où l’homme s’achève (cesse d’être imparfait), il ne veut plus rien puisqu’il est fini."

"l’autre peut me dominer, me maîtriser par son regard et je puis devenir l’esclave."*14
In other words to die, to be looked at is to give up one's freedom. The solid substances that are admired so much in the Sartrean universe have in fact an ambivalent role. Stone not only symbolises En-soi, an enviable Being, but equally, the absolute loss of liberty, "la mauvaise foi". "Le pierre," as Knabbenhans tells us, "est prisonnière de son être."

From this we are led to consider the frequent substantialism of bad faith, that facade hardened, Bergson assures us, by "la torpeur d'une existence assurée, tranquille, bourgeoise." "Mauvaise foi" is often recognised by those best qualities of En-soi.

"Le docteur a le droit de parler: il n'a pas manqué sa vic; il a au se rendre utile. Il se dresse, calme et puissant, au-dessus de cette petite épave; c'est un roc."

(N:102)

The man of bad faith hides his freedom from himself and in order to deny his condemnation to choose, he adopts a rigid system of values that seems to petrify him, "killing his thoughts" and depositing them as "(de) petites idées étroites et solides".

(N:15)

One of the most striking examples of the solid nature of "mauvaise foi" is that in Le Sursis of the unthinking German soldier.

"il lui semblait que l'ordre muet du Führer le traversait de part en part et prenait corps dans sa bouche (....)
Non Führer, non Führer, tu parles et je suis changé en pierre, je ne pense plus, je ne veux plus, je suis que ta voix."

(N:369,375)
The inanimation of En-soi easily images the paralysis of an inauthentic existence. It is interesting to point out here how Charles, the cripple, uses the image of the stone to describe his weakness, his total dependence on others.

"Il avait trouvé naturel d'être poussé, roulé, porté, il était devenu une chose (....) Il fallait penser: je ne suis qu'une pierre, je ne suis qu'une pierre." (S:276)

In conclusion it is perhaps best to settle the dust of tangents and quotations to re-emphasize the parallel lines this chapter has set out to accentuate; that the sympathy for solids made manifest in the Sartrean universe has two similarly profound motivations. For even as the approbation of the hardness and indifference of stone will favour a section of Sartre's philosophy - the En-soi, the fulfilled Being - helping to explain and illustrate it, this same approval will witness a more subjective source within a creative and powerful personality. If we feel with Bachelard that,

"une âme molle ne peut guère imaginer une matière dure" 20
then we must accord Sartre that inner moral fibre and courage, that capacity for purposive thinking and questioning, that spiritual steadfastness of great artists, for they all have found their expression, "se dis(ant) ... dura" 21 in the geological base of the Sartrean universe.
1. En-soi: see notes in Lexicon p. 10.

2. Brigitte Knabenhans op. cit. p. 11.

3. ibid


5. The irony of this situation is that to Daniel, Nathicou seems "en parfait accord avec lui-même"(A.R.: 141-2), to have an "air (...) solide"(A.R.: 431) c.f. Albert Camus, Carnets 1942-1951 p. 17

"Nostalgia for other people's lives. This is because, seen from the outside, they form a whole. While our life, seen from inside, is all bits and pieces. Once again, we run after an illusion of unity."


7. The statue, that has such a commanding position in Sartrean writing - see La Nausée pp. 15, 45; Le Mur p. 46; Les Notes p. 13 - is probably a symbol of the stable, perfected being.

"Mort et triomphant (...) La statue de Pinette, mort pour la patrie." (M.A.: 104)

Compare this to Bachelard's comment

"La statue est aussi bien l'être humain immobilisé par la mort." (Bachelard: Terre p. 228)


10. e.g. war c.f. pp 34, 77 and 439


12. c.f. Nathalie Sarraute, Portrait d'un Inconnu p. 53

"Je deviens tout de suite et malgré moi exactement comme ils me voient."

13. Robert Campbell: Expliquez-Moi ... L'Existentialisme

14. id

15. la mauvaise foi: see notes in Lexicon p. 9.


18. Iris Murdoch: Sartre, Romantic Rationalist p. 3.


"The priest walked on (.....) He felt respect all the way up the street: men took off their hats as he passed (.....) He could feel the old life hardening round him like a habit, a stony case which held his head high and dictated the way he walked, and even formed his words."


CONTINGENCY AND THE FACTITIOUS BEING

"Le coeur est pourri. La sentimentalité, le pittoresque, la complaisance, tous ces refuges visqueux où l'homme se défend dans une ville si dure à l'homme."

Albert Camus

Anguish gives a recoil from former rigid ways of understanding existence. From anguish one can see "Le Monde tout nu" (N:189), and things "délivrées de leurs noms" (N:177). The new and penetrating lucidity that anguish accords is able to transcend the hard exterior of artificial forms and know the soft amorphousness of existence as it is quite apart from its human significance.

"l'existence s'étaitoudain dévoilée. Elle avait perdu son allure inoffensive de catégorie abstraite: c'était la pâte même des choses (...) la diversité des choses, leur individualité n'était qu'une apparence, un vernis. Ce vernis avait fondu, il restait des masses monstrueuses et molles, en désordre - nues, d'une effrayante et obscène nudité."

(N:189)

Sartre constantly represents the contingent nature of existence with soft, viscous substance for it realizes within a single material that illusion of appearances which we see as central to Sartre's philosophy.

"Il (le visqueux) donne donc d'abord l'impression d'un être qu'on veut posséder. Seulement, au moment où je crois le posséder, voilà que, par un curieux renversement, c'est lui qui me possède."

Existence similarly deceives with a factitious being. One believed existence to be inert, fixed and closed within categories of usefulness but then suddenly one can see everything give in to a more fundamental and undifferentiated massa, "un pleine que l'homme ne peut quitter" (N:189). Existence has then ceased
to be the abstraction of man's intelligence; it becomes recognised as an amorphous and repulsive abundance of Being. To evoke this 'ubiquitous presence of the irrational' Sartre involves viscosity to a remarkable extent in his descriptions of the ordinary world.

"La mer (...) était pâteuse et glauque, couleur de café au lait." (S:36)
"Une voix en pâte d'amande" (A.R.:190)
"C'est l'heure de l'apéritif; les choses vivantes, les chiens, les hommes, toutes les masses molles qui se meuvent spontanément." (N:40)

Sartre will also pose images of viscosity against the 'real' world, bringing out the cloying grossness of viscous substances through the hideous and bizarre forms of nightmares.

"Est-ce que je l'ai rêvée, cette énorme présence? Elle était là, posée sur le jardin, dégringolée dans les arbres, toute molle, poussant tout, toute émascée, une confiture (...) ça remplissait tout de son affreusement gelatineux (...) j'aurais du contre ce gros être absurde." (N:139,190)

Sartre certainly does not spare his horror of viscous matter any realism. However it must be noted that inextricable from this intense distaste is a curious fascination for the viscous. Marcelle shows an uninhibited appreciation of the viscous nature of her vomit.

"Ça ne la dégoûtait pas: c'était de la vie, comme les éclaboussures d'un printemps, ça n'était pas plus répugnant que la petite fille rousse et odorante qui enduit les bourgeois." (A.R.:98)

And Roquentin, despite his attacks of nausea, marvels for long and intense periods over the pastiness of his world.
He talks of "une extase horrible" (N:185), of "une attrace jouissance" (N:186) that such flaccidity stimulates in him. Yet it is a strange alternance of fascination and repulsion which arrests him in front of the soft and amorphous presence of the tree root in the Jardin Public. He can neither accept nor refuse its existence. This same singular blend of feelings often repeats itself in the Sartrean universe. Take for example Daniel's reactions in the following scene.

"Il avait une tache devant les yeux, le souvenir d'une épaisse lueur jaune d'oeuf, elle le repoussait et l'attirait à la fois."  
(A.R.:185)

Bachelard explains the appeal of the viscous as tactile,

"La main connaît d'instinct la pâte parfaite"  
and we may indeed remark ourselves on this factor with several of the characters.

"Il (Mathieu) s'appliqua à observer l'agitation épaisse et maladroite du liquide (...) Pour Ivich c'était une petite volupté visqueuse et verte qui la plaisait jusqu'au bout des doigts."  
(A.R.:84)

"Mathieu posa la main sur la jambe de Marcelle et la caressa doucement. Il aimait cette chair beurrée."  
(A.R.:15)

We will see later (p. ) how this tactile awareness is the central agent for determining much of Sartre's philosophy.

Viscosity is an imaging medium not only for the contingency of the exterior world but also for that of the human world. The Sartrean character feels that his own being, "une chose matérielle"  
4, is engaged in the same pulpous factitiousness
of all existence. Annie describes her being as "(une) pâte qui s'allonge". Roquentin feels 'rompli de lymphe ou de lait tiède' (N:15) and even his reflection in a mirror reveals nothing firm or incisive.

"Ce que je vois est à la lisière du monde végétal, au niveau des polypes."

(N:30)

Daniel feels oddly that he is "une matière molle et mouvante" (B:446) and Mathieu too feels that in the end his whole person is no more than "une petite gomme visqueuse qui ramperait dans la poussière." (A.R.:273) It is important to realise that this understanding of one's own pasty nature is the final and supreme source of nausea in the Sartrean universe.

But anguish and all the torment and emptiness of feeling an incomplete and un accountable being, forever exiled from the stableness and totality of En-soi, are an overwhelming burden for a consciousness that tries desperately to recognise such emotions as the sine qua non of an authentic existence. The natural unthinking tendency is to let one's being fall into the nearest defined form. The true fluid movement of the consciousness then slows down, semi-coagulates into its past and "the messy stuff of its moment-to-moment experience."

The Pour-soi which gives up its freedom like this to a subjective, limited and factitious being is characterised by viscous substances. And Pour-soi recognises viscosity as its false being; "le cauchemar de l'épaississement" is no more than the awareness of one's responsibility to preserve, against the temptation of
En-soi, the fluidness of one's authentic existence. Let's examine then the viscosity of Pour-soi through the ways it can relax its forward projection of self.

Daniel, although anxious to be separate from that central and defined homosexual part of his being, invariably yields to it.

"ça le reprenait, ça l'aspirait par en bas, il s'engluisait en lui-même."

(A.R.:125)

Similarly, when Mathieu's vigilance over his freedom relaxes, he is overcome by a sleep-like sickness and lapses into the sweetness of "un rêve pâteux" (N.A.:267). And when Brunot is trapped by illness into assuming his past life, it is a viscous state that he is caught in.

"il retombe dans une enfance calme (...) il retombe dans la séve gluante, dans la SUBJECTIVITÉ"

(N.A.:542)

Sleep, "un monde épais" (A.R.:256), also draws the consciousness into its thick dark being. To sleep is to abandon the sharp precision of lucidity and to fall into a state of viscous inanimation.

"Il n'y avait rien dans cette tête qui ressemblât à une fuite éperdue devant soi, ni curiosité, ni haine, aucun mouvement (...) : rien que la pâte épaisse du sommeil."

(A.R.:129)

This same apathy of being characterises the intelligence which submits to any group or society, accepting established beliefs.

"l'humanisme reprend et fond ensemble toutes les attitudes humaines (...) il en fait une lymphe blanche et mousseuse."

(W:167)
It is notably emotions which precipitate the Pour-soi into accepting a factitious form and in this respect it is of great interest to see that Sartre characterises human emotions with viscosity.

"c'était une grosse joie flasque" (S:504)  
"La bonté monta dans ses seins comme du lait." (M.A.:28)  
"des adieux mous qui s'étirent comme du caoutchouc."  
(A.R.:369)

If, per impossible, the Sartrean character could know objective emotions they too, says Sartre, would give in to the moist and flaccid grossness of a viscous substance. Roquentin draws an excellent image in this situation.

"est-ce que c'est ma faute si la plus sincère de mes souffrances, la plus sèche se traîne et s'appesantit, avec trop de chair et la peau trop large à la fois, comme l'éléphant de mer, avec de gros yeux humides (...)?"  
(R:248)

Then too these viscous emotions are neither sharp nor brusque and the Sartrean character feels them as soft, slow movements.

"quelque chose remua dans sa poitrine, quelque chose de tiède et de modeste, qui ressemblait à de l'espoir."  
(A.R.:63)

"c'était (plus) tétanisant et (plus) humide, (plus) charnel. C'était de la bonté."  
(A.R.:236)

The sliding motion of these glairy emotions seems to pump (‘pompe’), to cling (‘s’accroche’); a single moment of weakness, of relaxation and one is caught.

Daniel, despite his "horreur d’abandon" (A.R.:234), seems to tempt this abandonment through his feelings towards Marcelle. And when trapped by "(une) poisseuse pitié", he seeks his deliverance through contact with something hard and violent."
Boris too feels threatened by the sweetness of surging emotions, also recognising his release in harshness.

"Il sentait naître en lui une étrange douceur déconcertée, il avait envie de s'ébrouer et de piaffer pour dissiper ce vertige de douceur."

(A.R.:211)

Sexual emotion in particular 'pumps' consciousness, inhibits its freedom as Boris explains,

"Ça me dégoûte de faire l'amour. (…) On ne sait plus ce qu'on fait, on se sent dominé."

(A.R.:53)

And as with other emotions, sexual desire is described in viscous terms, as "(une) colle chaude et abondante" (3:32), as "une onde pâteuse" (A.R.:53), which seems to submerge and inundate, stifling all lucidity.

"Le désir pouvait les idées noires, comme d'ailleurs les autres idées."

(A.R.:50)

And as if in linear development from this, we see that human flesh is similarly described as gross and viscous, "élastique, gelée comme un pant de chevreau" (A.R.:50)"9. It is 'onctueuse, beurreuse'"10 and "se brasse comme de la pâte à main" (A.R.:190). Flesh, especially woman's,"11 comes to symbolise the inauthenticity of the unconscious.

"The flesh symbolizes the absolute loss of freedom.""12

So to desire fleshy woman is to give oneself over to their viscosity.

"Des corps de femme, ça s'empoigne. Du caoutchouc, de la viande désossée, il vous en vient toujours plus qu'on ne veut dans les mains."

(3:151)
Mathieu recognises in Marcelle's pregnancy a threat to his freedom. He feels suddenly trapped everywhere by viscosity. There is Marcelle with her semblance to "un levantin gras" (A.R.:13), and the foetus, "une petite maree vitreuse" (A.R.:29) which is struggling to become "une petite ventouse blanche et molle" (A.R.:64) to 'pump' the outside world. Even the season itself seems to conspire with this viscous trap.

"Il fit quelques pas; le goudron noir et fondant, piqueté de grains blancs colla à ses semelles: Marcelle était encintée."

(A.R.:69)

Four-sei then, despite its intrinsic purity of being, seems hopelessly caught up in a regressed form, factitious and viscous, participating, contre gri, in the same contingent nature of the outside world.

We need not hesitate to say, in conclusion, that such an obsessive, and, to Sartre, satisfying use of a single substance does illustrate just how much Sartre controls, as Jean Thibaudeau expresses it, "son travail par son goût."

But while the insistent viscous imagery - that is now recognised as a Sartrean leit-motiv - does engage a large and important philosophical content, that 'taste' for viscous matter is, we feel, a secondary imaginative whim, fulfilling a very human curiosity for the imperfect, the sad and basic grotesqueries of existence, but nevertheless less profoundly involved in relaying the more purposive, the more sensitive movements of Sartre's character. Viscosity fails by the very nature of its material form to catch the Sartrean desire for reason and human
value that transparent and metallic substances begin to realize in a dynamo of perfection and contradiction. Viscosity seems to participate more in the flamboyancy of Sartre's artistic temperament, giving, as "une obsession sous sa plume", a literary release to an excitable imagination, and commanding regard and criticism for its sensationalism, its "horrid poetry". It is unfortunately the daring of the viscous imagery that such critical attention focuses, seeing in its testament the only Sartrean face. We will see far beyond this superficial interpretation, but have, in the meantime, been well assured and stimulated by the evidence of Sartre's creative power.
1. See Lexicon, p. 10.
2. Robert Campbell, Jean-Paul Sartre on Une Littérature Philosophique, p. 40.
4. Robert Campbell, op. cit., p. 36.
5. Iris Murdoch, Sartre-Romantic Rationalist, p. 17.
7. c.f. music. See p. 41.
9. c.f. R:175.
11. Sartre uses the female breast to image the viscous in L'Étre et Le Néant, see Robert Campbell, op. cit., p. 40.
15. "L'existentialisme apportait avec lui un matériel d'expressions imagées dont la violence fit fortune: la "nausée", la "viscosité"." Littérature Française, Tome 2, p. 432.
16. Iris Murdoch, op. cit., p. 16.
17. c.f. "Sartre and Camus grapple with the questions raised by existentialism, a school of philosophy that may not last much longer than deterministic science but which has nevertheless helped to liberate valuable creative powers." Irving Howe, Zola: The Genius of "Cordana", p. 54.
EN-SOI-POUR-SOI

"... something alien to the processes of domestic life, single, hard, bright, like a diamond in the sand, which would render the possessor secure."

Virginia Woolf.

Up until now the Sartrean universe has vacillated between two extremes: the pure and transparent freedom of Pour-soi and the opaque finity of En-soi. While the dense, closed being of stones menaces with a paralysing compactness, the fluid limpidity of Pour-soi threatens with sterility. And yet between the two are only various degrees of viscosity to which Sartre accords no metaphysical value. Sartre's ideal being then will be one to reduce "cette incassable distance (soudainement) introduite entre soi-même et soi" and regain its "Totalité"\(^1\) by uniting En-soi and Pour-soi in the one form. Such an ideal being, Murdoch explains, is synonymous with the condition of God.

"That which is sought (valued) is the firmness of thing-like-being (être-en-soi), combined with the transparency of consciousness (être-pour-soi): a state of complete lucidity and complete changelessness (......) Such a condition, that of being en-soi-pour-soi (......) is the condition of being God.\(^2\)

In aspiring to this "existence nouvelle" (A.R.:74) the Sartrean character is wanting to purify himself ('se purifier') to purge himself ('se nettoyer') of all that is soft and superfluous in his being.

"... chasser l'existence hors de moi, vider les instants de leur graisse, les tordre, les essuyer, 'se purifier, se durcir.'"

(N:245)
This aspiration closely parallels the work of the alchemist which is also a striving for purity.

"Pour un alchimiste, une distillation est une purification qui élève la substance en l'allégeant de ses impuretés."  

It is significant too that alchemy is meaningful on two integrated levels; the processes which act on a substance, bringing it to its perfect essence, are symbolic of similar spiritual processes which act on the alchemist, working his own being to perfection.

"If there is an explanation of the alchemical gold it is in the field of the nature of the integrated personality."  

In Sartre's universe, as in that of the alchemist, such perfection is imaged with an ambivalent material, one that is both solid and vitreous. While the solidity realises the En-soi, the Pour-soi is expressed in the transparency or light quality. Light, furthermore, represents, Bachelard tells us, a certain material purity.

"La faculté d'être lumineuse (...) elle suppose plus de pureté dans la substance, plus d'homogénéité dans les parties, plus de délicatesse dans la structure."  

Now "the shining gold spiritual being" that the alchemical transmutations realise, has says Bachelard, an ambivalent origin, "relev(ant) de la double imagination matérielle de la terre et de l'air." Alchemy had long recognised the ambiguous nature of its goal but as in the Sartrean universe such ambiguity is the sole measure of validity.
"It was quite reasonable that the wonderful stone should be a solid. But it must also be fluid in its nature for it must permeate all the body of material it was to change." 8

To realise this marvellous but incongruous ideal in his novels Sartre has been forced into two different techniques: either he chooses a substance or being that resembles the ideal on a material level, or he takes those qualities which are characteristic of the ideal and unites them within a subject, often non-being, conferring upon it an imaginative substantiability. It is the second technique that Sartre uses to express his belief in the perfection of the work of art.

In the Sartrean universe music is the paragon of human achievement.

"la durée de la musique se dilatait, s'enfaisait comme une trombe. Elle emplissait la salle de sa transparence métallique."

(M:33)

Such a metonymic image, which Ullman says recalls the style of the Concourts, 9 brings together the qualities of En-soi and Pour-soi in the single form. The solid nature of the music is brought out further in the descriptions of its aggressive nature. The music "frappe", "déchire", "perce", "dérape" and "tranche comme un faux". However, this apparent density is counter-balanced with further emphasis on music's fluid nature. Its notes "courant", "se pressent", the refrain "se jette en avant". Bachelard does assure us that "la substance pure est un être volant". 10

Having achieved the ideal, god-like form, music seems dissociated from ordinary existence.
"Elle n'existe pas (....) Elle est au-delà (....) À travers des épaisseurs et des épaisseurs d'existence, elle se dévoile, mince et ferme (....) Elle n'existe pas, puisqu'elle n'a rien de trop."

(N: 244)

For while "le monde des existences" (N: 147) is incomplete, soft and grotesque, music has from clarity and form been rendered hard, crystalline and impitiable.

"Tout est plein, l'existence partout dense et lourde et douce. Mais, par-delà toute cette douceur, inaccessible, toute proche, et loin hélas, jeune impitoyable et sereine il y a cette ... cette rigueur."

(N: 147)

Sartre insists on these typically musical qualities,

"la mélodie reste la même, jeune et ferme, comme un témoin sans pitié."

(N: 246)

"aussi pure qu'un air de musique, à peine moins impitoyables."

(A.R.: 276)

clearly contrasting the ideal being with the human and worldly one. For if music is "tout occupée d'elle-même," "inaccessible", then "la fade intimité" of the ordinary world is overwhelming ("accueillant"), in it one feels "en famille".

Bachelard has a material gauge for distinguishing these perfected levels of existence.

"Plus l'être est condensé, plus il est loin de la vie."*11

And we can in fact see how Sartre works within much the same system of qualities, comparing the inhumanity of the Boulevard Noir to a diamond (N: 45), and describing the musical being as "ferme", "dur" and "rigoureux". Even as the expression of a soft human emotion, music loses nothing of either its limpidity or its
f firmness, but reaches in the image of the diamond a perfect
synthesis.

"Une glorieuse petite souffrance vient de naître, une
souffrance modèle (....) sans complaisance (....) avec
une aride pureté (....) On ne peut certainement pas
dire qu'elle soit compatissante, cette petite douceur
de diamant."

(M:243-4)

The diamond, substance par excellence in the Sartrean universe,
seems to achieve in a single being the totality that Pour-soi
was seeking and that music achieves. What is it about the diamond
that has moved Sartre to elect it as the Nirvana of his world?
We are told in Le Naissäe that minerals are, "les moins effrayants
des existants" (M:219) and so are at the furthest remove from the
Sartrean experience of the sickening abundance of ordinary
existence. Bachelard offers us a valid and poetic answer on a
material level.

"L'âme y (dans le diamant) voit briller la perfection
où elle tend (....) La lumière est corporisée (....)
Un rêve concret a, en quelque manière effacé l'antithèse
de l'ombre et de la lumière."#12

It would seem that in the diamond at least the incongruous
participants of the Sartrean ideal have been resolved in a
tangible form - "La lumière est corporisée."

That this material perfection is achieved in the Sartrean
universe is very significant from the human aspect, for just as
in the alchemist's world, a spiritual perfection is reached at the
same time as a material one. It is of particular significance that
the human perfection should be described in the same terms as the
material one, i.e. of essentially hardness and brilliance.
"Quand la voix s'est élevée, dans le silence, j'ai senti mon corps se durcir et la Nausée s'est évanouie. D'un coup, c'était presque pénible de devenir ainsi tout dur, tout rutilant."

(M:33)

Roquentin explains that he has gained this totality of Being by having integrated himself in the music, "Je suis dans la musique." He has for a moment and through an outside form won his own ideal whole personality. He then wants to create his own pure and precise work of art, to have his being become formed through its making, "lentement comme une pierre précieuse - et finalement demeurer là, tranquillement, pour la joie de l'âternité."*13 Such a work must be Roquentin tells us, "belle et dure comme de l'acier," since only the hard precision of a pure substantial being like steel will be able to bring any sense of meaning ("un peu de clarté") and form to his existence. It is through the form of the completed work of art that he hopes to save himself ("se sauver"). He can clear himself of the awfulness of his existence ("se laver du péché d'exister"), by gaining the world of achieved beings ("des morts") without however suffering any of the finality of closed forms.

All this is, of course, very fine: make something with diamond or steel-like qualities and acquire from it the longed-for ideal Totality. But how, as Iris Murdoch has asked, does the artistic perfection precipitate this mysterious salvatory transmutation?*14

"But how is Roquentin, the creator, to transfer these yearned-for properties to even his own past?"*15
Murdock concludes that any sense of perfection or justification gained from art must be illusory. And it is quite possibly so since La Nausée is the only novel to offer art so adamantly as a possible solution to the human situation. Political engagement begins to figure more as the access to perfection, whereas art receives more critical treatment.

"On les (les couleurs) avaient confondues, soufflées, poussées à l'extrême limite d'elles-mêmes, et elles avaient accompli leur destin, il n'y avait plus qu'à les conserver dans les musées." (M.A.:32)

It might well seem that what Sartre gained in scepticism in his later novels he lost in idealism.

However let us examine the nature of this Sartrean ideal further to see how its characteristic properties are achieved.

The material perfection of the ideal being draws directly from its ordered structure. Its existence follows a rigid and disciplined internal design, forcing it away from the imperfection of the contingent world and towards the hard lucidity of a fulfilled being.

"Il n'y a que les airs de musique pour porter fidèlement leur propre mort en soi comme une nécessité interne; seulement ils n'existent pas." (M:88)

Such beings seen in their perfection to transcend the human world, to cut across its undisciplined time scheme with a sharp clarity. We can in fact distinguish two time levels according to a material density. Human time, as human existence, is flabby, "fait d'instantes larges et mouâ", its days are liquid and aimless, "s'ajout(ent) aux jours sans date". In contrast ideal time, in
accordance with its form, is firm and clear, "une étroite durée". Those moments when the Sartrean character feels that he has transcended "la mollesse quotidienne" of his own time and reached the world of absolutes are characterised by a sharp sense of stillness.*16

"De temps en temps, on fait un total partiel (...) Par moments rarement on fait le point (...) Le temps d'un éclair. Après ça, le défilé commence."
(N:61)

It's only an instant of arrest, but in that instant life seems to have fulfilled its own destiny, to have burst out into perfect form, "sa petite parle d'avoir" (M.A.:133). The moment seems detached, perfected, eternal.

"Ça brille comme un petit diamant - ce moment-là. Il est tout rond, il est suspendu dans le vide comme un petit diamant, je suis éternelle."
(A.R.:283)

Once again we find that the precious stone is chosen as the symbol for the ideal unity of being. Mathieu, like Ivič, enjoys a feeling of detachment from self, of integration with something beyond his sort of existence.


Sartre's affinity for pure, diaphanous and metallic substances is quite definite. "Le métal est une protestation matérielle",*17 Bachelard tells us, and, "le cristal évoque un matérialisme de la pureté."*18 These two affirmations could
well serve us as a résumé of the "désir individuel"*19 which prompted Sartre to novel writing. For, as with Camus*20, all artistic work implies for Sartre a correction of existence and if on the one hand Sartre creates with excessive abundance and precision a world of banality and imperfection, then on the other hand he is creating as Albâres has said, "ce tissu vivant pour (y) installer (....) les (....) problèmes du destin."*21 Sartre's novels are a protest against the very conditions that engender human and metaphysical problems and this Sartrean protestation appears to us as a neo-platonic nostalgia*22 for perfection, for purity, that he satisfies in the constant reference to and admiration of precious stones and metallic substances.
(Notes to En-Soi-Pour-Soi)

2. Iris Murdoch, Sartre, Romantic Rationalist, p. 44.
6. C. A. Burland, op. cit., p. 23.
8. C. A. Burland, op. cit., p. 47.
12. Id., p. 306.
13. Id., p. 304.

14. The same problem of course exists in alchemy. It would seem that those few who discovered this final truth retired into sage but circumspect silence! See Burland.


16. That purity and ideal time are co-existent is recognised by alchemy, "... for only when time is in abeyance can mysteries which seem unreasonable reach a solution". Burland, op. cit., p. 25.

18. Id., p. 294.
19. Jean Thibaudau, Le Roman Comme AutoBiographie, Tel Quel: 1965 no. 34.
20. See L'Homme Révolté, chap. 4.
21. R. M. Albères, La Révolte des Ecrivains d'Aujourd'hui, p. 204.
22. This Sartrean nostalgia closely parallels in aspiration and imagery that of the search for the Saint-Graal.

"Wolfram d'Eschenbach le représente comme une pierre précieuse (...). On a pu voir (....) une apologie de la chevalerie chrétienne, code de vie permettant à une classe sociale qui en respectait scrupuleusement les règles, d'atteindre l'idéal de perfection à laquelle elle se serait sentie mystérieusement éloignée," L. Kuenneheim and H. Roussel, Guide de la Littérature du Moyen Age, pp. 34-35.
TOUCH

"... j'ai connu (...) des hommes dont les mains n'étaient pas des nourrices. Mais des horloges de naissance."

Paul Eluard

The sense of touch is unquestionably the most active and the most important sense in the Sartrean universe. Tactile sensations dominate the lives of most of the characters and, moreover, on this density of tactile experience is based the largest part of the phenomenological conclusions that the novels put forward. By way of explanation it can be remarked that, contrary to the other senses, touch is not limited in its sensory area, that the whole body in fact has a tactile responsiveness. The human experience and understanding of existence will in consequence be considerably tactile.

One of the first things we realize is that the sense of touch has a double existence, being both an active and a passive sense. To touch is to actively seek tactile sensations whereas to feel is, conversely, to receive without conscious instigation tactile sensation. It does not necessarily follow that these two capacities are equally responsive; the intensity of tactile experience corresponds to their variance as we see with Ivich. Ivich has, from quasi-prudishness, a weak active sense of touch.

"Ses mains (...) ne lui servaient guère à prendre, c'étaient deux petites idoles frustrées au bout de ses bras; elles effleuraient les choses avec des gestes menus et inachevés et semblaient moins les saisir que les modeler. (...) Ivich ne pouvait rien faire de ses dix doigts."

(A.R.:30)

However, on the passive side she is sensitive almost to excess.

"Pour elles les choses étaient des présences étonnantes et complètes, d'amples remous qui la pénétraient jusque dans sa chair."

(A.R.:34)

It is important to realize that the thought and the fictitious universe that the Sartrean novels present draw on both types
of tactile sensation.

Without making any unnecessary division between the two we can examine the concentration of tactile experience in this universe and begin to understand its relevance to Sartrean existentialism. At the creative level we can see how much of Sartre's fictional universe involves pure tactile sensation. Take for example the prominence of temperature in the following scene.

"Un glaçon nageait dans le vin rouge de Mathieu, il but, il eut d'abord de l'eau froide dans la bouche, puis une petite mare de vin avant encore un sou乩 chaud qui fondit tout aussitôt en eau; Charles tourna un peu la tête et dit: "Encore de la sueur (...)." On lui posa son assiette sur la poitrine, elle lui chaussetait le nez à travers la serviette et la chemise ...

(5:136-7)

The sense of touch is used extensively too in the frequent descriptions of the summer in Europe and New York.

"Gomez suait toujours (...) "Bon Dieu!" soupira-t-il en passant sa main humide sur sa poitrine mouillée (...) l'air avait la fièvre (...) il porterait cette douce amitié et puante (...) Il se mit debout avec précaution, mais sans pouvoir éviter l'inondation, les gouttes coulaient sur ses flancs comme des poux, ça le chatouillait."

(6:178)

When we further examine tactile experience in the Sartrean novel we find that for the characters their sense of touch is their primary source of knowledge. To touch is the most satisfactory contact with reality. Touch alone can convince Roquentin that an acquaintance is not, as he fears, dead.

"Il faut que je voie M. Pasquelle en vie, que je touche au besoin sa barbe ou ses mains. Alors, peut-être je serai sauvé."  

(8:112)
Seeing can be deceptive, but touching, handling, feeling are incontestable proof, they are the final assurance. ¹

"Mathieu se tortait dans les flammes, il n'était plus qu'une brûlure, il suffoquait. Il dut plaquer les mains sur sa poitrine et les descendre lentement jusqu'à son ventre pour s'assurer qu'il était indemne."

(H.A.:275)

Hands in particular are the principal means of approach, of tactile recognition.

"Le brouillard était (...) dense (...) il fallait avancer avec prudence, tâter le sol au bout du pied et même étendre les mains en avant."

(R.104)

This easily defined role of the hands seems to become instinctive at even an abstract and metaphysical level.

It is the hands that know, that confirm.

"Longin (...) avança ses longues mains comme pour tâter prudenceusement la nouvelle."

(H.A.:93)

Similarly Mathieu responds to the silent immobility of stone through his hands.

"Il étendit les mains et les pousa lentement sur la pierre de la balustrade (...) Il aurait voulu s'accrocher à cette pierre (...) se remplir de son opacité, de son repos."

(S:419)

However, experience of abstract phenomena is not restricted to the hands. While Boquentin does talk of having "touché la cime de son bonheur", his response to the possibility of aesthetic salvation at the end of "Le Nouvèè enganges his whole person.
Mathieu's tactile awareness of time is also very corporeal.

"Le temps ne coulait même plus: il tremblotait, affaibli sur cette face rousse. Un mouvement trop brusque et Mathieu le sentirait de nouveau dans ses os, comme l'élanement d'un vieux rhumatisme."

Indeed it must be stressed that the Sartrean person is extraordinarily sensitive and responds intensely in many varied situations. Mathieu's expression of affection for Ivich, while remarkable for the subtlety of its evocation, is a profound tactile appreciation.

"Mathieu la regardait. Un désir violent et imprécis l'avait envahi: (...) sentir du dedans ces bras longs et minces, sentir, à la saignée, la peau de l'avant-bras se coller comme une lèvre à la peau du bras, sentir ce corps et tous les petits baisers secrets qu'il se donnait sans cesse. Étre Ivich sans cesser d'être moi."

Emotions and the sense of touch are naturally sympathetic, the sense of touch being an important agent for expressing feeling in the Sartrean universe, either for simple affection, or sexual desire.

"Un petit poing tâtonnant effleura sa main. Elle ouvrit la main et la ferma sur le poignet de Pablo."

or sexual desire.

"Miris s'étendit près de Lois et se mit à lui caresser les épaules et les seins."

Direct contact with other people can have quite
different implications, acting as a catalyst to personal freedom. Take for example Mathieu who, embarrassed by Irene's stare, saves himself by physical contact.

"Il se leva et lui prit le bras (...)"
"Qu'est-ce qui vous prend? demanda-t-elle. - J'avais envie de vous toucher. En tout bien tout honneur: parce que vous me regardez."
(S:1438)

He reacts similarly with Ivich when he feels that her thoughts are trapping him into being that sort of person.

"Elle me juge", pensa Mathieu avec irritation. Il se pencha; pour la punir, il effleura du bout des lèvres une bouche froide et close."
(A.N.:94)

It would seem that active touching can affect the nihilating recoil of consciousness, and it is with this understanding that we must surely consider the scene where Mathieu is able to distinguish himself, not without regret, from the stones of the Pont-Neuf.

"Mes mains: l'inappréciable distance qui me révèle les choses et m'en sépare pour toujours."
(S:419)

Touch is also the primary agent for affecting man's consciousness of himself as a corporeal presence. Roquentin, despite a close examination of his reflection in the mirror, finds that all visual recognition of himself stems from an intense sensory awareness of his whole body.

"Est-ce que les autres hommes ont autant de peine à juger de leur visage? Il me semble que je vois le mien comme je sens mon corps, par une sensation sourde et organique."
(N:51)
The Cartesian maxime, 'Je pense donc je suis', which is one of the constant touchstones of the Sartrean universe, becomes here, 'Je me sens être donc je suis'. A quick look at Roquentin's thoughts will verify the primacy of this tactile awareness of self.

"J'existe (...) ça remue. Ce sont des effleurements partout (...) je sens ma main. C'est moi (...) je ne peux pas la supprimer, ni supprimer le reste de mon corps, la chaleur humide qui salit ma chemise, ni tout cette graisse chaude qui tourne paresseusement, comme si on la remuait à la cuiller, ni toutes les sensations qui se promènent là-dedans, qui vont et viennent, remuent de mon flanc à mon aisselle."

(N:144-1-2)

The tactile relationships of the Sartrean character to himself and to his world are at the centre of the philosophical intent of the extensive use of the sense of touch. The sort of sensation that the character is aware of in his own being will largely dictate the nature of his feelings and the significance of his thoughts. Repugnant and flabby sensations - of vegetation, warmth, weight, and of the clinging colémes of his shirt - provoke in Roquentin a sense of irritation and exasperation. It is from this awareness of himself as shapeless and grotesque that he believes his existence is vague and useless.

"Je me lève (...) je sens. Pourquoi? Eh bien, parce que je n'ai pas non plus de raisons pour ne pas le faire. Même si je reste, même si je me blottis en silence dans un coin, je ne m'oublierai pas. Je serai là, je pèserai sur le plancher. Je suis."

(N:144)

We can see the same thought process with Mathieu; even as he feels that his body is 'un maquet encombrant' he judges
life dull, futile, a little inept. The tactile awareness of self is certainly then a principal stimulus to nausea.

The other important stimulus is, as has already been suggested, the Sartrean character's tactile relationship with his world. It is through the sense of touch that he discovers the naked and amorphous richness of existence, original source of nausea. We need only look first of all at those scenes where Roquentin is overcome by feelings of nausea to see their tactile origin. He picks up a muddy stone and drops it straight away; on opening a door he suddenly and intensely feels its cold handle; the head of the self-taught man in his own makes him think of a fat worm; his shirt seems to creep on his back; he bends down to pick up a muddy and 'tendre' piece of paper but can't bring himself to do it. Roquentin once liked to touch things (N: 22) then it repulses him. Now has his tactile relationship with the world changed?

Until now the usefulness of things had seemed both to justify their existence and to keep them subordinate and inanimate. Roquentin touched them but "les objets, cela ne devrait pas toucher, guëque cela ne vit pas" (N: 22). But then all of a sudden those same things seem to exist apart from men and from his use of them, affirming their indepedence through the sense of touch.

"... ils me touchent, c'est insupportable. J'ai peur d'entrer en contact avec eux tout comme s'ils étaient des bêtes vivantes."

(N: 22)
Until now Roquentin had believed existence was an abstraction, then he feels it moving in everything. The stone, the muddy paper, the door-knob were only arbitrary forms transmitting this living abundance to his hands.

"Maintenant je vois; je me rappelle mieux ce que j'ai senti, l'autre jour, au bord de la mer, quand je tenais ce galet. C'était une espèce d'acccurement douceur. Que c'était donc désagréable! Et cela venait du galet, j'en suis sûr, cela passait du galet dans mes mains. Oui, c'est cela, c'est bien cela: une sorte de nausée dans les mains." (N: 22)

Again it is in the hands that tactile power and reception concentrates, knowing both the object extant

"J'appuie ma main sur la banquette, mais je la retire précipitamment; ça existe." (N: 177)

and the metaphysical condition that engenders all existence.

"Absurdité; encore un acte: je me débats contre des mots; là-bas je touchais la chose." (N: 182)

It is in the sense of touch too that is given the power to recognise the conditions of the ideal being. While the ordinary stuff of existence is warm, viscous and palpitating; the perfect matter is cold, solid and still. And in possessing the exterior form of order and restraint, the Sartrean character feels his own being as having these same physical qualities, he enjoys a total awareness of a new metaphysical existence.

"Je suis sûr, je sens mon corps comme une machine de précision au repos. Moi, j'ai eu de vraies aventures." (N: 39)

The ability to recognise both the imperfect and the corrected levels of Being through the sense of touch gives a balance to
the basis of the Sartrean universe, lending realism and idealism equally a human closeness to which we respond sympathetically.

The sense of touch is engaged thoroughly and expertly in all movements, in all moods of Sartre's novels. Tactile sensation is the beginning for a major part of the thought and feeling in the world of those novels, giving to the life a bodily fullness that does not seem to belong to a creative after-thought but to arise from the keen and curious tactile sense of the artist himself. Touch, despite, perhaps indeed and paradoxically because of, its chief involvement with anguish, is the chief witness in the Sartrean testament to a singular and vital experience of life, and it is undoubtedly in the reification of profound and moving touch experiences that the Sartrean universe achieves much of its singularity as a philosophical as well as an artistic voice.

2. See Pour-soi, p. 15.
SOUND

"So beautiful strange and new! Since it was to end so soon I almost wish I had never heard it. For it has roused a longing in me that is pain and nothing seems worth while but just to hear that sound once more and go on listening to it forever."

Kenneth Grahame.

Sartre's hearing is remarkably sensitive. Surely few writers have created with such Preustian richness the resonant universe of the novels of Sartre. We can approach this auditory wealth by examining first of all the nature of this perception.

Sounds seem to have a more than normal intensity for Sartre's characters, overcoming and possessing them. And because in the Sartrean universe all existence manifests itself in sound, the overwhelming fullness of existence in La Nausée is for Roquentin a very dramatic sound experience.

"Je me laissai aller sur le banc, étonné, assommé par cette profusion d'êtres sans origine: partout des éclosions des épanouissements, mes oreilles bourdonnaient d'existence."

(M:137)

To engage at any level in existence is to become aware of sound.

"Daniel se mit au pas de ce lent défilé, il emprunta à ces hommes leur sourire endormi, leur destin vague et menaçant, il se perdit: il n'y eut plus en lui qu'un bruit sourd d'avalanches."

(A.R:138)
Smaller less obtrusive sounds can be equally pervasive.

"Le petit bruit d'eau de la fontaine Masquerat se coulait dans mes oreilles et s'y faisait un nid, les embuisait de soupirs."  
(N:180)

Note that it is only a slight ('petit') sound that is perceived with such intensity; Sartre's hearing it would seem is particularly sensitive to those fine thin sounds that most of us would be unmoved by. Indeed, Roquentin is able to distinguish ordinary sounds from those penetrating hard supra-mundane ones.

"Le vent s'apprête par intermittence une petite sonnerie solitaire, qui vient de loin. Les bruits domestiques, le ronflement des autos, les cris, les aboiements ne s'allègent guère des rues 'clairées', ils restent au chaud. Mais cette sonnerie perce les ténèbres et parvient jusqu'ici: elle est plus dure, moins humaine que les autres bruits."  
(N:42)

What is particularly interesting to us is that this classification of sound is tactile,1 that Roquentin makes the distinction according to either the human warmth and thickness of the sound or to its unworldly sharpness.

In the Sartrean universe the latter type, the sharp, aggressive and ringing sound is dominant.

"le tramway ? (...) arrive avec un grand bruit de ferraille"  
(N:11)
"La sonnerie du Ciné-Eldorado retentissait dans l'air clair"  
(N:76)
"Le grelottement hésitant d'un piano mécanique frappe Brunet au passage"  
(N:A1:13)

Noises such as the following are rare in the novel.

"un bruit somptueux (...) un bruit de marée"  
(N:64)
What significance, we ask, has this auditory predilection in regard to first, the thought contained in the novels and, second, to the subjective creative process.

Our understanding of Sartre's nostalgia for an ideal,* 2 for true adventures with real beginnings will best explain this singular bias, for, sharpness of sound, Sartre says, is the signature of the ideal.

"De vrais commencements, apparaissant comme une sonnerie de trompette, comme les premières notes d'un air de jazz, brusquement, coupant court à l'ennui, raffermissant la durée (....). On se promène (....). Et puis d'un coup, on pense: "Quelque chose est arrivé." N'importe quoi: un légère craquement dans l'ombre (....). Mais ce mince événement (....) est à l'avant d'une grande forme ...."  

(N:58-59)

The clearness of sharp sounds seems to promise the constringency of time, characteristic of music, and their cutting acidity symbolises the mineral world to which the Sartrean character aspires. In evidence we have the description of the music in La Nausée as dry, metallic and brusque: all qualities which make Roquentin think that something inevitable and real and thus valuable has happened. (N:38) The metallic perfection of an ideal being would appear to necessitate the participation of sharp or coarse sounds. Take, for example, Lucie, the cleaning woman of La Nausée whose "air minéralisé" seems to draw directly from that raucous and violent sobbing part of her suffering. (N:44) Then there is the negress of the record, "Some of These Days", whose life, "quelque chose
de précieux" seems similarly sustained by a raucous voice, and the white acid sounds of a saxophone. All the "ideal" moments of La Nausée involve similar strident sounds and the following occasion that Roquentin does not hesitate to call an adventure, shows unequivocably the affinity of sound and perfection.  

"Un vent assez fort s'est levé. J'entends grincer le chapeau de tôle de l'archevêque (....) tout existe d'une autre façon (....). Quelque chose va se produire (....), Je me vois avancer, avec le sentiment de fatalité (....). Le chapeau de tôle grince. Je ne sais si le monde s'est soudain resserré ou si c'est moi qui mets entre les sons et les formes une unité si forte (....). Le vent m'apporte le cri d'une sirène (....) comme je suis sec quand il (ce sentiment d'aventure) est reparti."

(N:83-87)

On all counts brittle sounds create a singular base of jazz and mechanics to all of Sartre's novels. Of particular interest is the neurotic attention that such insistent sound repetitions would seem to manifest, for what qualifies all these sounds is their irritating nature. Taking La Nausée as a rich source of these sounds that P. H. Simon has called "bruits louche"  

They can be slight and penetrating,  

"son rire, un petit rire flûte et gamin" (N:230)  

or, either monotonous and minor,  

"Une horloge sonne la demie de dix heures" (N:94)  

or monotonous and major,  

"Tous les soirs, jusqu'à minuit, elle (une drague) hurle et gémuit et mène un train de tous les diables."

(N:78)
or, as is the general trend, banal, often scratchy,

"un souffle court." (N:34)
"le gardien ronfle doucement." (N:121)
"le petit bourdonnement de leurs paroles." (N:104)
"le râle de la mer." (N:80)

The scratchiness of sounds is particularly evident to Roquentin in the café where he remarks that the hands of the card-players are scratching "le tapis avec leurs ongles". This same sound is suggested later in the Jardin Public.

"Un arbre gratte la terre sous mes pieds d'un ongle noir." (N:178)

Roquentin's hearing is equally perceptive to the sounds in the library where he spends long hours. Above all his attention is caught by the sound of the librarian's walking.

"Le gardien promène des heures entières entre les tables en claquant des talons." (N:110)
"les souliers du Corse craquaient sur le plancher." (N:111)

It is significant that Roquentin should miss the sharp regularity of this sound when the librarian is absent. We must conclude that in some way these consistent sounds, although annoying, are an assurance to him. This moral positivity of sound is equally true for others. An old man who also visits the library frequently and who is reluctant to leave the reading room seems to take comfort from tapping his fingers on the table, "à coups secs et réguliers" (N:117). There is also a young man who must whistle as he finally and regretfully leaves the library buildings. It would seem that the threat of silence made by
human anguish can be dissipated by sound. It is this belief surely that prompts Lucie to the following gesture –

"Quand elle est seule dans les chambres, je l'entends qui fredonne, pour s'empêcher de penser."  

(N:23)

Sound, and particularly sharp and repetitive sound, has then an established role in the drama of feelings associate with Sartre's philosophy.

Let us turn now to the second part of our investigation; the significance of the Sartrean bias for dry sound with regard to the subjective creative process. In other words what personal involvement has Sartre in the extensive use of those sounds. His favouritism of the following related type of sound betrays, we feel, more of the man behind the novel's universe.

"j'entends (....) une petite chute de charbon dans le poêle."  

(N:111)

"L'escalier craquait."  

(A.R:10)

"Dans les maisons désertes, les meubles et les parquets craquaient doucement."  

(N:??)

Such acute almost domestic attention strangely reflects the world of those writers whose novels move in densely imaginative spheres. Godin, citing from Bosco, makes this telling comment.

"Un enfant livré à lui-même y devient vite anormalement attentif. Rien ne lui échappe. Il est à l'affut de tout."  

We can indeed note a basic similarity in the childhood of these two writers: then muse indefinitely on the spiritual labyrinth they took to such different conclusions.
We feel strongly too that Sartre is very close to his characters through the definite pleasure they find in this cracking noise. Roquentin likes to pick up pieces of newspaper the sun has made "secs et cassants comme des feuilles mortes", tearing them to hear "leur long crapitement". (N:21) Charles, the cripple, responds intensely to the metallic resonance of an aeroplane engine.

"le ciel rôsonna comme un gong (....). Il se défendit et ses orteils frétillèrent: le son venait par grandes nappe de cuivre, c'était agréable et caressant, ça ressemblait à l'odeur de chloroforme." (3:37-38)

Sound obviously plays a stimulative role in the imaginative and sensorial richness of Sartrean experience. It is audital associations of this type that best show up those individualized tastes that Sartre has shown elsewhere through an imaginative rapport with his novel material. We can begin to know even some of the finer tenors of the Sartrean temperament with the associative energies that the sound is given. So the clamour of a railway station evokes sea-shell, and the murmuring of prisoners, the muffled bassness of the sea. Marcelle's laugh is the gentle sound of a bird, the cry of a frightened man is the cry of a wild animal and the street makes a cracking sound like a forest. The sound may acquire a physical presence.

"Elle entendit un brouhaha et il lui sembla que le souffle d'une longue salle voulait le frappait au passage." (3:36h)

Sartre's novels overflow with correspondences such as these that, not only for their personal resonance, but also for those stirring and revealing relations they seize on within
living phenomena, must surely earn from us the respect that Flaubert won from Pommier.

"Comme on surprend sur le vif l'application continue de l'artiste-né à saisir au juste les phénomènes."*7

So we find that sound, the musical, the metallic and the natural, is engaged in extensive areas of the Sartrean universe, earning its very prominent place by working on both human (anguish) and metaphysical (the ideal) levels and by gathering into itself all the personal and sensitive qualities of what Valéry would call a "plaisir local".*8 The active and penetrating responsiveness that such a term necessitates preserves not only Sartre's art from, in Valéry's eyes, barbaric spiritualism, but Sartre himself from the accusations of "grossièreté brutale" such as Candon unwittingly makes.*9

If we are to be impressed at all by the diffusion of sound in Sartre's fictional world, we must disengage ourselves from the dull régime of our own patterned responses to sound and involve ourselves in the singularities of this very fine Sartrean sense.
1. See Touch, p. 56.
2. See En-Soi-Pour-Soi, p. 42.
3. Sometimes the sounds within an occasion only lack a human gesture to render it perfect. See M.A.:132-133.
6. One outstanding feature in both writers is the freedom they enjoyed as children, c.f. Les Motz (Sartre) and the autobiographical intention of much of L'Enfant et La Riviére (Bosco).
7. Jean Pommier, Dialogues avec la Passé, p. 312.
TASTE

"J'avais, j'avais ce goût de vivre chez les hommes
(...), j'avais, j'avais ce goût de vivre sans douceur."
Saint-John Perse.

Although the sense of taste makes fewer appearances in the Sartrean universe than the other senses, taste sensations are fully developed as physical responses and are thoroughly absorbed into the significance and style of the novels.

In Le Naufrage, taste reflects the repulsion of existence and the horror of all phenomena with systematic realism. It is notable that the crises of anguish are always accompanied by sickening tastes. In the café scene Noquentin is aware of "un goût de sucre de l'air dans (son) arrière-bouche" (N:35), and a later crisis brings him "(un) goût de fromage". On this occasion he becomes incensed with the Self-Taught man, even thinks of stabbing him but decides that,

"un goût de sang dans la bouche au lieu de ce goût de fromage, ça ne fait pas de différence."
(N:174)

Equally significant, equally gustatory are those moments when the soft grotesqueness of the body's existence is experienced.

"Ma salive est sucrée, mon corps est tiède; je me sens fade."
(N:143)

Noquentin also speaks of "l'eau douce et sucrée de (sa) chair", (N:146), and even says that his self-consciousness, his own thinking "laisse un drôle de goût". (N:142).
The sense of taste is stimulated at other moments of emotional weakness. Sunday, time par excellence for crises in Nathalie Sarraute's traumatic universe, leaves, says Roquentin, "un goût de cendre". And, even after several years, meeting his old girlfriend Anne still evokes for him "ce goût amer au fond de (sa) bouche."

It seems evident then that the sense of taste is only strikingly active during periods of personal abandonment to the horror and disorder of existence, irrefutable base of La Nausée. Infrequent and far from a gourmet's delight, tastes are yet a formal part of this base.

While this properly conceptual role of the sense of taste is not absent in Les Chemins de La Liberté - in this tetralogy there are similar moments, c.f. Daniel's boredom and "le goût doucement pourri du marc" (S:154), Mathieu's horror of his future and "le mauvais goût" (A.R.:81), Pierre's fear and "le goût amer dans la bouche" (S:65) - taste has a more imaginative relation with the thought it is conveying. In other words Sartre has given the physical sensation an artistic "intériorisation". We find that this different employment can be distinguished by the choice of intermediaries between sensation and significance.

The first use involves materials or qualifications that are properly gustatory, 'fromage', 'sucre', 'amer', and whose repulsive or upsetting nature gives, without naming, a clear and tangible conception of their original subject. By contrast, the second use
appears to discard such realism, preferring to credit taste with more sensibility, encouraging a more imaginative rapport in "cet échange à l'intérieur de l'image entre le sujet et l'objet."²

"Mathieu sentit de nouveau dans sa bouche un goût de catastrophe". (A.R.:36)

It is to taste to know directly the intensity and the implication of an abstract situation without having recourse to a mediating substance that might facilitate understanding.

"Le bar retomba dans un silence sec, il y avait dans l'air un goût de désastre." (A.R.:344)

Sensorial power then becomes a principal agent in determining the Sartrean character's relationship with his universe, acting even as a primary force of the intelligence. (Or, inversely, we may prefer to describe it, after Gandon, as "une sensibilité de l'intelligence."³)

Taste seems particularly sensitive to those human qualities in a situation. In the following scene we may well believe that the sense reaction unashamedly gauges Sartre's own sensitivity, the hope as well as the disillusionment.

"La défaite était devenue quotidienne (...) mais il lui restait de la veille, au fond de la bouche, un goût refroidi de froideur. Le vaguesemestre s'approchait, encadré par les deux cuistots; Mathieu les regarda: dans la nuit, sous la lune, ces bouche lui avaient souri. Plus rien; leurs durs visages fermés proclamaient qu'il faut se méfier des coups de lune et des extases de minuit." (M.A.:140)
It is the after-taste, the very real human despair that the body's senses know in all movements of life; it's almost as if the imperfection, the awful human aloneness were the basic element in everything and that taste is unable to ignore.

"Boris but une gorgée de son café et faillit le recracher: c'était comme si on lui avait mis toute sa tristesse dans la bouche."

(M.A.:87)

While taste sensations are not a striking feature of the Sartrean universe, they do form an integral part of its conception and of its expression. The sense of taste contributes its own singular capacity to the whole testament of human sensation vis-à-vis the human situation, and it is the fullness of that universe we respond to even in our judgment of it.
(Notes to Taste)


2. *Id.*, p. 125.

SMELL

"des soldats passeront avec des bouquets; un d’eux, tout en marchant, leva son bouquet vers son visage, plongea le nez dans les fleurs, respira au milieu des fleurs, son loisir, sa peine et son injustifiable gratuité."

Jean-Paul Sartre.

Sharp and penetrating, the sense of smell plays an important role in the Sartrean universe. The sense of smell like that of touch experiences life spontaneously, establishing a direct and simple relationship between the artist and his world. Cadin feels that particularly sensitive olfactory powers reveal a certain trait in that person.

"Le sens de l’odorat (...) une qualité que l’on s’attend à trouver chez un être primitif et sauvage, chez un homme habitué à saisir le monde par ses seuls sens!" 1

It is true, as we are discovering, that Sartre does seize much of life through his senses. However, we cannot accept without reticence that such an approach makes Sartre a primitive being, for we are also discovering how Sartre assimilates sensorial reaction into both a profound and thoughtful philosophy, and a personal and often poetic system of values. We will see too in Sartre’s novels how olfactory sensation transcends the quasi-animal limits that the ‘savagery’ of a Roscconian universe imposes, by being situated within a human and imaginative situation.

The smells that Sartre most frequently engages in his universe are those ‘odeurs suspectes’ 2 which underline the sordid and repugnant aspects of existence. La Nausée abounds
with sickening sensations and the sense of smell adds its own grossness. The famous crisis scene in the Jardin Public of *La Nausée* plunges Roquentin into a frightening intimacy with the naked obscenity of the world, "ses narines d'abordant d'une odeur verte et putride" (N:180). Equally repugnant are his meetings with the self-taught man, ('L'Autodidacte') who smells of "le vieux tabac" and "l'eau croupie", whose breath is "empesté". Even the vermouth that Roquentin drinks has an "odeur vineuse".

Not quite so crude, but equally sickening, are "l'odeur d'encens" (N:144), "(la) légère odeur de tabac blond" (N:73) and "le doux parfum du chocolat" (N:49), whose nauseating sweetness associates them immediately with anguished thoughts.

"Je me cognais vide (…) devant moi (…) il y avait une idée volumineuse et fade (…) Elle m'accourait. Tout cela se confondait pour moi avec le parfum de la barbe de Mercier."
(N:15)

The town itself of Rouville is foul-smelling, to live there is to live among smells (N:189), the most characteristic of which is of damp wood.

"La rue des Mutilés sent fortement le bois humide comme toutes les fois qu'il va pleuvoir."
(N:90)

What could be more depressing, more 'blafard'?

It's not only in *La Nausée* that smells enrich feelings of anguish.

"Ma vie (…) C'était un drôle d'objet sans commencement ni fin, qui pourtant n'était pas infini (…) elle avait un sens vague et hésitant comme les choses naturelles, une fadeur tenace, une odeur de poussière et de violette."
(A.R.:273)
and emotional depression,

"Mathieu refera la porte et resta immobile les bras ballants, pris à la gorge par l'insupportable douceur d'exister. Il était là, il s'épanouissait là, près de cette femme souriante, entier dans cette odeur de maladie, de bonbons et d'amour." (A.R.: 398)

Sartre constantly seeks out that which is sweetish 'de bon-bons', 'de sainfoin' (S: 52), 'une haleine parfumée' (A.R.: 50) and what is moist, 'de maladie', 'de purin' (S: 52), 'l'odeur de cave' (A.R.: 185).

Many times Sartre will use only the sense of smell, rather than smells themselves, to accent the physical intensity of anguish.

"ça s'estait le cauchemar" (A.R.: 186)

"... il se relève, il redescend à pas lents, il pense qu'il est seul. La mort est autour de lui comme une odeur, comme la fin d'un dimanche." (M.A.: 360)

It is interesting from the point of view of style to compare this abstraction to the following striking substantialism.

"L'air était moite, un peu fiévreux, des odeurs y flottaient par paquets chevelus, comme des algues." (S: 52)

We might well judge the depth of Sartre's imaginative perception on just these two examples.

It is easy to believe from all this that bad smells persist in the Sartrean universe with the overwhelming reality of what Simon would call 'une obsession hallucinatoire'. Peculiar and pervasive smells do form a large part of the crude amorphousness of existence that the Sartrean character experiences with nightmarish vision.
"Ce noir (...) se fondait en odeur de terre mouillé, de bois tiède et mouillé, en odeur noire étendue comme un vernis sur ce bois nerveux (...). Ce noir-là, présence amorphe et veule, débordait, de loin, la vue, l'odorat et le goût. Mais cette richesse tournait en confusion et finalement ça n'était plus rien parce que c'était trop."

(N:184-5)

Superfluous, rich and confused, existence seems to be too much for the ordinary capacities of the senses which only manage a "phantasmagoria of 'disordered' sensation". While each sense organ has the capacity to seize existence, none is able to reduce it to an essence from where to understand it. Man had believed he was engaged in the world intuitively but his experience of the unfilled fullness of existence reveals that even natural categories are only an "invention abstraite" on his part, "a trimming of meaning". In other words his relation to the world is discursive; man is free before a world that he cannot comprehend.

This penetrating sensibility and the perception it affords is undoubtedly the source of what Simon describes as the "dégoût des choses, premier mouvement de la sensibilité sartienne". However, it must be emphasised, pace Simon, that the Sartrean sensibility has other and equally strong movements that "accepté le donnée, l'embrasse, en nourrit sa force et son chant." In the Sartrean universe smells, as all sensation does, assume an existence quite apart from their philosophical role, and one which is, to borrow the meaning Simon gives the word -"la jouissance des choses telles qu'elles sont" - strongly "artistique". These other movements, although more reserved, nevertheless
correspond to intense Sartrean attitudes.

In transcending its purely conceptual role in the Sartrean universe, the sense of smell demonstrates a subtle intuitive perception.

"Mathieu respira une odeur verte et vivante, une jeune poussière; il cligna des yeux et sourit: 'L'été', "

(A.R.:69)

Mathieu needs only a single moment's breathing to identify the season according to smell and to analyse its characteristic traits! This almost naïve enjoyment of smells makes him remark too on the "odeur de résine" at Juan-Les-Pins, and he takes great pleasure in smelling "l'âpre odeur de varech et d'eucalyptus" (3:96). Simon has claimed that with the Sartrean universe he feels "presque jamais cette confiance dans la vie" 9 which, he says, even the most pessimistic of writers find in some mode. Yet, despite the infrequency of those moments of sensual pleasure, we feel that the intensity of Sartre's feelings fully expresses that,

"irresistible, universal, automatic tendency to find sweet pleasure somewhere, which pervades all life, from the meanest to the highest." 10

We can all too easily see only the 'meanest' in the Sartrean universe, sadly ignoring those short but sincere and moving occasions of the 'highest'.

"Mathieu respira soudain un parfum tiède d'absinthe et de menthe: après les ciseaux, les herbes et les fleurs s'éveillaient, elles jetaient leurs odeurs comme ils avaient jeté leurs cris: 'C'est vrai, pensa Mathieu, il y a aussi les odeurs'. Des odeurs vertes et poïtes, encore pointues, encore acides: elles deviendraient de plus en-plus sucrées, de
What a long way we are from the 'typical' Sartrean horror at living! *11

Such healthy contacts with natural phenomena make one wonder about Sartre’s true temperament. If we agree with Dufrenne that our unconscious life has two contrary movements, “l’un qui nous affirme dans notre particularité et nous lie à notre enfance, l’autre qui nous joint au monde et nous ouvre un avenir,”*12 then we might justifiably conclude that the Sartrean obsession with images as well as sensations of the foul and the obscene are an affirmation of a pre-public movement. Gandon declares such an interpretation – without conceding anything else.

"Il serait-il (Sartre) pas, en définitive, un écrivain précieux qui a manqué le coche et le regrette parfois, un bonnerade normalien scoule de purin naturaliste?"*13

But when we see beyond this movement towards excess and shock tactics, and examine the second movement then we can see a profound personal instinct that expresses itself, particularly through the sense of smell, in a pensive stillness.

"L’odeur de résine emplit soudain les narines de Mathieu et, pour la première fois depuis l’avant-veille, il lui semble qu’il y avait autour de lui quelque chose qu’il allait pouvoir regretter. C’était la paix de cet après-midi dans la cuisine, ces calmes travaux ménagers (...) un certain genre de vie calme ..." (S:347)

This humbled quietude is remarkable for a man of Sartre’s political energy and for a writer whose literary reputation rests on those more sensational and ‘soul-destroying’ areas of his work.
Has Sartre indeed, as Díazguez suspects, denied himself "un certain genre de vie calme, a poet's reflective position?"

It is interesting at this point of our questioning to note that those moments of poetic respite, when smells are perceived and reviewed with most subtlety, come even within the turmoil of the Sartrean universe.

"Il (Daniel) ouvrit la fenêtre, se pencha au-dessus du vide et respira l'odeur de violette du silence: tout de fois, à cette même place, j'ai voulu me fuir (...) La nuit était douce et sauvage."

(M.A.: 202)

Consider too just how much depth and richness the singular use of the sense of smell adds to the following scene.

"Il était d'une humeur absolument charmante et se sentait tout velouté au-dehors. Et puis, au-dehors, il y avait la mélancolie ténue de cette vieille journée qui sombrait lentement autour de lui et le frôlait, en s'enfonçant, de sa lumière et de ses parfums pleins de regrets."

(A.R.: 203-4)

The provocative confusion of sensation and sentiment again recalls the poetic fullness of a Proustian Combray. This Sartrean method of complementing feelings with sensations is also applied to sensations themselves. So Sartre will qualify his olfactory perception with qualities from the other senses; he tastes smells that are 'acides' and 'sucrées', sees smells that are 'vertes', touches 'l'odeur moite du couteau' and 'l'odeur chaude (... des hommes)', and can even find smells 'timides', 'féminines' and 'gai'... This transfer of sensorial powers is but one imaginative technique that effectively sharpens the life within the Sartrean novels.
The sense of smell then has integrated itself with unflagging vivacity into all levels of the Sartrean universe, affording philosophical realism to the existentialist experience of life as an unreserved and often crude plenitude even as it gave expression to a fundamental but profound appreciation of the human engagement in that same fullness of Being. And while we may wish to deny the sincerity of either of these two movements, we are forced to recognise Sartre's artistic capabilities in handling, in a series of differently styled novels, a sensory capacity with both pungency and sensitivity. For whatever temperament aspects nauseous or 'poetic' smells reveal of Sartre, the testament they are given helps gauge the quality and singularity of Sartre's relationship as a writer to his world. In the novels olfactory sensation is undoubtedly one of the central elements of,

"cette palpitation secrète, irremplaçable, qui fait passer dans un style, avec toutes les qualités d'esprit, tout le sensorium de l'écrivain."
(Notes to Small)

1. J. C. Godin, op. cit., p. 29.
3. Id., p. 61.
4. Iris Murdoch, op. cit., p. 35.
5. Id., p. 12.
7. Ibid.
8. Id., p. 66.
9. Id., p. 61.
10. Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, p. 133.
11. Even the impassive Brunet notices, "la bonne couleur de pierre chauffée". (M.A.:290)
15. We might well recall here the many photos of Sartre seen standing, pensively, at a balcony.
16. Yves Gandon, op. cit., p. 11.
CONCLUSION

"Une œuvre d'art est un coin de la création vu à travers un tempérament."
Emile Zola.

Sartre's experience of life is, as we have seen, sensory and penetrating, frankly and often perversely disturbing. In this peculiar visionary experience Sartrean thought has its beginning, a perspicacious and philosophical temperament finding in those new and startling relationships between phenomena the force for a unique understanding of the human engagement in existence.

Our examination of sense reaction, a key source to Sartrean experience, has revealed both the responsiveness and the sensitivity of Sartre's senses. Not only is the significance of the Sartrean universe shaped according to the nature and intensity of sense reaction, but their testament also measures a very fine personal response between Sartre and his physical being. It is, says Valéry, in that second part of an artist's testament, in that individual reflection on experience where the order of aesthetic life begins.

"La vue, le toucher, l'odorat, l'ouïe, le mouvoir, le parler, nous induisent de temps à autre à nous attarder dans les impressions qu'ils nous causent, à les conserver ou à les renouveler.

L'ensemble de ces effets à tendance infinie (...) pourrait constituer l'ordre des choses esthétiques."*1

And we have indeed remarked on the poetic wealth that Sartre can add to his universe by stepping momentarily outside of the insights and interpretations of sense experience and by giving
a stylised and reflective voice to his own and very singular appreciation of sense response. We do not even have to see these two movements as opposed expressions - the one philosophical and starkly realistic, the other subjective and artistically kind - but as differing moods of the same sense experience. It's as if Sartre can come full circle from the simple experience through to the significance it gains in philosophical reflection, and then beyond even that metaphysical anguish and absurdity towards less pretentious interpretations of those same conditions of existence. Perhaps pushed by that human capacity for survival despite the bitterness of truth, Sartre is able to accept with quiet interest the unaccounted pleasure of living.

Our study of substance has revealed a similar duality of testament. For even as the choice of substances was based on the congruity of their images to those principal Sartrean thoughts, a strong but carefully ordered Ego was finding a satisfying reflection of its own passions and energies in the selected material. In these images, particularly the stony and metallic ones of En-soi and of En-soi-pour-soi, the sustaining relationship is most often, as Bachelard says, that of the artist to the favoured form.

"... l'image a une double réalité: une réalité psychique et une réalité physique. C'est par l'image que l'être imaginant et l'être imaginé sont au plus proche,"*2
The sympathy between Sartre's being and certain substances has undoubtedly directed much of Sartrean philosophy, bringing tangible conclusiveness to the abstraction of thought and feeling aroused by existence.

It is interesting to see that in wishing to renew his experience and to both design and relate his own person through art, Sartre understands art in those material terms of his existentialist idealism. He believes art will give to the fluid and irrational movement of his life a stability, the shaped and stylized wholeness of immutable matter.³

"je pourrais couler ma babillarde, ma conscience, dans des caractères de bronze, remplacer les bruits de ma vie par des inscriptions ineffaçables, ma chair par un style, les molles spirales du temps par l'éternité."⁴

The final state of art will have given to the gestures, feelings and conclusions of his experience the finish of metal, the perfected unity of artist and art.

"je ne cesse de me créer, je suis le donateur et le donateur,"⁵

But no matter how significant the insight, how intense and complex the involvement of the artist with his world, it is after all in its testament that experience reaches its final and valuable satisfaction.

"... Le seul désir profondement philosophique est celui de comprendre et faire comprendre, celui de transformer la vision en représentation ordonnée et communicable, d'en donner une traduction au niveau de ce "verbe" qui est à la fois intelligence et langage."⁶
Our research has taken us into that transformation, watching as substance and sensation translated the concepts of Sartrean existentialism, both equally involved in creating a universe where experience and personality could find expression. And somewhere between our examination of living experience and its recording we have discovered the uniqueness of Sartre's art. This area, neither the instinctive movement of the senses nor the careful mechanics of writing, is yet the limbo where the fine threads of Sartre's relationship with life are first crystallised. For it is in the refusal of the conditions of life and in the will to creative meditation that Sartre "(s'est prouvé) et (s'est chanté) son propre devenir." *

Sartre's artistic bid to formulate a philosophy, to create a universe, from those principally despairing conclusions of his experience, is his individual desire to realign human existence with its authentic values. The belief that strength and value can be found 'on the far side of despair' makes Sartre's art courageous, perhaps foolishly audacious, but more importantly such a belief gives his universe that strange cynical stoicism which challenges even the grim realism of its own world with a wary but instinctive enthusiasm for living. It is this 'malgré tout' conviction that is our final conclusion on that engagement of Sartre with his novels: the will to discover, to feel and know and testify, this spirited but sensitive undertaking is the commitment of one man to his existence.

2. Rachiélarid, Terre, p. 5.

3. c.f. Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse, p. 245. Lily exchanges "the fluidity of life for the concentration of painting."


5. id., p. 22.


7. Rachélarid, Air, p. 278.
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