

# To Hell and Back

## *Sartre on (and in) Analysis with Freud*

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Facilis descensus Averno. (Easy is the descent into Hell.)

— Virgil, *Aeneid*

Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo. (If I cannot bend the higher [powers], I will stir up Acheron [one of the rivers of Hades].)

— Virgil, *Aeneid* (epigraph to Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*)

GARCIN: L'enfer, c'est les Autres! (Hell is—other people!)

— Sartre, *Huis clos*

MEYNERT: Ce serait beau de risquer l'Enfer pour que tout le monde puisse vivre à la lumière du ciel. (It would be splendid to risk Hell so that everyone could live under the light of Heaven.)

— Sartre, *Le scénario Freud*

On the back cover of the original French edition of Sartre's *Le scénario Freud* (*The Freud Scenario*), the promotional blurb poses the question: "Est-ce ici Sartre qui analyse Freud ou Freud qui analyse Sartre?" (Is Sartre analyzing Freud here, or is Freud analyzing Sartre?). We do not, for obvious reasons, have anything of Freud's on Sartre, but we do have quite a lot of Sartre on Freud, and great quantities of Sartre on Sartre. It has sometimes seemed to me that reading through everything that Sartre wrote—not just the autobiographical material but *everything*, including the carnets and the cahiers and the letters—might be a bit like having him in analysis. The speed and apparent openness with which he produced his texts, page after page in that quick yet legible script that French writers seem to turn out so effortlessly, mimic some of the conditions

of free association, and an analytically sensitive eye, like the analyst's ear in therapeutic sessions, could no doubt piece together a plausible account of the Sartrean unconscious.

One obvious starting point of this exercise would be with childhood, and particularly with the absence of that central figure in the primary family, the father. A passage of typical brilliance and elegance in *Les Mots* (*The Words*)—one of the rewards of working on Sartre, as I have remarked before, is to experience afresh the mastery of style that characterizes virtually everything he wrote—puts it like this:

Il n'y a pas de bon père, c'est la règle; qu'on n'en tienne pas grief aux hommes mais au lien de paternité qui est pourri. Faire des enfants, rien de mieux; en *avoir*, quelle iniquité! Eût-il vécu, mon père se fût couché sur moi de tout son long et m'eût écrasé. Par chance, il est mort en bas âge; au milieu des Énéas qui portent sur le dos leurs Anchises, je passe d'une rive à l'autre, seul et détestant ces géniteurs invisibles à cheval sur leurs fils pour toute la vie; j'ai laissé derrière moi un jeune mort qui n'eut pas le temps d'être mon père et qui pourrait être, aujourd'hui, mon fils. Fut-ce un mal ou un bien? Je ne sais; mais je souscris volontiers au verdict d'un éminent psychanalyste: je n'ai pas de Sur-moi.

There is no good father, that's the rule. Don't lay the blame on men but on the bond of paternity, which is rotten. To beget children, nothing better; to *have* them, what iniquity! Had my father lived, he would have lain on me at full length and would have crushed me. As luck had it, he died young. Amidst Aeneas and his fellows who carry their Anchises on their backs, I move from shore to shore, alone and hating those invisible begetters who bestraddle their sons all their life long. I left behind me a young man who did not have time to be my father and who could now be my son. Was it a good thing or a bad? I don't know. But I readily subscribe to the verdict of an eminent psychoanalyst: I have no Superego.<sup>1</sup>

This question of the father will return. I cite the passage, however, apart from the sheer pleasure of it, not to embark on an analytic task for which I am not qualified (though this will not prevent me from making some tentative observations) but to pick up a tiny thread that will be the *fil conducteur* of this essay. I do not even propose to undertake the meta-analytic task that inevitably suggests itself when Sartre and Freud are brought together, namely, a consideration of the differences between Freudian and existential psychoanalysis. That has been done, and nowhere better than in Betty Cannon's thorough and insightful book *Sartre and Psychoanalysis* (1991),<sup>2</sup> to which I will also return when I get back to the father. I take my cue from Sartre's passing reference to Virgil: all those Aeneases, each with his own Anchises on his shoulder.

One problem with classical allusions is that, in quotation, they often lose their context. Sartre seems to think of fathers rather like Old Men of the Sea weighing down so many Sinbads, but nothing in Virgil suggests that Anchises was a burden to Aeneas. Anchises wanted to remain in Troy, even though that meant certain death (which he was prepared to administer to himself), and was only persuaded by a heavenly sign to allow Aeneas to pick him up so that the family could escape together. Aeneas (in Dryden's translation) speaks of

“load[ing his] shoulders with a willing freight,” and it is clear that, if challenged, he would have replied with something like the legendary Depression-era line, *mutatis mutandis*: “He ain’t heavy, he’s my father.” But Virgil comes readily to Sartre’s mind, as he did to Freud’s, and this misreading is common enough. As is well known, Freud used a line from Virgil as the epigraph to his *Interpretation of Dreams*. It was this conjunction that set me off on the meditation that follows. Sartre’s Freud also, as we shall see, had a problem with paternity.

The structure of my argument can be discerned from the four quotations—two from Virgil, two from Sartre—that I have used as my own epigraphs. I begin with the old idea that there is a place, an underworld, to which people can go and from which, under appropriate circumstances and with the right guide, they can return. Virgil’s infernal adventure in book 6 of the *Aeneid* is undertaken by Aeneas with the guidance of the Cumaean sybil. (A celebrated reprise of this journey, with a rather different agenda, occurs in Dante, where Virgil himself is the guide.) Anchises is now dead, and Aeneas wishes to meet him once more. The sibyl warns him that it is easy to go down, but not so easy to come up again. The details of the journey, the conditions that have to be met, are not my main concern here. It will be enough to say that Aeneas does find his father, and he does emerge safe and sound in the end—but he has to go through Hell to do so.

My second epigraph, which was also Freud’s, comes from book 7 of the *Aeneid*. Aeneas is making his way to Latium, which he will conquer and rule. So much is foretold by the gods. However, Juno, the wife of Jove, is not pleased by this prospect; she knows she cannot avert the outcome, but she decides that she can make things as unpleasant as possible for all concerned. That is the force of her remark in the second epigraph: if she cannot influence the higher powers, she will stir up infernal ones. Freud’s choice of this line as an opener for the *Interpretation of Dreams* represents a second thought on his part—it seems less forceful there than it would have in the place where he originally intended to put it. Writing to Fliess on 4 December 1896, he gives an animated account of the progress of his work on hysteria: “The first thing I shall disclose to you about my works are the introductory quotations. My psychology of hysteria will be preceded by the proud words: *Introite et hic dii sunt* ... the symptom-formation by: *Flectere si nequeo superos Acheronta movebo*.”<sup>3</sup> “Introite et hic dii sunt” (Enter, for here too are gods) is what Heraclitus is reported to have said to visitors who found him in the kitchen, socially a lower setting than that in which he was accustomed to receive them. This no doubt reflects Freud’s awareness that the work on which he was embarking dealt with matters considered beneath the notice or the dignity of the medical profession and signals his resolve to counter this prejudice with “proud words.” But it is the specific application of the Virgil quote to symptom-formation (rather than, more generally, to the problem of dreams) that is of interest in the present context. Symptoms represent the stirring up of the infernal powers that results when something in the patient is frustrated at a higher level. The obvious inference here is that the “higher level” represents conscious processes, the “infernal powers” the workings of the unconscious, what Freud will later call the Id.

In the patient, then, there is an underworld, difficult to discover, for which Hell begins to seem an appropriate metaphor. And this brings me to my third epigraph, the first Sartrean one. The standard English translation of Garcin's outburst is "Hell is—other people!" But then the standard English translation of *Huis clos* is *No Exit*.<sup>4</sup> Sartre's French is richer and more suggestive than these renderings allow. True, no one can go *out* through a closed door, but that says nothing about what it encloses. And it is equally true that no one can go *in* through it. The judicial sense of *huis clos* might have been just as well (and just as incompletely) rendered by "no entry": the proceedings are not open to the public, and no one may be admitted who is not privy to the matter at hand. With a slight change of emphasis, we could say: no one can *get* in—what's happening in there is inaccessible. Like the unconscious, for example.

And what is happening in there? A play of Otherness—and not necessarily on the part of other people. Perhaps there's only one person, with his or her Others—that might be Hell enough. Perhaps there are many. Garcin, for his part, is prepared for a whole host of them: "Ha! vous n'êtes que deux? Je vous croyais beaucoup plus nombreuses" (*HC* 93) ("What! Only two of you? I thought there were more, many more"; *NE* 45). Sartre originally put his three characters in Hell because he needed them all to be in one place for the duration of the play without any possibility of escape—one feature of the situation that the English title captures very well. This was because he was writing it for three friends and thought that, to avoid rivalry, they should have equal time on the stage. But the idea of Hell as others came in part from his memories of being a prisoner of war: "Je n'oubliais pas le sentiment que j'avais eu au stalag à vivre constamment, totalement, sous le regard des autres, et l'enfer qui s'y établissait naturellement" ("I was not forgetting the feeling I had had at the Stalag of living constantly and totally beneath the eyes of others, and the Hell which naturally set in under such circumstances").<sup>5</sup> And the idea of Hell, once in place, provoked other considerations. In a spoken text that accompanied a recording of *Huis clos* released in 1965, Sartre commented:

Ce que j'ai voulu indiquer, c'est précisément que beaucoup de gens sont encroûtés dans une série d'habitudes, de coutumes, qu'ils ont sur eux des jugements dont ils souffrent, mais qu'ils ne cherchent même pas à changer.... Quel que soit le cercle d'enfer dans lequel nous vivons, je pense que nous sommes libres de le briser. Et si les gens ne le brisent pas, c'est encore librement qu'ils y restent. De sorte qu'ils se mettent librement en enfer. (*ES* 101)

What I wanted to suggest is precisely that many people are encrusted in a series of habits and customs, and that they are suffering from judgments made about them, but that they don't even try to change.... No matter what circle of Hell we're living in, I think we're free to break out of it. And if people don't break out of it, they still stay there freely. So that they condemn themselves freely to Hell. (*WS* 99)

It seems likely that some hindsight was involved in this last remark. It seems to have been demonstrating the constitutive power of texts to stimulate in readers—theories of authorial intention notwithstanding—meanings that writers

did not have in mind at the time, and to do this even when reader and writer are the same person. For there is no hint of “breaking the circle of hell” in *Huis clos*. Each of the characters finds Hell in the other two, and in the end even a murderous attempt on the part of one of them (Estelle) to get rid of another (Ines) ends absurdly—they are all already dead. Sartre goes on to say, later in the same text:

“L’enfer, c’est les autres” a été toujours mal compris. On a cru que je voulais dire par là que nos rapports avec les autres étaient toujours empoisonnés.... Or, c’est tout autre chose que je veux dire.... Les autres sont, au fond, ce qu’il y a de plus important en nous-mêmes, pour notre propre connaissance de nous-même. (*ES* 101)

“Hell is other people” has always been misunderstood. People thought that what I meant by it is that our relations with others are always rotten or illicit. But I mean something entirely different. I mean that if our relations with others are twisted or corrupted, then others have to be hell.... Fundamentally, others are what is most important in us for our understanding of ourselves. (*WS* 99)

There is a curious shift in tense here: “On a cru que je voulais dire,” but then “c’est tout autre chose que je veux dire.” It would be easy to make too much of this, but it is worth comment because in between “je voulais” in 1944 and “je veux” in 1965 falls 1959, the year in which, at the request of John Huston, Sartre wrote *Le scénario Freud*.<sup>6</sup>

As J.-B. Pontalis recounts it in his indispensable preface to the published version of that work, Sartre had not read Freud in great depth when he was writing *L’Être et le néant*,<sup>7</sup> at which time he was thoroughly skeptical of the Freudian unconscious. He made up for this in preparing to write the *Scénario*. Pontalis says of Sartre that as a result of his extensive reading at this time, “du coup, il peut comprendre, sinon admettre, des notions qu’il avait auparavant, comme philosophe resté plus cartésien qu’il ne croyait, mises en pièces, telles celles de pensée inconsciente et de refoulement” (*SF* 16) (“at once, he was able to understand if not accept notions which previously, as a philosopher who had remained more Cartesian than he thought, he had pulled to pieces—notions such as those of unconscious thought or repression”; *FS* xii). Sartre did not mind having his ideas upset, says Pontalis; he even took pleasure in it, “à condition que ce soit lui qui en tire les conséquences” (*SF* 15) (“always provided he was the one to draw the consequences”; *FS* xii). It seems clear that he did admit, not merely grasp, the idea of the unconscious, while still being ambivalent enough to make fun of it—as, for example, in the line he gives to Freud’s wife, Martha: “Je suis une femme honnête, moi. Et je n’ai pas d’inconscient” (*SF* 94) (“I’m a decent woman, I am, and I haven’t got an unconscious”; *FS* 71). But what I find interesting is that he seems already on some level to be associating the unconscious with Hell. Consider the following excerpt from a letter to Simone de Beauvoir, written during his visit to John Huston’s house in Ireland:

Quelle affaire! oh! quelle affaire! Que de mentisme ici. Tout le monde a ses complexes, ça va du masochisme à la férocité. Ne croyez pas, cependant, que nous

soyons en Enfer. Plutôt dans un très grand cimetière. Tout le monde est mort, avec des complexes congelés. Ça vit peu, peu, peu.... Huston a eu un drôle de mot pour parler de son “inconscient” à propos de Freud: “dans le mien, il n’y a rien.” Et le ton indiquait le sens: *plus rien*, même plus de vieux désirs inavouables. (*SF* 11)

What a business! Dear, oh! dear, what a business! Such systematic lying here. Everyone with their complexes, ranging from masochism to savagery. But don’t imagine we’re in Hell. More like a vast cemetery. Everybody dead, with frozen complexes. So little life—so very, very little.... Huston used an odd expression to describe his “unconscious,” when speaking of Freud: “In mine, there’s nothing.” And the tone made his meaning clear: nothing *any longer*, not even any old, unmentionable desires. (*FS* viii)

Another witness reports Sartre as saying, of Huston, “ce qu’il y a d’ennuyeux avec lui, c’est qu’il ne croit pas à l’inconscient” (*SF* 16) (“what’s irritating about him is that he doesn’t believe in the unconscious”; *FS* xii). In light of this, we could read the letter (it would be a stretch, but a tempting one) to mean: if only Huston had an unconscious, we might be in Hell, where there are at least other people; as it is, it is just a cemetery.

There is a telling passage in *Les mots* where Sartre describes the curious duality he experienced at the time of writing *La nausée*, that is, being the subject in an existential situation, and at the same time describing what it was like to be the subject of that existential situation. “J’étais Roquentin, je montrais en lui, sans complaisance, la trame de ma vie; en même temps j’étais *moi*, l’élu, annaliste des enfers, photomicroscope de verre et d’acier penché sur mes propres sirops protoplasmiques” (*LM* 211) (“I *was* Roquentin; I used him to show, without complacency, the texture of my life. At the same time, I was *I*, the elect, chronicler of Hell, a glass and steel photomicroscope peering at my own protoplasmic juices”; *TW* 158). What leaps to the eye (to mine, at any rate, given the preoccupations of this essay) is the expression “annaliste des enfers.” The young Sartre chronicles the hopelessness and the anguish of the people of Bouville and finds their situation hellish, but he also turns his microscope on his own inner workings—not, to be sure, the unconscious yet, but something certainly pre- or proto-conscious, the ooziings of protoplasm. That, he seems to be saying, is where you have to go to find yourself, and that is Hell, too. A passing remark in the *Cahiers pour une morale* puts this thought squarely in the context of his more strictly philosophical work: “La poursuite de l’Être c’est l’enfer” (“The pursuit of Being is hell”).<sup>8</sup>

Freud too, as Sartre suggests in the *Scénario*, is in his way an “annaliste des enfers.” Here there is another temptation, to be resisted for the time being, at least (but allowed, in good Freudian fashion, even as it is resisted), namely, to play on the homophones *annaliste/analyste*. Psychoanalysis is also on the road to Bouville (i.e., Mudville), and this brings me to the context of my fourth and final epigraph, from one of the most powerful scenes in *Le scénario Freud*. Dr. Meynert makes his remark about risking Hell on his deathbed, to which he has summoned Freud in order to settle his conscience, which is troubled because earlier on he had tried to destroy Freud in public—and nearly succeeded. Perhaps

it is by way of excuse that he claims never to have been himself: “Je ne sais pas qui je suis. Ce n’est pas moi qui ai vécu ma vie: c’est un Autre” (*SF* 157) (“I don’t know who I am. It’s not I who has lived my life: it’s an Other”; *FS* 136). So he has lived his life in bad faith. Sartre has set us up to see this in an earlier scene, where, in the course of a conversation, Meynert casually pours himself a glass of schnapps with his left hand. In the stage directions, Sartre says “on dirait cette main parfaitement distincte de la personne du professeur” (*SF* 42) (“one would say the hand was totally distinct from the professor’s person”; *FS* 19). The detachment of the hand from the person has been the mark of bad faith since the celebrated episode in *L’Être et le néant* when a woman allows a man to take her hand but disavows the consequences of this (*EN* 94–95; *BN* 55–56).

What Sartre’s Meynert is coming to realize at the very end of his life is that self-knowledge would have required him to go down into painful depths, into something like Hell. “Il faudra fouiller loin et profonde. Dans la boue” (*SF* 158) (“It’s necessary to dig deep down. Into the mud”; *FS* 136). This descent was something of which he was not capable, but in insistent language he encourages Freud to undertake it. If you cannot do it, he says, no one can. “Foncez: c’est dans votre caractère. Ne reculez devant rien. Si les forces vous manquent, faites un pacte avec le Diable” (*SF* 158) (“Now charge: it’s in your character. Retreat before nothing. If your strength fails you, make a pact with the Devil”; *FS* 136). And then comes the vision: how fine it would be to risk Hell so that all the world could live in the light of Heaven! This is a passage in which the ordinary translation of “tout le monde” (as simply “everyone”) is inadequate: it really does take in the whole world. Meynert seems to entrust Freud with a world-historical task—nothing less than the liberation of humankind.

It is hard to imagine that Sartre simply overlooked the obvious theological anticipation of this project, involving as it did precisely such a descent into Hell, between crucifixion and resurrection, for the eventual salvation of all believers. It would have been understandably difficult for an atheist to work this connection into the story of a Jew, but the parallel is striking, and in the present context, Freud and Sartre apart, it does raise a provocative question, which I will pose but leave hanging. The topos of descent into the Underworld goes back at least to Orpheus, and it has its metaphorical equivalents in Hebrew literature, too, as in the story of Jonah. Where did the early Christians get it? They had evidently read Plato—had they read Virgil, too? The Harrowing of Hell, in which Christ goes down and brings back the souls of the patriarchs and others who merit liberation, is not found in the Gospels, but it was a fixture in church doctrine from the Apostles’ creed onward, by which time Virgil would have been around for a couple hundred years. Virgil was certainly approved of by some Christian writers because of his text about a Cumaean prophecy in the Fourth Eclogue, according to which a miraculous boy descends from heaven to inaugurate a new age on earth. But this gets us very far from Sartre and opens up a large area of conjecture into which I will not venture further.

To return to Meynert—and not without an echo of that parenthetical digression—it is almost as if he sends Sartre on a mission as his son. The theme of the father figure in the *Scénario* is a recurrent one, but then it is recurrent in

Sartre's work generally—especially in his treatments of Baudelaire and Flaubert. Betty Cannon comments, in connection with the passage from *Les mots* cited at the beginning of this essay, on “Sartre’s lifelong aversion to the prefabricated destinies he saw fathers as laying on their sons,”<sup>9</sup> and draws special attention to “the abuses of patrimony as represented by Achille-Cléophas Flaubert.”<sup>10</sup> But she adds, “[W]e may ... read Sartre’s usual stance against fatherhood as a personal predilection which is not a necessary consequence of his philosophical position,”<sup>11</sup> and this is surely right—it is, rather, a consequence of early determinations that would require psychoanalytic decoding. True, he had no father of his own, but that bare fact hardly accounts for his almost obsessive preoccupation, almost like that of the atheist whom he describes as “un maniaque de Dieu qui voyait partout Son absence et qui ne pouvait ouvrir la bouche sans prononcer Son nom” (*LM* 85) (“a God-obsessed crank who saw His absence everywhere and who could not open his mouth without uttering His name”; *TW* 62). In particular, Sartre repeatedly drives home in the *Scénario* the point that Freud needed a father—indeed, more than one—and that (unlike Sartre himself) he not only had, but would have been acutely uncomfortable without, a Superego, a moral authority above him. Sartre has Freud say anxiously to Fliess, “Cela ne te terrifie pas, toi, de n’avoir personne au-dessus de toi?” (*SF* 295) (“Doesn’t it terrify you, Wilhelm, not to have anyone above you?” *FS* 272), and then go on to admit his own dependence on father figures: “Que dis-tu de cela? Un homme de quarante ans qui a peur de devenir adulte. Brucke, Meynert, Breuer, toi: que de pères! Sans compter Jakob Freud qui m’engendra” (*SF* 296) (“What do you say to that? A man of forty, who’s afraid of growing up? Brücke, Meynert, Breuer, you: so many fathers! Not counting Jakob Freud who begot me”; *FS* 273).

So Freud has five fathers, while Sartre does not have even one! A bit of one-upmanship here, perhaps a bit of rivalry. But it could almost be sibling rivalry; Sartre allows some intriguing parallels between himself and Freud. Consider the uncanny way in which *Huis clos* is echoed by the scene in which Freud dreams of being in a train and sitting in on a card game with three of his father figures, Meynert, Breuer, and Fliess. They tease him about not being able to play and treat him like a child. Suddenly, Freud cries out in a thundering voice: “Il faut un mort, à ce jeu” (“A dead man’s needed, for this game”), to which Meynert, after a moment of anxious surprise, replies, “*affectueusement et tristement*: Comment, mon petit, tu ne le sais pas? Mais c’est un jeu qui se joue à trois morts! Trois morts et un vivant. Les morts, c’est nous; tu es orphelin” (*SF* 302) (“*affectionately and sadly*: What, child, don’t you know? It’s a game that’s played with three dead men! Three dead men and one living one. The dead men, that’s us: you’re an orphan”; *FS* 279–280). And the scene then plays out with a reprise of an episode from Sartre’s childhood imagination that he recalls in *Les mots*, in which he finds himself in a train without a ticket and is confronted by the *contrôleur*, the conductor or ticket-collector. The father-figures disappear and Freud’s real father, Jakob Freud, appears:

JAKOB FREUD: Ils n’avaient pas de billets: c’est pour cela qu’ils sont morts. (They had no tickets: that’s why they’re dead.)

FREUD: *une petite voix enfantine*: Je croyais qu'ils allaient me protéger. (*small childlike voice*: I thought they were going to protect me.) (SF 302; FS 280)

Jakob Freud then says, in a voice off-stage: “Penses-tu, mon chéri! Et le contrôle de soi? Moi, je suis contrôleur, je t’aiderai. Je t’aiderai! Je t’aiderai! Votre billet!” (SF 303) (“What an idea, my darling! And how about keeping a check on yourself? My job is to check tickets, so I’ll help you. I’ll help you! I’ll help you! Your ticket!” FS 280).

This reference to self-control (“contrôle de soi”) suggests another contrast between Sartre and Freud. In the train sequence in *Les mots*, nobody comes to help the seven-year-old Sartre; he has to be self-sufficient. He makes some excuse to the *contrôleur* about being expected in Dijon, but there is a standoff between them that remains unhappily unresolved. But it turns out that he has been in control all along and that the responsibility this involves is almost too much for him: “Le train, le contrôleur et le délinquant, c’était moi. Et j’étais aussi un quatrième personnage; celui-là, l’organisateur, n’avait qu’un seul désir: se duper, fût-ce une minute, oublier qu’il avait tout mis sur pied” (LM 96) (“The train, the ticket-collector, and the delinquent were myself. And I was also a fourth character, the organizer, who had only one wish, to fool himself, if only for a minute, to forget that he had concocted everything”; TW 70).

This is rich material, and to do it justice would take more time and analytic skill than I have at my disposal. But as I suggested earlier, it is hard to restrain the impulse to conjecture. Could the “petite voix enfantine” be Sartre’s own? Might the fact that Freud’s father says “I’ll help you!” three times betray some envy on Sartre’s part of the paternal protection Freud enjoys, which could help lift the burden of self-determination? And yet Sartre has self-control while Freud does not, and he knows how to accept his situation without complaint. Later on in *Les mots*, looking back on this little drama from an adult point of view, having freed himself for good of the burden of God the father, he is still locked in a confrontation with the *contrôleur*, and he knows that nobody is waiting for him in Dijon. He has no excuse and, what is more, has no interest in looking for one. It is a possible mode of existence. The one ameliorating factor is that he can now say of the *contrôleur*, “[I]l me regarde, moins sévère qu’autrefois” (LM 212) (“[H]e looks at me, less severely than in the past”; TW 159). A small change—but, as far as it goes, a change for the better.

One of the possible outcomes of a successful course of psychotherapy is to persuade the “controller” (in this context, a more suggestive rendering of the French name for the railway official in question than “conductor” or “ticket-collector”) to be “less severe than in the past.” As in Sartre’s case, the controller is as much a part of the patient as the delinquent who needs to be controlled and as the train that carries them both along. Part of what I have been suggesting is that the therapeutic enterprise at its most exigent involves something like a descent into Hell and the confrontation there of the others, or the Other, whose alienation or cruelty has helped make the patient what he or she has become. With a suitable guide—the Cumaean sibyl, or Virgil, or Freud, or Sartre, or a good therapist—it may be possible, through self-knowledge, to

emerge again “under the light of Heaven.” What Sartre comes to understand about Freud is put in its simplest terms in the synopsis that he wrote for Huston in 1958:

Le sujet du scénario est en effet: un homme entreprend de connaître les autres parce qu’il y voit le seul moyen de se connaître lui-même et s’aperçoit qu’il doit mener à la fois ses recherches sur les autres et sur soi. On se connaît par les autres, on connaît les autres par soi. (*SF* 531)

The subject of the scenario is really: a man sets about knowing others because he sees this as the only way of getting to know himself; he realizes he must carry out his research upon others and upon himself simultaneously. We know ourselves through others, we know others through ourselves. (*FS* 505)

This realization represents a considerable advance on *Huis clos* and, as others have suggested, helps to pave the way for the great work on Flaubert. If Flaubert was Madame Bovary, Sartre may be Flaubert. Or Freud. He is, after all, a writer who has come to the realization that he is an Other among Others, whose Being, if I may so put it, can be read off from theirs—from all, or from any one: “Tout un homme, fait de tous les hommes et qui les vaut tous et que vaut n’importe qui” (*LM* 214) (“A whole man, composed of all men and as good as all of them and no better than any”; *TW* 160). It is hard to see how self-knowledge could get any better than that.

## Notes

1. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Les mots* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 19; hereafter cited *LM*. English translation, *The Words*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: George Braziller, 1964), 11; hereafter cited *TW*.
2. Betty Cannon, *Sartre and Psychoanalysis: An Existentialist Challenge to Clinical Metatheory* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1991).
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9. Cannon, *Sartre and Psychoanalysis*, 307.
10. *Ibid.*, 308.
11. *Ibid.*