universe, the critic's evasions and explanations are almost an impertinence beside the uncontrollable energy and daring of Sartre.

The theme of *The Flies* is the return of Orestes to Argos, to take vengeance on his mother, Clytemnestra, for the murder, by herself and her lover, Aegistheus, of his father, Agamemnon. Argos swarms with flies, as though the body of Agamemnon had remained through a fifteen-year putrescence, always rotting but never consumed. These symbolise the remorse and guilt of the people of Argos. The tyrannicide Orestes braves even the anger of the gods, represented on the stage itself by Zeus, the not-quite-omnipotent.

Superficially there are in *The Flies* some borrowings from Cocteau. Sartre's choice of a classical theme was made easier by the success 10 or 15 years before of Cocteau's plays on the Orpheus and Oedipus legends. And like Cocteau in *The Knights of the Table Round*, Sartre does not scruple to use magic and incantation on a modern stage. Like Shaw and James Bridie, Sartre obliges his ancient characters to chatter in modern idiom. Sartre, however, has written a tragedy, though the almost unbearable tension of the play is here lightened by touches of comedy. The power and scope of the play owe nothing to either the dignity or the insignificance of the characters in some thousands-of-years-old legend: they are living and actual people, not heroes and gods; but there is much of heroism and of godhead in Jones and Smith.

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IN the long one-act play *In Camera* Sartre had a somewhat easier task. Its characters are modern and its scene is laid in Hell. Hell is not a seven-times heated fiery furnace, but a room furnished with the meretricious pomp common to the drawing rooms of hotels and the foyers of theatres. "Hell is other people, and in the play a man and two women are shut in together, to talk and talk and talk—until Hell freezes. The man is a pacifist whose nerve failed him and who suffered martyrdom for his opinions, not voluntarily, but abjectly, after failure in an attempt to run away. One woman had killed her child, the other driven her woman friend to murder and suicide. They are not meant to be nice people, but they are admirably adapted to the excitement of both love and hatred (in *In Camera* the two are almost interchangeable) in each other. The tortures each can inflict upon the other two are inexhaustible.

In this short, venomous, and terrifying play, Sartre stands in the main line of one of the peculiarly French achievements in literature. The French have the gift of ruthlessness, denied the English or never sought for—the ruthlessness of the masochistic diabolism of Baudelaire, of the cruelty of Flaubert, of de Maupassant (realism without sympathy—*Tout comprendre est rien pardonner);* the English have not this persecuting zeal. Jean-Paul Sartre has it. He is perfectly prepared to crucify humanity. It is guilty; why should it not die the death? Bring out your Christians; my lions have good teeth and a seven-days' hunger. Humanity shall die that the outraged moralist may glow with self-righteousness. Calvin too was a Frenchman.

I look forward with intense interest to seeing these great plays acted.

—David Hall