

Editorial

We are thrilled, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of *Sartre Studies International*, to publish for the first time in English (thanks to Dennis Gilbert's initiative and perseverance) two interviews on theater given by Sartre to Russia's oldest continually running theater journal, *Teatr*, whose first issues date from the 1930s. Six years apart, these two interviews give us the flavor of Sartre addressing a Soviet audience, in early 1956, just before Russian tanks rolled into Hungary and then again in early 1962, as France negotiated its exit out of the disastrous Algerian War. While these interviews intersect at times with remarks made by Sartre in interviews and lectures during the same period in France (the need for theater to become a truly popular forum, the importance of Brecht as a model of politically engaged theater, etc.), the tone of the two interviews (the first in particular) is different, as Sartre seeks to connect with a socialist audience. These interviews also break new ground. Discussing contemporary playwrights, Sartre demonstrates, for example, his familiarity with Kateb Yacine and Algerian theater. More unexpectedly, addressing Russian readers, Sartre offers a much more positive assessment of Jean Vilar's Théâtre National Populaire than he ever formulated in France. In short, beyond their content, these interviews help us appreciate even more the importance of the *situation* shaping Sartre's pronouncements at any given moment.

The rest of our anniversary issue testifies yet again to the variety of causes, preoccupations and lines of inquiry informed by Sartre's thought. With his article: "How Can Sartrean Consciousness Be Reverent?", Sven Arvidson seeks to connect Sartre's early philosophy to virtue ethics, using the notion of reverent awe as articulated by contemporary philosopher Paul Woodruff. To be sure, admits Arvidson, in Sartre's world, reverent awe as an attitude constitutes yet another manifestation of bad faith consciousness, and he recognizes that reverence is not an emotion one would normally associate with Sartre, although he posits its kinship with anguish. But Arvidson also presents an unusual reading of *Nausea*, reading Roquentin's epiphany

in the Bouville garden as his encounter with the mystery of Being that resists not only his but humankind's understanding, uncovering an unsuspected relationship to awed reverence in the nausea which has overwhelmed him and whose sense has repeatedly escaped him. Other examples of being-in-itself in *Being and Nothingness* which resist and elude appropriation by consciousness also connect individual subjects to situations where they feel not just their limitations, but, as distinct from anguish, a more communal sense of limitations proper to the human condition.

If Arvidson focuses on early Sartrean ontology, articles by Katharine Wolfe and Justin Fugo are focused on the first *Critique*. In "Love and Violence: Sartre and the Ethics of Need," Wolfe presents a more positive view of need to counter the antagonistic account Sartre offers in the *Critique*, where need is seen as a catalyst for conflict and violence as we struggle against each other for survival. Yet Wolfe, using Primo Levi's reflections on the concentration camp experience he details in *The Drowned and the Saved*, argues that among our deepest needs are our "second person" needs for others' need to be met, based on our need to love and to care for others. Wolfe finds support for this understanding of need in many of Sartre's writings, including *Notebooks for an Ethics*, the *Rome Lecture*, as well as Sartre's account of the fused group in the *Critique*.

Adopting the Sartrean concepts of serial collectives, the practico-inert, and social groups, Fugo's article, "Contemporary 'Structures' of Racism," analyzes the "social structural processes" that produce and perpetuate racial oppression and domination. Fugo argues that, in a racist society, many of the principles we value are in reality anti-thetical to the promotion of racial justice. For example, our commitment to color-blindness as an ideal principle can result in social policies that ignore constraining background conditions for non-whites. Ideal norms rarely hold up under non-ideal situations and Fugo concludes that we have a shared responsibility to transform the practico-inert features of our social world that reinforce racist attitudes and practices.

Continuing a debate on Sartre's relationship to Marxism, Alfred Betschart argues in an exchange with Ron Aronson ("Sartre Was Not a Marxist") that Sartre's relationship to Marxism was not based on deep shared conviction: engagement with Marxism was unavoidable in looking at the relationship between man and society, but Sartre's attachment to Marxism (and various communist parties) was tactical at best. Bourgeois society was a common enemy and Sartre made common cause with Marxist thinkers and communist militants. For

Betschart, Sartre was not particularly versed in Marxist theory and engaged with it principally to highlight its limitations and insufficiencies. Sartre saw groups, not classes, as agents of change; he did not believe in a dialectics of nature. He had serious doubts about Marx as an economist and as the leader of a political party. For Betschart, Sartre's leanings were fundamentally anarchist; he always distrusted state power. In his response, Aronson makes the case for Sartre as an existential Marxist (which Betschart sees as an oxymoron), stressing his deep investment in a historical-materialist conception of the relation among economics, politics, and culture. In Aronson's eyes, Sartre remained committed to creating an *existential* Marxism still faithful to human self-determination, and concludes that, for any revival of Marxism to be successful, "it will have to go to school with Sartre." Reviews of Shahid Stover's *Being and Insurrection* and Di-Capua's *No Exit: Arab Existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Decolonization* complete our offerings for this anniversary year.

John Ireland and Constance Mui