In *L'Etre et le Neant* [*Being and Nothingness*], Sartre describes being-for-others as a source of alienation: the other is the one who has stolen the world from me.1 The meaning of my words always slips out of my grasp, he writes:2 I am a hostage to the gaze of the Other. Sartre's being-for-others has been subject to many fluctuations. What does the Other make of him now in the late 1980s? Sartre's eclipse by structuralism, and the decline of his influence, may be more than a question of intellectual fashion; they may illustrate a point which Sartre both incarnated and theorized, concerning the dynamics of indebtedness. The juxtaposition of biography and intellectual history which reviewing these three books together allows, spotlights an aspect of Sartre that structuralism and its heirs should not be allowed to obliterate.

Annie Cohen-Solal is a biographer of the 'Those images were certainly among the ones that passed through her head' school. She has a tendency to overwrite, to be self-consciously 'literary'. Still, she has done an impressive amount of research - she has consulted the files of the FBI and asked J.-B. Pontalis to analyse Sartre's dreams. (Disappointingly, professional discretion prevented him from giving anything away.) Ronald Hayman must have had reason to be grateful that her biography came out before his, although their accounts of certain incidents differ. However, despite her attribution of thoughts and feelings to the dramatis personae of Sartre's life, Cohen-Solal's biography is in fact more interested in the 'Sartre phenomenon', the way in which, from very early on, Sartre polarizes people's reactions until in the 1950s, for example, during the Algerian war, he catalyses the political polarities of a whole nation. The main focus of the biography is the reception of Sartre, 'the extraordinary appeal of the Sartrean image' (276,) and the equally powerful hostility he provoked - the 'Shoot Sartre' slogans chanted by the veteran demonstrators against Algerian independence, for example, and the OAS bomb attacks. Josette Pacaly's psychoanalytical study of Sartre's writing, *Sartre au miroir* (Klincksieck, 1980) does not appear in Cohen-Solal's bibliography and, on the whole, she avoids any attempt to 'comprehend' Sartre. Her Sartre is a public figure, known and approached through what
other people think about him, her theme a very Sartrean one: Sartre's capture
by the Other.

Ronald Hayman, on the other hand, has read Josette Pacaly. Although with
a much lighter touch (Pacaly's meticulous accumulation of textual evidence is
somewhat daunting for the non-specialist reader), he is indebted to the insights
of a psychoanalytical reading, and he wants to display to the reader Sartre's
own intimate Other, the rejected and despised self on which Sartre perpetually
turned his back. He starts with Nietzsche's observation that all philosophy is
'the confession of its author and a kind of involuntary unconscious memoir';
the philosopher is pointing to the 'relative positioning of the innermost drives
in his nature' (quoted on p. 7); he sets out to establish a persuasive network of
connections between life and work. The source for many of his clues to
Sartre's 'innermost drives' is Sartre's own autobiography, *Les Mots [Words]*.
Hayman thinks that when Sartre is at his most creative, he understands a great
deal about himself, the problem being rather that his 'belief in making fresh
starts [was] so compulsive that he refused to learn anything even from what he
wrote himself (330); 'it had become second nature for him to ignore the
lessons of his own writing' (405).

One of the key anecdotes in *Les Mots* concerns Sartre's need to be needed.
As Hayman recounts it:

Looking back on his childhood, Sartre felt he had tried to keep on re­
inventing himself in a series of vain attempts not to feel superfluous. He was
bitterly jealous of his grandfather's fifty-year-old collaborator, Emile
Simmonot, an ugly man who waxed his moustache, dyed his forelock and
came to lunch every Thursday. One evening, when a party was held at the
institute and Anne-Marie was playing Chopin in the flickering gaslight,
Charles said: 'Someone's missing: it's Simonnot.' Did anyone ever say:
'Someone's missing: it's Poulou'? He resolved to make himself indispens­
able. (23)

For Hayman, this need to be needed, to be indispensable, is the root of many
of Sartre's chief traits; for example, the anxiety about contingency in *La
Nausee [Nausea]*, or Sartre's renowned hostility towards nature: 'If Nature is
teeming with life, one small intellectual is unlikely to be missed' (102). In
particular, he thinks one can see it as the source of Sartre's fabled generosity,  which Hayman, like Howard Davies, identifies as a central characteristic. Like
Davies, Hayman recognizes that Sartre, again characteristically, had described
in *L'Être et le Neant* the dark side of this trait. Sartre had written:

Actually the gift is a primitive form of destruction. . . . But the craze to
destroy which is at the bottom of generosity is nothing else than a craze to
possess. . . . To give is to slavc. . . . Generosity is not irreducible; to give
is to appropriate by destruction while utilizing this destruction to enslave
another. 4

Thus although Sartre had recognized that generosity may be basically power­
seeking, aggressive, and destructive, he continues to give relentlessly, while
refusing to be indebted himself. This applies both to material goods, to
relationships, and to ideas. Hayman comments: 'Hating the idea of being intellectually in anyone's debt, he always aimed his harshest onslaughts against those who had helped him most' (197, on Proust); 'Sartre's debt to Heidegger was immeasurable and therefore intolerable' (284). Hayman refers to this pattern in an attempt to explain what to many must seem one of Sartre's most cruel actions: his failure to make a will after adopting Arlette Elkalm as his daughter, thereby dispossessing Simone de Beauvoir of his literary estate:

As an act of aggression it was directed mainly against de Beauvoir, who had been so insufferable loyal for so unconscionably long to a man who could not bear to be in anyone's debt. . . . It was an act of vengeance against her. (374)

Referring to Sartre's biographical studies, Hayman comments on 'the myth [that] the decision that will shape the writer is taken by adults during the victim's childhood. . . . This is the leitmotif of Sartrean biography' (261). However, it is a convenient myth in many ways and Hayman is not averse to using it himself. He attributes particular importance to the traumatic loss which Sartre must have suffered when his mother decided to remarry (significantly, Les Mots ends its narrative before this event). To this dispossession Hayman ascribes Sartre's profound hostility to father-figures and his obsession with self-generation. 'Sartre's declaration of war on the father-figure meant that he had to live permanently under siege. . . . He was in constant fear of being influenced, and, when he was, he had to deny it, even to himself (330). This partly explains, Hayman suggests, Sartre's characteristic need to react violently against the person he has only so recently been, to reject the past however recent, and move on, disconcerting his adherents and followers: 'it was his pattern each time he recanted to turn in systematic hatred against the quality he had formerly loved' (56); 'in literature, as in life, he wanted to believe he had no progenitor' (101). Sartre hypothesized in Les Mots that he had no super-ego, but Hayman disagrees with this claim emphatically: 'it had taken control of his Ego like an occupying army' (32); it was, of course, Charles Schweitzer, his grandfather, whom he had internalized. Thus in Hayman's account, as in Davies's, Sartre sees himself as an invaded territory, a colonized country. His excessive voluntarism, his assertion of autonomy, his fear of being determined or influenced by anything, come from this lifelong struggle against anything which was not himself (among which he tended to include his own body). 'The underlying fear seems to be one of being devoured' (193).

The Other as alienating gaze was also particularly traumatic (Pacaly suggests that it is a repressed fantasy of anal possession by the father-figure). 'Sartre . . . never freed himself from the fear he had dramatized in Les Sequestres d'Altona [The Condemned of Altona] about being judged in the unpredictable future' (363). This too is related back to Les Mots and Sartre's description of his abnormal sensitivity to other people's opinion of him; his own despair and self-disgust made him excessively dependent on other people's judgement, but at the same time aware of alienation. For Hayman, this vulnerability to the gaze of the Other is a source of great strength in his
writing; it enabled him to make identifications with the dispossessed. In this respect, the encounter with Genet was crucial. Sartre's identification with Genet - Hayman thinks *Saint Genet* is more autobiographical in many ways than *Les Mots* - leads to the conclusion that 'only by rebelling can the object turn himself into a subject' (401) and to the anti-colonialism of the 1950s. Hayman recounts Sartre's volte-face on violence, the move from the position of the 1940s and early 1950s that violence is an unwarranted interference with other people's freedom, to the theory of counter-violence as a necessary violence in a colonial context, though he is perhaps a bit overschematic here in suggesting that Sartre had completely contradicted himself. Merleau-Ponty had pointed out in 1955 that violence is inherent in Sartre's earlier philosophy: if there is no intermediate world (*intermonde*) between self and others, there is no possibility of avoiding conflict. Either I define the situation, or the other does. For a more theoretical account of this particular issue we need to turn to *Sartre and 'Les Temps Modernes'*.

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Davies makes similar links between the personal and the theoretical. His study of Sartre in the context of the *Temps Modernes* editorial team enables him to make the connections between the anti-colonial war Sartre waged against his internal invaders, the theory of generosity and debt, and Sartre's anti-colonialist and anti-racist politics. *Sartre and 'Les Temps Modernes'* overlaps in certain ways with Hayman's book, and the two studies can usefully be read together, Hayman's work filling in the details that the non-Sartre specialist might find it helpful to have, for Davies's study makes few concessions to the general reader. Davies shows how Sartre's commitment to anti-colonialism was connected to and rooted in his own psychic investments and his struggles against them. Sartre sees the identifications that constitute the ego as colonizations; parents 'possess' their children, and the social antecedents and formative influences which he spends his whole life rejecting are in their turn seen by him as types of colonization. *Les Mots* uses anthropology 'to fight an anti-colonialist struggle against the grandpaternal voice which Sartre hears echoing at the origins of all his motivations and which, by habitually "thinking against himself" he constantly strives to shake off (157). This did not stop him trying to colonize others, either through generosity (the gift) or through incorporation.

As the central focus of his study, Davies chooses academic anthropology and its relations with Sartre's project of 'synthetic anthropology', a totalizing and supra-disciplinary project. As far as I know, he is the first person to discuss in any detail Sartre's borrowings from anthropology, and the results of putting Sartre into this new context - neither literary nor philosophical - are exceptionally illuminating. Davies suggests that almost any other discourse - historiography, political theory, psychoanalysis, linguistics, sociology, and so on - would have served as well to give access to the dynamics of the development of *Les Temps Modernes*, and he may well be right, but the choice of anthropology was certainly an inspired one. For one thing, it enables him to put at centre stage the confrontations (or evasions) between Sartre's project and that of structuralism. Davies foregrounds the Sartrean criterion of
reflexivity: observation modifies both observer and observed, and this fact has bearing on the possibility of reciprocal relations and of autocritique. Anthropology, as a scientific endeavour, is to be required to recognize its own context and limitations, its implication in the object of its study, the potential effect of the observing anthropologist on the observed society. Sartre's own totalizing projects are also required to answer to the requirement of reflexivity. Reflexivity is an ethical imperative for the Temps Modernes collective. The choice of anthropology also highlights the way in which Sartre made use of anthropological concepts: generosity, the gift, reciprocity, resentment, possession, the zar, empathy, to discuss his own ontological, ethical, and political themes: possession by the other, alienation, anti-colonialism. It also enables Davies to show the way in which anthropology curbs Sartre's more voluntaristic impulses, giving due weight to the social which Sartre is so often inclined to minimize. Davies's view is that Les Temps Modernes was a creation which escaped its creator; it redefined Sartre and he was to a large extent dependent on it. Thus his tendency to totalize was checked. Les Temps Modernes in many instances forced Sartre to carry out his project of reflexivity. The tensions between the technical commitment to autocritique and the desire to totalize (the 'synthetic anthropology'), between the ethical imperative towards generosity and the destructive generosity which tries to dominate and subjugate, these tensions were mediated by the Temps Modernes collective, producing a finer ultimate product than when Sartre was left entirely to his own devices. (Davies identifies the failure of reflexivity, for example, in L'Idiot de la famille [The Idiot of the Family] - see Davies, 204—5). The importance of the review in Davies's eyes, then, is that it provided a collective which could stand up to Sartre's attempt at incorporation and push him into evolving, into moving beyond the somewhat idealist attempt to elaborate an ethics of reciprocity to the analysis of the material and political preconditions of such an ethic, conditions invariably absent in the colonial situation.

It is possible to locate two accounts of intersubjectivity in Sartre. The first and more well known one is the Hegelian struggle of consciousnesses. According to this account, intersubjectivity - relations with others - is conflictual prior to ethical commitment (the argument of L'Etre et le Neant). For this reason, ethics must have priority over anthropology's scientific project, otherwise anthropology, whatever its pretensions to objectivity and neutrality, will bring into its domain (the study of the Other - the other culture, the other society) the conflictual patterns that characterize pre-ethical relations with others. The other account is based on notions of empathy and reciprocity; that is to say, all modes of relationship with others, whether conflictual or consensual, presuppose an original intuitive grasp or comprehension of the other's project. Although this view is more often associated with Merleau-Ponty, Davies argues convincingly with reference to Sartre's reliance on anthropological concepts that there is some evidence in Sartre for such an ontology of mutual comprehension.

However, when it comes to polemics, Sartre's own relations with others tend to operate predominantly in the conflictual mode. There seem to be general agreement that Sartre's basic drives, contrary to what he claims in Les
Mots.\textsuperscript{7} were aggressive and destructive. Pacaly argues that he never resolved his Oedipus complex and remained locked into the aggressivity of the anal stage; Cohen-Solal documents the remarkable hostility he engendered in others; Hayman indicates a certain vindictiveness in the refusal to recognize debts; Davies, although less biographical, points to the cannibalizing tendencies of Sartre's intellect. This oppositional mode creates problems for the assessment of Sartre's anti-colonialist positions. One cannot simply applaud his moral courage. One can also legitimately wonder whether his tiers-mondisme (support for the 'Third World') might not have taken a more constructive and less oppositional form, at least at the level of intellectual debate. The biographies provide some telling accounts of his often cruel dismissal of his erstwhile colleagues, and other such failures of generosity. Sartre rejects psychoanalysis as a way out of personal cycles of projection and identification, aggression and narcissism, and opts for anti-colonial struggle, largely through the media, and by putting his own fame to good use. But he takes with him into this arena his propensity for the polarization of conflict. Davies follows the Temps Modernes line in concluding that achievements are not dependent on the purity of the motivations, but he also shows that it is other contributors, rather than Sartre himself (Michel Leiris, for example, or Jean Pouillon) who are the first to look for constructive and reciprocal relationships with other cultures or other intellectual systems, and to seek ways out of the cycles of conflict that Sartre's incorporating tendencies created.

The review, therefore, explores what Sartre is not able unaided to explore. Other personalities, while friendly towards Sartre's aims, do not share his views and contest them within the review. J.-B. Pontalis, for example, points to Sartre's own identifications (with Flaubert among others), forcing Sartre, albeit intermittently, to recognize his own implication in his objects of study. Pouillon attempts to mediate between structuralist anthropology and synthetic anthropology. Bernard Pingaud, who supports Sartre's literary ethic, attempts to complement it with recourse to structuralist analyses, while elsewhere, the literary ethic itself is challenged. Sartre is quickly transcended by the review that he directs, but in a manner that subsequently allows him to transcend himself (16).

Significant among these other contributors is Levi-Strauss. The use of the anthropological framework enables Davies to locate very precisely the convergences and differences between Sartre's synthetic anthropology and Levi-Strauss's structural anthropology and thus to illuminate what was at stake in structuralism's repudiation of Sartre. Davies shows in detail how Levi-Strauss begins as a potential ally, but how the two totalizing projects attempt and fail to incorporate each other, with structuralism by no means emerging as the winner. Sartre's initial sympathy for Levi-Straussian anthropology is based on the priority which Levi-Strauss gives to the anthropological over the psychological. Sartre is permanently unsympathetic to Freud; he inevitably sees psychoanalysis as a colonizing process (witness the episode of the man with the tape recorder, in 1969). Later he realizes the extent to which structural anthropology is connected to Freudianism, and becomes hostile to it. In any case, it soon becomes clear that Sartre and Levi-Strauss differ
completely on the role they assign to individual purposes and their interactions. Levi-Strauss stresses the unconscious; Sartre stresses history. While Sartre's synthetic anthropology asserts 'the freedom of the person to confer meaning on the constraints of his or her situation', the structuralist anthropology insists that 'meaning is itself constrained by the society as a cultural system' (80). Typically Sartre displays his own colonizing propensities and attempts to annex structural anthropology.

The fact that their arguments take place within the political context of the Algerian war foregrounds the question of the theorist's implication in a situation of conflict, and commitment to struggle. It is Sartre's ability to fuse his anti-structuralism with his anti-colonialism which makes his argument all the more pointed. There are several strands in this critique. Structural anthropology, he argues, depends too heavily on the notion of the unconscious. It offers nothing to explain social change; it studies societies in stasis and offers no model for revolutionary change such as might be provided by models of observer-observed interaction. It leaves out diachrony (history). It is non-interventionist and politically uncommitted. It is not reflexive. In practice, this means that by not committing itself to anti-colonialist and anti-racialist struggles, it can only help perpetuate them. In a colonial situation, anthropology can only be colonial. Moreover, the assumption that anthropology can observe a living and autonomous culture is false. The culture observed has been 'constructed' by colonialism; the original culture is now unobservable. Academic anthropology, then, 'studies collective alienations without either combating them or conceptualizing them' (86). So any non-reflexive anthropology is bound up in the colonial framework. Sartre's view is that 'political consciousness is informed by ethical choices which themselves invalidate all the premisses of structural anthropology' (181). Here, as always, Sartre privileges ethics and commitment over scientific knowledge in a way that prefigures the debates of the 1980s. After the argument comes out into the open with Levi-Strauss's riposte to Sartre in La Pensee sauvage in 1962, the two anthropologies 'continue to attempt to incorporate each other and to achieve compatibility with Marxism' (125). There is no attempt by Sartre to come to terms with linguistics and psychoanalysis; on the other hand, Levi-Strauss is unwilling or unable to theorize colonialism (126). However, here too, Davies argues that the response of the review to the polarization is to offer possibilities of more constructive approaches than Sartre himself provides. While Sartre is still poised between incorporation and struggle to the death, Pouillon and others seek a way forward, 'a place for praxis within structuralism' (144).

At the end of the Algerian war, the review retains its political commitment. The former 'objects' of academic anthropology have become in the meantime guerrilla fighters in liberation struggles. In the review, Regis Debray presents these former objects of study in the role now of subjects of history (177). The practice of reflexivity is consolidated as an inseparable part of the acquisition of knowledge (and Davies stresses the contribution of feminism during the 1970s to this methodological position). In the 1980s, anthropologists from the former colonies are now writing in the review.

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Davies has written an ethnographic study of Sartre in Sartrean terms: Sartre analysed his own possession (by parental and familial identifications) and his own colonization (of his intellectual equals). He had an intuitive understanding of his own generosity and of its implications (212). In the end, although his *L’Idiot de la famille* is a monument to the failure of reflexivity, the review and its Third World commitments vindicate Sartre in Davies’s eyes. Davies’s book makes clearer than either of the others why Sartre became the moral conscience for a generation. It is a generous interpretation of Sartre, a sophisticated discussion of contemporary conceptual arguments, and, despite the fact that it is primarily a history of intellectual movements, more genuinely revealing about Sartre than the biographies. It is unfortunate that Cambridge University Press, contrary to their usual practice, did not ask Davies to provide translations of the quotations; the issues which he discusses are relevant to many outside the field of modern French studies. In particular, the account of *Les Temps Modernes*’ critique of structuralism from its position of political commitment, and the account of its trenchant critiques of colonialism, deserve a wide readership. Sartre’s posthumous reputation will be indebted to Davies’s book. *Sartre and *Les Temps Modernes’* is one of the most acute and subtle analyses of Sartre in existence, an exemplary study of the complex history of a review, and required reading for anyone concerned with colonialist discourse and its avatars.

In particular, the question of gift and debt is still a live issue. In her recent book on Sartre, *Sartre: The necessity of freedom* (Cambridge University Press, 1988), Christina Howells shows how the next generation of intellectuals has systematically repudiated the influence of Sartre and refused to recognize what they owe to him. In a very Sartrean manner, in fact, they have been intolerant of debt. The ‘anxiety of influence’ is not restricted to poets. Howells suggests that ‘the aggression may well be considered a form of self-defence; the global rejection of Sartre is a necessary but transitional stage in the assessment of a major thinker. Indeed, the insistent repudiation of his influence by his successors can only be interpreted as a form of intellectual *denegation* [denial]’ (194). So one is now coming across accounts in recent work that are beginning to examine the debts: for example, Derrida’s to Sartre in Howells’s book, Lacan’s to Sartre in *Lacan in Contexts* by David Macey (Verso, 1988).

Davies’s book shows that, politically, Sartre has lost none of his significance. In this, he contrasts sharply with some of his successors, for in their determination to forget Sartre, they seem to have abandoned at the same time Sartre’s acute sense of priorities. Politically committed criticism of contemporary French thought, from feminist and socialist directions, has begun to focus on its ambivalence about political commitment. One could speculate that this is the result of the rejection of philosophies of consciousness in order to give due weight to the determinants of consciousness; in the process, the question of ethical or political *choices* may fall out of sight, as seems to have happened with Levi-Strauss. There seems to be some anxiety too about the political domain, since making choices here involves contestation, getting one’s hands dirty, as Sartre would have said, and the avoidance of contestation in practice often turns out to be the avoidance of commitment, for, as Sartre argued...
against Levi-Strauss, theorizing is not an innocent activity. Criticism from feminists in particular has indicated the symptomatic nature of the post-structuralist attempt to incorporate 'the feminine' and neutralize the political thrust of feminism. From the feminist side too has come the critique of the scientific rationality that privileges science over ethics and writes out of the scientific project the inherent implication of the knower in the known. The reminder that the knower is not a disembodied and unsituated individual, the insistence on reflexivity, and the priority that he gave to ethics and commitment: these may be Sartre's most vital legacy.

NOTES
1 L’Etre et le Neant (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), 313; Being and Nothingness (London: Methuen, 1957), 255.
2 L’Etre et le Neant, 441; Being and Nothingness, 373.
3 In 1946, Simone de Beauvoir gave the following description of Sartre: 'L’une des qualities qui impressionnent tous ses amis, c’est l’immense générosité de Sartre. Il donne sans compter son argent, son temps et lui-même: il est toujours prêt à s’intéresser aux autres mais il ne veut rien en retour; il n’a besoin de personne.' ['One of the qualities which impresses all his friends is Sartre’s immense generosity. He gives unstintingly his money, his time and himself; he is always ready to take an interest in others, but he wants nothing in return; he doesn’t need anyone.’] In Claude Francis and Fernande Gontier, Les Ecrits de Simone de Beauvoir (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), 335-6.
4 L’Etre et le Neant, 684; Being and Nothingness, 594.
5 Although Writing Against was published before Sartre and ‘Les Temps Modernes’, Hayman had access to an unpublished version of the latter and is indebted to it in certain ways.
6 The key work here is Marcel Mauss, Essai sur le don (1925) on the gift, and the threefold obligation to give, to receive, and to give in turn. When reciprocity is impossible because of inequality between giver and receiver, resentment is generated. Reciprocity is also a central concept in Levi-Strauss, Les Structures élémentaires de la parents (1949). Sartre’s first acquaintance with the notion of possession comes from Michel Leiris, L’Afrique fantome (1934) based on fieldwork with adepts of the zar religion in Ethiopia. Sartre later uses the zar in his book on Genet, describing Genet as a man possessed by the collective representations of him. Empathy is associated with Levi-Strauss’s attempts to conceptualize the appropriate attitude for the anthropologist in the field.
8 See, for example, Peter Dews, Logics of Disintegration (London: Verso, 1987).
9 This point is strongly made in Nancy Fraser, ‘The French Derrideans: politicizing deconstruction or deconstructing the political?’, New German Critique, 33 (1984).
10 There are too many references to quote more than one or two. One of the most powerful statements of this critique can be found in the work of Luce Irigaray. It is argued interrogatively by Alice Jardine in Gynesis: Configurations of woman and modernity (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985) and cogently and persuasively by Rosi Braidotti in her thesis on feminism and philosophy (forthcoming from Polity Press under the title Patterns of Dissonance). For an example of a committed feminist ‘deconstructionist’ approach, see Gayatri