



No Exit

Jean-Paul Sartre

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No Exit

Jean-Paul Sartre

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Jean-Paul Sartre, the great French existentialist, displays his mastery of drama in NO EXIT, an unforgettable portrayal of hell.

The play is a depiction of the afterlife in which three deceased characters are punished by being locked into a room together for eternity. It is the source of Sartre's especially famous and often misinterpreted quotation "L'enfer, c'est les autres" or "Hell is other people", a reference to Sartre's ideas about the Look and the perpetual ontological struggle of being caused to see oneself as an object in the world of another consciousness.

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From Reader Review No Exit for online ebook

Huda Yahya says

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L'enfer, c'est les autres? ?

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Jean-Paul Sartre's No Exit
A BBC Adaptation Starring Harold Pinter (1964)?
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mshvq...>

Ibrahim Saad says

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Ahmad Sharabiani says

huis clos = No Exit, Jean-Paul Sartre

No Exit (French: *Huis Clos*) is a 1944 existentialist French play by Jean-Paul Sartre. The original title is the French equivalent of the legal term *in camera*, referring to a private discussion behind closed doors. The play was first performed at the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier in May 1944. The play begins with three characters who find themselves waiting in a mysterious room. It is a depiction of the afterlife in which three deceased characters are punished by being locked into a room together for eternity. It is the source of Sartre's especially famous and often misinterpreted quotation "L'enfer, c'est les autres" or "Hell is other people", a reference to Sartre's ideas about the look and the perpetual ontological struggle of being caused to see oneself as an object from the view of another consciousness.

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Forrest says

As a function of pure entertainment, Sartre's *No Exit* is brilliant. Ironically, Sartre uses almost-pure dialogue to "show not tell" the dilemma faced by Garcin, Inez, and Estelle, three "absentees" (a euphemism for "the dead") locked into a room, condemned to be together for eternity. Each has arrived here for different reasons, but all three possess qualities that bring out the worst in the others. Rather than the traditional hellish tropes of horned demons and hell-fire, this play evokes more special tortures - the ability to see into the world of the living only long enough to know what other living beings are saying about you since you've been "absent," the pressure of having three personalities who delight in interfering with each potential pairing (and the promise of solace that might mean), and the exquisite pains of honest self-doubt.

I had hoped to take this as a "primary source" of Sartre's philosophy, but perhaps I've got it all backwards. I am familiar with the tenets of existentialism that Sartre espoused, but the philosophical gloss that is given in

No Exit seems to be as much a veneer as a core underpinning.

That said, one need not think too hard to realize that this is an excruciatingly uncomfortable examination of human nature in all its banality. The characters at once seem likable, or at least their character flaws seem excusable, initially. As the play goes on, though, we begin to see each person's flaws magnified, as with a glass, until the full impact of their crimes and selfishness are realized. Soon, the audience feels shame for having excused or even liked the absentees, with a full realization that any of them (the audience, that is) could be seen as Garcin, Inez, or Estelle, or possibly even a conglomeration of any two or all three.

Not for those who don't like looking in the mirror. Or even for those who do. Prepare to be discomfited!

Petra X says

[Still a tribal Jew though, and I still like boys. (hide spoiler)]

mai ahmd says

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Sidharth Vardhan says

Two is Company, Three is Hell

Oh my sweet Satan! this is one hell of a play. This definitely is scariest vision of inferno, and the vision is just too simple:

"You re-member all we were told about the torture-chambers, the fire and brimstone, the burning marl." Old wives' tales! There's no need for red-hot pokers. Hell is—other people!"

And who can be better torturer than brains behind holocausts and Abu-Gharibs?

“As for me, I am mean: that means that I need the suffering of others to exist. A flame. A flame in their hearts. When I am all alone, I am extinguished.”

Just as even the biggest loners among us need some sort of company every once in a while, each one of us need some time alone, all by oneself. The three characters of the play are stuck in a locked room where lights never go off and there is no question of sleeping. The dis-likable nature of these people, the uncertainty as to what punishments are to follow and visions of what is being said about them in their absence (after their death) is enough to create a tension that leads to differences between them, making them each other's nemesis. But what would you do if you have to live, okay correction, stay forever with two of your foes and none of you can kill each other?

You may argue that it is their inability to co-operate which created lead to those quarrels but really, being constantly seen by each other means that sooner or later you should find something to fight about - and, unlike while living, once you started fighting you can't have a moment alone or listen to music or something to calm down. The only item left in the place is a pen-knife, which is useless except to ensure that these people know how they hate each other by trying to stab each-other. Perfect. Forget Biblical authors, forget Hindu pundits, forget old wives, forget John Krammer, forget Dante; Devil himself needs to take lectures from Sartre.

Also one can't help but love the way Sartre keeps things simple whether it is time moving faster in hell (thus cutting drama to one scene) or fact that visions from Earth are narrated by character in question (instead of showing actual scenes - limiting play to only four characters and a single place). Genius!

P. S. Now I know from where they got the idea for 'Big Brother'.

Nastaran says

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Steven Godin says

The mere abstraction of 'forever' makes me shiver, but throw in that word 'hell', and the heat starts to rise to an unprecedented level, whether bliss or burning to be subjected to anything forever, with no foreseeable or even imaginable end is almost impossible to comprehend. I would promptly take living multiple lives briefly, than a single one indefinitely. As reality outside of any timeline doesn't seem to carry with it any kind of need for initiative, for good nor evil.

"Hm! So here we are?"

As with most of Sartre's work, he seeks to identify the various tenets commonly associated with existentialism, and 'No Exit' is widely regarded as the literary expression of another Sartrean work, 'Being and Nothingness', published in the same year.

The thing I found most unsettling about this play was not the play itself, but the fact Sartre wrote with only 'one act' in mind, simply as to not piss off the Germans by keeping theatergoers there after the imposed curfew, this was 1944, with many forms of entertainment going through approval by German censors, prior to the liberation of Paris.

Garcin, Estelle, Inez, three souls, all whisked away to that doomed place of fire and brimstone, there's no escaping each other, trapped in a room, and there's no escaping the truth. These characters torture each other as they are able to reflect each other better than any mirror, they also torture one another because of what they can't have. Inez wants Estelle, but Estelle wants Garcin, Garcin sides with Inez, creating a three-way non-love affair. Just dealing with other people is hell enough, who needs, torture devices, molten lava, or

perpetual darkness, emotional pain takes the brunt of the suffering.

I was thinking along the lines of a dark, surreal Kafkaesque nightmare, but it's nothing of the sort really. Here, this is much more of a quirky and light-hearted rendition of hell, Sartre's saying something that's very true to human nature, pushing this idea to its extreme, but using hell as a metaphor for the actions of the three individuals.

Ironically, the play starts with forever, and ends with forever.....

Looking back on the past is a form of torture, particularly when we fail to choose an act when the opportunity presents itself. When alive man can always choose, to rearrange order, before lifelong events are frozen into the void, where they will reside on a permanent basis.

Maryam Hosseini says

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Bettie? says

No Exit — Jean Jullien

Hell is other people.

Saleh MoonWalker says

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JV says

A single room with Second Empire furniture (no mirrors, no windows, three sofas, one paper knife, lights that won't go off), and no torturer. Accompanied by a mysterious valet, three incredulous characters (Inez Serrano, Estelle Rigault, and Joseph Garcí) are escorted inside and are eternally locked away within its walls. At first, no one wants to admit what each has committed to deserve this damnation, but as the play progresses, they confess their crimes — their deepest, darkest secrets exposed and pretenses stripped off.

"There were days when you peered into yourself, into the secret places of your heart, and what you saw there made you faint with horror. And then, next day, you didn't know what to make of it, you couldn't interpret the horror you had glimpsed the day before. Yes, you know what evil costs."

Without any mirrors, they are forced to rely on each other. This is the gaze at which they see themselves through each others' eyes.

"Inez: Sit down. Come closer. Closer. Look into my eyes. What do you see?

Estelle: Oh, I'm there! But so tiny I can't see myself properly.

Inez: But I can. Every inch of you."

By becoming human mirrors in which they can pass moral judgment based on one's past actions (or past existences) and being an object under scrutiny through someone's eyes, they relentlessly torture one another psychologically through their vile interactions, bringing out the truth and the worst qualities in each of them.

"Alone, none of us can save himself or herself; we're linked together inextricably."

Being stuck with the people you abhor the most in the afterlife is dreadful! And that, for me, is the worst kind of suffering that I could never endure. The mind is really a fragile one, and exposing me to that kind of infernal nightmare is morbidly horrifying!

"HELL IS — OTHER PEOPLE!"

While the above quote might sound misanthropic, it actually isn't in the context of this play. What makes it "hell" is that if our relations or interactions with other people eventually come to a point where everything boils down to having a toxic, destructive relationship, being objectified/humiliated by others, now that is hell!

No Exit is a great examination of human nature and our desire to be admired. If you've experienced hell, then heed Margaret Atwood's advice: ***nolite te bastardes carborundorum*** ! Or better yet, be like Cersei Lannister. Blow those bastards to smithereens and relish your cinematic masterpiece!

And if you're already an "absentee" in the physical world, you might want to get crazy and grab that paper knife in that claustrophobic room for stabbing your foe in the afterlife. But then again, you're already "dead"! So what's the point? And as Garcin would say, "Well, well, let's get on with it..." And so the torment begins again...

Nazish says

This play gave me a wonderful idea for my next photography project and another view of hell. Every time I pick up something by existentialist authors, I'm reminded of how much they closely border upon my thoughts on life. The play centers around three characters who are trapped in a room after being dead for several hours and begin conversing about each other's idea of why they've landed there which they think is essentially the hell. They bicker, fight and hate each other and we come to see how each one of them is a cause of torment for another.

So to sum it up *“Hell is other people.”*

There was never a time while reading this I wasn't reminded of The Breakfast Club. The bickering and incessant probing for truth from each character was done almost alike. Even the lipstick scene is pretty much the same! Hughes, like Satre, tried to steer the focus away from stereotypical images and presented what is human under the façade. The play is short and quick to read but leaves a much lasting impression forever, and ever, and ever...

Foad says

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"L'enfer, c'est les autres"

-Jean-Paul Sartre

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Vipassana says

Hell is other people!

That statement is beyond doubt the most famous of Satre's. However, it is only after one is acquainted with No Exit does one realise how grossly misinterpreted that statement is. In the context of this play, the statement is not misanthropic. It highlights a symptom of the condition that is life. Perhaps this quote, where Estelle peers into the eyes of Inez for the lack of a mirror, characterizes Satre's iconic quote better.

Your scare me rather. My reflection in the glass never did that; of course, I knew it so well. Like something I had tamed...I'm going to smile, and my smile will sink down into your pupils, and heaven knows what it will become.

We see ourselves as a reflection of the perception of others. Often we cultivate the face that we present to them as well. Yet, the other people don't receive this image as we present it. The brush of a few layers, and see what we fear of ourselves. The denial of that moment is strong. It makes one defensive. But how long can you defend your self? It is absolute hell to live with one's guard up all the time. Though if one were to go

through such a situation, I wonder how long it would last. It would appear pointless to go on forever. Does the will to hold up a crumbling mask last for long? "*A man is what he wills himself to be*", as Garcin says.

As a little thought experiment, I wonder what happens in this hell beyond the limits of this story. The end leads me to believe it might not be that hellish after all.

This is the first piece of Satre's that I have read. Due to several reasons, I did not expect to enjoy his work much. After reading this play, I look forward to them.
