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Reflections and Refractions in Camus's *La Chute*

The extraordinary complication of Camus's La Chute creates what might be called an allusive complex, including numerous allusions creating various parallels and oppositions. If an allusion "is the metaphorical relationship created when an alluding text evokes and uses another," what makes it especially interesting in Camus's monologue is the way its multiple, extended and synoptic (or brief) allusions work together to create an experience of significant power that focuses on why the reader cannot accept Clamence's ultimate invitation to confess to him. Camus takes his referent texts for the most part from the Bible and the French tradition, leaving no doubt of the culture required of the reader.

Keywords: allusion, synoptic and extended allusions, allusive complex, Rousseau, the Bible,

The following pages will focus on *La Chute*'s (1956) "allusive complex." The monologue offers an example of extraordinary complexity, including numerous allusions of various parallels and oppositions. If an allusion is "the metaphorical relationship created when an alluding text evokes and uses another,"¹ what makes it especially interesting in *La Chute* is the way its multiple, extended and synoptic (or brief) allusions work together to create an experience of significant power. As the reader is reminded of other texts, creating reflections and refractions of Camus's creation, the focus intensifies on why the reader cannot accept Clamence's ultimate invitation to confess to him. Camus takes his referent texts for the most part from the Bible and the French tradition, leaving no doubt of the culture required of the reader. For those with the requisite knowledge, his references in *La Chute* may stimulate a recall of previous readings elsewhere that arise as mental images, in effect, to lay alongside what is taking place in Camus's text. When all operates as it should, the image from other works joins with the textual references and a new metaphoric image is created. Such an image will moreover join metaphorically with

succeeding images until the text in the reader's mind becomes, although particularly complex, superbly clear.

Allusion

Camus is by no means the first to exploit allusion. The device was very common in the theatre during the French classical age and the 1940s and '50s. Naming a play *Phèdre*, *Antigone*, or *Electre* brought the preceding Greek or classical French play into the new reading or viewing experience and can set up a pattern of parallels and oppositions that allow the new creation not only to use the preceding allusive source but to create something altogether different. Although Henri Peyre accused Anouilh and Giraudoux of plagiarism and a lack of creativity (80-81), it is perfectly legitimate to use preceding works as though they were vocabulary or names or symbols that carry several traditional meanings (some of which may not be currently pertinent), and permit an author to add notably to the work with an extension of significance. Allusion is not plagiarism; nor, as Pasco argues, does it exemplify models, sources, imitation, parody, or pastiche. It is the conscious usage of a preceding, "source" text chosen from literature, history, sacred writings, myth, or legendry to emphasize or clarify the present, in-hand "alluding" text by joining together with it metaphorically.

The source work alluded to may be similar, thus parallel to the referring text, or it may be different, even to the point of holding someone or something up to mockery. It is meant to exploit certain qualities of the source text in order to add to the meaning and effect of the new creation. In addition, it operates at the command of the writer but only when recognized in the mind of the reader or audience. Until recent times in the Western world, the text most commonly alluded to was the Bible, for it constituted a stable unit

that most people knew something about. When, for example, Balzac gave one of the characters in *La muse du département* (1843) the name of Dinah, like the Biblical character who turned away from Jehovah, it is no surprise to learn that she is an apostate, having given up her religious allegiance for her personal comfort and well being.

Alluding artists may, indeed, decide to make a preceding work stand for something different than it did originally, as, for example, when the pastor of Gide's *La Symphonie pastorale* quotes out of context repeatedly so as to justify his abuse of the blind girl.

Extended allusion

Most of the allusions that I've mentioned so far extend over a large portion or the whole of a literary work. Not that "extended" allusions differ fundamentally from the briefer, "synoptic" variety. It is simply that their references occur across a relatively long text, sometimes from beginning to end. They set up parallels or oppositions between the referent text and the one in hand which, in referring, create the allusion. The author makes the final determination by his or her way of exploiting those external texts in his own work. In Camus's *La Chute*, for example, the allusion to Sartre's and Jeanson's highly publicized dispute with Camus provides an appropriate example of extended allusion.² This controversy is too well known to rehearse here, but *La chute* includes others. Taken together they powerfully indicate that the narrator is proposing a viciously inhuman solution to the problems most human beings share. Early on in the monologue, we are introduced to the narrator, Jean-Baptiste Clamence, whose name suggests John the Baptist come to announce a "new" faith, *vox clamantis in deserto*. It may also refer to Jean Baptiste Rousseau, the brilliant author of numerous satiric verses and, though perhaps more subtly, it may point to Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the *Confessions*. After

all, as Flaubert pointed out in "Le dictionnaire des idées reçues," some believe that "J.-J. Rousseau et J.B. Rousseau sont des deux frères comme l'étaient les deux Corneille."³

Jean-Jacques Rousseau announced on the first page of *Les Confessions* that he was doing something new: "Je forme une entreprise qui n'eut jamais d'exemple et dont l'exécution n'aura point d'imitateur. Je veux montrer à mes semblables un homme dans toute la vérité de la nature; et cet homme, ce sera moi" (*Confessions* 5). He was confessing the unvarnished truth about himself, he explains further, in order to exculpate himself. He wants to put himself on the side of those who laughed not with but at him (*du côté des rieurs*—*Confessions* cf. 365, 1034). Rousseau's argument is very modern: he claims to be innocent because he is "no worse than anyone else," and, while addressing the "Eternal Being," he calls upon each of those around him to "découvr[ir] à son tour son cœur [. . .] et puis qu'un seul [. . .] dise, s'il l'ose: *je fus meilleur que cet homme-là*" (6). In some cases Jean-Jacques has been "méprisable et vil" and in others he has been "bon, généreux, sublime." However different he might be from other men, he was the same in that he had done both reprehensible and admirable things. Camus's Jean-Baptiste Clamence is similar in that he also wishes to "mettre les rieurs de mon côté, ou, du moins, me mettre de leur côté."⁴ He too has come to announce a new faith.

Camus's awareness of *Les Confessions* was acute. It is well known that Rousseau abandoned five infants to the hospices, for example, though on at least one occasion he denied it, and in later accounts after he was exposed by Voltaire, he passes rather quickly over the last three children.⁵ There are of course a number of ways to justify lies. It helps to define them as mere variance between an autobiographical text and reality. Rousseau liked to believe that the abandonment was unlike the person he really was and would give

people a false picture of his true self. There are also textual "ornaments" that may incidentally hide the facts. There are edulcorations that slide over into ameliorations. There are faulty memories. There are misunderstandings and simple weakness, embarrassment and shame, even timidity.⁶ But the more one reads especially Rousseau's evaluation of lying in the fourth *Rêverie*, the more explanations for "innocent" lying that one considers, the less convincing the truth of *Les Confessions* becomes. Jean-Baptiste Clamence puts a fine point on the issue: "D'ailleurs, je n'aime plus que les confessions, et les auteurs de confession écrivent surtout pour ne pas se confesser, pour ne rien dire de ce qu'ils savent. Quand ils prétendent passer aux aveux, c'est le moment de se méfier, on va maquiller le cadavre" (*Chute* 752).

As Jean-Baptiste Clamence's confession unwinds, and he reveals his lies, his triumphalism, his theft, his cowardice, readers cannot fail to remember at every remove the *Confessions* of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. As a result, the confessional element of *La Chute* is highlighted, indeed emphasized, as is the desire to "prévenir le rire [. . .] il s'agissait encore de couper au jugement" (*Chute* 738). The texts by Camus and Rousseau join together metaphorically to make an image that focuses on the pretense, the aggressiveness, the aggrandizement of merciless self-betrayal, and the strangely attractive nature of this despicable, travestied "hero of our time."⁷ We know that Rousseau lied, and Clamence confesses regularly that he does, that he cannot be trusted. Just as Rousseau's lie or lies had a purpose, that is, to present him positively to other people, so Jean-Baptiste's distortions of truth do likewise, but in the latter case he wishes to seduce his audience into slavery. While truth loses value, so public avowal of weakness and crime gains. Because he was the first to understand and confess his guilt, he can become the

penitent-judge, thus empowered to direct others in their attempt to find relief from their insecurities and guilt. As Quinones summarizes, Jean-Baptiste Clamence and other twentieth-century *philosophes* use "the diabolic logic of using universal guilt for purposes of personal exculpability" (381) to prepare the next step explained by Clamence: "Plus je m'accuse et plus j'ai le droit de vous juger" (*Chute* 762). Those who confess thus open up a space where they are themselves free of judgment. Even more freedom is accorded when the narrator goes to a sporting event or the theatre, for all eyes are focused toward the arena or the stage and away from him (*Chute* 737). Clamence goes on to suggest that new disciples should submit to him and confess their sins. "Il faut donc se choisir un maître" (*Chute* 758). They will not be accorded the grace of absolution, but rather will gain instruction in bringing others to the same submission. These repeated references generally point to a parallel reality, strengthening the degree to which Clamence's allegiances are to empty or disreputable values.

Synoptic Allusions

There are other extended allusions, but I would like to turn in a somewhat different direction and consider those allusions that have only a brief textual referent. While extended allusions use a number of references that tie the external text to the internal reference being read, rather like an expertly executed, thematically organized fireworks display, a synoptic or brief allusion resembles a single rocket which bursts high above before illuminating a portion of the text in hand. There may be no more than one or two trajectories of quite limited effect, or they may evoke an overreaching image that is both lengthy and profound. Such allusions can also have links to other allusive texts. Almost without exception, these brief allusions in *La Chute* are ironic, oppositional, if not

satiric, and each has the potential of many possible meanings which the work being read may or may not activate and exploit. This is, of course, no different from any lexical element with multiple meanings. On reading the word "red," for example, though one would not deny the definitions of a color, of heat, even passion, of communism, or of any number of other possibilities, we would never expect a writer to make use of them all. His choice will depend on his needs. In more skillfully composed texts, each of the briefer allusions will weave with the others to produce an understanding of the work's whole, precisely the case with *La Chute*.

Camus's *La Chute* uses biblical texts extensively. The very title opens the possibility that the reader will think of the biblical fall of Satan: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven," the apostle Luke writes (10:18). The point, of course, is to identify Clamence with Satan, the "accuser of our brethren" (Revelation 12:10), a point which with this unique mention will accompany the main character throughout the monologue. Clamence actually goes so far as to accuse Christ of murder and sedition (*Chute* 748-49). In fact, Jean-Baptiste maintains that the explanation for the crucifixion was that Jesus "savait, lui, qu'il n'était pas tout à fait innocent" (*Chute* 749), which contravenes the biblical assertions that Christ was perfectly innocent, so much so as to be able, not to subject others, but to offer Himself as a substitute for those who are sinful. Furthermore, the pardon that Jesus offers Pierre seems ludicrous to Jean-Baptiste. It seems to him, I would say, like the parricide who throws himself on the mercy of the court because he is an orphan. After all, Peter was both a coward and a traitor. How could God pick him as the rock on which He would build His Church (*Chute* 750; Matt. 16:18)?

Often unrelated details are paraded in the false prophet's monologue to besmirch examples of moral excellence and thus build up the alternative system he represents. Even Descartes, whose magnificent philosophical effort, designed to prove the existence of God, is associated with the insane asylum that one of his houses was to become. What eventually happened to the house has nothing to do with Descartes, of course, but it introduces guilt by association and shifts the emphasis from his philosophy to his house and then to the insane. These allusions work together to force the reader to reflect on *La Chute's* particularly religious tone while establishing a radical contrast with faiths that refuse, as Camus termed it, "all legitimacy to violence, whether it comes from *raison d'état* or totalitarian philosophy" (Camus qtd. in Judt 95). One allusion after another, the brief references are marshaled to point to the similar reality of all religions. Camus believed that religions and inventions were creations of the mind, having no justification in reality. They encouraged people to believe that they were not responsible for the creation of their own essences, and, in the end, such "slave religions" killed people. In the reader's mind, the allusions create parallel but opposing standards of truth, forgiveness, justice, mercy, love, courage, while for Jean-Baptiste Clamence none of these virtues exist. He has created his own religion. Or, to take a summary from La Rochefoucauld, as far as the penitent-judge is concerned, "Nos vertus ne sont, le plus souvent, que de vices déguisés."⁸ In effect, Clamence would have us believe that there is neither truth, nor mercy, nor justice. The only hope is to dominate others, to be able as a counterfeit pope to drink the water of a friend dying of sickness and thirst (*Chute* 754-55).

Jean-Baptiste's smarmy account leaves no doubt about Camus's position, since the character is presented in a satiric manner that rakes the author's communist friends' self-

sufficiency. Most philosophers would agree with Sartre that Camus was not a true philosopher. Judt accurately calls him a French moralist in the tradition of Pascal (135). Certainly, Camus had enormous reservations about the day's fashionable philosophers, for he believed that with the background of Marxism, historical realism, Nietzscheism, and nihilism, absolute commitment to reason applied to history would in the twentieth century justify the lack of moral imperatives and the inevitability of society's great crimes. Very aware of the results of such ratiocination which leads inevitably to the Terror, he maintained that human beings must combat evil; they must "place loyalty, love, friendship above public duty or an abstraction" (Judt 131). For Camus, the one imperative was humanity, both as a species and as a value. He also felt that unrestrained reason would lead to the enslaving doctrines of Jean-Baptiste and the Renegade, a world where compromise becomes impossible, where power is the only force capable of bringing resolution, where liberty remains impossible. Camus seems to have agreed with the general, post-war condemnation of his leftist acquaintances. In short, *La chute* constitutes a virulent attack on totalitarian communism and on future oriented, Marxist philosophy. As a solution to civilization's impossible dilemma raised by the period's left-leaning philosophers, Jean-Baptiste proposes slavery. He preaches an ideology, a religion where man has no meaning and no responsibility. At the time, Camus was ridiculed for his outrageous creation. Today, as demagogues seemingly multiply in their use of religion and ideology to justify torture, murder, and genocide, he seems prescient.

While Jean-Baptiste occasionally asks a question and seemingly receives an answer in this expertly constructed monologue, the interlocutor's answer is not given precisely. Clamence merely indicates the response, before passing on to his own

concerns. *La Chute* begins in the Mexico City Bar when the false prophet introduces himself to a Parisian and ends when the latter receives an unequivocal invitation to become a disciple. Along the way, the narrator Clamence tells his perhaps mendacious story, and he embeds dozens of other stories within his account: the baritone who beat his wife and disappeared, the adulterer who murdered his spouse because he was infuriated by her virtue, the prisoner who wanted to register a complaint at Buchenwald because he was innocent, and so on. Most of these stories have no other reason than to illustrate Clamence's lesson at a particular point in his monologue. All indicate the ridiculous pretention of humankind's overweening, self-centered pretense; some are particularly important in that they allude to the over-riding thematic and moralistic concerns of the story.

The allusion to a medieval tale of a mother who was forced to choose which of her sons would be executed and which spared, which would die, and which would execute the others likewise illustrates the monologue, but it goes further. Though there are a number of differences between the legend and later reworkings, Balzac's subsequent rewriting, and Camus's version, insist on the constant of man's inhumanity to man and destruction of the very concept of family. Camus puts the mother before a choice between her sons, while Balzac forces one of the sons to kill father, mother, and siblings in order to preserve the family's title, name, and bloodlines. The core of the various versions is intensified by its repetition.⁹ Is the continuation of a family more important than human life? Can forcing a mother to choose which of her sons will be killed be justified on any grounds? Clamence is bringing human worth and maternal love into question. The allusion provides Camus with a startlingly vivid attack on one of the more

important values of civilization. And Jean-Baptiste stays in Amsterdam where allusions to Dante, Virgile, and the Bible allow him to dominate all such inhumanity.

That the location of Jean-Baptiste's ministry is the Mexico City Bar may remind readers of the appalling history of the Latin American capital. In *La Chute*, it marks the beginning of Clamence's attempt to remake religion into a tool for his own aggrandizement, so as to bring in more victims. At first the Aztecs were vassals of the Texcoco rulers, then their allies. Finally, they gained control. Their continuing wars were undertaken particularly to acquire prisoners for the human sacrifices required by their religion. While the extended allusion to Jean-Jacque Rousseau's *Les Confessions* opens the very real possibility that Clamence is using his confession for purposes that have nothing to do with divine forgiveness, but rather with absolving his own guilt by putting the blame on others, it also emphasizes the narrator's identity with Satan, who is, of course, a murderer and the father of lies (John 8:44).

The title of Camus's work identifies the narrator with Satan, and the name of the narrator reminds readers that Jean-Baptiste was a prophet who proclaimed a new faith. Both references may alert readers to *La chute*'s many allusions to the Bible, a text of traditional importance. Other details are perhaps more salient, as pointed out by Sandy Petrey. I think of Clamence's camel's-hair coat and his fantasies of decapitation (*Chute* 764), which not only tie the judge-penitent more firmly to the biblical text, but further emphasize an opposition between the characters of the two prophets, as well. The "transcendent majesty" of John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets, contrasts with Clamence's cruel psychological games, much as the "noble simplicity" of biblical style contrasts with Clamence's "serpentine speech and epigrammatic wit."¹⁰ Not

only does the prophet freely admit that he is a liar (e.g., *Chute* 738), he chooses as his logo, "Ne vous y fiez pas" (*Chute* 717). Jean-Baptiste's decision to live in the Jewish Quarter is also important, for it recalls one of the great crimes of history and Clamence's strange affinity for the area. It also continues the association with religion because of the title, the narrator's name, the comparison of the interlocutor with a Saducee,¹¹ and the Mexico City Bar that will progressively gain power in its suggestion that the ideologies of modern philosophy are a religion, a religion leading inevitably to death. Fascist philosophy has been responsible for the murder of some 70,000 Dutch Jews, for example, as even more millions were killed by Stalin and justified by the French communists' philosophizing.

When Jean-Baptiste and the interlocutor go to the Isle of Marken and the Zuyderzee, the false prophet points to the many doves flying high above them. Unlike the biblical doves that would bring back notice to Noah that the earth was once again available for them to land and create a world of peace, or the Holy Spirit who descended on Jesus like a dove, these birds, "attendant là-haut, elles attendent toute l'année. Elles tournent au-dessus de la terre, regardent, voudrait descendre. Mais il n'y a rien, que la mer et les canaux [. . .] et nulle tête où se poser."¹² Clamence compares himself to the Son of God when he avows with his usual grandiosity, "[J]e me sentais fils de roi, ou buisson ardent. [. . .] Je me sentais, j'hésite à l'avouer, désigné" (*Chute* 709). He goes further, becoming even more explicit: "Quelle ivresse de se sentir Dieu le père" (*Chute* 763). Still, despite his presence there beneath the doves, there is no peace, there is no rest, there is no comfort, and the birds remain up above, in the air. In effect, a series of synoptic allusions each open varying references to the Bible, a Bible whose text insists on

the importance of the humanistic values of love, virtue, truth, and compassion. We remember that the damned souls incarcerated in Dante's ninth circle, to which Amsterdam is compared, are traitors who denied love and all human warmth. They are consequently fixed in ice and establish an antithesis to the allusions to the Bible. We understand why Jean-Baptiste would be "froid" (*Chute* 760). While Camus was seemingly not a Christian, he made use of the Bible and related imagery to represent his own humanist values allusively.

One of *La Chute*'s key, though brief, allusions reminds the reader of a story by Stendhal. Jean-Baptiste is crossing the Seine on the *pont Royal* when he sees a young woman leaning over the parapet and looking at the water. He continues his route. He has left the bridge and gone another fifty meters or so when he hears a splash and a scream, which is repeated until it is suddenly extinguished. He knows he should go back and rescue the woman, though he does not. Little by little he moves away. Stendhal's readers will remember "Philosophie transcendante," where the nineteenth-century author's narrator, Justin Louaut, sees a man drowning. "J'eus," he says, "quelque idée de me jeter à l'eau; mais j'ai quarante-sept ans et des rhumatismes. [. . .] L'homme reparut sur l'eau, il jeta un cri. Je m'éloignai rapidement, [. . .] j'entends encore un cri du batelier. [. . .] Tout à coup je me dis: 'Lieutenant Louaut [. . .] dans un quart d'heure cet homme sera noyé et toute ta vie tu te rappelleras son cri.' [. . .] Tout à coup une voix me dit: '*Lieutenant Louaut, vous êtes un lâche!*'" ¹³ Later, having saved the man from the water, he suffers from rheumatism and loneliness, since no one comes to visit him, and he wonders "ce qui m'a fait faire ma belle action?" He concludes: "Je me serais méprisé moi-même si je ne me fusse jeté à l'eau."

As Louaut heard a voice, so Clamence heard a laugh. Jacqueline Lévi-Valensi understood that both are tools of judgment (46). In the case of the nineteenth-century lieutenant, the voice moved him to successful action. The drowning man is saved, though the cold water causes his rescuer to have a severe attack of rheumatism. Clamence, however, moves off, wishing only to protect himself from the laughter. He does so by establishing a religion of confession and judgment. The judgment is tied tightly to guilt, but it is severed from condemnation by the claim that, since all men have crimes in their background, it does not matter. Only occasionally does he think about how cold the water would have been (*Chute* 765).

Clamence's inability to act is highlighted by Janus, a logo which he claims for himself (*Chute* 717). Janus was the god of beginnings and endings; he remembered the past, and foresaw the future. Where he lacked power was in the present, rather like Clamence, and like popular philosophies, as *La Chute* makes clear. Camus put it this way in *L'Homme révolté*: "Les hommes d'Europe [. . .] oublient le present pour l'avenir, la proie des êtres pour la fumée de la puissance, la misère de la banlieue pour une cité radieuse, la justice quotidienne pour une vaine terre promise" (*Homme révolté* 323). At the time of writing *La Chute*, Camus's disaffection for the ideologies that had controlled recent history was fully formed.

Allusive complex

Camus further felt that the philosophers propagating these philosophies spoke out of both sides of their mouths. They taught commitment and abnegation, while wallowing in the acclaim of their disciples. Clamence himself confesses, "J'ai vécu ma vie entière sous un double signe" (*Chute* 737). On one occasion, his smile seems "double" (*Chute*

714). He has not only come to terms with his duplicity, "je m'y suis installé, au contraire" (*Chute* 762). The false prophet is delighted with the "[d]élicieuse maison" (*Chute* 716) they pass, for it bears a sign with two heads, which Clamence explains identifies the owner: "La maison appartenait à un vendeur d'esclaves" (*Chute* 716). Clamence claims that like all men he needs slaves "comme d'air pur. Commander, c'est respirer" (*Chute* 737), although Clamence's duplicitous nature would want the slaves to be described as free men.

In the last significant synoptic allusion, the false prophet turns to the Van Eyck masterpiece, the *Adoration of the Lamb*. Jean-Baptiste welcomes the interlocutor to his home, and shows him the never recovered panel stolen in 1934: the *Just Judges*. Camus's penitent-judge gives a number of reasons for not returning the painting, but the most important of these explanations is doubtless that he wanted the *Judges* to be under his control, and under lock and key, thus separated from the merciful Lamb and the Triune God (represented in the polyptic with a triple tiara): "La Justice étant définitivement séparée de l'innocence" (*Chute* 757). In Jean-Baptiste's system, there should be no condemnation and no possibility of forgiveness. This allusion, like the others, highlights the false-prophet's theology. From beginning to end, Jean-Baptiste's religion pits biblical values, especially those of humility, courage, truth, charity, freedom, fidelity, innocence, and purity, against the modern prophet's unwavering egotism. Of course, the very opposition emphasizes humanity as the greatest value of all.

From the beginning of *La Chute*, Camus, a master stylist, lays out a series of allusions which either parallel or oppose the new religion the garrulous prophet preaches. It is not the only device at the author's command, but it turns this work into a powerful

attack on the inhumanity of modern man. The allusions are to works that detail human beings' virtue or, its opposite, their pride, cowardice, mendaciousness, selfishness, treachery, and depravity. In even more numerous brief allusions, Camus points to negative examples of behavior, sometimes in an unequivocally sardonic tone, as when he says, "Notre père qui êtes provisoirement ici" (*Chute* 759). Readers are reminded of the humanity portrayed in Dante's *Hell*, Rousseau's *Les Confessions*, and the Christian and the Jewish Testaments. I have not considered all of these allusions. Others to different passages in Scripture and to such fictional confessions as André Gide's *L'Immoraliste* (*Chute* 1489) are numerous.

The extended allusions incorporate entire texts to the reading experience, causing them to lie like a cloudbank over the monologue, so to speak, while encouraging a deeper, more profound understanding of the text as they metaphorically join the alluding referent to the external texts. The many briefer allusions open reminders of other events and texts that are integrated both into the alluding text and into the more extended references to Rousseau, Dante, and the Bible that guide the reader's understanding. As they work together, they tend to increase the reaction to Jean-Baptiste's egotistical self-sufficiency and blasphemous degeneracy. Few works are able like *La Chute* to marshal veritable libraries in their desire to communicate fully and effectively with a reader. While not a hermetic text, it is certainly true that *La Chute* speaks more plainly and more completely to someone who knows French literature. Just as *L'Homme révolté* tells us, "L'absolu ne s'atteint ni surtout ne se crée à travers l'histoire" (320), so the empty formulations of popular philosophers and so the creation of Jean-Baptiste Clamence. As we understand what the loathsome false prophet has done, it is hard to believe that

anyone would be willing to die for such an ideal, though millions have, however unwitting or unwilling they might have been.

At the end, readers are left in confrontation with the most powerful device of all those in *La Chute*: the monologue by Jean-Baptiste Clamence. Although, as I have suggested throughout this article, the text leaves no doubt of its goal to ridicule anti-humanist values, it seems to aim at intellectuals of many stripes: whether those of *Les Temps Modernes*, Marxists, Catholics, liberals, or conservatives, all of whom have vantage points from which to judge Clamence. As the text draws to a close, and the reader is still without certainty as to how the interlocutor will decide, those who have followed the false prophet from the beginning may begin to suspect that he or she is the true interlocutor. If so, we may be forced to decide for ourselves. When the terminal invitation is launched: "Alors, racontez-moi, je vous prie, ce qui vous est arrivé un soir sur les quais de la Seine" (*Chute* 765), can the interlocutor fail to answer? Will Clamence be rejected? Or will the representative of humankind, to whom the discourse has from the beginning been in fact addressed, will the reader bow to the insidiously seductive abomination proposed by Jean-Baptiste Clamence? If we agree to confess our sins to a Clamence, we submit to a second fall or *chute*. Should we, however, refuse the proffered slavery, we reject the Biblical fall of man and take a step toward the creation of an Existential man.

NOTES

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¹Pasco, *Allusion* 12. Where useful, I have borrowed the terminology in this study, as well. For his discussion of "Allusive Complex," see, 77-97. For other excellent work on allusion, see, Riffaterre, Perri, Orr, Machacek. Each of these critics grapples with a description of how the alluding text interacts with the referent, though without always distinguishing the various kinds of intertextuality.

²This falling out has attracted a great deal of attention. Duvall even suggests that it marks : "the disappearance if not the death of the intellectual in France as a focus of significant conversation and debate (579-85). Dante's *Divine Comedy* provides another excellent example of an external text: see, e.g., Galpin, King, Hustis. More work needs to be done on the way Pascal's *Pensées* function in Camus's work, though a good introduction to Camus and Pascal is to be found in Green, especially in regard to *La Chute*, see 240-42.

³Flaubert 2.1021. Jean-Jacques Rousseau himself referred to them as "Rousseau premier, Rousseau second" (*Les Confessions*, 1.157).

⁴Camus, *Chute* 738; cf., "[J]'en traitai quelques uns de manière à ne pas laisser les rieurs de leur côté" (*Confessions* 365); and, Alceste: "Les rieurs sont pour vous, Madame, c'est tout dire, / Et vous pouvez pousser contre moi la satire" (Molière, *Le Misanthrope*, act II, scene iv, l. 681).

⁵*Confessions* 345-46, 357. Other possible prevarications and obfuscations (e.g., *Confessions* 245-46 and nn5-6, 261-62 and 261n1, 339 and n3) were less embarrassing for the *philosophe*, but he returned several times to the matter of the children.

⁶For ornaments, see *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (1035 and n4). Rousseau claims, moreover, that he was delivering his children to the public education that he could

not provide, possibly unaware that these hospice infants died like flies (*Confessions* 356-59). His own weakness constituted a frequently mentioned problem (*Rêveries* 1039). For other weaknesses, see, e.g., *Rêveries* 1034-35.

⁷Camus used Lermontov's "Un Héros de notre temps" for an epigraph in an edition of *La Chute* ("Notice," *Chute* 1366-67, 1373). A portion of Camus's philosophical justification for his position occurs in *L'Homme révolté* 63-107.

⁸Camus exploits his gift for aphorism across *La Chute*, where one is frequently reminded of La Rochefoucauld—see, e.g., John Cruickshank, *Albert Camus and the Literature of Revolt* (Galaxy; New York: Oxford, 1960) 180-81.

⁹*Chute* 1479; Balzac, "El Verdugo" 10.1133-46; A.-H. Krappe; Jean Gessler; Wayne Conner; Antony R. Pugh. I am grateful to Kathy Comfort for her help in identifying the Balzacian referent text. Corry Cropper reminded me that William Styron's novel, *Sophie's Choice* (1979) and the subsequent film (1982) also use the basic story.

¹⁰Matt. 3: 4; Mark 1:6; *Chute* 1478, 1549. The quotations are from Petrey 1450. Wheeler also has an excellent, related study.

¹¹*Chute* 1478. Sadducees were conservative, generally wealthy Jews who held to the law, rejecting angels, the resurrection, retribution, and life after death. Yves Ansel suggests that Camus may have confused the Saducees with the Pharisees, because of their commitment to the law (126). Still, Camus surely chose the sect to emphasize Clamence's materialism.

¹²*Chute* 1510-11. The doves occur several times in *La Chute*, although this passage is particularly interesting. Clamence's later insistence on going outside to

immerse himself in the huge snowflakes that he takes for doves is also significant, for the fantasy may indicate his anguish (1548).

¹³Stendhal 273-77. Jacqueline Lévi-Valensi first pointed to the important story.

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