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**Sartrean Existentialism in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson
Crusoe (1719)* and Albert Camus' *La chute (1956)***

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Dedications

**To the memory of my brother;
my mother and father;
my brothers and sisters;
my teachers and all my friends.**

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Abstract

This dissertation compares Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Albert Camus' *La Chute* (1956). Both of them are studied within the category of research known as literary affinities and they are studied from the perspective of Jean Paul Sartre's Philosophy of Existentialism exposed in his lecture Existentialism and Humanism. For that purpose, it explores the Biblical Myths, such as the Adam's figure, the Original Sin, and the Fall as represented in the actions of the main characters, respectively Robinson Crusoe and Clamence. The dissertation also deals with their existential crisis within a hostile environment which entails free choice and responsibility. In addition, it tackles the concept of being-for-itself and being-for-other as they are portrayed in the two novels. The analysis shows that Robinson Crusoe's regret of disobeying his father and the saving of Friday from death help him to give a meaning to his life and find a way to salvation. In contrast, Clamence's failure to save the woman on the bridge makes him lose meaning of his life and dive in deep darkness.

Key words: Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Albert Camus' *The Fall* (1956), Existentialism, essence, freedom, Original Sin.

I. General Introduction

The problem of existence has been a center of interest since ancient times and the root of Existentialism can be traced back to Socrates (469- 399)¹. Through history a large number of writers and philosophers explored the theme of existentialism, but it is until the post WWII that it emerged as a philosophy. The term existentialism was first coined in 1940 by the French catholic philosopher Gabriel Honore Marcel in his early essay “Existence and Objectivity”². The term was then adopted by Jean Paul Sartre while discussing his own existentialist position in 1945. Sartre is the pioneer of the French Existentialism who contributed more in making it popular than any other philosopher.³

Sartre was able to understand the spiritual situation of the post-war generation that was disconnected from the traditional belief systems which helped people to make a sense of their lives. In his view, human beings are able to shape their lives according to their own chosen projects and commitments; they are free and must not follow the external factors like: heredity, society, family and fate. Existentialism claims that all traditional values and notions are denied and replaced by the individual’s will. Therefore, humans must accept their absolute freedom and assume ultimate responsibility to overcome difficulties and make their lives meaningful.

Our research interest in this study is the problematic character of the human situation through which the individual is always confronted with diverse possibilities from which he/she may choose and on the basis of which he/she may project him/herself. We will focus on the human situation since humans are dominated and dependent upon their relationship with things and with other people. In addition, they fear death and the failure of their projects and always confront the feeling of guilt. This feeling is inherent in the limitation of their choices and the responsibilities that derive from making them.

The subject of our study will focus on Existentialism in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Albert Camus' *La Chute*. Though the two works were written during two different periods, both of them explore several similar themes through the return to the same biblical myth of Adam and the depiction of the existentialist crisis undergone by the two protagonists, respectively Crusoe and Clamence.

Review of the literature

Existentialism is a very old thought. Socrates was the first to question human existence and saw man "as a problem in himself and as a subject and object of true knowledge and enquiry"⁴. Through time, a large number of writers and philosophers explored the thought of existentialism from different perspectives. Among these writers it is worth to mention: Soren Aabye Kierkegaard, the Danish Christian philosopher (1813-1855), Friedrich William Nietzsche, the German atheist (1844-1900), Karl Theodor Jaspers, a psychologist (1883-1969) and the French philosopher Jean-Paul Charles Aymard Sartre (1905 – 1980).⁵

Existentialism flourished in Denmark, France, Germany and Italy especially in the 20th century. It is considered as the most influential philosophy on the European continent during the 20th century. The rise and the development of this philosophical movement are related to many facts such as: the Industrial Revolution in Europe, the economic and physical destruction caused by World War II and the beginning of Cold War and Nuclear Age.⁶ These events caused a lot of suffering to the Europeans; they felt lost, rejected and confused. They could no more define themselves and this made them question the importance and the meaning of their lives. As a result, the existentialist thought came to shed light on the feelings of alienation, loss of religious beliefs, anxiety, guilt and absurd. Most of these feelings are found in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Albert Camus' *The Fall* (1945) and a large number of writers explored them differently.

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Albert Camus' *The Fall* (1945) have been the a center of interest for many critics from the perspective of existentialism. Wirahadi Umar's article, "Existentialism Studies on Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe Freedom of Life", sheds light on two main issues which are to investigate the way Robinson Crusoe preserves his existence despite all the difficulties he faces, and how Existentialism is related to free choice. Wirahadi uses Soren Kierkegaard's Existential thought to analyze the novel. He affirms that the way Crusoe defends his existence is related to Existentialist aspects. During his struggle to survive, "Crusoe finds himself in alienation or estrangement, anxiety and nothingness feelings."⁷ He does his best to stay alive during hard times.

In his article, "Camus and the Fall from Innocence", Carl A. Viggiani argues that *La Chute* deals with the problem of the 20th century, which is how to "live without divine Grace and Justice."⁸ Viggiani emphasizes the theme of judgment that is the remarkable feature of *La Chute*. He deals with Clamence's discovery of the horror of freedom and choice, and how the former is accompanied by guilt and judgment whereas the latter may be associated to a series of circumstances and personal judgment. In his view, through his "function as a false prophet and judge-penitent" Clamence aims to make all his "victims", people he meets in Mexico City bar, aware of being guilty.⁹ Clamence aims to show that "we live in terrible times, in which the end of history, the end of the world, the last judgment, universal slavery are [...] real possibilities."¹⁰

In "A comparative study on the Theme of Human Existence in the Novels of Albert Camus and F. Sionil Jose", F. Demetrio seeks to find the similarities and differences between Camus' and Jose's novels by exploring the theme of human existence. His aim is "to grasp the temporally and culturally distant speculations of the former on human existence through the more familiar texts of the latter."¹¹ Albert Camus and Sionil Jose "struggled to make sense of their temporally and culturally determined existence using the intellectual tools available for

them.”¹² F. Demetrio makes a comparison between *The Fall* of Albert Camus and Ben Singkol of Jose, he argues that after the fall, Clamence realizes that he helps and worries about other people only to show himself above them all¹³. At last Clamence’s life appears to him with no sense or aim.

Although the above critics have dealt with the existential aspects in the two novels, their works have overlooked the existential crisis that was undergone by the main characters resulted from the decisions they make. Therefore, our concern in this dissertation is to study Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and Camus’ *La Chute* by focusing on the existential struggle that the main characters experience while searching for the importance and the meaning of their lives.

Issues and Research Questions

A number of books and articles have explored different themes in *Robinson Crusoe* and *La Chute*. The main characters’ difficulties to survive in hard and disturbing situations have been largely emphasized. However, one of our assumptions is to study the two protagonists in the light of an existential perspective. Hence, this analysis focuses on two literary works that belong to two different cultures and times. Both of Defoe and Camus wrote in two contexts far removed from each other, yet both relied on the same myth of Adam and drew on the same thought of Existentialism. This affinity in literary expression leads us to raise the following questions in order to put their respective narratives in perspective: how does each of Defoe and Camus employ the myth of Adam? How does each of Crusoe and Clamence experience existentialism? What are the purposes of each writer in drawing on existentialism in their two respective works?

Methodological outline

In an attempt to answer on the research questions above we have used the philosophy of Existentialism by trying to employ its main aspects on the two works of Defoe'and Camus respectively *Robinson Crusoe* and *La Chute*

Thus, our work composes of five sections; the first section is devoted to the general introduction where we introduce Existentialism and mentioned the two literary works of Defoe and Camus, we also review some previous critics that are written on Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Camus' *La chute*. Then, we raise the issue and the research questions which is the study gap that we aim to fulfill. The second section includes method and materials; it consists of Jean Peal Sartre's Philosophy of Existentialism, in addition to the summaries and the historical contexts of the two novels. The third section consists of the results. The fourth section is dedicated to the discussion and the analysis of the two novels. It is divided into two chapters. The first deals with *Robinson Crusoe* and the second with *La Chute*. Both of them explore the Myth of Adam and important aspects Sartrean Existentialism that are found in each novel. The last section is a general conclusion of our work as a summary of the whole work and a restatement of the main findings.

Endnotes

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² https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/9899/5/05_chapter%201.pdf Accessed on October 9th, 2019.

³ https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/63628/7/07_chapter%202.pdf Accessed on September 19th 2018.

⁴ Ibid

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¹⁰ Ibid., pp 70-71

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¹² Ibid., p 66

¹³ Ibid., p 64

II. Method and Materials

Method

The aim of our study is to deal with existentialism in the two novels Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Albert Camus' *La Chute*. To reach this aim, we have used Jean Paul Sartre's philosophy of Existentialism developed in his lecture Existentialism and Humanism that was first presented at the Club Maintenant in Paris in October 1945. Through his lecture, he aimed to defend existentialism against some charges. For instance leading to quietism and despair and neglecting the beautiful side of human nature. In this dissertation we also make reference to some concepts related to existentialism such as being-for-itself and being-for-other that Sartre mentioned in his *Being and Nothingness: a phenomenological essay on ontology (1943)*.

As a movement, existentialism arose in Europe in the 19th century by many Philosophers, such as Soren Kierkegaard, Frederick Nietzsche, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky. It is until the end of the second World War that the movement reached the United States and the rest of the world. In fact, before people witness the horror of the two World Wars, God and the church used to be the reference point to human beings, but after experiencing their intense terror, especially the Second World War, people started to question the existence of God and the credibility of the religious institutions.¹

Jean Paul Sartre is considered as the prophet of Existentialism who introduces it to the world. He was an atheist existentialist who rejects the notion that God created the universe with a specific purpose what is referred to as the "absurd". Indeed, existentialism is strongly linked to the concept of absurdity which means that human beings are creatures that search for meaning and answer in a meaningless world.² Much of Sartre's literary works explore the theme of existentialism, for instance: *Nausea* (1938) which was the mouthpiece of existentialism that allows us to see Sartre's existentialist views.

We have chosen this theory because it contains the main aspects that describe the human's actions towards himself and his life context from which he cannot be separated. In existentialism, man is the one who determines and chooses what he wants to be. He can only exist in a developmental process that is formed through free will towards a superior being. Thus man chooses his essence by choosing what he wants to become³. In this context Sartre declares that existence precedes essence which means that before the projection of the self, nothing exists:

Atheistic existentialism, of which I am representative, declares with greater consistency that if God does not exist there is at least one being whose existence comes before its essence, a being which exists before it can be defined by any conception of it. That being is man or as Heidegger has it, the human reality.⁴

In Sartre's view, if existence precedes essence, human beings are responsible of what they make of themselves⁵. He also argues that existentialism is a doctrine which affirms that every truth and every action imply both environment and human subjectivity. The latter entails that man is a conscious being, and a plan that is aware of himself. His subjective consciousness is the foundation of his choice, action and essence. And it is the ground for human freedom that, in its turn, entails responsibility.

Sartre gives definitions of some important concepts, such as: anguish, abandonment and despair. The first one means that "everything happens to every man as though the whole human race has its eyes fixed upon what he is doing and regulates its conduct accordingly."⁶ The second one means that we are left alone; from the moment we are thrown in the world we are responsible for everything we do. The last one means that "we limit ourselves to a reliance upon that which is within our wills or within the sum of the probabilities which render our actions feasible"⁷ Sartre also affirms that the other cannot be separated from the self. The other is free and his freedom opposes ours'. Our freedom and the one of the others have a reciprocal relationship. They are dependent on each other. In this respect Sartre says: I "am

obliged to will the liberty of others at the same time as mine. I cannot make liberty my aim unless I make that of others equally my aim.”⁸

Materials

The two novels deal with the theme of Existentialism. The two main characters undergo two different experiences that will influence their personalities and their lives. Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Albert Camus’ *La Chute* (1945) are two novels in which Jean Paul Sartre’s Existentialism could be applied. We notice that their main characters experience an existential crisis.

Biography of Daniel Defoe

Daniel Defoe was born in 1660. He belonged to a family of non conformists, those who refuse to accept the rule of non established national church. He studied to become a Presbyterian minister, but he abandoned the clergy in favor of making his future as a merchant. He worked at a number of trades but he went bankrupt several times. It was until the age of 40 that he started writing. In fact, journalism and literature were the only branches in which he knew success. He became a political writer and then a journalist and a pamphleteer. He wrote poems and criticisms of the government. In 1683 he published his first political pamphlet. His fearless opinions and writings about religion and politics put him several times in jail. He wrote more than 500 books between pamphlets and journals. In 1719 he published his much known novel *Robinson Crusoe*. The latter joins between a biography, an account of adventure and a study of a man in relation to work and nature. He died in April 1731 at London in England. He is considered the father of the English novel and a true writer of the Enlightenment.

Biography of Albert Camus

Albert Camus (1913-1960) is a French novelist, essayist, and playwright. He was born in Algeria when it was a French colonial possession. His Father, Lucien Camus, died one year

following his son's birth as a result of infected wounds from a battle during the first World War. Albert Camus lived in poverty with his mother who was a house cleaner. Camus occupied himself with studies and sport and succeeded to get a scholarship and study at the university of Algiers, but due to a severe bout of tuberculosis he was only able to study part-time along with odd jobs. He was a brilliant student described as both physical and mental athlete. In 1938 he became a journalist and wrote for an anti colonial newspaper in Algeria. Then he served as part of the French Resistance against the Nazi occupation forces during World War II and edited the underground newspaper *Combat*. It was during these years that Camus developed his philosophy of absurdity of life that appeared clearly in his first novel *The Stranger* (1942). He also published various interesting works such as: *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *The plague*(1948) and *The Fall*(1956). They were warmly received by the audience and in 1957 he was awarded the noble prize of literature. Albert Camus died in a car accident in 1960.

A presentation of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* features the story of a young Englishman from the town of York in the 17th century. His father, who is a merchant of German origin prepares him for law, but Crusoe expresses his wish to go to the sea instead. His father tries to convince him to stay at home by telling him that his middle state is the most suited to human's happiness because it is not exposed to miseries and hardship. He also explains that it is better to seek a modest secure life for oneself. But Crusoe's desire to sail was stronger than his father's advice. Thus he succumbs to temptation and embarks on a shipboard for London. At sea, Crusoe faces many misfortunes. During his first voyage, he is frightened by a violent storm that pushes him to make vows that if he survives, he will go back home. After the storm he forgets about his vows and sails many other times.

During another trip Crusoe is seized and enslaved by Moorish pirates, fortunately he succeeds to free himself and travel to Brazil. There, he establishes himself as a plantation owner and soon becomes successful. The success of his plantation makes him in need of sale labor; therefore, he embarks on a slave gathering expedition to West Africa. This time, his ship faces a great storm that ends up with his shipwrecked and the death of all his comrades. Crusoe is thrown in a distant island where he realizes that he is the sole survivor of the expedition. He remains with no shelter or food. His loss causes him a deep suffering especially during the first days on the island. Crusoe's nature as a hard worker helps him to survive. He returns to the wreck's remains twelve times to salvage guns, powder, food, and other items. On shore, he finds goats he can graze for meat and builds himself a shelter. Despite this, loss and loneliness make him undergo an existential struggle and questions his religion and doubts about God's providence. After spending some times on the isolated island, he starts to develop his skills and his own mode of life where enjoys his freedom and peace, but this peace did not last a long time.

One day while Crusoe was walking on the shore, he sees a man's footprint and discovers that a group of natives or "savages", as he calls them, come very often to the island and bring captives so as to kill and eat them. Crusoe at first is terrified, but then he saves one the cannibals' captive. The latter vows total submission to Crusoe in gratitude for liberating him. Crusoe names him Friday to commemorate the day on which he is saved and makes him his loyal servant and gradually changes him into an English-speaking Christian. Later both of them release two other victims of the cannibals. One is a European Spaniard and the other is Friday's father. Eight days later, an English ship arrives to the island. Crusoe and the ship's captain strike a deal in which Crusoe helps the captain and the loyal sailors retake the ship and leave the worst mutineers on the island. After 28 years Crusoe leaves the island on 19 December 1686 and embarks for England.

A presentation of *La Chute*

La Chute (1956) by Albert Camus is a philosophical novel. It is about a former successful Parisian lawyer, Jean Bptiste Clamence, who abandons his profession in Paris to become a judge-penitent and live in Amsterdam. The whole story happens in five days. Clamence meets a stranger in a bar in Amsterdam called Mexico City and engages with him in a conversation. Through their conversation we learn that he used to be an honest lawyer who specializes in the noble cases such as the protection of widows and orphans. He is in the camp of justice that was enough for his peace of mind. He is a man of generosity, an example of a perfect citizen. But this did not last for a long time. One evening while he was walking on the Pont des Arts, he suddenly hears a laughter coming from behind him but nobody was there when he turns back. He hears the laughter a second time when he gets home, and when he smiles to his mirror his smile seems to be false.

Clamence associates the laughter to an event that he witnessed few years before. It is during one of November's nights, when he is crossing a bridge called Pont Royal. He sees a young woman about to commit a suicide. Clamence does not stop to help her though he knows that she will through herself from the bridge. At first he thinks that he forgot about that event but the laughter reminds him about his deed. He feels guilty which makes him experience a complete failure. As a result, Clamence loses all his good qualities and destroys the good reputation he once had. He thinks about his past and realize that all his good behaviors were meant to the public; that all what he cares about is the way others see and consider him. He discovers at what extent he is selfish, and that the severity on his heart will remain with him forever because he can never escape the feelings of guilt since there cannot be any other opportunity to get the woman out of the water. This revelation promoted him to give up his practice as a lawyer and take up the profession of Judge-penitent. His new

profession consists in being an assistant to all tourists who come to that bar and offer to listen sympathetically to their confessions of sins.

Historical context of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)

Robinson Crusoe's journey takes place in the context of the 17th century European imperialism and colonialism. This period knew remarkable changes especially in society and economy. English society knew the growth of the middle class. The latter is a group of individuals between the idle landed rich and the toiling peasants that appeared during the 16th and the 17th centuries⁹. Most of those who belong to this class are commercials, who work to increase and develop their wealth; they have a good position in society. The middle society aimed to increase and further develop their wealth; they always try to improve their own position in life by accumulating more wealth.

Furthermore, during the 17th and the 18th century, England was known by trade and discoveries. It knew a remarkable growing of overseas trade and long distance voyages. Keith Wrightson states in *Earthy Necessities* that England was already experiencing what has been called the "Commercial Revolution" during which even rural people were integrated into commercial network¹⁰. Europeans began to establish settlements in America. They started to divide lands into small parcels under private ownership. The crops that they cultivated the most were: tobacco, rice, sugar can, and cotton. European immigrants who went to America to own their own land did not accept to work for others and with the growth of plantation there was a great need for manpower. As a result, convicts were sent from Britain, but that was not enough. Thus planters began to purchase slaves from West Indies and Africa¹¹. This is in fact the reason that will push Crusoe, in the novel, to sail to Guinea.

Defoe was likely inspired by the real life of Alexander Selkirk who survived alone for four years on an island in the south pacific. This influence makes his novel realistic, in fact, Defoe was the first realistic novelist in the early 18th century. He is said to be the father of

Realism¹². The latter broke with the demands of art to show life as it should be in order to show it as “it is”. Realistic novels are known by detailed and factual descriptions. writers try to represent events and social conditions as they are. In Robinson Crusoe, Defoe supplied dates, names, places and minute descriptions which make the reader feel that the characters and events of the story are real.

Historical Context of *La Chute*(1956)

La Chute (1956), or *The Fall* in English, is Camus’s last philosophical novel. Jean Paul Sartre declares that it is “likely Camus’ finest and least understood [...] It was an exceptional adventure of our culture, a movement of which tried to guess the phases of the final outcome.”¹³ When Albert Camus wrote *La Chute*, he was ill and had a dispute with one of his best friends, Sartre. The later was for the independence of Algeria but Camus supported the French war. Camus was deeply touched by the loss of his best friend. In 1950 the war broke out and this made Camus so terrified.¹⁴

The 20th century saw the largest transformation of the world order. It witnessed many events that caused significant changes in the world such as the two World Wars, the nuclear power, nationalism, decolonization, the Cold War and the post-Cold War conflicts. Camus witnessed the horror of the World War II. The latter filled the world with fear and terror. It caused huge losses. People lost faith and hope in the world and questioned the importance of existence and life. Camus declared that people who lived during the 20th doubted about the purpose and the meaning of their lives because of losing all belief in God and justice. In the last chapter of Camus’ novel *L’Homme Révolté* he tried to give a solution to this problem, at that time he seemed to have a positive perception toward the future. Yet after the publication of *La Chute* he seemed to lose that positive perception and questioned the possibility of living in a world that lacks justice and divine assistance.¹⁵

Furthermore, Camus' private life was not fine too. He had problems with his wife, Francine Faure, and he was unable to compose or continue any piece of writing. Camus was exhausted and unhappy and this made him question what he achieved during his life. The atmosphere of the post- World War II was full of dissonance, hopelessness and estrangement thus a large number of Camus' works dealt with these issues.¹⁶ *La Chute* appeared to answer on some important questions that disturbed Camus' mind such as the meaning of Life.

Endnotes

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III. Results

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Albert Camus' *La Chute* appear to share several affinities though they are written by two authors belonging to two different cultures and historical periods. To begin, the two writers of the two novels use the same Biblical myth of Adam. *Robinson Crusoe*'s and *La Chute*'s protagonists respectively Robinson and Clamence fall from the state of grace in which they were. First, both of them were leading a peaceful and comfortable life before losing their comfortable position due to their sin. Crusoe disobeys his father; instead of becoming a successful lawyer, he chooses a life of adventures full of dangers. Clamence fails to save a young woman who throws herself from a bridge. Thus, the destruction of the two protagonists is brought about by the choices they make.

In addition, after the fall of the two protagonists, they undergo a hard experience whereby they find themselves alone and abandoned. They realize that they are guilty and they are the only responsible for their situations. Both of them experience an existential crisis where they question the importance and meaning of their lives. They become aware of the dangers of their freedom and free choice. Also, though Robinson becomes a true Christian, at the beginning of the novel he seemed just like Clamence; he does not believe in God or God's providence.

Furthermore, the "other" plays an important role in the two novels. Both of Crusoe and Clamence fear the other. Crusoe does his best to protect himself from the other for instance by building weapons and a wall all around his castle on the island. And Clamence is traumatized by the gaze of the other, all his interest is how others see and consider him. Also, the other contributes in the change of the two protagonists. Both of them have been influenced. Robinson becomes a true Christian only after he meets Friday. And Clamence changes when he meets the woman on the bridge.

To conclude, the two protagonists change the place in which they used to live. Crusoe is lost in an uninhabited island and Clamence is exiled to Amsterdam, a place that he chooses for several reasons. There is also a similarity at the level of the settings. The two places are surrounded by water that may symbolize their loneliness and their abandonment.

IV-Discussion

Chapter One: Religion and Sartrean Existentialism in *Robinson Crusoe* (1718)

This chapter sheds light on the various similarities that exist between the fall of Crusoe and the fall of Adam. We move then to deal with the different aspects of Sartre's philosophy of Existentialism by focusing on the existential crisis that Crusoe experiences after being abandoned alone on the island. This chapter explores the themes of freedom, choice and responsibility to see how Crusoe creates his essence by recognizing his mistake and finding a way to salvation after bearing a lot of physical and psychological suffering.

I Robinson Crusoe and the Original Sin

Robinson Crusoe is the main character of the novel. At the beginning of the story he is presented as an 18years old British ordinary urban citizen, who has lost his two brothers and remains a unique child. Crusoe lives with his parents who belong to the Middle Class that has a very good position in society. According to old Crusoe, it is the best class since it neither experiences the extremes of luxury nor poverty¹

As the only child of a wealthy family, Crusoe's life is already arranged for him by his father. He receives a competent share of learning, a house education and he is prepared for law. His father encourages him to follow an ordinary secured and comfortable life. Robinson's state resembles to the state of the Biblical first created man, Adam, when he was in the Garden of Eden. When God created Adam, according to the bible, he gave him everything he could ever need including a wife. Both of them lived peacefully in the Garden of Eden. God warned Adam that he is free to eat from any tree except the one of knowledge of good and bad: "You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden except the tree of knowledge of good and bad. From that tree you shall not eat; the moment you eat from it you are surely doomed to die"². Though the tree was forbidden for him, Adam disobeyed God's

commandment, and ate from it falling into a sin. As a result, God punished him by sending him out of heaven to the earth.

Just like Adam, Crusoe is also in a state of grace. He has money, a family, and a great future already arranged for him. But despite all this, he is not satisfied. From the beginning of the novel he shows a great desire to undergo high sea adventures: “My father, who was very ancient, had given me a competent share of learning, as far as house-education and a country free school generally go, and designed me for the law; but I would be satisfied with nothing but going to sea.”³ Crusoe does not care too much about law or his social class. His dream is to sail and make his own fortune by practicing trade. He is so excited to traveling and discoveries.

Like Adam who was warned by God, Crusoe also is warned by his father. Here we notice that both of them committed a sin in a quest for knowledge. Adam wanted to gain knowledge of everything and Crusoe as will wants to travel, discover new lands and know about other countries. His father tries to convince him to stay home. He tells Crusoe that the life of a man “firmly rooted in the middle class” is happy because it is safe and comfortable; whereas the life of an adventurer usually resulted in either poverty or, if successful, the discontent and luxury of the upper classes⁴:

He told me [. . .] that these things were either too far above me, or too far below me; that mine was the middle State, or what might be called the upper Station of Low Life, which he had found by long Experience was the best State in the World, the most suited to human Happiness, not exposed to the Miseries and Hardships, the Labour and Sufferings of the mechanick Part of Mankind, and not embarass'd with the Pride, Luxury, Ambition and Envy of the upper Part of Mankind.⁵

Crusoe’s father warns him that if he disobeys him God will never bless him. This is not the only warning. During his first trip Crusoe faces a dangerous storm that may be seen as a foreshadowing to what will happen later. Besides, He faces death several times, he becomes sick and he is captured by pirates. There is also the advice of one of his comrades warning him that God may severely punish him.

He afterwards talked very gravely to me, exhorting me to go back to my father, and not tempt Providence to my ruin, telling me I might see a visible hand of Heaven against me. ‘And, young man,’ said he, ‘depend upon it, if you do not go back, wherever you go, you will meet with nothing but disasters and disappointments, till your father’s words are fulfilled upon you’⁶

Despite all these warnings, Crusoe chooses to prioritize his own will over his father’s. He decides to cross the seas without asking for his permission or for God’s blessing. He is aware that by disobeying his father he disobeys God because the puritans consider the father as God’s deputy thus, any act against him is considered as an act against God. As a puritan Crusoe is aware that his rebellion against his father is a sin. His great desire for self satisfaction leads him to abandon his parents and his future. Later, he refers to this subsequent mistake as his “Original Sin” which brings up his miserable condition. But, it is also this sin that will guide him to the right way to salvation. In this context Anthony Padovano writes: “the most fundamental factor in the doctrine of original sin is not universal salvation. Original sin does not tell us that man is evil, but that God is savior”⁷

Crusoe confronts a second storm on his way to Guinea, a mortal storm ending with the destruction of his ship and the death of all his comrades. The storm throws him in a distant and uninhabited island. The punishment that he receives resembles to the one of Adam. Both of them found themselves alone and helpless on a foreign land as a punishment for their sin. In this context Leopold Damrosch says: “Crusoe original sin like Adam’s disobedience to his father”⁸. After going to the sea against express warnings, he is punished by shipwreck and isolation. Once on the island Crusoe faces hard times, no shelter, no food no clothes and no company. He is obliged to start from nothing. He swims to the shipwreck and brings many necessary things, he gathers them and plans how to use them carefully especially the weapons, for hunting at first was his only source. Moreover, to ensure his safety, he builds a shelter for himself and extends it day by day to feel more comfortable, and begins to settle by creating a life on his own.

Adam, when he is punished by God, regretted his sin and pried to ask for God's forgiveness. After Crusoe faces death and loneliness he starts to think seriously about his deed. We notice through the novel that he blames himself repeatedly. What Crusoe lives on the island will totally change him and move him to believe in God he narrates his salvation as a kind of miracle and persists in viewing the tempests as punishment for his sin and the fulfillment of his father's prediction that God would not bless him and that he would have leisure to repent when it was too late. Although Crusoe's father "was merely prophesying his son's future, his words have the operative power of a curse; Crusoe never forgets them: 'I began now seriously to reflect upon what I had done, and how justly I was overtaken by the Judgment of Heaven for my wicked leaving my Father's House, and abandoning my Duty'." ⁹

Crusoe's salvation occurs in his first year on the island. He lives there for twenty eight years during which he busies himself with his relationship with God: he prays and reads the bible and makes innumerable projects to develop the island for his sustenance and safety. He believes in the providence of God, and that God makes him live hard times in order to show him the right way to follow. He accepts his solitude as salvation and reading the Bible offers him comfort and guidance. Crusoe, then, moves from a disobedient son to a regretful cast away to a very religious man. At first, he wants to deliver himself from the island, but after that he focuses on his deliverance from his sin.

II- Robinson Crusoe and Sartrean Existentialism

II- 1. Freedom, choice and responsibility in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)

Existentialism is defined as a 20th century philosophical movement that embraces some fundamental issues, centering on the individual existence in the universe where people must accept their absolute freedom and assume their ultimate responsibility. It tends to lay emphasis on man's existence. It defines itself as a return to the absolute truth. A large number of philosophers have a different attitude about human existence and give Existentialism

various forms. But despite this variety, they all agree on one point that Existentialism is based on a concrete human being.¹⁰

Existentialism is related to human's freedom; the latter is essential for a human being. Sartre declares in his *Existentialism and humanism* which was an attempt to defend existentialism against some charges, that "man is free, man is freedom"¹¹. For him, a human being has no self existence without freedom. He has the ability to decide what he wants to be and what he wants to do, and this activity makes him find his freedom. Sartre affirms the limitless possibilities of individual freedom. The latter is the fountain of hope and foundation of all human values; it is the one that constitutes us as human beings. It gives us the capacity to choose and how to live, and this determines what kind of people we are.

Crusoe's freedom appears in the fact that he follows his own will instead of his father's. He had one way to choose; either he stays at home with his parents, become a successful lawyer and enjoy the upper station of low life, or seek high sea adventures and undergo a life full of danger. On the island Crusoe discovers his absolute freedom. He is free to do anything he wants; the whole island is his own, no one is there to give him instructions or guide him.

With freedom comes free choice which plays an important role in shaping one's existence. According to Kierkegaard, the founding father of existentialism, every human being will create "his world" based on his free choice avoiding any intervention from any authority such as family, political system and culture¹². He states that existentialism refers to any human who refuses to accept a decision handed by an authority. This is exactly what Robinson Crusoe does; he ends up by following his own decision. This stresses Kierkegaard idea that to exist means to realize his self through the freedom of choice. Therefore, Robinson Crusoe as a free man chooses to sail ignoring his father's authority and advice. His freedom may be seen also when he sails for the first time. When he is on the ship, he faces a storm that

terrifies him. The feeling of fear that he experiences pushes him to make vows that he will never sail again: “I made many vows and resolutions that if it would please God to spare my life in this one voyage, if ever I got once my foot upon dry land again, I would go directly home to my father, and never set it into a ship again.”¹³ But once the storm stops he forgets about his vows as if he never pronounced them. His freedom sets in the fact that he didn’t fear God or any other authority.

Freedom entails responsibility. Since man is free to choose he is responsible for what he chooses. In this context Sartre declares that man is responsible for what he is: “the first effect of existentialism is that it puts everyman in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely up on his own shoulders”¹⁴ Existentialists rebelled against the traditional meaning of human existence and tried to create their own meaning with the help of free choice. They state that we have to bear the responsibility to make our life meaningful. Any individual must be aware that he/she is a free and self determined being and must be aware that he/she is fundamentally responsible for what he/she has chosen to be.

Bearing responsibility means that our life must be accepted as a product of one’s own choices and actions, and not the result of the environment or any social or cultural aspects that may influence the choices we make. The realization that the human life is without foundation leads an individual towards his/her responsibility. In addition, the concept of responsibility underlines that we are not victims of any social, economic, psychological and physiological conditions. We are responsible for developing our own unique individuality i.e. we make our own decision and we are aware that this decision directs us to the meaning of our lives.

Crusoe’s feelings of responsibility may be seen each time he blames himself for what happened to him. Blaming one’s oneself means that there is no any other person to throw the responsibility upon. Thus, Crusoe is the only person to be blamed since he reacts according to

his own choice and no one forces him to sail. In many passages in the novel, Crusoe remembers his deed and regrets it:

I began now seriously to reflect upon what I had done, and how justly I was overtaken by the Judgment of Heaven for my wicked leaving my Father's house, and abandoning my Duty; all the good Counsel of my Parents, my Father's Tears and my Mother's Entreaties, came now fresh into my Mind, and my Conscience, which was not yet come to the Pitch of Hardness which it has been since, reproach'd me with the Contempt of Advice and the Breach of my Duty to God and my Father.¹⁶

Crusoe realizes that what happens to him is his own mistake.

II- 2.Existential Crisis

It may happen to an individual to struggle while trying to define his existence. In the novel, the main character, Robinson Crusoe, goes through hard times where he experiences an existential crisis. At the beginning of the novel, he is interested only in his own will and ignores the will of his father. In some passages he describes how he is touched by his father's speech, but this does changed his mind:

I was sincerely affected with this discourse, and, indeed, who could be otherwise? and I resolved not to think of going abroad any more, but to settle at home according to my father's desire. But alas! a few days wore it all off; and, in short, to prevent any of my father's further importunities, in a few weeks after I resolved to run quite away from him.¹⁷

Crusoe's action shows that he is free to choose, and his freedom appears in his action. He chooses to become a sailor instead of a lawyer. And this was the first step toward his crises. At first he has a family and a place to belong to which gives him an identity but that is not what he wishes. His existential struggle starts when he is thrown in the uninhabited island with no help. He loses everything he is abandoned and he struggles to define himself in a new place and new environment.

According to Sartre, man is abandoned in the world. By realizing the burden of responsibility man can understand why he is abandoned. As an atheistic philosopher, Sartre means by abandonment that man faces the absence of God. He is aware of being left alone and of being responsible for all what he does, his choices and actions, and thus responsible for what he makes of himself. This explains his idea that man is condemned to be free.¹⁸ With

the absence of God, man loses all the objective standards and divine qualities to achieve salvation. Abandonment is, in fact, an awareness of being left on one's own and experience the utter aloneness. This makes man face the situation of defining himself in this context

Sartre explains:

We are like actors who suddenly find themselves on stage without knowing the name of the play, or what role they are playing, without knowing what to do or say yes, without even knowing whether the play has an author at all whether it is serious or a farce. We must personally make a decision, to be something or other, a villain or a hero, ridiculous or tragic. Or we can simply exist, immediately, but what is also a choosing role and that choice, too, is made without our ever knowing what the performance was about.¹⁹

Much of what is said about abandonment can be applied to Robinson Crusoe. His state of abandonment appears clearly through his shock when he realizes his loss and that he is the only survivor on the island with no strength or help he says:

I walked about in the shore, lifting up my hands, and my whole being, as I may say, wrapped up in the contemplation of my deliverance, making a thousand gestures and motions which I cannot describe reflecting upon all my comrades that have been drowned and that there should be no soul saved by myself²⁰

Crusoe forgets about thanking God for being safe and for being chosen among his comrades to stay alive. The hard situation into which he is thrown makes him forget about God. His feeling of abandonment may be also seen in his doubt concerning his belief in God. According to Sartre, if God does not exist, man is in consequence forlorn, because without God there is nothing to depend upon. Though Crusoe survives the shipwreck he does not seem to have a strong religious inclination. His doubt about his belief in God appears several times. For instance when he sees the grain that grew on the island though the climate is not proper, he believes that God miraculously causes the grain to grow and that touched his heart, but when he discovers that he threw a bag of chickens' food there his feelings have disappeared: "[...]and then my religious thankfulness to God started to abate too upon the discovering that all this was nothing but what was common"²¹ Moreover, when he finds a print of a man's naked foot on the island, fear and horror shakes his faith too. All his religious hope and his confidence in God's providence vanish.²²

Sartre argues that humans are in anguish because their responsibility is much greater than simply defining their own individual essence. He explains in his *Existentialism and Humanism* that we are not responsible only for ourselves, but rather our responsibility is related to others which, according to Sartre, puts us in “anguish”. He means by “anguish” that when we are taking decisions and doing actions, we are, in fact, surveyed by others who watch us and try to do the same thing as we do. This puts a great burden of a profound responsibility upon our shoulders.

Sartre states that when we choose we can never know what the outcome of our choice will be and what will become of us. This is why, according to Sartre, man is always in anguish. Crusoe chooses to become a sailor and by this choice he affects his own becoming. Once he is on the island he becomes aware of his freedom because nothingness reveals our freedom, and anguish in fact, is defined as the consciousness of our freedom: “[...]it is in anguish that man gets the consciousness of his freedom, or if you prefer, anguish is the mode of being of freedom as consciousness of being; it is in anguish that freedom is, in its being, in question for itself.”²³

Crusoe experiences a failure. His existential struggle does not reside only in facing hardship and loneliness in a distant foreign land, but also in the realization that he is the cause of that failure, he is guilty. He discovers that his failure is due to being in absolute freedom that allows him to decide and act as he wishes. And this reveals to him the bitter truth that he is responsible for his decline, but in chapter I titled “I am very Ill and Frighted”, Crusoe says: “[...] God had appointed all this to befall me; that I was brought to this miserable circumstance by his direction [...] why has god done this to me? What have I done to be thus used”²⁴. If we observe this passage from Sartre’s point of view, we may say that Crusoe uses God as an excuse to what has befallen him. He escapes from his responsibility by throwing it on fate.

Crusoe believes in God. At first, he experiences a struggle concerning his belief. He feels that God gives him an unfair fate. He blames God for giving him an unbearable burden. But then, Crusoe becomes aware that God punishes him for his wrong doing. He thinks about his situation and deduces that God does this to him. His redemption starts when he sees a terrible dream that he considers as a warning from God. He sees a man who comes to kill him because he did not regret his deed. The man says to him: “Seeing all these things have not bring thou to repentance, now thou shalt die”²⁴ After this dream, Crusoe starts regeneration, his consciousness begins to awake and he reproaches himself with his past life by which he provokes the justice of God. After his dream, he takes one of the Bibles he retrieved from the ship, opens it and reads: “call on me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver, thou shall glorify me”²⁵. This affects him deeply that he sets time everyday to read the bible.

Though Crusoe receives a Christian education, he does not use the knowledge he had before in order to define God. He thinks about God only according to what happens to him. He deduces: “Sure we are all made by some secret power who formed the earth and sea, the air sky; and who is that? [...] it is God that has made it all”²⁷. There is no body to guide him except his own reason. What is important here is not only the fact that Crusoe sees light, but also the fact that he is able to reach spiritual awakening and understanding completely outside any organized religion, using only his Bible and his own consciousness. This leads us to introduce “Deism”. The latter is a philosophical belief in the existence of God knowable through human reason. This belief propagated during the enlightenment movement. In other words, “Deism” refers to what could be told natural religion to acceptance of certain body of religious knowledge that is born in every person or that can be acquired by the use of reason²⁸. Robinson Crusoe redefines religion by adopting a rational interpretation of life. Though he loses his identity, he succeeds to reconstruct it through believing in God.

Robinson Crusoe struggles and does his best to find and realize his life existence. He goes through a hard experience that teaches him to be a strong and independent man. What happens to him can be considered as a lesson to face real life. Crusoe's character shows how every human being must defend his existence at any time and any place.

II-3.Existence precedes essence

The central doctrine of existentialists either Catholics or atheists, is that existence precedes essence. In *Existentialism and Humanism* Sartre says: "what do we mean by existence precedes essence? We mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world and defines himself afterwards"²⁹. Existentialists believe that humans first exist and then they give meaning to their existence through their consciousness. Since human beings are subjects rather than objects, persons rather than things, their existence are prior to their essence because they are beings in the world before they define themselves i.e. before they take on an essence, they begin as nothing and they make themselves through their choices and actions. There is no pre-established set of characteristics that determine our true nature and proper function. Since man is able to make choices that define his existence, he is not self creator but he is at liberty and this makes him responsible of all his deeds. This is the case of Crusoe, we notice through the story how he seems free when he takes his decision and sails though he is aware of the dangers that may face him at the sea. Therefore, he cannot blame fate or any other person for what happens to him.

When Crusoe's ship is destroyed by the violent storm, he loses everything: his comrades, his job, and his money. The storm throws him into a distant island, where he remains helpless and experiences true loneliness. Though all the difficulties that he faces, he commits himself to stay alive. He succeeds to rebuild himself. He is at first just a man who exists on a foreign land without any other standards to define him such as society or family, but then he creates himself through nothingness; he builds his own house and provides it with

all necessary things we see how he comes to organize it successfully: “ I made me a table and a chair[...] I made large shelves of the breadth of a foot and a half, one over another all along one side of my cave, to lay all my tools, nails and ironwork [...] my cave[...] looked like a general magazine of all necessary things.”³⁰ Then Crusoe creates a society of his own. First it consists of him and animals which he treats as people. After that we see the appearance of Friday and his father, then the arriving of the mountaineering Englishmen. Then the island turns to be a small society.

Crusoe spends fifteen years on the island without meeting a person. He lives only with animals and plants around him: “I had lived fifteen years now, and had not met with the least shadow or figure of any people.”³¹ One day, Crusoe discovers some cannibals who come habitually to the island in order to have feasts. At first he is so terrified that he stays three days in his castle without going out. Crusoe then saves a prisoner that the cannibals bring to eat. The rescued is also a cannibal from another tribe. Crusoe calls him Friday to commemorate the day on which he saved him. He treats him with a kind of superiority; for instance the first word that he teaches him is “Master”. He also resolves to teach him all what he knows. Day by day, Friday abandons his cannibalistic nature and learns to wear clothes, make tools, and cook food.

Friday’s use as a character serves to define Robinson Crusoe. Thanks to Friday, we can see the identity of Crusoe as a modern civilized white man. The attitudes and behaviors that he teaches him reflect clearly his nature and culture. Though Robinson’s true passion for religion starts from the moment he realizes his sin, and though he prays and reads the bible, he always expresses a doubt about his beliefs. Crusoe says when he sees the cannibal’s foot print: “Thus my fear banished all my religious hope, all that former confidence in God, which was founded upon such wonderful experience as I had had of His goodness, now vanished.”³³ There are also many events in the story that have been mentioned above in which Crusoe

expresses an ambivalence concerning religion. It is until he meets Friday that he reaches a stable belief in God. Crusoe does his best to teach Friday everything about religion; he becomes like a priest. Saving Friday's soul and teaching him to become a civilized man help to identify Crusoe and to offer him stabilization in his belief in God.

Sartre identifies three constituents of being: being-for-itself, being-in-itself and being-for-others. Our interest will be on the being-for-itself and being-for-other. The first one refers to the fact that man is thrown into the world and he is free to choose the way of being since he is conscious and does not have a predetermined essence. He suggests that being for itself-is-aware of its incompleteness "conscious being" so it creates itself from nothingness. Thus, for Sartre, nothingness is the defining characteristic of the for-itself, because man has the capacity to create himself by performing and acting in the world.³⁴ The being-for-itself is defined by its non physical characteristic. The second one is about man, who defines himself according to the other's gaze.³⁵

This can be applied to Crusoe. We see through the story how Crusoe is conscious. He knows that if he stays home, he will have a quiet life, and if he sails he will face death. Despite his awareness, he chooses to sail. This stresses the fact that man is thrown into the world and is free to choose his way of being. Once Crusoe is on the "island of despair", as he calls it, he could create himself from nothing. He does not have the least conditions to survive. But, he succeeds to build a shelter and provide food by making his own farm where he raises animals and cultivates crops. He finds a way of life on the island. The appearance of Friday is very significant in the novel. It aims to identify the two characters. By making a comparison between them and through paying attention to how each one sees the other we may identify and classify them. When Crusoe describes Friday's behavior, he is in fact revealing his own behaviors too. So, the other plays an important role in shaping one's identity.

Robinson Crusoe's story resembles to the story of Adam in the fact that both of them lose their comfortable state due to disobedience. They suffer and go through hard times, but despite the hardship they find a way to light. Crusoe faces death and loneliness and discovers that he is the only responsible for what happened to him. This makes him experience an existential crisis where he struggles to define himself in a new place and new environment. Despite all the difficulties that face him, he succeeds to overcome his existential crisis through believing in God and through hard work.

Endnotes

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- ² Genesis (2:17)
- ³ Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*. London: Penguin Books, 1994, p 8.
- ⁴ Novak, Maximillian. Robinson Crusoe “Original Sin”. 1961, p 21.
- ⁵ Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*. London: Penguin Books, 1994, p 9.
- ⁶ Ibid, p 19.
- ⁷ Anthony, Padovano. “Original Sin and Christian Anthropology”, 1969.
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- ⁹ Novak, Maximillian. Robinson Crusoe “Original Sin”. 1961, p 29.
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- ¹³ Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*. London: Penguin Books, 1994, p 13.
- ¹⁴ Sartre, Jean Paul. *Existentialisme and Humanisme*. France : Les Edition Nagel, 1946. Translated by Mairet Philip, 1948, p 29
- ¹⁵ https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/63628/7/07_chapter%202.pdf>
- ¹⁶ Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*. London: Penguin Books, 1994, p 50.
- ¹⁷ Ibid, p 11.²¹
- ¹⁸ Sartre, Jean Paul. *Existentialisme and Humanisme*. France : Les Edition Nagel, 1946. Translated by Mairet Philip, 1948, p 34

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- ²⁰ Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*. London: Penguin Books, 1994, p 50.
- ²¹ *Ibid*, p 68.
- ²² *Ibid*, p 156.
- ²³ Sartre, Jean Paul. *Being and Nothingness: a phenomenological essay on ontology*. Paris: Gallimard, 1943, p 29
- ²⁴ Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*. London: Penguin Books, 1994, p 94.
- ²⁵ *Ibid*, p 89
- ²⁶ *Ibid*, p 95
- ²⁷ *Ibid*, p 84
- ²⁸ Joseph, Waligore. "Christian Deism in Eighteenth century England" accessed on October 12th 2019 <[http:// www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net)>
- ²⁹ Sartre, Jean Paul. *Existentialisme and Humanisme*. France : Les Edition Nagel, 1946. Translated by Mairet Philip, 1948,p 28
- ³⁰ Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*. London: Penguin Books, 1994, p 169
- ³¹ *Ibid*, p 158
- ³² *Ibid*, p 151
- ³³ *Ibid*, p 154
- ³⁴ Nellickappilly, Sreekumar. *Jean Paul Sartre's concept of Human Existence*, chapter 38. Viewed May 15th,2019< <http://nptel.ac.in/courses/109106051/> Module°/°205/Chapter°/°2038.PDF>
- ³⁵ *Ibid*.

Chapter Two: Religion and Sartrean Existentialism in Albert Camus' *La Chute*

The present chapter deals with the Biblical reference that Camus uses in his novel. It sheds light on the similarities that exist between the protagonist of *La Chute*, Clamence, and the first created man, Adam basing on Sartre's Existentialism. The chapter analyzes Clamence's situation after his failure to save the woman on the bridge. His experience throws him in a torment and makes him discover the necessity to choose, the obligation to assume his guilt, and the inability to escape responsibility.

I-Jean Baptiste Clamence and the Original Sin

The title of the novel, *La Chute* is obviously borrowed from the story of Adam and Eve. In fact, the word "la chute" in the Christian faith refers to Adam's expulsion from Eden. Clamence as we learn from his dialogue with a stranger in a bar nearby Amsterdam has also been in a state of grace. He has been an honest lawyer who helps the poor and a defender of orphans and widows.

Il y a quelques années, j'étais avocat à Paris et, ma foi, un avocat assez connu [...] J'avais une spécialité: les nobles cause. La veuve et l'orphelin [...] J'étais soutenu par deux sentiments sincères: la satisfaction de me trouver du bon coté de la barre et un mépris instinctif envers les juges en général.¹

Everybody speaks about his good deeds and his humble personality. He has a very good position in society everybody loves him and refers to him as an example of goodness and honesty. We notice that he works hard to create his good reputation. He did all his best to help others and be an example of modesty.

But, his conversation with the stranger turns to be a confession of his bad deeds. Clamence reveals to his interlocutor that he has committed a sin in the past and that sin causes his decline. The idea of *La Chute* is tied to the original sin that led to Adam's expulsion from Eden. Adam sinned by eating a fruit from the forbidden tree of knowledge as it is explained in the first chapter. Clamence's sin is his failure to save a young woman, who commits a suicide.

During one of November's nights, while walking back to his home, he sees a young woman leaning on a bridge and looking down to the waters.

Sur le pont, je passai derrière une forme penchée sur le parapet, et qui semblait regarder le fleuve. De plus près, je distinguai une mince jeune femme [...] Mais je poursuivis ma route, après une hésitation [...] j'avais déjà parcouru une cinquantaine de mètres à peu près, lorsque j'entendis le bruit, que malgré la distance me parut formidablement dans le silence nocturne, d'un corps qui s'abat sur l'eau.²

Clamence did not stop to help the woman. As a man who is always on the right way, he should prevent the woman from throwing herself from the bridge or save her from drowning. But he chooses to not act. After this incident, his life changes gradually; he loses the pivots of meaning around which he had organized his life. And he is forced to abandon Paris for Amsterdam.

Just like Robinson Crusoe, Clamence state resembles to Adam's one. But instead of going back to God after committing a sin and asking for forgiveness to find a way to light, Clamence goes deeper in darkness. He destroys his own reputation and lives among thieves on the margin of society. Though the two novels have the same biblical reference, they differ in the fact that Crusoe finds a way to light because he saved Friday's life, but Clamence drowns in darkness due to his inability to save the woman on the bridge.

II- Clamence and Sartrean Existentialism

II-1. Freedom, choice and responsibility in *La Chute*

As mentioned before, freedom is the supreme value among existentialists. A human being has no self existence without freedom. Clamence's freedom is seen in all the parts of his life and all what he goes through. The story begins by the confession of Clamence to the stranger in a bar. The act of confession shows how Clamence is in total Freedom. When we confess, we reveal sincerely all the good and the bad things that we have done. This act means that we are free and do not fear anything. If we move back to his past, we may see his freedom reflected through his feeling and his way of living: "Les juges punissaient, les

accusés expiaient et moi, libre de tout devoir, soustrait au jugement comme à la sanction, je régnais, librement dans une lumière édénique.”³. Clamence is free to choose his profession as a lawyer and free in practicing it: “je régnais, librement”. We see how he chooses to defend orphans and widows and help all those who require his assistance. Even the way he narrates to the stranger reflects his total freedom.

As it has been referred to before, freedom is strongly related to choice. According to Sartre, existence necessitates a choice, and there exists only who can choose. Existence may be seen as the option of freedom. Sartre introduces the notion of man as a project i.e. a human being has the project of defining his existence⁴. He emphasizes that we are not simply what we wish to be, a product of one’s own dream, but rather a product of one’s choices, or actions. He insists that we are all free beings and therefore, we always live under a constant threat of the necessity to choose. Through the story we see how choice shapes what happens to Clamence. All what he goes through is related to the choices he makes.

Clamence used to be a successful lawyer with a very honorable reputation because he chooses to help others by all means. Choice also makes him undergo a profound change. This is during one of November’s nights when he is crossing a bridge called Pont Royal. He sees a slim young woman dressed in black leaning over the railing and staring at the river. He hesitates at first, but then he carries on walking. After few steps, he hears a sound of a body striking the water and a cry that is repeated several times. Clamence was alone and obliged to take a decision, either to save her or not:

Je voulus courir et je ne bougeai. Je me disais qu’il fallait faire vite et je sentais une faiblesse irrésistible envahir mon corps. J’ai oublié ce que j’ai pensé alors. « Trop tard, trop loin... » ou quelque chose de ce genre. J’écoutais toujours immobile. Puis, à petit pas, sous la pluie je m’éloignai. Je ne prévins personne.⁵

We see that Clamence is confronted with the need to make a decision. His hesitation shows that he has a choice either to help the woman or not. He, at last, chooses to walk away. Due to this decision, he experiences a complete failure. He loses his values, his good qualities and his identity.

According to Sartre, we are free to choose, and because we are free to choose, we are responsible for what we choose and for what we make of ourselves. Freedom imposes isolation on the individual and puts him in a unique situation; therefore he must make his moral choices and bear responsibility of them⁷. His responsibility lies in accepting his freedom and all the consequences that appear as a result of his personal decision. In this context Sartre says:

He must [human being] assume the situation with the proud consciousness of being the author of it, after the very worst disadvantages or the worse threats which can endanger person and have meaning only in and through my project; and it is on the ground of engagement which I am that they appear. It is therefore senseless to think of complaining since nothing foreign has decided, what we feel, what we live, or what we are.⁷

Clamence feels himself free but he does not know that freedom demanded responsibility. The struggle that he experiences is due to the realization of his responsibility. When he chooses to act in a given way for example when he is confronted with the need to make a decision to save the woman or do nothing, he was free and responsible for his act. Thus, he can't through the responsibility upon anybody else. In fact, his fall occurs the moment he discovers that freedom and responsibility cannot be separated. He even has chosen to not read news papers or anything else that will give him information about the woman the day after her suicide which can be considered as an escape from responsibility.

II-2.Existential crisis

Clamence does not fall directly after the suicide of the young woman, but his destruction starts a few years after that event. He conducts a life of success, and his life in Paris was like living in the "Garden of Eden". He has always been on the top of everything, enjoying his state and he is satisfied by all what he does: "Mais voilà, j'étais du bon côté, cela suffisait à la paix de ma conscience. Le sentiment de droit, la satisfaction d'avoir raison, la joie de s'estimer soi-même, cher monsieur, son des ressorts puissants pour nous tenir debout ou nous faire avancer."⁸

Clamence explains how he feels proud of himself. There are not only feelings of proud but also those of superiority for instance, when he faces the judges while defending his clients, he actually feels that he is above them all.

Everything was fine in Clamence's life until one evening. While he was walking on one of Paris' bridges alone, he suddenly hears a laughter coming from behind him. When he arrives home he heard it another time under his windows:

J'étais monté sur le pont des Arts [...] j'allais allumer une cigarette ; la cigarette de la satisfaction, quand au même moment un rire éclata derrière moi. Surpris, je fis une brusque volte-face : il n'y avait personne [...] j'entendait le rire dans mon dos, un peu plus lointain comme si il descendait le fleuve. Je restais là, immobile. Le rire décroisé.⁹

Clamence tells us that two or three years before he hears the laughter, he failed to save the young woman that has thrown herself from the bridge. He thinks that he forgot about that event but when he hears the laughter few years later, he connects it to the suicide of the girl and realizes that the event never left his mind. He thinks that the laughter comes from the waters because the woman he fails to save throws herself in the river. The laughter directs Clamence to discover what is hidden inside him.

Clamence starts to question himself and to seek truth: why did he not save the woman? Clamence, as referred to before, has always been on the good side; he helps people in need, defends them and gives them money. But, none of what he used to do is dangerous. When he meets the woman on the bridge, it is the first time he faces a dangerous situation. If he jumps to save her he may die too. We notice that Clamence used to help others only in save situations. He allows the woman to drown and by this act he contradicts all the good qualities he pretends to have. Later, he recognizes his act of cowardice as a normal reflex of self interest. From that event, Clamence changes and sees his life in a different way. He realizes that the incident that occurs in the past is chasing him. For instance, one day after the event while he is watching the waters of the sea, he is completely disturbed by a little speck which

was a bit of debris left behind by a ship. This means that Clamence can never escape what happened or make himself as uncaring or lacking in conscience: “Soudain, j’aperçus au large un point noir sur l’océan couleur de fer. Je détournai les yeux aussitôt, mon cœur se met à battre. Quand je me forçai à regarder, le pont noir avait disparu. J’allais crier, appeler stupidement à l’aide.”¹⁰

One of the reasons that pushes Clamence to live in disturbance is the realization that all what he cares about is his own image. He expresses how he admires being prized for his honorable behaviors. For instance, in one of the passages, Clamence tells his interlocutor how he feels when a wife of a client presses his arm and assures him that nothing could ever repay what he had done for them.¹¹ In another passage, he questions his gesture of tipping his hat to a blind man after helping him to cross the street: “Quand je quittais un aveugle sur le trottoir ou je l’avais aidé à atterrir, je le saluais. Ce coup de chapeau ne lui était évidemment pas destiné, il ne pouvait pas le voire. A qui donc s’adressait-il ? Au public”¹² He knows that a blind man cannot see his gesture, so it is directed to the public that sees him. All his interest is how others perceive him. He attends social gatherings not for the support of others but it is in order for his presence to be noted, gain popularity and receive recognitions. Clamence learns at what extent he is reliant on others. He is afraid that others would discover what he has done: plutôt il me semblait que chaque un d’ceux qui je rencontrais me regardait avec un sourire caché¹³. His own identity and his happiness is dependent not upon what he does, but upon how others see and define him. He lives a deep suffering when he realizes that all his good behaviors and actions are meant to secure the acceptance and the approval of people around him.

After the event Clamence is no more the one he used to be, he could not define himself. He has always considered himself superior and above all judgment:

Ma profession satisfaisait heureusement cette vocation en sommets [...] Elle me plaçait toujours au-dessus du juge que je jugeais à son tour, au-dessus du l’accusé que je forçais à la reconnaissance [...] je vivais impunément. Je n’étais concerné par aucun jugement.¹⁴

His existential crisis is brought about by the realization that the mocking laughter he hears is his conscience, revealing to him that the man of superior virtue he considers himself to be is in fact a sinner like everyone else. Clamence becomes aware that all human beings are sinful and no one is innocent. Therefore, he is also guilty and, he is subject to judgment made by others. According to him, since everyman testifies to the crime of all others, we do not need God to create guilt or punish. The other will judge and his judgment is worse than the final one. Clamence carries the burden of guilt. He always lives in fear that people would see through him and discover his hypocrisy.

As a result of his struggle, Clamence attempts to destroy his own reputation. He feels himself filled with dissonance and disorder. He insults poor and blind people and discovers that he receives secret, unexpected joy in doing so. He engages in scandalous activities, such as going to bed with harlots and drinking excessively for nights. He does all this because he wants immortal life. He knows that death is the end of everybody and this makes him more disturbed. Therefore, debauchery was the only thing that can liberate him, but despite this, he cannot not forget or change his state of mortality: “Oui, je mourais d’envie d’être immortel [...] parce que je désirais la vie éternelle, je couchais donc avec des putains et je buvais pendant des nuits. Le matin, bien sûr, j’avais dans la bouche le goût amer de la condition mortelle.”¹⁵ Clamence knows that one day he will die; therefore, all his efforts are meaningless. In fact, when human beings discover the truth of their existence, they become disturbed and try to neglect this truth by ignoring death. Yet, the later must be recognized and accepted as the final ending in order for any human being to “be what he really is”. Death proves that human’s life is absurd.¹⁶

The absurd is one of the most important aspects of Existentialism. It is very significant in the philosophical writings of Sartre and Camus. The word absurd means meaningless, according to existentialists, human’s existence in the universe is absurd i.e. meaningless.

Existentialism considers the actions and motifs of any individual as absurd because they are directed to an unachievable goal. In the context of Existentialism the term “absurd” is defined in two different ways:

“In the first way life is absurd, it makes no sense and has no meaning or ultimate purpose. But further it is also cleared that human beings need to make sense in order to create a meaning or purpose in life [...] Second, the absurdity is limited to actions and choices of human beings.”¹⁷

Albert Camus wrote a philosophical essay about the absurd titled *The Myth of Sisyphus* where he dealt with the futility of human actions and absurdity of human existence. He claims that there is a fundamental conflict between what we want from the universe and what we find in it. We will never find in life itself the meaning that we want to find and if life is meaningless does it lead one to commit suicide? If it has no meaning does that mean that it is not worth living? In order to answer these questions, Camus uses the Greek myth of Sisyphus. The latter is condemned to roll a rock upon a hill, but when he reaches the summit, the rock rolls to the bottom again. Human’s life, according to Camus, is like Sisyphus and the rock i.e. it is pointless and without meaning. However, he claims that one can overcome the absurdity of his existence by the absurd itself that one can accept and live in a world devoid of meaning or purpose. This idea resembles to Sartre’s claim: “live as you like. Desperation is itself a way of life”.¹⁸

Clamence struggles with freedom and responsibility. Any human being must recognize the inescapability from freedom and accept the responsibility associated to it. Since responsibility is associated to freedom one cannot escape anguish. The latter is a condition of freedom and action. Clamence discovers that he is free to choose and each choice he makes will have consequences on which he has no control and, can never know which choice leads to better consequences. So he becomes aware that he must live with the realization that his freedom is limitless and must always make individual choices and be responsible for them.

According to Clamence, in order to escape guilt, we cast it upon others. He thinks that all humans are judges, all are guilty, and all are basically crucified by each other without

knowing the reason why. His discovery promoted him to give up his practice and take up the profession of judge-penitent. By confessing his own sins, he also brings others to confession and declares that he is for any theory that rejects the innocence of man, and for any practice that treats him as guilty: “Je suis donc pour toute théorie qui refuse l’innocence à l’homme et pour toute pratique qui le traite en coupable”¹⁹

Clarence does not believe in the existence of God. He does not pray or practice any kind of inner work he believes that a world without a God suffers from the absence of transcendental norms and guidelines. With the absence of God and the desire to escape responsibility, man has to choose a master, who will command every act and distinguish clearly between good and evil. Humans must obey in order to escape their fear from freedom. In other words, they must find, as Sartre calls it, “an excuse”. For Camus as well as for Sartre, God is an excuse to guarantee man’s innocence: “Alors? Alors, la seule utilité de Dieu serait de garantir l’innocence et je verrais plutôt la religion comme une grande entreprise de blanchissage.”²⁰

II-3.Existence precedes essence

The concept of existence and essence and the difference between them are the oldest debated issue in history of philosophy. Existence is characterized by concreteness whereas essence is characterized by abstractness. The existence of anything can be defined by the fact that “it is” and the essence can be defined by answering the question “what it is”. If we go back through the history of philosophy we find that sometimes essence dominates on thinkers, and sometimes existence does. In fact, some philosophers have concluded that both existence and essence are unreal. But, afterward at the age of reason, the concept of existence became prominent.²¹

By existence precedes essence, Sartre means that human beings are not what they conceive themselves to be, but they are what they will²¹. They make their essence by the

actions and decisions they take. Sartre challenges the view that we are imbued with any essence or purpose; he rejects the idea that God has already predetermined them. Clamence used to be an honest lawyer recognized everywhere. He works hard to succeed in his life and his profession. Here we may see how his essence is created after his existence. But the essence he makes changes by his act when he did not rescue the woman on the bridge. This decision brings about his downfall. He is the one who destroys the essence that he once made and replaces it by another. After the event, Clamence does many bad and unethical deeds like drinking and insulting others. He becomes another person completely different to the one he used to be. But, that person is created by his own choices and actions, nobody directs him to follow the way he follows.

While discussing the important features of man, Jean Paul Sartre, identifies three parts of being, among which two only have been used in our research. First, the being-for-itself that refers to the being of individuals and their existence. It is the being of a human being that suggests the presence of a free and knowing being²². Sartre argues that humans are aware of themselves and their consciousness of their own existence is central to their being. Clamence too is aware of himself and of his situation in society. The event that he witnesses on the bridge reveals his incompleteness. He realizes that he is thrown into the world and it is up to him to choose his way of being and create his own essence.

The second dimension of being is called: being-for-other. When we encounter other people, we realize that they are subjects, who are conscious agents. Sartre suggests that our relations to other people are of the very essence of man. When we encounter the other, we also encounter their subjectivity. This, according to Sartre, raises the possibility that we may become an object to the subjectivity of the other consciousness. In order to explain this, Sartre gives the example of a “voyeur who peeps through a keyhole and suddenly realizes that another person is looking at him and judging him[...] the voyeur here experiences the

subjectivity of the other” and when we are aware of the subjectivity of the other, our existential structure changes. This means that the way we conceive ourselves does not only depend upon us, but also upon others because if we objectify them, they objectify us too.²³ We want others to see us as we want to be seen which may create conflicts. These conflicts are “part of our existentialist situation” and we cannot surmount them. In Sartre’s play *No Exit* one of the characters claims that hell is other people.²⁴

Clamence’s most fear is the discovery of what he did on the bridge. At a certain time, he confesses that all what he does is meant to form a good image to the public. He cares too much for how people think about him. He enjoys when he is thanked by others and when he is mentioned as the most honorable and humble person. In fact, the laughter he hears is the best proof that he always lives in fear of others. All what matters for him is how he is seen and how he is considered. He feels himself in hell, when he realizes that other people are looking at him, judging him, and the judgment of other humans is the worst for him:

Croyez-moi, les religions se trempent dès l’instant qu’elles font de la morale et qu’elles fulminent les commandements. Dieu n’est pas nécessaire pour créer la culpabilité, ni punir. Nos semblables y suffisent, aidés par nous-même. Vous parliez du jugement dernier. Permettez-moi d’en rire respectueusement. Je l’attends de pied ferme : j’ai connu ce qu’il y a de pire, qui est le jugement des hommes.²⁵

The passage shows at what extent he is traumatized by the other. He claims that the judgment of man is worse than the judgment of God.

Much of what is said and written about Existentialism can be applied to Camus’ novel *La Chute*. The main character undergoes a profound change due to a hard experience. The discovery of his absolute freedom and the huge burden of responsibility lead him to question the importance and the meaning of his life. His inability to save the woman on the bridge uncovers the truth that he is self-centered. This drives him to lose the right way and guidance.

End notes

¹ Camus, Albert. *La chute*. Algeria: L’Odessee, 2015, p 17-18

- ² Ibid., p 58
- ³ Ibid. , 25
- ⁴ Sartre, Jean Paul. *Existentialisme and Humanisme*. France : Les Edition Nagel, 1946.
Translated by Mairet Philip, 1948, p 28
- ⁵ Camus, Albert. *La chute*. Algeria: L'Odessee, 2015, p 59
- ⁶ Sartre, Jean Paul. *Existentialisme and Humanisme*. France : Les Edition Nagel, 1946.
Translated by Mairet Philip, 1948, p 29
- ⁷ Boukacem, Kamilia. Appraising Contemporary Existentialism in John Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress and Danny Boyle's The Beach. University of Bejaia, 2018, p 34 (qtd in.Herris 5)
- ⁸ Camus, Albert. *La chute*. Algeria: L'Odessee, 2015, p 18
- ⁹ Ibid., p 34
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p 89
- ¹¹ Ibid., p 22
- ¹² Ibid., p 41
- ¹³ Ibid., p 66
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p 23
- ¹⁵ Ibid., p 85
- ¹⁶ Boukacem, Kamilia. Appraising Contemporary Existentialism in John Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress and Danny Boyle's The Beach. University of Bejaia, 2018, p 46
Accessed on August 22ed 2019
- ¹⁷ https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/63628/7/07_chapter%202.pdf>
- ¹⁸ Leddy, Joseph. A critical analysis of Jean Paul Sartre ' s existential humanism with particular emphasis upon his concept of freedom and its moral implications. University of Windsor. 1957

- ¹⁹ Camus, Albert. *La chute*. Algeria: L'Odessee, 2015, p 109
- ²⁰ Ibid., p 68
- ²¹ https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/63628/7/07_chapter%202.pdf>
- ²² Nellickappilly, Sreekumar. Jean Paul Sartre Concept of Human Existence Chapter 38.
Viewed April 15th 2019. <<https://www.accademia.edu>.>
- ²³ Ibid
- ²⁴ Ibid
- ²⁵ Camus, Albert. *La chute*. Algeria: L'Odessee, 2015, p 91.

IV. General Conclusion

Throughout our modest work entitled Sartre's Existentialism in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Albert Camus' *La Chute*, we try to analyze the two novels from Sartre's philosophy of Existentialism explained in his lecture in Paris titled Existentialism and Humanism on October 1945. We focus on the most important aspects of this philosophy such as freedom, choice, responsibility, anguish and abandonment by studying the characters' situation and their existential crisis.

Our dissertation first presents the historical context of the two novels. We see that the two authors lived during transitional periods that influenced them: Defoe lived during a century that witnessed a great change in the economic order and the rise of Realism and Camus witnessed the horror of the World War II. This influence may be seen through the main characters of their two novels, who struggle to define themselves. Thus, knowing the historical background of the two works is very important for understanding their aims.

The main aim of our dissertation is showing the relevance of Sartrean Existentialism to the chosen novels. This is done by highlighting the existential crisis that the protagonists, Crusoe and Clamence, undergo. We see at what extent Crusoe suffers to survive after his downfall. He is thrown alone on a foreign and uninhabited island, where he struggled to define himself. Clamence, in *La Chute*, fails to save a young woman from committing a suicide. This failure changes him, and makes him question the importance of life and existence.

Through the analysis of the two narratives, we see the presence of the main aspects of the existential theory, especially while dealing with their protagonists. We argue that Crusoe and Clamence experience an existential disturbance once they realize their absolute freedom, their necessity to choose and their inability to escape from the responsibility of their choices. Crusoe chooses to sail and adventure instead of leading a guaranteed prosperous future. His

choice makes him lose everything he has and start from nothing. Clamence's decision to walk away instead of saving the young woman reveals to him the burden of freedom and responsibility. Guilt is chasing him everywhere and makes him change his profession from a lawyer to a judge-penitent.

Furthermore, we see that though Defoe and Camus chose the same biblical myth of Adam, the development of events in each novel takes a different turn. We find out that Robinson Crusoe finds his way to salvation thanks to rescuing Friday from an eminent death. Inversely Clamence loses his way and dives in deep darkness because of his failure to save a woman in distress. So, the other plays a crucial role in the change that the two protagonists undergo.

All in all, this dissertation tackles the issue of Existentialism in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Albert Camus' *La Chute*. It affirms the possibility of studying the two novels together from the perspective of Jean Paul Sartre's Philosophy of existentialism. To conclude, these two narratives can also be studied from the perspective of psychoanalysis.

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