

THE CONCEPT OF THE EXISTENTIAL FALL IN ALBERT CAMUS' *THE FALL* AND WILLIAM GOLDING'S *FREE FALL*

ALBERT CAMUS'NUN *DÜŞÜŞ* VE WILLIAM GOLDING'İN *SERBEST DÜŞÜŞ*
ROMANLARINDA VAROLUŞSAL DÜŞÜŞ KAVRAMI

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Abstract

The atrocities of World War II and the following period of recovery in Europe resulted in the fact that human innocence was wiped away and replaced by the state of never-ending guilt for crimes committed in the pre- and post-WWII period. The overwhelming majority of people realized that their lives were wrought by the previously dormant qualities of selfishness and hypocrisy leading them to experience their "fall", standing for the loss of innocence and disappearing trust in the meaning of rationalised existence, from then on undermined by the absurdity of everyday life. The concept of the existentialist fall is a recurrent theme both in Albert Camus' *The Fall* and William Golding's *Free Fall*. While *The Fall* is the forefather of many existentialist novels, portraying man strangled in a hopeless and nihilist struggle taking place in the new historical environment, *Free Fall*, in its turn, has become one of the best specimens of fiction dealing with the concepts of human sin, free will, guilt, alienation and loss of freedom. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to analyse and compare Camus' *The Fall* with Golding's *Free Fall* in terms of their treatment of the concept of the existentialist fall.

Keywords: Camus, Golding, existentialism, the fall, loss of innocence.

Öz

İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nın vahşeti ve bunu takip eden Avrupa'daki zorlayıcı toparlanma dönemi, insan masumiyetini silip yerine, savaş öncesi ve savaş zamanında işlenen suçlardan kaynaklayan hiç bitmeyen suçluluk duygusunun yer almasıyla sonuçlandı. İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası dönemde insanların çoğu hayatlarının, daha önce görünmez olan bencillik ve ikiyüzlülük tarafından şekillendirildiğini fark ettiler; bu da onları, masumiyetin kaybına ve o andan itibaren gündelik yaşamın anlamsızlığına ve rasyonelleştirilmiş varoluşun anlamına duyulan güvenin kaybolmasına dayanarak "düşmelerini" deneyimlemeye yönlendirdi. Bu bağlamda varoluşçu düşünüş kavramı hem Albert Camus'nün *Düşüş* romanında hem de William Golding'in *Serbest Düşüş* adlı eserinde tekrarlanan bir temadır. *Düşüş*, yirminci yüzyılın ikinci yarısındaki pek çok varoluşçu romanın öncüsü olurken, yeni tarihsel ortamda yaşanan umutsuz ve nihilist bir mücadele içinde boğulan insanı tasvir ederken, üç yıl sonra yazılan *Serbest Düşüş* romanı da insanın günahı, özgür iradesi, suçluluk, yabancılaşma ve özgürlük kaybı kavramlarını ele alan en iyi kurgu örneklerinden biri haline gelir. Dolayısıyla bu makalenin amacı, Camus'nün *Düşüş* ile Golding'in *Serbest Düşüş* romanlarında varoluşçu düşünüş kavramını ele alışları açısından analiz etmek ve birbirleriyle karşılaştırmaktır.

Anahtar Kelime: Camus, Golding, varoluşçuluk, düşünüş, masumiyet kaybı.

Introduction and Theoretical Premises

The idea of the existentialist "fall" was one of the most prevalent concepts in the second half of the twentieth century and dominated the European philosophical and literary arena for many decades. Yet, it was the nineteenth century with its blind belief in the power of Rationalism that prepared background for the human "fall" by liberating the man from religion and God, which allowed him to see himself as the ultimate power at the centre of the universe and to use reason alone in his attempt to discover the truth of existence. Due to his overwhelming sense of accomplishment, the modern man rejected religion and replaced it with science, believing that everything was possible through human reason. Proud of his scientific achievements, the man disregarded his spiritual side, which led him to become avaricious, fervent, and self-centred, and to forget certain virtues like justice, love and righteousness. As a consequence, the humanity paid a heavy price for this reason-based enthusiasm by entering the state of "cosmic chaos" (Friedman, 1993, p. 67) of World War I and II, the deadliest wars in human history, in which science and reason were used for deliberate extermination of millions of people. The atrocities of World War II and the following grim period of recovery in Europe resulted in the fact that human innocence as such was wiped away and replaced by the commonly prevailing state of never-ending guilt for crimes and wrongs committed in the pre- and post-WWII period. The overwhelming majority of people realized that their lives were wrought by the previously dormant qualities of selfishness and hypocrisy leading them to experience their "fall", standing for the loss of innocence and disappearing trust in the meaning of rationalised existence, which from then on was undermined by the absurdity of everyday life. It was the time of "the passage from Newtonian dynamics to generalized relativity" (Sartre, 1949, p. 1631) – the movement which became to be known as Existentialism. Existentialism rejected the merit of the masterplan of life and gave prominence to fleeting moments in the life of man who was a "means rather than ends" (Sinfield, 1983, p. 35) in the mechanism of existence. The major pinnacles of Existentialism were formulated by Jean Paul Sartre in *Existentialism and Humanism* (1946) and Albert Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942) and advocated the necessity to generate one's inner individual meaning to survive in the outer world that underwent the "fall", as from the existentialist point of view "existence comes before essence" (Sartre, 1948, p. 26). Hence, Existentialism may be viewed as "an attempt to reconcile the objective and the subjective, the absolute and the relative, the timeless and the historical [...] to evoke the primordial gushing-fourth of life in all its concrete, particular and temporal verity" (Beauvoir, 1946, p. 1160).

The existentialist fall - “a problem of impure properties carried tediously to an unvarying end: the stalemate of dust and desire” (Faulkner, 1987, p. 114) - is the phenomenon that has been frequently explored in works of European fiction. The protagonist in these novels represents the predicament of the modern man first shaken to the core by a dreadful experience from the recent past and then made to perceive the absurdity of one’s existence, is obliged to undergo a fall from grace - a course of transformation from the condition of static ‘being’ to the condition of incessant ‘becoming’. As a result, the protagonist often embarks on the existentialist pursuit of meaning and freedom by incessantly cross-examining his instance of guilt and responsibility. Yet, this quest is not devoid of the feeling of agony, which “comes from the realization of helplessness, of hopelessness: man does not carry within himself the means of the solution of his life’s problems” (Bruneau, 1948, p. 70). In this connection, for the protagonist to be able to cross-examine one’s existence the existentialist novel “will not tell a story; it will choose a particularly important relationship between a character and the world, or society, or other characters, and develop all its possibilities” (Bruneau, 1948, p. 70). Hence, the protagonist’s increasing awareness will be the sole source of development in the existentialist novel, while the progressive realization of the human condition will be the most important tool empowering the central character, because, as Sartre said, “purifying consciousness is the only way out of viscosity” (1970, p. 5). What is more, provided that existential living is governed by irrationalism and impossibility to grasp the meaning of outside reality neither the writers of fiction nor the characters can fully perceive one’s motives and the logic behind one’s deeds. The characters are not given the luxury to understand each other. It is for this reason that “the heroes never explain themselves; do not allow themselves to be dissected: they act only. To analyse them would be to kill them” (Sartre, 1946, p. 117). Indeed, most existentialist novelists portray their characters in a puzzling and obscure way, as it is freedom and not rational understanding that guide them in their endeavour. The characters “perform before our eyes acts which were complete in themselves, impossible to explain, acts which it was necessary to grasp completely, with all the obscure powers of our souls” (Sartre, 1946, p. 117). The swift multiplication of acts in existentialist fiction does not allow the existentialist novelist to “locate the meaning in a fixed concept” (Karabulut, 2021, p.165) and employ the chronological representation of time, which in this case becomes completely irrelevant to the real essence of time for the character. For this reason, the existentialists often use the “profile technique” (Bruneau, 1948, p. 69) standing for the endless multiplication and alteration of characters in the novel, “weaving a novel out of various simultaneous lives, with characters who pass each other

by without knowing one another and who all contribute to the atmosphere of a moment or a historical period (Sartre, 1946, p. 115).

Hence, the existentialist protagonist cannot be constructed by using literary devices from the preceding realist or naturalist literary periods, as the

existentialist believes in freedom, in the unpredictability of men's actions; human life, for him, cannot, must not be degraded into automatism. A character in a novel must vibrate with the same anxieties and "anguish" as the "man-in-the-world", must be, in the present tense, and not have been, in the past. (Bruneau, 1948, p. 67)

As a result, the existentialist hero is constructed through a rapidly changing series of commonplace actions, taking place in the "external and internal worlds [comprising] irregular spaces left between 'within' and 'without'" (Karabulut, 2021, p. 165), that are left up to our interpretation, much like it happens in real day-to-day life - the only tool pleasing existential writers who employed literary representation for their philosophy.

Though Albert Camus (1913-1960) always denied his ideological association with existentialism and was suspicious of labels of any sort by saying "No, I am not an existentialist. Sartre and I are always surprised to see our names linked (...)" (qtd. in Baker, 1988, p. 1993), he is widely considered to be the founder of existentialist philosophy alongside with Jean Paul Sartre, as well as a great French writer. Camus' literary works are well known for their deeply existential themes, such as absurdity of life, denunciation of God, constant encounters with death and a desperate craving for life, deep alienation, freedom of choice, anguish as an inseparable part of human existence, opposition of an individual to the society, facticity or the "absence of reason for any reality; in other words, the impossibility of providing an ultimate ground for the existence of any being" (Meillassoux, 2014, p. 8), which fosters man to resort to myths that provide seeming explanations for the givens of life. *The Fall* (1956), a novel written in the last decade of Camus' intellectual effervescence, consolidates the major principles of Camus' existential point of view by implying that it is useless to pretend that man, being a hypocritical, selfish, guilt ridden and fallen from grace creature, can change with the passage of time.

In his turn, the English novelist and poet William Golding (1911 - 1993) was a prominent figure in the field of existential literature. Since he served in the Royal Navy at the time of World War II, he was profoundly affected by wartime atrocities against humanity, which he depicted in detail in his novels. What is more, Golding had an opportunity to witness the brutalism of intellectuals propagating the power of reason that was used to create an intolerably defective world towards the middle of the twentieth century. For this reason, in his fiction Golding dealt

with the confines of human reason held accountable for the rise of the evil potential in human beings, as he believed that “what it is to be human, what it is to create and simultaneously to destroy” (Dickson, 1990, p. 36). The situation is no different in the novel *Free Fall* (1959) by William Golding where the author expresses himself as a novelist who is reacting to his universe and to the predicament of man.

The concept of the existentialist fall is a recurrent theme both in Albert Camus’ novel *The Fall* and William Golding’s *Free Fall*. While *The Fall* is the forefather of many existentialist novels of the second part of the twentieth century, portraying man strangled in a hopeless and nihilist struggle taking place in the new historical environment, *Free Fall*, in its turn, written three years later, managed to become one of the best specimens of fiction dealing with the concepts of human sin, free will, guilt, alienation and loss of freedom. As a consequence, the aim of this paper is to analyse and compare Camus’ *The Fall* and Golding’s *Free Fall* with each other in terms of their treatment of the concept of the existentialist fall.

1. The Fallen Prophets and Lawless Judges in Albert Camus’ *The Fall*

Albert Camus was always interested in the painful absurdity of life. For Camus, the central challenge of modernity was to oppose nihilism directly, to “accept life as it was given, persuaded as it is by an absurd sensibility and lacking transcendent values, while remaining committed to the possibility of meaningful leaving” (Sprintzen, 1988, p. 16). Camus was strongly determined to find a functioning solution to nihilism overwhelming human existence, which was the result of the horrifying experience of World War II. According to Camus, the real pessimism “lies not in acknowledging the injustice, cruelty and absurdity which govern the world, but in giving one’s assent to them” (Masters, 1975, p. 2). This was the central idea underlying Camus’ literary works. However, his novel *The Fall* (1956) astonished the readers as it was different in mood from his previous works. Camus’ last decade of literary activity was a time of reflection and re-evaluation, during which all the contradictions torturing his mind came to the fore alongside with the “hopeless conflict between his ideal and the new historical situation that was taking shape” (Braun, 1974, p. 205). Hence, it can be assumed that *The Fall* reflects the change Camus underwent through the years of his literary career.

As the title of the book suggests, *The Fall*, being a biblical metaphor, intimates a descent into a hell-like world presided by conflict and strife. Even without reading the book, one might predict that the novel builds on the theme of the fall from grace. *The Fall*, written as a sequence of monologues, comprises a haughty confession of a judge penitent Jean-Baptiste Clamence in a seedy bar, *Mexico City*, in Amsterdam over the course of five days. The novel begins with

Clamence elaborating on his past and his orderly life in Paris for the sole purpose of rediscovering his essence and the reasons for his fall. Being a rather well-known lawyer in Paris, he was “buoyed up by two sincere feelings: the satisfaction of being on the right side of the bar and an instinctive scorn for judges in general” (Camus, 1962, p. 15). Clamence’s Parisian life may be compared to Adam’s idyllic existence in the gardens of Eden “free of any duty, shielded equally from judgement as from penalty” (Camus, 1962, p. 22), which resulted in the fact that Clamence, satisfied with his own virtuousness and success saw himself superior to all:

I felt like a king’s son or a burning bush...I felt, I hesitate to admit, marked out. Personally marked out, among all, for that long and uninterrupted success. (Camus, 1962, p. 23)

As a man of generosity and warmth, Clamence provided care and support to poor and disabled people, which enabled him to utilize his innate gift of virtuousness. Thus, Clamence would give his seat to someone who deserved it or forfeit his taxi seat to someone in greater hurry than himself, which frequently instilled him with the feeling of sheer pleasure:

I enjoyed my nature to the fullest and we all know that therein lies happiness...good manners provided me with great delights. Consequently, I was considered generous and so I was. (Camus, 1962, p. 18)

As for Clamence’s association with the opposite sex, he exhibited no less success because his “relationship with women was natural, free, easy as the saying goes” (Camus, 1962, p. 43). Yet, towards the end of the novel the reader comes to the realization that Clamence was far from being in love with any of them. Being quite attractive, it was no difficult for him to seduce women. Yet, most of the time, he was guided by the selfish motive of making as much use as possible of any female having a close relationship with him. Just like a typical specimen of a modern man, Clamence attached more importance to physical qualities of women rather than to their emotional characteristics:

I looked merely for objects of pleasure and conquest...I was aided in by my looks: nature had been generous with me. I was considerably proud of this and derived many satisfactions there from. (Camus, 1962, p. 44)

Nevertheless, despite Clamence’s initial portrayal as a successful lawyer and a self-confident, helpful citizen, the character undergoes a deeply disturbing experience that shatters his framework of moral values and self-respect. While walking across the Pont des Arts between the Institute de France and the Louvre, Clamence was taken astray by a “mysterious burst of laughter” (Lottman, 1979, p. 562):

I had gone up on Pont des Arts...at that very moment a laugh burst out behind me...there was nobody there...I was aware of the rapid beating of my heart. (Camus, 1962, p. 30)

From that moment, provoked by continuing bursts of laughter, Clamence “begins to re-examine his previous image of himself and to plunge slowly downward into an abyss of total self-contempt” (Brée, 1962, p. 230). Yet, it is the instance of seeing a drowning woman from the bridge and displaying no visible attempts to save her that functions as a breaking moment upon the timeline of Clamence’s existence:

I went on after a moment’s hesitation...I heard the sound which, despite the distance, seemed dreadfully loud in the midnight silence of a body striking the water...I heard a cry, repeated several times...I wanted to run and yet I did not move an inch. (Camus, 1962, p. 52)

Being deeply shaken by the immobility and impotence to act, Clamence is surpassed by the feeling of utmost weakness, which makes him realize the absurdity of life he led until it was upturned by the cries of the drowning woman. Clamence is fully aware that it is too late to save the woman, so he does not even turn back to look at her. Hence, the physical fall of the woman evolves into Clamence’s spiritual fall:

I was trembling, I believe from cold and shock...I felt an irresistible weakness steal over me. I have forgotten what I thought then. Too late, too far...or something of that sort. (Camus, 1962, p. 52)

The instance is very indicative of the Biblical description of the fall from grace, or the Fall, which is associated with the episode when both Adam and Eve were evicted from the Garden of Eden after they had eaten the forbidden fruit: “You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace” (Galatians 5:4). In this excerpt from New Testament Paul the Apostle reminds the early Christian converts that if they pursue to justify themselves by pertaining to law, they will fall from the grace of God, as grace is not something to be earned through our efforts but is freely granted by God. Camus takes a similar stance in the novel by saying that “he who clings to a law does not fear the judgment that reinstates him in an order he believes in” (Camus, 1962, p. 57). Thus, to ‘earn’ grace by abiding to the law merely means disregarding God’s grace upon humans. In this connection, it is possible to trace Camus’ intention to question the Western belief in the power of pure reason by means of presenting a clear break between Jean-Baptist Clamence in the position of John the Baptist the Merciful (as his name and last name imply), Clamence the Lawyer or Clamence the God at the beginning of novel, exercising the rule of law, administering punishments and pronouncing verdicts, and the downfallen Clamence, who, just like the Biblical Adam, is shown no mercy by God and exiled from Eden for neglecting the momentousness of heavenly grace, or, to put it in existential terms, for sheer hypocrisy and mechanical superficiality permeating his existence. In this way, Camus brings to the fore the impairments of human condition in the post-WWII era, as “Clamence paralyzed on the bridge can be seen as an emblem of the

aristocratic or bourgeois intellectual, well-intentioned but too comfortable and narcissistic to be able to really commit himself" (Lazere, 1973, p. 187).

Clamence's life is shattered into pieces following his fall, as "every item of his life is reinterpreted in the light of this experience and found to be hypocritical" (Masters, 1975, p. 118). Indeed, Clamence realises that he helped people for the mere act of helping, not being guided by any sincere intentions. Similarly, he is completely dispassionate about the drowning woman simply because there was no one watching him. Clamence leaves Paris for Amsterdam, a city notorious for its debauchery, and arrives at a seedy ill-famed bar named Mexico City where he confides into a complete stranger. Ironically, just like the drowning woman, Clamence sinks into the aquatic milieu of Amsterdam, whose canals he likens to the concentric circles of hell. The dark and suffocating atmosphere of Amsterdam accentuates Clamence's predicament:

Have you noticed that Amsterdam's concentric canals resemble the circles of hell? The middle-class hell, of course, peopled with bad dreams. When one comes from the outside, as one gradually goes through those circles, life - and hence its crimes - becomes dense, darker. (Camus, 1962, p. 13)

In the lawless solitude of the *Mexico City* bar, Clamence discovers that there is no certainty in human life; nothing is obvious just like in a surrealist painting:

We are not sure; we cannot be sure. [...] So as long as you are alive, your case is doubtful; you have a right only to their scepticism [...] In order to cease being an doubtful case, one has to cease being, that is all. (Camus, 1962, p. 56)

This depicts the predicament of modern man who cannot be sure of anything in his life. In the obvious void of meaning Clamence takes oneself for a pseudo-prophet:

An empty prophet for shabby times, Elijah without a messiah, choked with fever and alcohol, my back up against this mouldy door, my finger raised toward a threatening sky, showering imprecations on lawless men. (Camus, 1962, p. 57)

Thus, just like the fallen angel Lucifer, Clamence undertakes the profession of judge-penitent aimed at judging people without law, as "the keenest of human torments is to be judged without a law [...] yet we are in that torment" (Camus, 1962, p. 57). Clamence rejects human innocence and serves as an enlightened supporter of man's ultimate slavery, since he does not envision himself as a man who defeated his former flaws, but as a man who invented a recipe to live with them all. Having recognised the wrongs in his life, Clamence is far from repenting and reforming oneself. Instead, he clings to the role of the judge penitent as a hypocritical instrument of personal justification, alleviating one's conscience and manipulating others for the rest of his existence.

To be able to justify himself and to transfer his personal guilt onto others Clamence devised an intricate four-step mechanism of administering penitent judgement. At the initial stage, instead of directly denouncing the sins of frequent visitors to *Mexico Bar*, Clamence cunningly reverses the process and condemns himself first, so as to avoid immediate condemnation:

Inasmuch as every judge someday ends up as a penitent, one had to travel the road in the opposite direction and practice the profession of penitent to be able to end up as a judge. (Camus, 1962, p. 66)

As Clamence narrates his story, he intermingles his own experience with that of his listeners and thus encourages his interlocutors surpass him in his sinful confession. Thus, at the second stage of judgement Clamence creates a portrayal not only of himself alone but a complex representation gulping down his listeners - a depiction of everyone and of no one at all:

I navigate skilfully, multiplying distinctions and digressions [...] I adapt my words to my listener and lead him to go on one better. I mingle what concerns me and what concerns others. I choose the features we have in common, the experiences we have endured together, the failings we share [...]. With all that I construct a portrait which is the image of all and of no one. A mask [...]. When the portrait is finished, I show it with great sorrow: "This, alas, is what I am!" The prosecutor's charge is finished. But at the same time the portrait I hold out to my contemporaries becomes a mirror. (Camus, 1962, p. 67)

By condemning himself, Clamence administers justice on his listeners to provoke them to judge themselves - the situation that provides him with the feeling of relief and temporary redemption. Thus, at the third stage, in the entirely Luciferian manner, Clamence states that "the more I accuse myself, the more I have a right to judge you. Even better, I provoke you into judging yourself, and this relieves me of that much of the burden" (Camus, 1962, p. 67). Similarly, the fourth and the final stage in Clamence's calculating mechanism of judgement is based on inviting the interlocutor to start his own confession. No matter how resilient the listener might be at the point of Clamence's invitation, his life never stays the same being poisoned by seeds of doubt sown by Clamence: "They don't forget it; they reflect. Sooner or later, half as a game and half out of emotional upset, they give up and tell all" (Camus, 1962, p. 68). With this diabolic formula, Clamence, just like a fallen angel, can grant himself almost everything, can exist with his flaws and enjoy his failings in plenty. This instils him with confidence about his ability to remain in control until the end by transmitting personal guilt and sins onto others with no sense of remorse:

You'll find me unchanged. And why should I change, since I have found the happiness that suits me? I have accepted duplicity instead of being upset about it. On the contrary, I have settled into it and found there the comfort I was looking for throughout life. I was wrong, after all, to tell you that the essential was to avoid judgment. The essential is being able to permit oneself everything, even if, from time to time, one has to profess vociferously one's own infamy. (Camus, 1962, p. 68)

At the end of the novel, Clamence makes the most shocking confession of all - that is, if he could live the same experience again, if "the young woman throws herself into water again, so that I may a second time have the chance of saving" (Camus, 1962, p. 108), he would not attempt to save her. Even the idea of diving into water makes him feel cold. "Brr...! The water is so cold! But let's not worry! It's too late now. It will always be too late. Fortunately!" (Camus, 1962, p. 108). So, with this last exclamation "Fortunately!" (Camus, 1962, p. 108), Camus underlines the fact that it is useless to pretend that men, depicted as hypocritical, selfish, guilt ridden and fallen from grace can ever change.

As a result, *The Fall* is neither a dwelling upon an individual character nor a portrait of Camus himself. It is, indeed, the description of the whole fallen generation that symbolises the merciless hypocrisy of modern man, while the quotation taken from the novel *The Hero of Our Time* (1840) by Mikhail Lermontov and used by Camus on the very first page of his novel is a sound proof of that, stating that the novel "is in fact a portrait but not of an individual; it is the aggregate of the vices of our whole generation in their fullest expression" (Camus, 1962, p. 5). Similarly, Clamence masterfully delineates the condition of modern man: "A single sentence will suffice for modern man: he fornicated and read papers" (Camus, 1962, p. 7). Therefore, the protagonist echoes Camus' deep existential pessimism about the future of mankind, populated by selfish, hypocritical and, therefore, fallen individuals, who have lost their innocence and trust in the meaning of rationalised existence, undermined by the absurdity of everyday life.

2. The Fall from Grace in William Golding's Novel *Free Fall*

William Golding was an author celebrated for his profound treatment of universal and essential human values. World War II and the following period of all-encompassing disillusionment with rationalism and humanistic beliefs of the previous century instilled Golding with the desire to verbalize the truth about the predicament of man in the light of the existentialist philosophy. Just like the founder of existentialism Albert Camus in *The Fall* (1956), William Golding wrote the novel *Free Fall* (1959) to expand on the concept of human "fall" through the course of one's individual life. The novel serves as a "highly sophisticated inquiry into how a particular psychic projection, called "Samuel Mountjoy," confers meaning on his existence: how he interprets his past and assimilates the events of his life into patterns of significance which embody that past as well as prefigure a future" (O'Donnell, 1980, p. 83). Golding begins the novel by making Sammy Mountjoy, its main character, retroactively to discover the instance when he lost his freedom: "When did I lose my freedom? (Golding, 1991, p. 5). The loss of freedom and the

human “fall” are events of profound similarity, which Sammy Montjoy, “predestined by his ironical name to descend into sorrow rather than mount in joy, finds it very hard to pinpoint, however hard he tries” (Monod, 1985, p. 136). The fact underlines the idea that the fall of man is strongly linked to the workings of one’s free will, feelings of responsibility and guilt.

The novel *Free Fall* portrays Sammy as an artist discarding all systems in his determination to comprehend himself and his universe: “I have hung all systems on the wall like a row of useless hats. They do not fit” (Golding, 1991, p. 5). The reason for this denial might lie in the protagonist’s name - Sammy Mountjoy, which symbolizes the conflict between the character’s “spiritual vision and cross sensuality” (Dickson, 1990, p. 61) primary to Sammy’s inner suffering. Just like Jean-Baptiste Clamence in Camus’ *The Fall*, Sammy Mountjoy possesses a name of dual nature. His name is based on the combination of the uncomparable, namely the reference to the Biblical prophet Samuel – the last judge and the prophet of God, anointing the first king of Israel and inspiring believers to dispose of false idols in order to worship one true God, and that of mons veneris or the pubic mound, considered to be an erogenous pleasure zone and exceedingly eroticized in numerous cultures.

At the beginning of the novel the reader finds Sammy in prison held by Germans. In captivity, he traces his life back to the point he lost his freedom and recalls his childhood, while Sammy’s overall progress towards self-knowledge happens upon his release from prison. Only after being exposed to torture can Sammy understand his moral failure in the past and start examining it. As a result, Sammy attempts to give some direction to his present by conjuring up fragments from the past. The character’s earliest memories take him to his childhood in Kentish slum, Rotten Row, which represents the innocent world of Sammy’s childhood. This “Garden of England” (Golding, 1991, p. 18) is ironically a garden of Eden to Sammy Mountjoy, at that time a “guiltless ragamuffin wandering in paradise” (Dickson, 1990, p. 61). Sammy’s fragmented memory of his past is depicted through the dualism governing his childhood. Sammy is an illegitimate child brought up by a good-natured mother: “What was my dad, Ma? Let him never know” (Golding, 1991, p. 13). The character of Sammy’s mother, in her turn, is presented through an endless list of binary oppositions:

She terrifies but she does not frighten.

She neglects but she does not warp or exploit.

She is violent without malice or cruelty.

She is adult without patronage or condescension.

She is warm without possessiveness.

But, above all, she is there. (Golding, 1991, p. 14)

Similarly, Sammy's childhood friends, Evie and Maggie, are completely different from each other. While Elvie, as a dominant figure, is a liar and a fantasist, Maggie is more introverted. As Sammy gets older, the dualism represented by Evie and Maggie evolves into the dualism of between his male friends Philip and Johnny. Sammy acts in a boyish manner with Johnny when they attempt to have a night excursion to an airport and to enter a private estate. Unlike Johnny, Philip is a coward disguising in Sammy's shadow.

Sammy's next collection of binary oppositions includes his two teachers. One is Rowena Pringle, who, just like her surname, signifying a "tingling and annoying action" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), is religious, dogmatic, unsympathetic and fond of telling Biblical stories of man's creation. The other one is Nick Shales - a scientist and positivist, who, just like his surname, standing for a finely stratified "grey rock, usually formed from clay that has become hard, that breaks easily into thin layers" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.), refuses to believe anything he cannot prove using the rock of science, notwithstanding the fact that science and reason are nothing more than a collection of easily breakable postulates. At first, Sammy finds Nick's world "cool and reasonable" (Golding, 1991, p. 143):

I chose Nick. For this reason, truth seems to be unattainable. I know myself to be irrational because rationalist belief dawned in me, and I had no basis for it in logic or calm thought. People are the walls of our room, not philosophies. (Golding, 1991, p. 217)

However, later he decides that Miss Pringle understands human essence in a better way in the world where humans presume that "good and evil can be decided by the majority vote" (Gindin, 1988, p. 45). Yet, at a later stage Sammy realizes that it is impossible to merge the "physical" and the "spiritual", exemplified by Nick and Miss Pringle. Hence, the multitude of dualisms pervading the novel emphasizes the fact that existential living is governed by irrationalism and impossibility to grasp the meaning of outside reality. For this reason, it becomes impossible for the characters to fully perceive one's motives and the logic behind one's deeds.

At this point of the novel, Sammy attempts to detect the point he lost his freedom. Yet, neither his infancy, nor his childhood pronounce him guilty of any crimes. The young Sammy is "innocent of guilt, unconscious of innocence; happy, therefore, and unconscious of happiness" (Golding, 1991, p. 53). This is the reason why Sammy must look somewhere else to locate the moment of his fall. As a result, he turns to Beatrice, his corporal love that ironically echoes Dante Alighieri's platonic love for his muse Beatrice di Folco Portinari. Just like Dante, Sammy draws a picture of Beatrice while at school. The picture is so highly praised that none of his later paintings can get a similar acclaim. In opposition to Dante, Sammy's tragedy lies in the

fact that he confuses, as Dante never did, his feeling of love for Beatrice with the carnal possession of her body:

I want you, I want all of you, not just cold kisses and walks—I want to be with you and in you and on you and round you—I want fusion and identity—I want to understand and be understood—oh God, Beatrice, Beatrice, I love you—I want to be you! (Golding, 1991, p. 71)

As can be seen, Sammy goes beyond adoring Beatrice - he possesses her and destroys her, which marks the instance of his initial fall and loss of freedom. Although the relationship with Beatrice lasts for two years, Sammy does not have any regrets when starting an affair with Taffy, whose name is reminiscent of the sensuous sweetness of a toffy candy – a sexually liberated daughter of a Communist and a complete counterpart of Beatrice:

What was I to do about her? What could I do? Give Taffy up? Presumably that would be the standard reply of the moralist. But was I now to live the rest of my life with Beatrice, knowing all the time that I was in love with Taffy? (Golding, 1991, p. 85)

In this connection, Sammy selfishly believes that nothing is certain about his existence, “what has to be cared for is the quiet and the pleasure of this sultan” (Golding, 1991, p. 128). Yet, despite the egoism he displayed in the past, at the instance of narration Sammy feels guilty for the wrongs he has done to Beatrice. Indeed, the passive character of Beatrice was constantly victimized by Sammy - her life broken, first, by his possessing her and, afterwards, by his leaving her. It is only at the end of World War II that Sammy sees Beatrice for the last time, but this time in mental hospital where she is kept coercively. Seeing Beatrice in such a pitiful situation makes Sammy realize that it is too late to correct the harm he has done in the past, which renders him as a specimen of a man “fallen” from grace at his own “free” will.

The literal moment when Sammy loses his independence is revealed when he makes a confession to a friend by disclosing that he has sacrificed everything to possess Beatrice:

What is important to you?

“Beatrice I for.”

She thinks you depraved already. She dislikes you.

“If I want something enough I can always get it provided I am willing to make the appropriate sacrifice.”

What will you sacrifice?

“Everything.” (Golding, 1991, p. 155)

Thus, the suggestion, the resolution, the readiness to sacrifice everything to attain his intention, is a sign of “human pride and egoism, the conscious human impulse to abandon concern for others, freedom of action, salvation itself, for the satisfaction of one’s own” (Redpath, 1986, p.

73). Sammy cements the instance of his fall and passes a verdict upon the loss of personal freedom by saying:

Guilty am I; therefore wicked I will be. If I cannot find the brilliant crimes to commit then at least I will claim to have committed them. Guilt comes before the crime and can cause it. (Golding, 1991, p. 152)

Thus, Sammy constructs one of the many possible narratives of himself and “realizes that, at any given time, he lives in several worlds at once” (O’Donnell, 1980, p. 85). Still, and this is the other side of existentialist consciousness, in order to survive in the meaningless commotion of the fallen post-WWII era, Sammy senses the need to do something, the need to outline a map of actions, a “route once taken, which point the way to the guilt he feels” (O’Donnell, 1980, p. 85).

Yet, it is not just Sammy who undergoes the fall from grace, but also the character of Doctor Halde – a hellish Gestapo inquisitor, interrogating Sammy in the Nazi prison in the course of World War II on the subject of a planned escape from the concentration camp. Doctor Halde, a Nazi psychologist, exposes Sammy to a mental torture by incarcerating him in a broom-closet submerged in complete darkness, which might be interpreted as a symbol of the impenetrable darkness of Sammy’s fallen soul. Doctor Halde has no warmth, no human emotions and no compassion. Even his voice is the “foreign voice, nationless, voice of a divorced area, a voice that might be conveyed better by the symbols of maths than the printed words” (Golding, 1991, p. 135). Although Doctor Halde possesses little human features, he is, nevertheless, accurate in his analysis of Sammy truly existentialist predicament. Doctor Halde accentuates Sammy’s total loss among intellectual ideas, among dualisms and binary oppositions governing his life, which makes him belittle Sammy to the level of animals:

There is no health in you, Mr. Mountjoy. You do not believe in anything enough to suffer for it or be glad. [...] You possess yourself. Intellectual ideas, even the idea of loyalty to your country sit on you loosely. [...] Oh, yes, you are capable of a certain degree of friendship and a certain degree of love, but nothing to mark you out from the ants or the sparrows. (Golding, 1991, p. 96)

In this connection, both Sammy and Doctor Halde comprise an insightful representation of a modern individual whose wickedness does not originate from an inborn lack of spiritual empathy, or from a misinterpretation of his inner self. Rather, it stems from his free fall or “deliberate choice to sacrifice his spiritual capacity and to serve only his reasoning faculty” (Baker, 1988, p. 64). The last lines of the novel - “The Herr Doctor does not know about peoples” (Golding, 1991, p. 168) are symbolical of both, the Rationalist excellence to deal with people in terms of clinical treatment, and the Rationalist impotence to become aware of human

nature as it is and its basic needs. Hence, Sammy's imposition of his ego onto Beatrice is analogous to Helde's imposition of his ego onto Sammy, which is nothing more than evil stemming from a creature that has undergone the fall.

As a result, William Golding's novel *Free Fall* accentuates the existentialist dilemma of the modern man that is characterised by the "lack of stability and even permanence of human personality" (Monod, 1985, p. 136). Golding achieves this through his narrative technique, in which the events are mixed among fourteen chapters. Thus, modern man is trapped within the limits of the existentialist predicament, because "what men believe is a function of what they are; and what they are is in part what has happened to them" (Golding, 1991, p. 140). Having accomplished many misdeeds and having undergone the subsequent fall, modern man loses his capacity to make free choices and to disentangle himself from the net of existentialist meaninglessness. Sammy states that "I had lost my power to choose. I had given away my freedom [...] What I was, I had become" (Golding, 1991, p. 100), emphasising the fact that evil and unhappiness are unavoidable in the modern world succeeding the human fall.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The concept of existentialist fall, human hypocrisy, disillusionment with the rational forces shaping the magnitude of modern existence, loss of free will and elusiveness of ultimate meaning are the pivotal themes both in Albert Camus' novel *The Fall* and William Golding's novel *Free Fall*. However, not just the themes, but also the narrative techniques employed in the novels have many features in common. Both novels are narrated in the first person, which brings to the fore the characters' awareness of the reasons and the aftermath of their fall. In both novels protagonists cross-examine themselves. In *Free Fall*, Sammy attempts to respond to the question "When did I lose my freedom?" (Golding, 1991, p. 8), which might be equated to his loss of innocence, while in *The Fall* Clamence writes in order to discover who he really is and, hence, to justify his fall from grace.

In both novels the protagonists examine themselves through evoking memories from their past in the form of monologues. Clamence recollects his time as a successful lawyer in Paris. Likewise, Sammy recalls his childhood and infancy when he felt happy and innocent. Both protagonists are engaged in detecting the exact point they lost their innocence. Interestingly enough, these points are directly related to their relationship with women. In this way, both Camus and Golding undermine the commonly accepted dogma about woman being the primal instigator of the human fall. The authors deconstruct this premise by putting the blame on any individual submersed in hypocrisy, superficiality and sin, be it Clamence, Sammy or Doctor

Halde. Unlike Sammy, whose fall takes place because of the act of commission, Clamence's fall results from the act of omission. From the moment Clamence neglected to dive into the river Seine in order to save the drowning woman, he was haunted by the failure of nerve. As a result, just like the woman who drowned in Paris, Clamence drowns in the hell-like circles of Amsterdam. Sammy, in his turn, lives in the district named Paradise Hill, presumably removed from the Rotton Row of his birth; but like Clamence, he exists in a personal hell compiled of personal guilt.

The process of cross-examination makes the protagonists aware of the complete absurdity of their lives. In Clamence's case, he does nothing to save the drowning woman which brings his life into pieces. Clamence questions his morality and becomes aware of his fall from grace. To somehow justify himself, Clamence attempts to transmit his guilt onto the whole humanity. Likewise, Sammy is conscious of his guilt before Beatrice, which he attributes to the overall post-Nazi guilty state of humanity. In this connection, Sammy states that humans torture each other because of our imperfections and innate proneness to fall:

Do you not see how our imperfections force us to torture each other? Of course you do! The innocent and the wicked live in one world [...] But we are neither the innocent nor the wicked. We are the guilty. We fall down. We crawl on hands and knees. We weep and tear each other. (Golding, 1991, p. 167)

In a similar manner, Clamence delineates human fate through his portrayal of a prison cell "not high enough to stand up nor yet wide enough to lie down" (Camus, 1962, p. 53), while Sammy imagines that he has to "keep lifting [his] chin in order to look over the likeness of a wall" (Golding, 1991, p. 111) at the time of his interrogation by Doctor Halde.

Both novels underline the impossibility to change the past in their final scenes. In *The Fall*, Clamence states that "it is too late" (Camus, 1962, p. 70) to go back and to save the drowned woman. Similarly, during Sammy's visit of the mental hospital where Beatrice is confined, Beatrice pisses on the ground, thus, emphasizing the impossibility of changing her predicament:

"What I mean is: can you cure her?"
More stuff. More quacking.
"Look, Kenneth. Can she be cured?"
"In the present state of our knowledge - "
"Can she be cured?"
"No." (Golding, 1991, p. 161)

Therefore, the protagonists become aware of the existential absurdity of modern condition that cannot be altered due to one's loss of free will resulting from actions committed in the past.

Thus, the characters become trapped in the ambiguous, yet pushing world where one's personality is plunged into the jumble of guilt and ambiguity.

As a consequence, the concept of fall is a major theme both in Albert Camus' *The Fall*, the forefather of many existentialist novels written in the twentieth century, and William Golding's illustrious novel *Free Fall*. When these two novels are compared to each other in terms of falling from grace, both have many common characteristics. That is, as the protagonists evoke their memories of the past and find that it is impossible to define and complete the real-life selves, they realize their moral failure and develop the feeling of guilt which they later expand onto the whole mankind. Interestingly enough, despite the outspoken tragedy of the main characters in *The Fall* and *The Free Fall*, both Albert Camus and William Golding believe that though, "this world has no ultimate meaning [...] something in it has meaning, and that is man, because he is the only creature to insist on having one" (qtd. in Masters, 1975, p. 2), so as not be misled by some vague promises offered by myths or divine entities. As a result, through a highly dramatic style, imagery, and irony both novels provide a comprehensive exploration of the concept of the existential fall and aim to voice the predestination of ordinary people "with the gift of vivid and persuasive expression" (Masters, 1975, p. 2).

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