

*Absurdity and Revolt in the works of Georges Duhamel: A  
Camusian reading*

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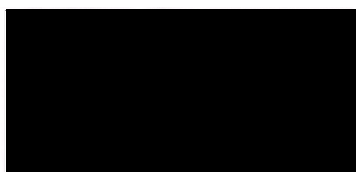
Thank you to my partner Sues for her grace and patience.

I must also mention here my daughter Remy, whose death on Christmas Eve 2005, during the course of this thesis, confirmed for me the absurdity of this world, and crystallised my own revolt. To her, I dedicate this thesis.

***CERTIFICATION***

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not been submitted for any prior degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis and all sources used have been acknowledged.



### ***ABSTRACT***

A reading of the works of Duhamel in light of those of Camus suggests a strong influence on the latter by the former. By the time Camus began his literary career, Duhamel was already a well-established and respected author, with whom most educated French people would have been familiar.

This thesis posits the idea that, long before Camus named the absurd in 1942, Duhamel had already explored many of the themes that would form the subject matter for *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (1942) and *L'Homme révolté* (1951). Not only are these two essays crucial in understanding the evolution of Camus' thought; they can be shown to be essential road maps for identifying themes of absurdity and revolt in the works of the earlier writer; Duhamel.

Features common to the protagonists of both authors — the gratuitous acts committed by both Salavin and Meursault and their ambivalent responses — suggest a strong link between them. If Meursault's actions can be explained by *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, then perhaps Duhamel's Salavin and Laudrel can be illuminated by the very same essay. If Duhamel's Laurent Pasquier embodies some of the qualities of Dr Rieux, then perhaps he might also be considered a rebel in what would become the 'Camusian' sense.

Themes of absurdity and revolt permeate Duhamel's entire literary output; while Duhamel's Salavin and Camus' Meursault are quite different personalities, they both follow a path infused with a sense of the meaninglessness of existence, tinged with nihilism and which culminates in an ethical rebellion in the face of the certainty of death.

It is these convergences, similarities and parallels which form the basis of this project and which, to date, have not been thoroughly explored by critics. In other words, there has been no detailed comparative analysis of the works of these two authors. It is this gap in the critical canon which this thesis seeks to rectify.

**NOTE ON ABBREVIATIONS**

The following abbreviations have been used throughout for the works of Duhamel and Camus.

**CAMUS**

*ER* *L'Exil et le royaume.*

*EE* *L'Envers et l'endroit.*

*HR* *L'Homme révolté.*

*LMH* *La Mort heureuse.*

*LMS* *Le Mythe de Sisyphe.*

*PH* *Le Premier Homme.*

**DUHAMEL**

*AA* *L'Archange de l'aventure.*

*BF* *Biographie de mes fantômes.*

*CCO* *Le combat contre les ombres.*

*CF* *Civilisation française.*

*CL* *Le Club des Lyonnais.*

*CM* *Confession de minuit.*

*CP* *Cri des profondeurs.*

*CPN* *Cécile parmi nous.*

*CSA* *Chronique des saisons amères.*

*DB* *Le Désert de Bièvres.*

*DH* *Deux Hommes.*

*DL* *Défense des Lettres.*

<i>DN</i>	<i>Discours aux nuages.</i>
<i>ET</i>	<i>Entretiens dans le Tumulte</i>
<i>FMJ</i>	<i>Fables de mon jardin.</i>
<i>IA</i>	<i>Inventaire de l'abîme.</i>
<i>IG</i>	<i>Images de la Grèce.</i>
<i>JS</i>	<i>Journal de Salavin.</i>
<i>LEE</i>	<i>Les Espoirs et les épreuves.</i>
<i>LHA</i>	<i>Les Hommes abandonnés.</i>
<i>LLA</i>	<i>Le Livre de l'amertume.</i>
<i>LNO</i>	<i>La Nuit d'orage.</i>
<i>LPJ</i>	<i>Le Prince Jaffar.</i>
<i>LPM</i>	<i>La Possession du monde.</i>
<i>MGB</i>	<i>Mémorial de la guerre blanche.</i>
<i>MP</i>	<i>Manuel du Protestataire.</i>
<i>NH</i>	<i>Le Notaire du Havre.</i>
<i>NSE</i>	<i>Nouvelles du sombre empire.</i>
<i>NSJ</i>	<i>La Nuit de la Saint-Jean.</i>
<i>PA</i>	<i>La Pesée des âmes.</i>
<i>PF</i>	<i>Positions françaises.</i>
<i>PJP</i>	<i>La Passion de Joseph Pasquier.</i>
<i>QF</i>	<i>Querelles de famille.</i>
<i>RMI</i>	<i>Remarques sur les mémoires imaginaires.</i>
<i>SDP</i>	<i>Les Sept Dernières Plaies.</i>
<i>SJH</i>	<i>Suzanne et les jeunes hommes.</i>
<i>SV</i>	<i>Semailles au vent.</i>
<i>SVF</i>	<i>Scènes de la vie future.</i>

<i>TQM</i>	<i>Tel qu'en lui-même.</i>
<i>TR</i>	<i>Le Temps de la recherche.</i>
<i>VM</i>	<i>Vie des martyrs.</i>
<i>VPP</i>	<i>Le Voyage de Patrice Periot.</i>
<i>VTP</i>	<i>Vue de la terre promise.</i>



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