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THE CURIOUS CASE OF LE CLÉZIO’S ADAM POLLO: SEARCHING FOR AN EXISTENTIAL CURE FOR THE CLINICAL DISORDER OF CONSUMERISM

ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study is to explore J.M.G. Le Clézio’s complex and experimental first novel Le Procès-Verbal (The Interrogation) from a new, interdisciplinary perspective. Specifically, this investigation attempts to answer the following multifaceted questions: (i) Is Adam Pollo truly insane? (ii) How objective are the criteria used by medical professionals to evaluate insanity? (iii) What is the origin of the protagonist’s alleged madness? (iv) Does the main character suffer from the clinical disorder of consumerism? (v) Where does Adam Pollo turn in order to find a cure for his immense existential anguish?

KEYWORDS: J.M.G. Le Clézio, mental illness, hegemony, social control, consumerism

0. INTRODUCTION

Much has been written about Le Clézio’s first novel Le procès-verbal for which he received the coveted Prix Renaudot in 1963. The purpose of this study is to probe the protagonist’s alleged insanity by exploring the veritable reasons for his internment in a psychiatric facility at the end of this complex and nuanced text. This interdisciplinary investigation will examine the growing body of research which unequivocally suggests that excessive consumption promoted by the pervasive ideology of consumerism diffused by the mainstream media is a clinical disorder. If Adam Pollo indeed suffers from this medical condition, what are the symptoms that render this classification possible? Moreover, how does this early leclézian character attempt to heal himself from cancerous, materialistic impulses? The final section of this essay will consider whether his disquieting actions are misinterpreted as a form of mental illness by the general public. Is Adam Pollo truly ‘mad,’ or is he merely trying to liberate himself from artificial simulacra and to (re)-attach

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himself to primordial cosmic forces to which every organism on this planet is inextricably linked? Is Adam Pollo’s insanity an elaborate metaphor for modern consumer republics whose alienated citizens are now ‘sick’ on a global scale?

1. CONTEXTUALISATION OF LE PROCES-VERBAL

Described by the author himself in the preface as a “Roman-Jeu” or a “Roman-Puzzle,” *Le procès-verbal* is an experimental text that challenges the reader. In stark contrast to a traditional novel that provides most of the answers, *Le procès-verbal* is a “histoire à trous” ‘story with holes’ (Roussel-Gillet:117, my trans.). The extremely unreliable nature of the information provided by the narrator makes it impossible to ascertain whether Adam Pollo “sortait de l’armée ou de l’asile” ‘has just left the army or a mental home’ (10; viii).¹ As the narrator openly confesses, “Il n’y avait rien, dans la composition même de ces choses horribles, qui lui indiquât de façon certaine s’il sortait de l’asile ou de l’armée” ‘There was nothing in the actual structure of these horrible things to show him definitely whether he had just come out of a mental home or out of the army’ (44; 35). This fundamental question to which no definitive answer exists will continue to haunt the reader throughout the narrative. Furthermore, this inherent limitation renders a psychiatric diagnosis even more problematic given that we have a rather incomplete picture comprised of isolated fragments that cannot be objectively verified.

2. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH RELATED TO THE NEFARIOUS EFFECTS OF CONSUMERISM

Nonetheless, Adam Pollo does display several symptoms that could help shed some light on this multifaceted issue. Specifically, the tortured protagonist fits the clinical profile of a victim of the nefarious effects of

¹This citation comes from Le Clézio’s aforementioned preface. Moreover, numerous critics have examined the influence of the *nouveau roman* that is evident in the author’s early writings.
consumerism developed by contemporary researchers such as Tim Kasser, Richard Ryan, and Russell Belk. Given that many studies suggest that consumerism has replaced traditional value systems which emphasized the importance of family, friends, and other relationships, the act of consumption itself often appears to function in society as an existential remedy for the human condition. However, impulsively buying all of the latest gadgets in a misguided effort to maximize happiness seems to be a rather ineffective cure for projecting ontological significance upon the absurdity of human existence.

Despite the ubiquity of the seductive messages urging us to consume our way to self-actualization and inner contentment, empirical studies have proven that compulsive compulsion is a poor existential “coping strategy” (Arndt, et al 2004: 227). Summarizing the findings of their recent investigation, Tim Kasser and Richard Ryan affirm, “the data suggest that, relatively speaking, the desire for money does not necessarily bring happiness; instead, too much emphasis on this aspect of the American dream may be an orgasmic nightmare” (p.421). Although many other researchers concur with Kasser and Ryan’s conclusions related to the ephemeral nature of the ecstasy derived from acquiring a material possession, the unfounded notion that an automatic correlation exists between happiness and objects of consumption still continues to saturate our myriad of digital screens. Additionally, as Marsha Richins (1994) underscores, the ideology of consumerism compels the modern subject to define himself almost entirely by what he owns.\(^2\) Although consumer products and the symbolic fantasies that they represent incessantly fail to deliver on their grandiose promises of a life of luxury, we have nowhere else to turn given that traditional virtues have been completely effaced.

\(^2\)Specifically, Marsha Richins (1994) decries the fact that “In Western societies, people consume more than needed for subsistence or comfort, and one reason for this consumption is the meaning that it provides” (p.532).
3. ADAM POLLO’S PROBELAMATIC AND COMPLEX INNER QUEST

Indeed, it is in this context in which Adam Pollo’s “quête de l’être” ‘inner quest’ should be understood (Fayet 1989: 187; my trans.). In the wake of the destruction of any meaningful values that do positively correlate to ontological significance and contentment, is the protagonist’s problematic search condemned to failure from its inception? Is there any space that is free from the taint of consumerism and its shallow ideals? Regardless of the answer to these questions, *Le procès-verbal* is undoubtedly an existential novel in which a profoundly distraught protagonist seeks an existential remedy to alleviate his immense anguish. Offering a similar analysis as Odile Fayet, Denis Bachand (2000) explains that *Le procès-verbal* is a “roman initiatique” ‘novel of apprenticeship’ which “tente de donner sens à l’aventure de vivre” ‘attempts to give meaning to the experience of being alive’ (85;86; my trans.). Confirming Fayet and Bachand’s interpretations of this complex novel, Bronwen Martin asserts, “Adam Pollo, is portrayed as suffering from amnesia, and his search for identity will emerge as the core theme of the book” (2005: 3). Moreover, Martin links this existential quest to a “disaffection with consumer society” that ultimately motivates the protagonist to search for meaning elsewhere (p.5). According to contemporary researchers, this ontological distress is a symptom of the clinical disorder of consumerism.

4. UNDERSTANDING THE PROTAGANIST’S DESTABILIZING, ONTOLOGICAL NAUSEA

Two crucial scenes that transpire in shopping centers concretize the protagonist’s displeasure with modern consumer society. These episodes also reveal the origins of Adam Pollo’s existential trauma. Underscoring the searing pain experienced by the protagonist in these menacing spaces, Geraldine Mcilwaine (2010) explains, “When he enters the department store, Adam is overwhelmed by the lights, the noise and the products on sale; as a result he suffers from hyperesthesia, leaves the store and vomits” (p.131). Not only does this poignant scene foreshadow themes that the
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The author will develop more fully in *La Guerre* (1970) and *Les Géants* (1973), but it also highlights an original aspect of Le Clézio’s early existential works such as *Le procès-verbal*, *La fièvre*, and *Le déluge*. Although many of the author’s writings from the so-called first cycle bear the stamp of the previously mentioned literary movements, Le Clézio is perhaps the only ‘existential’ writer to expose consumerism itself as a source of anguish.

In a passage to which Mcilwaine refers that is reminiscent of Hyperpolis in *Les Géants*, Adam Pollo appears to suffer from a sort of ontological nausea induced by the consumerist messages that incessantly bombard his senses. As the narrator elucidates, “à l’intérieur de ce magasin horrible, il était étourdi par le bruit et par les lumières […] et la nausée hésitait dans sa gorge” ‘(inside of) this horrible shop; he was dazed by the noise and the lights […] and a hesitant nausea lingered in his throat’ (82-83; 74). These physical symptoms are an outward manifestation of the protagonist’s inner turmoil. In a drastically altered planetary landscape that has taken human civilization “un million d’années à conquérir” ‘a million years to conquer,’ how can the modern subject live authentically and discover his or her place in the universe in relatively complete isolation from it (83; 74)? In other words, our attempts at appropriating and commodifying every last parcel of the biosphere have not provided any lasting solace from the human condition or any type or real meaning. In *Le procès-verbal*, Adam Pollo derives no enduring pleasure from the commercial objects that Western society valorizes fabricated from the earth’s limited natural resources. Struck by the epiphany that impulsively ‘mastering’ and consuming other forms of matter is yet another momentary distraction from our impending death and the apparent absurdity of existence, the protagonist rejects the notion that happiness can be purchased in a department store. Consumerism is not a cure for

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3 Numerous scholars divide Le Clézio’s work into various cycles. See Mootoosamay, Vidoolah. “‘Maurice est si loin qu’on ne peut qu’en rêver’: Le Paradis perdu de J.M.G. Le Clézio entre mythe et mémoire.” *AltreModernità* 7: 112-125.

4 I am employing this term in the Sartrian sense.

5 Similar to other existential protagonists, Adam Pollo often contemplates suicide and all of the various scenarios that could ultimately lead to his untimely demise. See pages 114-121 from *Le Procès-verbal*. 
the existential emptiness experienced by Adam Pollo, it is one of the root causes of his trauma.

Adam Pollo’s cerebral nausea concretizes the unmitigated failure of hollow consumerist ideals to maximize contentment and self-actualization. In clinical terms, is Adam Pollo a ‘recovering consumerist’ for whom impulsive consumption is no longer an effective coping strategy whatsoever? Or, did he ever find any existential significance from the act of consumption itself? Given the fragmented nature of the narrative, the reader will never have a definitive answer to these questions. However, it is evident that the protagonist will flee consumer society and its seductive commercial signs in search of a more authentic existence.

5. THE PROTAGONIST’S EXTREME SOCIAL ISOLATION AND PROFOUND NARCISSISM

Although Le procès-verbal is a complex, experimental work that ultimately offers more questions than answers, the main character exhibits other symptoms in addition to ontological nausea that seem to suggest that he has yet to heal from the mental disorder of consumerism. Numerous researchers such as Keith Campbell and Marsha Richins have noted that individuals that suffer from this illness stemming from the exploitative ideology of consumption lack the capacity to have meaningful relationships with others. Since the modern subject is constantly immersed in the hyper-real in Baudrillardian terms, a menacing realm whose artificial simulations incessantly disseminate one

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6 I am employing this expression in the Sartrian sense as well.
7 The second episode which takes place in an electronics store will be analyzed in a later section of this essay.
message (i.e. the accumulation of material objects is all that matters), human values have been entirely eroded. For this reason, “materialists place less emphasis on interpersonal relationships” (Richins 1994:523) because they “feel alienated and disconnected from others” (Campbell 2011:383).

Indeed, is there a better example of this profound disconnection to which Richins and Campbell refer than Le Clézio’s Adam Pollo? In a calculated effort to make everyone think that he is deceased, this tormented protagonist confesses that he tossed his motorcycle into the sea before moving in to an isolated, abandoned house. As the narrator explains, “Quand j’ai décidé d’habiter ici, j’ai pris tout ce qu’il fallait, comme si j’allais à la pêche, je suis revenu la nuit, et puis j’ai balancé ma moto à la mer. Comme ça, je me faisais passer pour mort” ‘When I decided to live here I took all I needed, as though I were going fishing, I came back in the night, and then I toppled my motorbike into the sea. Like that I gave the impression I was dead’ (13; 3). Why does Adam Pollo intentionally attempt to deceive people into believing that he is dead? Incapable of identifying or bonding with other human beings, the author’s first anti-hero simply wants to be left to his own devices. In her analysis of Le Procès-verbal, Isabelle Roussel-Gillet affirms, “Adam se solidarise de lui-même, comme il s’est auparavant détaché de tout groupe: famille, couple, société […]” ‘Adam pursues his own interests as if he has detached himself from any group: family, couple, society’ (115; my trans.). Summarizing his complete emotional detachment from his family, friends, and everyone else, the narrator accurately describes himself as a “monstre de solitude” ‘monster of solitude’ that rarely leaves his clandestine residence on the periphery of society (15; my trans.).

Although the protagonist periodically receives visits from a woman named Michèle that he once unsuccessfully tried to rape, their relationship is devoid of any real sentiment. Adam Pollo exploits this enigmatic lover for money and sex. In addition to borrowing cash from Michèle and using her for momentary erotic gratification, the protagonist manipulates her into running errands for him in town. The narrator does not care about Michèle at all but he tolerates spending time with her given that this disturbing relationship has instrumental value. Michèle not only
offers a path for him to satisfy his sexual urges, but she also helps him to avoid contact with other people. If this young woman is willing to provide the basic necessities that he needs for sustenance, Adam Pollo can effectively evade everyone to the greatest extent possible. Placed in this context, the nausea that the protagonist experiences in the department store makes sense. No possible justification exists for his aberrant behavior including his violent tendencies, yet Adam Pollo is a victim himself whose psyche has been fractured by the consumer society from which he is despondently longing to escape. His self-imposed isolation corresponds precisely to the clinical profile developed by scholars such as Richins and Campbell.

Not only is the protagonist unable to connect with Michèle on a deeper level, but he also has few ties with friends or family. Specifically, Adam’s stormy relationship with his parents is quite revealing. Reaching out to her son in a last-ditch effort to establish a real rapport, Denise Pollo writes in a letter, “Il faudra que tu formes un cercle d’amis, d’affection, sans quoi tu souffriras et tu risqueras d’en pârir le premier […] J’attends dès demain une lettre de toi, une longue et gentille lettre. Ecris-moi surtout ce dont tu as besoin” ‘You must form a circle of friends, where you can find affection; otherwise you’ll be unhappy and you will probably be the first to suffer for it […] I shall look forward to a letter from you tomorrow, a long, friendly one. Be sure and tell me what you need’ (186; 182). Although the narrator’s cold, indifferent reply to his mother could indeed be interpreted through the lens of Sartre and Laing’s theories related to the “repression exerted by the family unit as the cause of mental illness” as noted by Bronwen Martin (25), Adam’s lack of any emotional response to his mother’s rending plea could also be indicative of a genuine disorder. Is the protagonist one of the many casualties of a consumer society in which traditional virtues have been eradicated by materialistic ideology? In a global environment in which nothing else matters besides the pursuit of monetary wealth at all costs, is it really surprising that the narrator’s relationships with friends and family have fallen by the wayside? Moreover, research suggests that this affective disconnection is a pervasive issue that has afflicted many other individuals since the inception of what the historian Lizabeth Cohen terms ‘consumer republics.’
Furthermore, this “corrosion of the character of human beings” fostered by the simplistic ideology of consumerism has torn away at the very moral fabric of society (Garibaldo and Rebecchi 118). Unfortunately, Adam Pollo also undoubtedly suffers from the most deleterious symptom of the psychological disorder of consumerism: narcissism. In addition to the fact that narcissists have no compassion or empathy for other people in distress, Paul Rose (2007) elucidates that “narcissism is characterized by grandiose aspirations” (p.579). In Le Procès-verbal, the narrator’s deep narcissism is linked to anthropocentric delusions of grandeur. As the narrator reveals, “Adam se nommait tout bas le maître des choses” ‘Adam told himself in a whisper that he was in control of things’ (27; 17).

Along with the disquieting systematic torture of the rat noted by many critics, the scene at the zoo casts light upon this megalomania. Sadistically teasing caged animals that are unable to defend themselves, the narrator asserts, “Il passa le reste de son après-midi, parcourant le jardin zoologique […] Il avait découvert que le meilleur moyen de s’immiscer dans une espèce, est de s’efforcer d’en désirer la femelle […] Ça faisait des siècles qu’on attendait ce moment-là, et lui Adam Pollo, il était arrivé […] et il s’était consacré le possesseur de toutes les choses” ‘He spent the rest of his afternoon walking all over the zoo […] He had discovered that the best way to mix with a species is to make oneself desire a female member of it […] People had been waiting centuries for that moment, and he, Adam Pollo, had reached it […] and appropriated all things to himself’ (67-71; 58-62). Is there a greater form of narcissistic reverie than imagining oneself as the center of the universe or the great miracle of existence? At least momentarily convinced that the entire biosphere revolves around all of his personal needs and desires, the narrator is able to justify his exploitative relationship with both Michèle and the natural world. This alarming comportment is a reflection of the ‘religion’ of consumerism that has replaced all other ethical systems. Given the hyper-individuality lauded and promoted by the hegemonic forces that sustain consumer republics, this selfish, destructive, and chimerical worldview is perhaps more ubiquitous than ever. Moreover, the origins of these illusory delusions can be traced to consumerism that has transformed every material life form into a commodity to be compulsively devoured.
by a solitary individual striving to render his or her life more meaningful. In other words, consumption is a personal act that is entirely divorced from any moral considerations in respect to the planet or the Other.

6. ADAM POLLO’S “FLIGHT” FROM THE MODERN WORLD: FINDING AN EXISTENTIAL CURE FOR HIS SEARING ONTOLOGICAL PAIN

Although the psychological portrait of Adam Pollo’s anguish outlined above is incomplete and rather problematic, the protagonist’s apparent disdain for consumerism instinctively compels him to flee the modern world. Feeling estranged from other people and the cosmic whole to which all beings are inextricably linked, the disenchanted narrator of *Le procès-verbal* attempts to heal himself from modernity and its artificial simulations. The precise therapeutic method that the protagonist employs is indicative of a precursor to a litany of Le Clézio’s other texts such as *La fièvre*, *L’Extase matérielle*, and *Voyages de l’autre côté*. As numerous critics like Hervé Lambert, Denis Bachand, Jens Oliver Müller, Jean Onimus, and Francine Dugast-Portes have noted, Adam Pollo is the first of many Leclézian characters to endeavor to fuse with the rest of the material world to which all species belong. Striving to eliminate all of the barriers that prevent him from having “contact direct avec le monde des éléments” ‘direct contact with the elemental world,’ the narrator follows the “démarche même de fusion, d’absorption dans le monde” ‘path itself of fusion, absorption into the world’ (Müller 1992:42; Dugast-Portes 1991:154; my trans.).

Why does the protagonist desperately want to dissolve into the remainder of the universe during his fleeting moments of ‘extase matérielle’? Adam Pollo’s concerted efforts to remove the obstacles that separate him from other material particles represent the core of a spiritual and philosophical exercise. By melding into the biosphere which created and sustains all abundant life, the narrator hopes to discover his small place in the elemental mystery that surrounds him. Looking for a viable alternative

\[\text{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{9}}\text{Indeed, this is the same concept of cosmic humility or ‘petitesse’ that the reader discovers in } \textit{L’Extase Matérielle}.\]
to consumer republics that only induce immense existential suffering or nausea, Adam Pollo’s ontological quest can only be achieved outside the menacing confines of the hyper-real. Cognizant that existential transcendence through consumption is an ephemeral solution at best, the protagonist is forced to find significance elsewhere given the ubiquity of consumerist ideology and the myriad of mediums that reinforce this chimerical paradigm.

However, the curious case of Adam Pollo takes yet another unexpected turn since the potential cure (fusion) for his condition often appears to have reached an impasse. In a passage which is clearly reminiscent of the ‘extase horrible’ ‘horrible ecstasy’ experienced by Antoine Roquentin in Sartre’s *La Nausée*, the narrator offers the following description of one of his attempts to (re)-connect with the elements: “Perplexe, il se tut; il écouta, et soudain, par hasard, il se rendit compte que tout l’univers respirait la paix” ‘Perplexed, he fell silent; and suddenly, by pure chance, he realized that the whole universe was redolent of peace’ (52; 43). Despite his initial euphoria and the serenity that accompanies it, this pantheistic communion quickly degenerates into “les plus horribles extases” ‘the most horrible ecstasies’ (52; 43). Given the ambivalence of this scene, the reader is left to ponder if these cosmic nuptials in the Camusian sense really have anything to offer the protagonist. What message is the author trying to convey? Is this yet another ontological remedy that is doomed to failure from the outset?

In addition to this rather ambiguous episode that befuddles the reader and causes him or her to question the viability of pantheistic fusion as an antidote, the aforementioned scenes at the zoo and the massacre of the rat add another layer to this complex work of fiction. Even if (re)-establishing a primordial relationship with the earth is an effective coping strategy that can project meaning upon our absurd existence as the author seems to suggest in *L’Extase matérielle*, Adam Pollo often appears to oscillate between two incompatible philosophical positions. At any given moment, the protagonist is either declaring himself master of the universe or pining for a perfect union with it. This inconsistency does not appear to follow a logical progression. The narrator incessantly waffles back and forth between poignant epiphanies in which he realizes that it would
be “une faiblesses […] de vouloir triompher de la matière” ‘one more weakness […] to attempt to overcome matter’ and instances of extreme narcissistic, anthropocentric delusion (160; 154).

Just moments after allegedly breaking out of his ontological shell of being and transforming into a rat, Adam Pollo systematically butchers this defenseless creature for no apparent reason. The senseless nature of this violence deeply disquiets the reader. The protagonist attempts to justify the massacre by asserting that this organism has “aucun droit de vivre” ‘no right to live’ (93; my trans.). Revealing his inner state of mind during this unprovoked assault, the narrator explains, “il se sentait devenir géant tout à coup” ‘he felt himself becoming a giant’ (94;86). One possible explanation for this crime is that healing is not always a linear process. For example, addicts often regress several times before they are fully rehabilitated. If Adam Pollo is a recovering consumerist as much textual evidence suggests, then perhaps his treatment is in the early stages. Moreover, it should be noted that the tormented protagonist is trying to cure himself without the assistance of a highly-trained medical professional. Even if he is aware of the problem, is he capable of fixing it himself?

Another interpretation of this unsettling passage is that Adam Pollo is not ready to accept the philosophical ramifications of the revelations triggered by the aforementioned pantheistic fusion. Knowing that he is comprised of the same sacred substance as any other material organism; can he look at his own reflection in the mirror? In a universe in which everything is created and continuously recycled from the same basic building blocks, is there any real justification for his existence? Is this momentary fit of rage actuated by a deep ecological awareness of the absurdity and the gratuitous nature of human life? Given that the narrator claims to have quite literally ‘become one’ with the rat that he exterminates, is he trying to erase himself? Similar to any other sentient and non-sentient being, Adam Pollo never asked to be thrown into the chaos of existence. Is his fleeting time on this planet a free gift or an unavoidable curse? In Sartrian terms, is he ‘condemned’ to dwell in a biosphere where life evolves and reshapes itself according to a trajectory that is indifferent to the concerns of any given species?
7. REEXAMINING THE PROTAGANIST’S ALLEGED MENTAL BREAKDOWN

Adam Pollo’s supposed mental breakdown near the end of the narrative is equally as ambivalent as the previously mentioned scenes in the text that render a clear diagnosis of Adam Pollo’s trauma difficult. Although the protagonist’s public tirade “will be interpreted by others as insanity,” this passage is much more nuanced than it originally appears (Martin 9). First, it should be noted that this episode takes place in front of an electronics store. Indeed, the narrator’s distress is triggered by the artificial images of success and happiness that saturate the television screens inside of this shopping center and in all of our homes. It is nearly impossible to read this section of the novel without thinking of *La Guerre* (1970) and *Les Géants* (1973).

In these two works written a few years after *Le procès-verbal*, Le Clézio develops his scathing critique of consumer society to its fullest. Additionally, the Franco-Mauritian author also clearly articulates his fears related to the omnipresence of the hyper-real environments in which the modern subject is now immersed the majority of the time. For this reason, one must wonder whether *Le procès-verbal* is a literary representation of consumerism as a clinical disorder, a ferocious attack on the hollow virtues of consumerism and the carefully manufactured images that undergird this exploitative paradigm, or a combination of both. Is Adam Pollo ill or merely “sick and tired of civilization” (Spiridon 2015:247).

The content of the protagonist’s diatribe which ultimately lands him in a psychiatric facility where he will be incarcerated for good provides a possible answer to this question. Although Adam Pollo’s hysterical musings are misinterpreted as the mere ravings of a mad man by both bystanders and later by medical professionals, this discourse contains important philosophical elements. Elucidating his anxiety about the medium of television which disseminates the alluring messages that cause him to vomit earlier, the narrator screams to anyone that is willing to listen, “Frères, je suis la Télé, et vous êtes la Télé, et la Télé est en nous […] Mesdames et messieurs, arrêtez-vous. Ecoutez un peu ce que je dis […] Vous êtes des habitués. Vous n’êtes pas les hommes […] Pourquoi
ne pas essayer […] de remplacer vos propres machines” ‘Brothers, I am the Telly and you are the Telly and the Telly is within us […] Stop, ladies and gentlemen, and listen to me for a little […] You’re used to it. You are not human beings […] Why not try […] to act as substitutes for your own machines’ (p.192-194; p.186-188). In this passage, Le Clézio describes the death of the subject by the objects of consumption that we have created to improve the quality of our existence. Specifically, has the artificial image of a good life that continuously bombards our myriad of digital screens including our televisions, computers, tablets, and phones replaced reality itself? In other words, are all of our experiences now being filtered through gadgets supported by advertisers that are constantly selling us what Baudrillard calls ‘signs of happiness’? If the hyper-real has entirely eclipsed the real, then is there any escape for discontents of globalization like Adam Pollo? In a world that is becoming more interconnected and interdependent with each passing day, how much longer will the proposed remedy of a pantheistic fusion even be possible? Will the seductive simulations that lead to narcissistic delusions and nausea one day transform the entire biosphere preventing any type of philosophical flight and the pantheistic communion that it entails?

8. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Le procès-verbal is undoubtedly one of the author’s most challenging texts that problematizes how individuals are deemed to be certifiable. It is impossible to say with any degree of certainty if Adam Pollo is indeed insane. Does the protagonist suffer from a mental disorder or is his inexplicable behavior emblematic of a moral and intellectual rebellion? Is he condemned because he simply refuses to play society’s game? Or, is Adam Pollo a stricken consumerist that is attempting to rehabilitate himself the best way he knows how with a few bumps along the long road to full recovery? Moreover, if the narrator is a victim of the clinical disorder of consumerism, is there a remedy? Although he meets many of the criteria highlighted by contemporary researchers that have examined the devastating psychological effects of the ideology of consumerism, we cannot be assured that this is the correct diagnosis. However, if Adam Pollo is sick, the origin of his trauma is painfully
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apparent. Thus, perhaps it really does not matter whether the protagonist is ‘sane’ or not. Regardless of the answer to this multifaceted question, Le Clézio compellingly illustrates in Le procès-verbal that it is consumer society that has gone terribly awry or even mad.

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