

This work investigates the ways in which the theme of the trial is treated in Franz Kafka's *The Trial* (1925), Albert Camus's *L'Étranger* (1942) and Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds* (1986). This implies a comparative study of the three novels, focusing essentially -but not exclusively- on narrative structure and characterization. The choice of these two essential formal constituents can be accounted for by their capacity to render the plight of the Jews in Central Europe, the exemplification of the absurd and the denunciation of Apartheid. Relying on the Marxists' assumption whereby literature is very much related to history and ideology, we have brought out the fact that while the theme of the trial is used in *The Trial* and *Mating Birds* as a means of protest against oppressive ideologies (anti-Semitism and Apartheid), it, conversely, serves in *L'Étranger* as a means of escape from history (the Algerian colonial question). With regard to narrative structure, we have shown that while it fleshes out the absurd in *L'Étranger*, it is used in *Mating Birds*, as a device for "writing back" to *L'Étranger* which 'thingifies' the non-Europeans. Our three heroes, i.e. Joseph K., Meursault and Sibiya, face their trials in differing ways. While Joseph K. tries to defend his case, Meursault is totally inured to what befalls him. Even though Sibiya follows the procedures of his trial with a certain aloofness, he takes a sarcastic and mocking view of the judicial system of Apartheid. All in all, we can say that the motif of revolt is a thread that links the three novels. Joseph K. tries to revolt, but he fails since he bequeathes no sustaining philosophy. His revolt is taken up by Meursault who, thanks to the 'smoke screen' of the absurd, succeeds, paradoxically, to play the part of a sacrificial lamb. Sibiya, in his turn, takes up Meursault's revolt and makes of it the seeds of a political revolution. This means that whereas Meursault's revolt is individual and metaphysical, Sibiya's is historical since it is rooted in the harsh reality of South Africa as experienced by the non-Europeans. In other words, while Joseph K.'s and Meursault's revolts tend to an abstract and ethereal universality, Sibiya's has a pertinent perspective, that of an Apartheid-free South